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2023  
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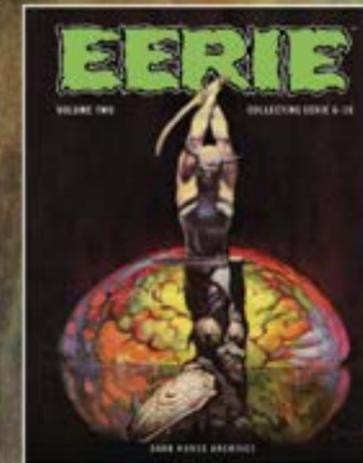
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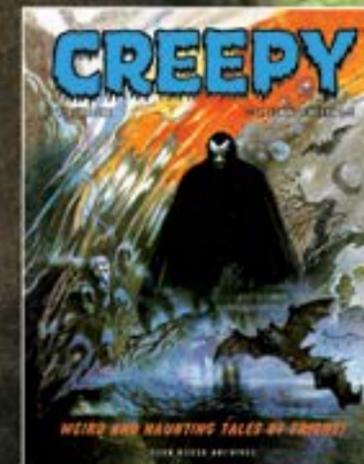
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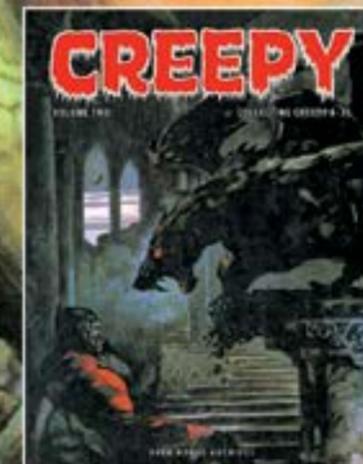
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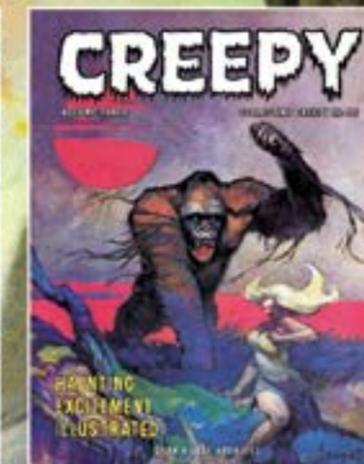
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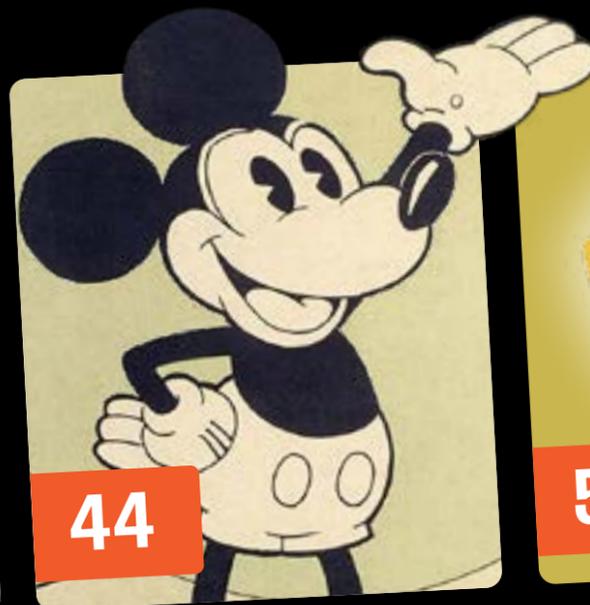
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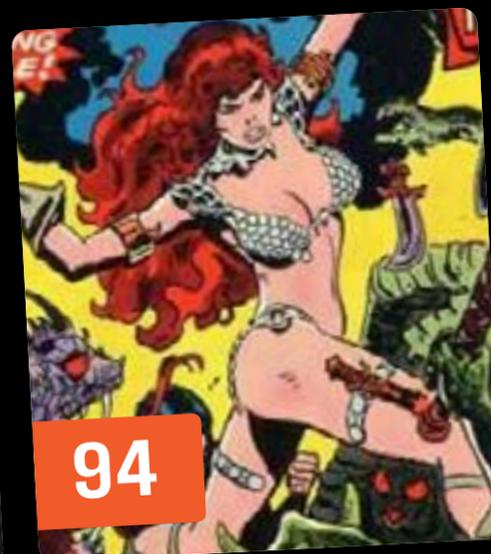
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# ABOUT THE COVER

We are beyond thrilled that Becky Cloonan has agreed to provide the cover for the Comic-Con 2023 Souvenir Book.

Becky began her career making minicomics as part of the Meathaus collective. Since then, she's gone on to write and draw on titles like *Dark Agnes*, *Conan the Barbarian*, *The Punisher*, *True Lives of the Fabulous Killjoys*, *Gotham Academy*, *Detective Comics*, and *Batman*, and working on creator-owned books like *Southern Cross* and the critically acclaimed collection of short stories, *By Chance or Providence*. In 2012 she became the first female artist to draw the main Batman title for DC Comics.

Currently she is focusing on a new creator-owned work with DSTLRY.



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

# WELCOME BACK!



**W**e are overjoyed to be able to welcome you all to another fantastic Comic-Con! We are excited to once again be able to reunite in person to celebrate the amazing world of popular arts and all its various fandoms that we love so well. To be a part of the group experience that is the community of Comic-Con. This year marks our 54th Comic-Con event and we are grateful to be able to share this return with all those who attend, you who are the heart of this event.

From its beginnings, Comic-Con has been about community, that gathering of the tribes of popular arts and culture. It's a place to renew old friendships and make new ones, a place for fans to gather with others to celebrate. We have been as much about the social connections as we are about programmed events or offerings in the Exhibit Hall. It is an opportunity to learn new things, explore new fandoms and interests, meet new people, and share stories and experiences with like-minded fans. At Comic-Con, you will find events and opportunities that cover an amazing diversity of interests . . . there is truly something for everyone.

Comic-Con brings with it another opportunity to see fans once again gather throughout the entire campus of Comic-Con, whether it be socializing in the lobbies of the host hotels, shopping in the exhibit hall, taking a break in the Sails Pavilion, photographing the many costumes in the lobby or hallways, taking in a program or a workshop, learning a new game, watching the Masquerade, visiting one of the many activations outside the Center, or simply spending time with friends old and new at the end of each day. To share in the joy of seeing those spaces bustling with activity and creativity. A return to the in-person community that is Comic-Con.

As always, we look forward to this opportunity to spend time with all of you who make the magic happen. We know that there are many other shows that you could choose to attend, and we are grateful that you have chosen to spend your time with us. This show is a work of love from us, the "village" that is the thousands of Comic-Con volunteers and staff who work year-round to make this show happen, and we are thrilled to share it with you. Your loyalty and support are the reason for our longevity and success. We thank you all and hope you enjoy Comic-Con 2023 as much as we've enjoyed creating it for you.

### Robin Donlan

President,  
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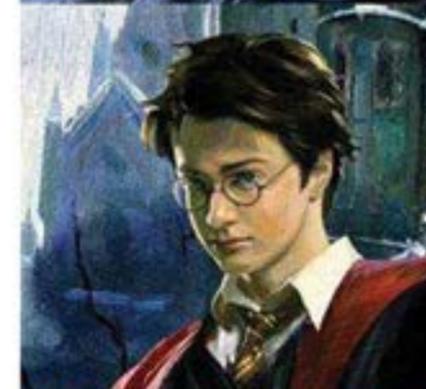
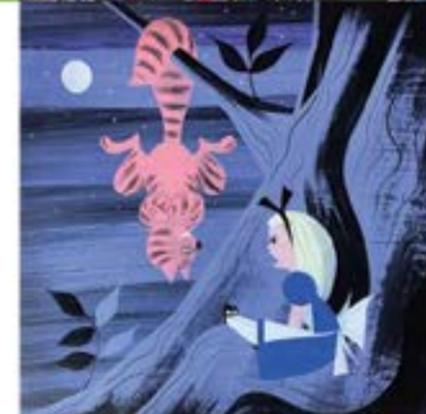
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# SPECIAL QUESTS

2023

Thank you to all  
 Comic-Con Special Guests

Photo: Lucas Passmore



AVEYARD

**Victoria Aveyard**

Victoria Aveyard was born and raised in East Longmeadow, MA, a small town known only for the most complicated traffic rotary in the continental United States. She now lives in Los Angeles, where traffic is definitely worse. As an author and screenwriter, she uses her career as an excuse to read too many books and watch too many movies. She is the author of the #1 *New York Times* bestselling *Red Queen* and *Realm Breaker* series.



BECK



BENTON

**Jerry Beck**

Jerry Beck is a noted animation historian and cartoon producer. As a film distributor, his company Streamline Pictures brought Miyazaki's *Totoro* and Otomo's *Akira* to the U.S. His over 15 books on animation history include *The Animated Movie Guide*, *Looney Tunes: The Ultimate Visual Guide*, and *The 50 Greatest Cartoons*. He currently teaches animation history at CalArts, UCLA, and Chapman University; curates a monthly "Cartoon Club" for Quentin Tarantino's New Beverly Cinema in Hollywood; and edits two blogs, *Animation Scoop* and *Cartoon Research*. Beck has programmed animation retrospectives and

animator tributes for the Anney and Ottawa Animation Festivals, The Museum of Modern Art, and The Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences. And each year he presents "The Worst Cartoons Ever" at Comic-Con.

**Jim Benton**

Jim is the *New York Times* bestselling author behind *Catwad*, *Franny K Stein*, *It's Happy Bunny*, *Attack of the Stuff*, *Comet the Unstoppable Reindeer*, *The Handbook*, *Dog Butts and Love*, and *Man I Hate Cursive*, among others. His series *Dear Dumb Diary* has over 10 million books in print and was made into a musical made-for-TV movie, which Jim co-wrote and produced. Jim's awards include four divisional Reuben awards from the National Cartoonists Society, three Addy awards, and two Eisner Award nominations. Look for his upcoming *Batman Squad* from DC!



BLACK



CAMPBELL

**Holly Black**

Holly Black is the #1 *New York Times* bestselling and award-winning author of speculative and fantasy novels, short stories, and comics. Her best-known works include the *Elfhome* series, *The Coldest Girl In Coldtown*, and the *Spiderwick Chronicles*. She has

sold over 26 million books worldwide, and her work has been translated into over 30 languages and adapted for film. She currently lives in New England with her husband and son in a house with a secret library. *Book of Night* is her adult fiction debut.

**J. Scott Campbell**

J. Scott Campbell is Internationally renowned for his rendition of Marvel and DC Comics characters, with a career spanning over 30 years. Founder of two sought-after and highly successful brands, *Danger Girl* and *FairyTale Fantasies*, J. Scott is only getting started. His unmistakable style combines his love of 90s comics and animation with stylized figures and expressions, and a nod to pinup favorites Gil Elvgren and Robert McGinnis. J. Scott's artistic vision, combined with his business sense, delivers esteemed collectibles with tremendous commercial success and a strong connection with an ever-growing audience.



CATÉ

**Ricardo Caté**

Ricardo Caté is the most prominent Native American cartoonist working today. His popular cartoon

*Without Reservations* is published daily in the *Santa Fe New Mexican* and *Taos News* and explores the irony and poignant humor found in the Native American experience of living in dominant culture. In addition to being a cartoonist, Caté is also an activist, stand-up comedian, writer, teacher, veteran, former college athlete, tribal official, four-time Dakota Access Pipeline protester at Standing Rock, and filmmaker. Ricardo follows the ways of his Kewa Pueblo heritage and teaches on the reservation. He has three children and lives in the Santo Domingo Pueblo, New Mexico.

### Janice Chiang

Janice Chiang is an award-winning American comic book letterer with over 40 years of experience in the industry. She learned her hand-lettering skills from Larry Hama and Ralph Reese at Neal Adams Continuity Studios in the 1970s. Her background is in fine arts, printmaking, and all handcrafts. Her father taught her Chinese calligraphy, so she viewed hand lettering as calligraphy, too. She soon moved to Marvel, where her career really took off. Throughout the 1980s and up until the mid-1990s she kept

extremely busy, often lettering up to ten books a month. Janice has mastered digital lettering with her distinct artistic style. Current clients include Storm King Comics, DC, and Scholastic. Notable projects have been *John Carpenter's Tales for a HalloweenNight*, *DC Super Hero Girls GNs*, *Superman Smashes The Klan*, the *Monkey Prince* series, *I Survived: Nazi Invasion*, *Smurfs* graphic novels, and *Tokyo Rose—Zero Hour: A Japanese Woman's Persecution and Ultimate Redemption After World War II*.

### Becky Cloonan

Becky Cloonan (creator of this book's cover art) is an artist and writer best known for her comic work with DC, Dark Horse, Image, and Marvel, while her illustrations have found their way onto album covers, gig posters, and buildings. Newly relocated to the Pacific Northwest, she is taking advantage of the many rainy days to draw as much as she can. Currently she is focusing on a new creator-owned book with DSTLRY.

### Felicia Day

Felicia Day has appeared as an actor in numerous television shows, including *Supernatural* and *The*

*Magicians*. She is also a prolific voiceover artist. However, Felicia is best known for her projects in the digital world, such as *Dr. Horrible's Sing-Along Blog* and *The Guild*, which she created and starred in. In addition, she founded the prominent digital production company Geek & Sundry, which produced such shows as *Tabletop*, *Spellslingers*, and *Critical Role*. The company is currently owned by Legendary Entertainment. Felicia has written two *New York Times* bestselling books and currently works as an actor, podcaster, writer, and streamer.

### Alex de Campi

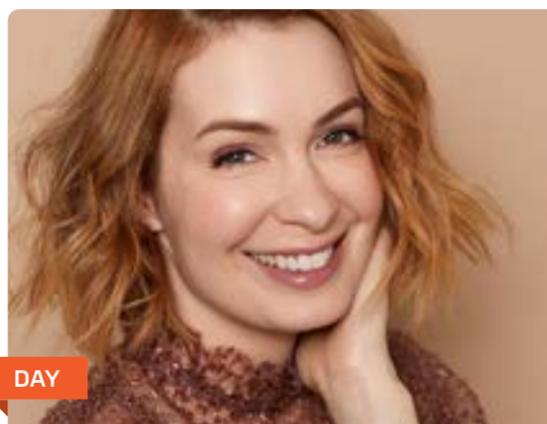
Alex de Campi mostly writes thrillers and horror. Sometimes they're graphic novels (like the Eisner-nominated *Bad Girls* from Gallery 13, Z2's *Madi* with Duncan Jones, or Image Comics' *Dracula, Motherf\*\*ker!*), sometimes they're prose novels (BookTok fave *The Scottish Boy*, from Unbound) and sometimes they're TV or film (the *Blade Runner* anime). Sometimes she does other things, like her acclaimed Eisner- and Ringo-nominated alt-love anthology *Twisted Romance* (Image). Her next projects are the cyberpunk animal



CHIANG



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adventure *Scrapper* with games legend Cliff Bleszinski (debuting at Comic-Con from Image); *Parasocial*, her second horror collaboration with Erica Henderson (Image, October) and her love story to '80s action movies, *Bad Karma* (Image, November). You can also read her YA fantasy-adventure book *Reversal* on Webtoons, and her noir spy thriller *The Brandenburg School for Boys* on Panel Syndicate. Oh, and sometimes she directs music videos (her most recent one was the pixel-art choose-your-own-adventure game for Turin Brakes' "Isolation"). She lives in Manhattan with her daughter, two dogs, and a cat, except in the summer, when the whole menagerie moves to a remote Maine island.

### Jo Duffy

Jo Duffy is a writer and editor, known for her comics work on such title as *Power Man and Iron Fist*, *Catwoman*, *Batman*, *Wolverine*, *Fallen Angels*, *Nestrobber*, *Glory*, *Bloodpool*, *Crystar*, *Elvira*, *Defenders*, *Creepy*, *Punisher*, *Daredevil*, *Dark Horse Presents*, *Teenage Tokyo*, *X-Men Classics*, *Marvel Fanfare*, *A Distant Soul*, *Powerpuff Girls*, *Spider-Man*, *Thing*, and *Star*

*Wars*, along with the English edition of Katsuhiro Otomo's *Akira* and the early issues of *Naruto*. She was managing editor of *Epic Illustrated* magazine and edited a number of Marvel and Epic comics, including *Elektra: Assassin*, *Daredevil*, *Dreadstar*, *Groo the Wanderer*, *Doctor Strange*, *Incredible Hulk*, *She-Hulk*, *Micronauts*, and *ROM Spaceknight*. Unfortunately, Jo had to cancel her appearance at the last minute, but she is looking forward to being a guest at Comic-Con in 2024.

### Mark Evanier

Mark Evanier attended his first San Diego Comic-Con in 1970 and has been to every one of these annual events ever since. He was then an assistant to the great Jack Kirby, whom he wrote about in his book *Kirby, King of Comics*. Mark has also written for live-action TV shows, animated TV shows (including various Garfield cartoons) and tons of comic books. The comics include working with Sergio Aragonés for 40 years on *Groo the Wanderer*, and many more. He is also a historian of comic books and animation.

### Barbara Friedlander

Barbara Friedlander

was the first woman to create a character for DC, in the comic book *Swing with Scooter*. Scooter, a former British musician and rock star, became a staple of the DC Universe for many years. Barbara was introduced into the world of DC Romance by Jack E. Miller, writer and editor at DC. "He taught me the ropes of editing and writing and because of his mentorship I was able to develop many new characters and new features that also remained part of DC's Romance line up until its demise over ten years later." She worked with such editors and creators as Bob Kane, Bill Finger, Carmine Infantino, Julie Schwartz, Bob Haney, and Tony Abruzzo—some of most of the memorable names from the Silver Age of comics. Lately she has been writing romance again: "I am trying to help to bring it back into the universe in a viable 'new' genre."

### Bill Griffith

"Are we having fun yet?" This non sequitur utterance by the clown-suited philosopher/media star Zippy the Pinhead has become so oft-quoted that it is now in *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations*. Zippy's creator Bill Griffith began his comics career in New York City in 1969.

His first strips were published in *The East Village Other* and *Screw Magazine* and featured an angry amphibian named Mr. The Toad. He ventured to San Francisco in 1970 to join the burgeoning underground comics movement and made his home there until 1998. His first major comic book titles included *Tales of Toad* and *Young Lust*. He was co-editor of *Arcade*, *The Comics Revue* for its seven-issue run in the mid-70s and worked with the important underground publishers throughout the seventies and up to the present: Print Mint, Last Gasp, Rip Off Press, Kitchen Sink, and Fantagraphics Books. The first *Zippy* strip appeared in *Real Pulp* #1 (Print Mint) in 1970. The strip went weekly in 1976, first in the *Berkeley Barb* and then syndicated nationally through Rip Off Press. Griffith published his first graphic novel, *Invisible Ink* (Eisner Award winner), in 2015, followed by *Nobody's Fool* in 2019 and *Three Rocks*, the first graphic biography of Nancy cartoonist Ernie Bushmiller, in 2023.

**Simon Hanselmann**  
Simon Hanselmann's *Megg & Mogg* series of comics has been trans-

lated into 14 languages and won Eisner and Angouleme awards. An animated *Megg and Mogg* short ran on Hulu and Disney+ in 2022. His eighth book with Fantagraphics, *The Werewolf Jones & Sons Deluxe Summer Fun Annual*, came out on July 18.

**Junji Ito**  
Four-time Eisner Award-winning creator Junji Ito made his professional manga debut in 1987 and since then has gone on to be recognized as one of the greatest contemporary artists working in the horror genre. His works include *Tomie* and *Uzumaki*, which have been adapted into live-action films; *Gyo*, which was adapted into an animated film; and his books *Deserter*, *Fragments of Horror*, *Frankenstein*, *Lovesickness*, *No Longer Human*, *Remina*, *Shiver*, *Smashed*, and *Venus in the Blind Spot*, all of which are available from VIZ Media. In 2019 his collection *Frankenstein* won the Best Adaptation from Another Medium Eisner, and in 2021 he was awarded Best Writer/Artist, while his book *Remina* received the award for Best U.S. Edition of International Material—Asia. In 2022, *Lovesickness* won Best U.S. Edition

of International Material—Asia. *Co-sponsored by VIZ Media*

**Keith Knight**  
For three decades, Keith Knight has brought the funny back to the funny pages with a uniquely personal style that's a cross between *Calvin & Hobbes*, *MAD*, and underground comix. The multi-award-winning cartoonist is part of a generation of African American artists who were raised on hip-hop, infusing their work with urgency, edge, humor, satire, politics, and race. His cartoons have appeared in various publications worldwide, including the *Washington Post*, the *New Yorker*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *The Nib*, *Ebony*, and *The Funny Times*. Knight's work is the inspiration for the live-action streaming television series *Woke*, on Hulu. Knight served as a co-creator, writer, and executive producer, and he appears as Kubby the Koala in season 1, episode 7.

**Jim Lee**  
Jim Lee, the world-renowned comic book artist, writer, editor, and publisher, is currently president, publisher, and chief creative officer of DC. He leads creative efforts to integrate DC's publishing portfolio of



# ANIMATION MAGAZINE

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characters and stories across all media, supporting Warner Bros. Discovery's family of brands and studios. Jim joined DC in 1998 and has overseen many of the company's highly successful publishing programs, including the recent record-breaking Rebirth line of comics and The New 52 initiative that relaunched the entire line of monthly superhero comic books. As part of the revamp, Lee designed and reimagined the new, more contemporary costumes for some of the DC Universe's most iconic characters, including Batman, Superman, and Wonder Woman. Lee was born in Seoul, South Korea, but moved with his family to St. Louis when he was young. He holds a BA in psychology from Princeton University and started his professional career at Marvel Comics, where his work on the X-Men continues to hold the all-time record for single-issue sales. He resides in Los Angeles with his wife, nine children, and some 45 animals, including two cats.

### Darcie Little Badger

Darcie Little Badger is a Lipan Apache writer with a PhD in oceanography. Her critically acclaimed debut novel *Elatsoe*

was featured in Time magazine as one of the best 100 fantasy books of all time. *Elatsoe* also won the Locus award for Best First Novel and is a Nebula, Ignyte, and Lodestar finalist. Her second fantasy novel, *A Snake Falls to Earth*, received the Newbery Honor, is an LA Times Book Prize Finalist, and is on the National Book Awards longlist. Her comics credits include *Strangelands* and *Marvel Voices*.

### Todd McFarlane

Todd McFarlane is the Emmy- and Grammy-winning director/producer and creator of one of the world's best-selling comics, *Spawn*. Known for his work on *Spider-Man* and *The Amazing Spider-Man*, where he co-created *Venom*, McFarlane is co-founder and president of Image Comics, and CEO of McFarlane Toys, Todd McFarlane Productions, and McFarlane Films. *Spawn* has been adapted into an award-winning animated series and live-action film. The comic earned a Guinness World Record for "longest-running creator-owned superhero comic book series." His recent projects include the launch of *Scorched*, *King Spawn*, *Gunslinger*, and *Spawn's Universe*.

### Frank Miller

Frank Miller first gained notoriety in the late 1970s as the artist and later writer of *Daredevil* for Marvel. Next came the sf samurai drama *Ronin*, followed by the groundbreaking *Batman: The Dark Knight* and *Batman: Year One*. He next fulfilled a lifelong dream by doing the all-out crime series *Sin City*, which was an instant success and spawned two blockbuster films, which he co-directed with Robert Rodriguez. His graphic novel *300* was also adapted into a highly successful film by Zack Snyder. Recently, Miller, alongside Dan DiDio and Silenn Thomas, launched Frank Miller Presents, an independent publishing company focused on creating and curating a new line of comics.

### Stephen Notley

Like all good things, Stephen Notley originated in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. He soon grasped that cartooning was the Art of all Arts and, groping blindly for that glorious golden ring, he started drawing. Fifty-odd years later he's still at it, and while he eventually bounced from his home and native land to seek his fortune in sunny Seattle writing and designing goofy nonsense for PopCap



LITTLE BADGER

Photo: Bekah M Photography



McFARLANE



MILLER

Photo: AFP & Joël Saget



NOTLEY

aiwan

# COMICS

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FOR FULL EVENTS SCHEDULE

MEET ARTISTS  
at BOOTH 5524

Chang Sheng 常勝 @ changsheng1221



7/20 Thu. - 7/22 Sat.  
2PM - 3PM

7/23 Sun.  
10AM - 11AM

Kaizbow 凱子包 @ lailaikaikai



7/20 Thu. - 7/22 Sat.  
3PM - 4PM

7/23 Sun.  
11AM - 12AM

"OLDMAN" BOOK SIGNING  
at eigomANGA BOOTH 1802

7/21 Fri. 4PM - 5PM

PANELS

Writing for Comics and Manga

7/20 Thu. 6PM - 7PM  
at Room 29AB

Social Issues Explored in the Comic  
"Justice"

7/22 Sat. 5PM - 6PM  
at Room 9

All the events are subject to change.

Games, he's still inflicting *Bob the Angry Flower* cartoons on the world at the rate of one per week and intends to do so as long as the flesh cooperates.

### Joe Quesada

Joe Quesada is best known for his 22-year career at Marvel Comics. As editor-in-chief, he was a key part of the team that saved Marvel from bankruptcy and was instrumental in launching the Marvel Knights, Ultimate, and Max line of books as well as some of the best-known storylines in the modern Marvel era, which served as the bedrock for Marvel's film, TV, and animation success. As chief creative officer and a member of the Marvel Creative Committee, Joe worked closely with Marvel Studios and was part of the creation of Marvel TV and Animation. Since announcing the end of his tenure at Marvel in May of 2022, Joe's been busy creating Batman covers for DC, writing and directing his first short film, "FLY," which has won numerous awards, and signing a first-look deal with Amazon Studios. In his free time, he's planning something amazing.

**John Romita Jr.** John Romita Jr. began

his career at Marvel UK, doing sketches for covers of reprints. His American debut was with a six-page story entitled "Chaos at the Coffee Bean!" in *The Amazing Spider-Man Annual* (1977). John's early popularity began with his run on *Iron Man* with writer David Michelinie and artist Bob Layton, which began in 1978. The creative team introduced several supporting characters, including Tony Stark's bodyguard girlfriend Bethany Cabe and rival industrialist Justin Hammer. In the early 1980s, he had his first regular run on the series *The Amazing Spider-Man* and in 2022 he returned to the book.

### P. Craig Russell

After establishing a name for himself at Marvel on *Killraven* and *Dr. Strange*, P. Craig Russell went on to open new vistas for the field of comics with his adaptations of operas by Mozart, Strauss, and Wagner. Russell is also known for his graphic novel adaptations of Neil Gaiman's *Coraline*, *American Gods*, and *Norse Mythology*. In 2022 he was inducted in the Will Eisner Comic Industry Awards Hall of Fame.

### Ben Saunders

Professor Ben Saunders founded the Program in Comics Studies at the University of Oregon—

the first of its kind in the country. He has published widely on different aspects of comics culture and is series editor of the Penguin Classics Marvel Collection. He has also curated several acclaimed exhibitions, including *Marvel: Universe of Super Heroes*—a massive, multimedia extravaganza that sold more than a million tickets during its extended tour of the USA. A regular speaker at conventions and frequent commentator for documentaries and podcasts, Professor Saunders is proud to proselytize for the beautiful medium of comics.

### Linda Sejic

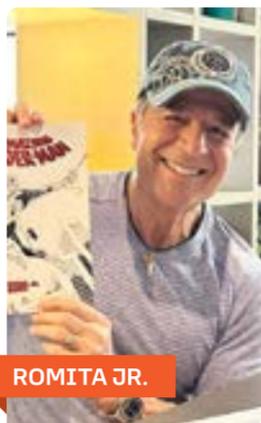
Linda Sejic is a comic creator from Croatia. She did art on Top Cow's series *Wildfire*, *Tales of Honor*, and *Swing*, but she is best known for her creator-owned comics *Blood Stain* and *Punderworld*, which garnered its massive popularity on the webcomic site Webtoons. Currently she is working on the continuation of *Punderworld*, which is planned to have three volumes in total. *Sponsored by Top Cow Productions, Inc.*

### Stjepan Sejic

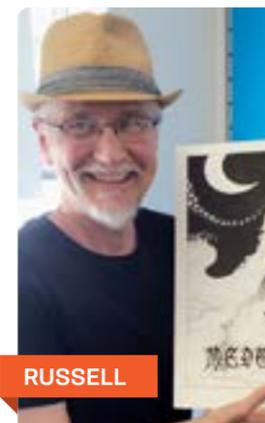
Stjepan Sejic is a comic creator from Croatia



QUESADA



ROMITA JR.



RUSSELL



SAUNDERS



SEJIC



SEJIC

Photo: Wayne Alan Harold

Look at it this way, it's either an expensive vinyl figure or very reasonable fine art.



PSAcard.com

known for his long run on *Witchblade* as well as other Top Cow titles *Angelus*, *Artifacts*, and *Aphrodite IX*. He also did art for DC's *Aquaman*, *Suicide Squad*, and *Justice League Odyssey*, in addition to being a writer/artist on DC's series *Harleen*. These days he predominantly writes and draws his creator-owned series *Sunstone*, *Fine Print* ("or how a divine contract may not be the best cure for a broken heart"), *Death Vigil*, and the upcoming *Achilles Shieldmaidens* and *The Queen and the Woodborn*.  
Sponsored by Top Cow Productions, Inc.

### John Semper

John Semper was the producer and head writer of *Spider-Man: The Animated Series*, which appeared on Fox Kids TV during the 1990s. On that series he worked directly with Stan Lee in bringing the web-slinger to the TV screen. John has also written for classic animated shows such as *Scooby-Doo*, *Smurfs*, *The Jetsons*, *My Little Pony*, *DuckTales*, *Jim Henson's Fraggle Rock*, *Alvin and the Chipmunks*, *Static Shock*, and many others. His feature film writing credits include the live-action comedy *Class Act* starring Kid 'n Play, produced by Warner Bros. Fans of

Japanese anime director Hayao Miyazaki have appreciated his English-language scripts for the Disney-released feature films *Laputa: The Castle in the Sky* and *Kiki's Delivery Service*. He recently co-wrote the animated feature film *Green Lantern: Beware My Power*. He is currently the co-executive producer of *Weather Hunters*, a new animated series for PBS created by Al Roker, now in production.

### Scott Shaw!

For over 50 years, Scott Shaw! has written and drawn underground comix (*Gory Stories*, *Fear and Laughter*), mainstream comix (*Captain Carrot and his Amazing Zoo Crew!*, *Sonic the Hedgehog*, *Simpsons Comics*), children's books (the *Marooned Lagoon* series), syndicated strips (*Bugs Bunny*, *Woodsy Owl*), graphic novels (*Shrek*, *Annoying Orange*), TV cartoons (*Jim Henson's Muppet Babies*, *The Completely Mental Misadventures of Ed Grimley*, *Camp Candy*), toys (McFarlane Toys' Hanna-Barbera and Simpsons figures), trading cards (Garbage Pail Kids, *Oddball Comics*), advertising (Post Pebbles cereal featuring the *Flintstones*), T-shirts (MeTV's *Svengoolie*, San Diego Comic Fest), and music album art (The *Monkees' A Barrel Full*

of *Monkees* and *Just Us* and San Diego's *Staring at the Sun* and *Spice Train*). Current projects include Scott's *Kilgore Home Nursing* for David Lloyd's *Aces Weekly*, *Scott Shaw!s Comix & Stories* (a collection of early material) and Image's *Li'l Dragon*, his spinoff of Erik Larsen's *Savage Dragon*. For *TwoMorrows*, Scott writes a regular column for *Retrofan* magazine and is finishing his 200-page *Oddball Comics* book. Scott has received Emmys, an Eisner Award, and a Humanitas Award for his work. He's known for his *Oddball Comics Live!* and his participation in *Quick Draw!* with Mark Evanier and Sergio Aragonés. Scott was a co-organizer of San Diego's *Comic-Con* in 1970.

### Beau Smith

Beau Smith was a prolific letter column correspondent before becoming the vice president of marketing for Eclipse Comics. He went on to head the marketing departments for Todd McFarlane Productions, IDW Publishing, and the Library of American Comics. Beau's been writing comix for as long as he's been selling them. His first success as a writer came with *The Black Terror*. He then had a long run on DC's *Guy Gardner Warrior* and



SEMPER



SHAW!



SMITH



A FILM BY RANDALL PARK | FROM THE ACCLAIMED GRAPHIC NOVEL  
 SONY PICTURES CLASSICS TOPIC STUDIOS AND TANGO PRESENT AN IMMINENT COLLISION ROADSIDE ATTRACTIONS PICTURE FILMS PRODUCTION "SHORTCOMINGS" JUSTIN H. MIN SHERRY COLA ALLY MAKI TAVI GEVINSON DEBBY RYAN SONOYA MIZUNO WITH JACOB BATALON AND TIMOTHY SIMONS CASTING BY NICOLE ABELLERA HALLMAN, CSA MUSIC BY JOE RUDGE COSTUME DESIGNER AVA YURIKO HAMA EDITOR ROBERT NASSAU PRODUCTION DESIGNER BILL BOES DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY SANTIAGO GONZALEZ EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS RYAN HELLER MICHAEL BLOOM MARIA ZUCKERMAN JENNIFER SEMLER TIM HEADINGTON LIA BUMAN NEIL SHAH MAX SILVA DANIEL HANK RYAN PAINE ADRIAN TOMINE PRODUCED BY HIEU HO p.g.a. RANDALL PARK MICHAEL GOLAMCO MARGOT HAND p.g.a. JENNIFER BERMAN HOWARD COHEN ERIC D'ARBELOFF BASED ON THE GRAPHIC NOVEL BY ADRIAN TOMINE WRITTEN BY ADRIAN TOMINE DIRECTED BY RANDALL PARK  
 R FOR LANGUAGE THROUGHOUT, SEXUAL MATERIAL AND BRIEF SMOKING  
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ONLY IN THEATERS AUGUST 4

also worked on stories featuring Aliens, Star Wars, Wolverine, Spawn, Wildcat, and others. His original creations include *Primate*, *Parts Unknown*, *Cobb*, and *Wynonna Earp*. *Wynonna Earp* was developed as a TV show for Syfy where it ran for four seasons and won two People's Choice Awards as best sci-fi/fantasy show. Beau was a regular visitor to the set of *Wynonna Earp* and has co-written *Wynonna Earp* comic books with members of the cast. He's also co-written stories with Tim Rozon (who played Doc Holliday on the show) for *Giant-Size Two-Fisted Manly Tales*. Beau's next work is *Stop Watch*, co-written by Melanie Scrofano (who played Wynonna Earp) and drawn by Randy Green.

### Jeff Smith

Jeff Smith is the writer and artist of comics and graphic novels including *Bone*, *RASL*, *Shazam: The Monster Society of Evil*, *Rose, Tall Tales*, and *TUKI*. Both *Bone* and *RASL* were self-published and are *New York Times* bestsellers. *Bone* launched the current YA graphic novel explosion via Scholastic Books' Graphix imprint and has won 41 national and international awards, including 10 Eisner Awards, and has been translated into over 30

languages. *RASL* won an Eisner Award for Best Graphic Album—New. The webcomic version of *TUKI* won the National Cartoonists Award for Best Online Comic in 2014.

### Rachel Smythe

Rachel Smythe is the creator of the Webtoon phenomenon *Lore Olympus*. Debuting on Webtoon Originals in 2018, *Lore Olympus* captured hearts and minds with its glamorous setting, razor-sharp comedic timing, complex characters in messy relationships, and above all else, its breathtakingly beautiful visuals. Rachel's craftsmanship and storytelling have seen the series rise to greater and greater success, winning many industry awards, including an Eisner Award in 2022 and an animation adaptation with Jim Henson Studios currently in development. Rachel's work is inspired by Greek mythology, modern television dramas, film cinematography, high fashion, and contemporary culture, which combine into a unique experience within the episodes of *Lore Olympus* that millions can't get enough of. Rachel lives and works in her home country of New Zealand with her partner and dog.

### Matthew Southworth

Matthew Southworth is a cartoonist and musician from Nashville, Tennessee, now firmly planted in Seattle. He is known for his work co-creating the Eisner-nominated *Stumptown*, which was adapted into a successful but mercilessly COVID-cancelled ABC TV series, and for his work on Fantagraphics' celebrated *The Cloven*, written by *New York Times* bestselling author Garth Stein. Southworth is an artist, writer, guitarist and guitar builder who led previous lives in playwriting, film-making, and apartment managing.

### Merrie Spaeth

Half a century ago, Merrie Spaeth wrote *Grimm's Ghost Stories*, *Boris Karloff*, and *Dark Shadows* for Gold Key Comics. Merrie had already had an international film career... well, maybe not international but as a teenager she starred in a major motion picture, 1963's *The World of Henry Orient*, alongside Peter Sellers, Angela Lansbury, and Tom Bosley. The hit movie was directed by future Oscar winner George Roy Hill (*The Sting*). Afterward, she went on to appear in numerous television shows before turning to other inter-



SMITH



SMYTHE



SOUTHWORTH



SPAETH



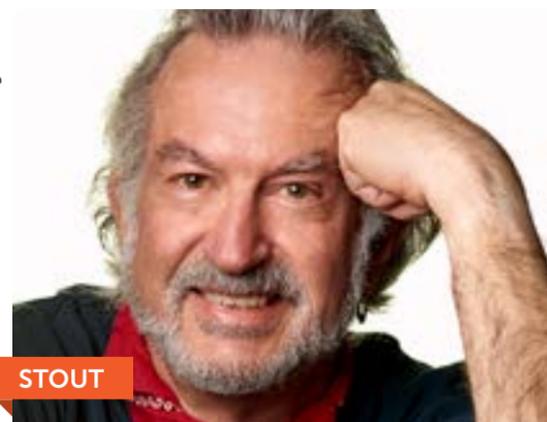
STEENZ

Photo: Jamison Weeks



STEIN

Photo: Greg Preston



STOUT



STRACZYNSKI

ests. Merrie became a reporter, was a radio and television talk show host, and started one of the first cable shows, *Manhattan Weekend*. She was selected for the prestigious White House Fellows program and assigned to the FBI as a special assistant to Director William Webster. Later, she served as director of public affairs for the Federal Trade Commission and White House director of media relations for President Ronald Reagan. These days, Merrie writes for *The Wall Street Journal* and other publications and has published three books: *Marketplace Communication*, *Words Matter*, and *You Don't Say!* plus, recently, her first children's book, *Baby Bear Comes Back*. The comic books, however, were always her first love!

### Steenz

Steenz is a St. Louis-based cartoonist, editor, and professor. They're the cartoonist on the syndicated comic strip *Heart of the City*, the co-creator of the Standard Comic Script, and president of the board for the St. Louis Independent Comics Expo. Steenz currently teaches cartooning at Webster University while editing titles from independent publishers and creators. They're

also currently working on their latest graphic novel *Side Quest: A Graphic Novel History of TTRPGs*. Their latest book, *Lost and Found: A Heart of the City Collection*, is available now.

### Garth Stein

Garth Stein is the author of the #1 *New York Times* bestselling novel and international sensation *The Art of Racing in the Rain*. His other novels include *Raven Stole the Moon*, *How Evan Broke His Head and Other Secrets*, and *A Sudden Light*. The first book of his graphic novel series *The Cloven*, illustrated by Matthew Southworth, was published by Fantagraphics in 2020, with Book Two coming this year. Garth is the co-founder of Seattle7Writers, a nonprofit collective of more than 80 Northwest authors and he is currently the chair of the Author Leadership Circle for the Book Industry Charitable Foundation (BINCFoundation.org).

### William Stout

Artist William Stout has worked with Russ Manning, Harvey Kurtzman, Will Elder, Jean "Moebius" Giraud, Will Eisner, Jack Kirby, and Al Williamson. His studiomates included Dave Stevens and Paul Chadwick. Bill

co-founded the Comic Art Professional Society and was their tenth president. Stout created the iconic *Wizards* poster, then worked on over 70 movies, including *Return of the Living Dead* and *Masters of the Universe*. He helped *Pan's Labyrinth* win two Oscars. Michael Crichton claimed Stout's dinosaur reconstructions inspired *Jurassic Park*. Bill's 50-year career overview, *Fantastic Worlds—The Art of William Stout* (2018) precedes a Fleck Publications box set collecting Stout's comics work.

### J. Michael Straczynski

J. Michael Straczynski is known for writing, producing, and creating such shows as *Babylon 5* and *Sense8*; writing Clint Eastwood's *Changeling* as well as working on the first *Thor* movie, *World War Z*, and *Underworld Awakening*; and writing hundreds of comics for Marvel (*Amazing Spider-Man*, *Thor*, *Supreme Power*), Image (*Midnight Nation*), and DC (*Superman Earth One*). After serving on the Creative Council of AWA comics, he has returned to Marvel on *Captain America*, has partnered with Dark Horse on a series of graphic novels and new comics, has several new books and audio dramas about to come out, and

his brand new *Babylon 5* animated movie is slated to make its world premiere at Comic-Con. JMS has also received the Hugo Award (twice), the Saturn Award, the GLAAD Media, Eisner, Icon, and Inkpot Awards, and he was nominated for a British Academy Award (BAFTA) for *Changeling*. This is his first appearance at Comic-Con since 2019.

### Mariko Tamaki

Mariko Tamaki is a *New York Times* bestselling writer of comics and prose. She is the co-creator of *This One Summer* (with Jillian Tamaki) and *Laura Dean Keeps Breaking Up with Me* (with Rosemary Valero-O'Connell), both of which received Eisner Awards and Printz Honors. She has had the pleasure of working for Marvel, DC, Abrams, and BOOM! Studios on various amazing superhero type things. Unfortunately, Mariko had to cancel at the last minute, but we look forward to having her as a guest in 2024.

### Raina Telgemeier

Raina Telgemeier is the author and illustrator of the graphic novels *Smile, Drama, Sisters, Ghosts, and Guts*, all #1 *New York Times* bestsellers. She also adapted and illustrated four graphic

novel versions of Ann M. Martin's *Baby-Sitters Club* series and has contributed short stories to many anthologies. Raina's accolades include five Eisner Awards, a Boston Globe-Horn Book Honor, a Stonewall Honor, and many Best-of and Notables lists.

### Ben Templesmith

Ben Templesmith is a *New York Times* best-selling artist and writer. His most notable comics works have been *30 Days of Night* (published by IDW and the basis for a major motion picture) and *Fell* (published by Image Comics). His other projects include the critically acclaimed series *Wormwood: Gentleman Corpse*, *Welcome to Hoxford*, and *Singularity 7*, all of which he also wrote. He has worked on the *Star Wars*, *Doctor Who*, *GI Joe*, *Army of Darkness*, *Silent Hill*, and *Buffy: The Vampire Slayer* properties and produces art and design for music bands, DVDs, toys, and film concept work.

### Maggie Thompson

Maggie Thompson describes herself as a "celebrity-adjacent award-winning pop-culture nerd." She began collecting comic books when she was

four years old and began co-editing the pioneering fanzine *Comic Art* with Don Thompson when she was 18. She has continued collecting, writing, and editing in the course of a career that has included 30 years of *Comics Buyer's Guide* and a variety of other comics-oriented projects. Those include indexes of Fantagraphics' Pogo reprints and a weekly post for Gemstone Publishing's *Scoop* newsletter, and she hopes to begin reworking her own *maggiethompson.com* website before year's end.

### Ron Turner

Ron Turner is the long-time proprietor of Last Gasp, the San Francisco-based publisher of comic and books. He began publishing in 1970 with *Slow Death Funnies*, an ecological underground comic anthology, and immediately followed it with the first all-women underground comic, *It Ain't Me, Babe*. He subsequently published *Zap*, *Weirdo*, *Young Lust*, and hundreds more titles over nearly 50 years in business. He's studied engineering and experimental psychology, was a Peace Corps volunteer in Sri Lanka, worked as a railroad brakeman, tutored blind students in statistics, and managed



TAMAKI



TELGEMEIER



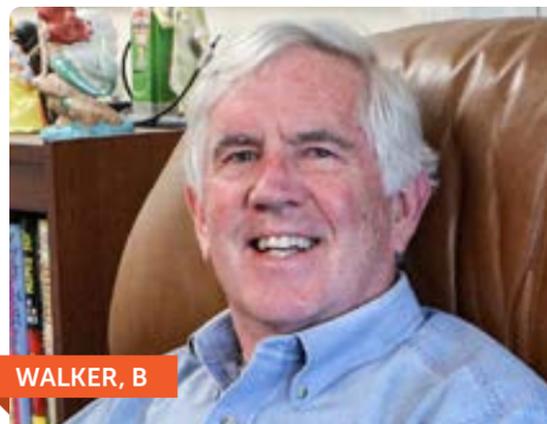
TEMPLESMITH



THOMPSON



TURNER



WALKER, B



WALKER, D



WEEKS



WELLS

a drive-in theater. Last Gasp's recent projects include *Heaven's Door*, a psychedelic manga by Keiichi Koike; *Greetings from Delusionville*, featuring the work of street art legend Ron English; *Slow Death Zero: The Anthology of Ecological Horror*; and *Shut Up You Animals!!! The Pope is Dead: A Remembrance of Dirk Dirksen and a History of the Mabuhay Gardens*.

### Brian Walker

Brian Walker is a founder and former director of the Museum of Cartoon Art, where he worked from 1974 to 1992. Since 1984 he has been part of the creative team that produces the comic strips *Beetle Bailey* and *Hi and Lois*. He has written, edited, or contributed to 45 books on cartoon art, including the definitive history *The Comics: The Complete Collection* (Abrams ComicArts). He taught a course in cartoon history at the School of Visual Arts from 1995 to 1996. He has served as curator for 75 cartoon exhibitions, including *The Sunday Funnies: 100 Years of Comics in American Life* at the Barnum Museum in Bridgeport, CT; *100 Years of American Comics* at the Belgian Center for Comic Art in Brussels; *Masters of American Comics* at

the Hammer Museum and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles; and *George Herriman: Crazy Kat Is Crazy Kat Is Crazy Kat* at the Reina Sofia Museum in Madrid. He was editor-in-chief of *Collectors' Showcase* magazine from 1997 to 2000, and is the founder and current chairman of the Connecticut Chapter of the National Cartoonists Society.

### David F. Walker

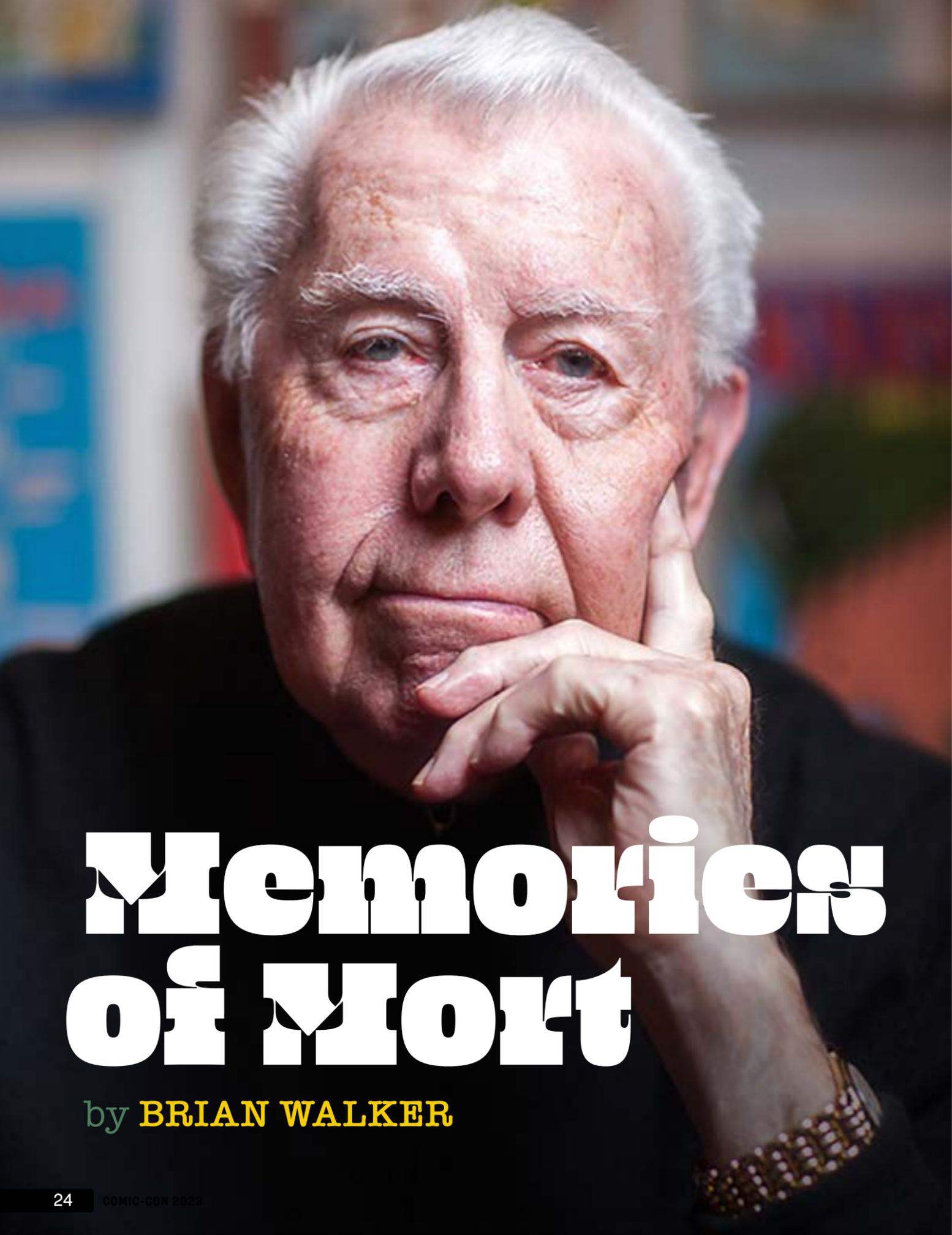
David F. Walker is an award-winning comic book writer, filmmaker, journalist, and educator. He is best known for his work in graphic novels and comics, which includes the Eisner Award and Ringo Award-winning series *Bitter Root* (Image Comics), the Eisner Award-nominated series *Naomi* (DC Comics), and the critically acclaimed graphic novel *The Black Panther Party* (Ten Speed Press). His most recent project is *The Hated*, soon to be a Netflix series. He has written for Marvel Comics (*Luke Cage*, *Occupy Avengers*, *Power Man and Iron Fist*, *Nighthawk*, *Fury*, *Deadpool*) and DC Comics (*Cyborg*, *Young Justice*). He also teaches part-time at Portland State University.

### Lee Weeks

Lee Weeks is an award-winning comics artist and sometimes writer. Known for his work on *Batman* and *Superman*, his breakthrough was an early-1990s run on Marvel's *Daredevil*. Having worked on nearly every major character teamed with many of the most celebrated creators, his work with acclaimed writer Tom King on *Batman* included the highly regarded *Cold Days* arc and the Eisner-nominated, Ringo-winning surprise hit *Batman/Elmer Fudd* special. Lee has taught narrative art master classes at his alma mater, the Joe Kubert School. He also knows a few really good card tricks.

### Martha Wells

Martha Wells has written many fantasy novels, including *The Wizard Hunters*, *Wheel of the Infinite*, the Books of the Raksura series (beginning with *The Cloud Roads* and ending with *The Harbors of the Sun*), and the Nebula-nominated *The Death of the Necromancer*, as well as YA fantasy novels, short stories, and nonfiction. Her *New York Times* and *USA Today*-bestselling *Murderbot Diaries* series has won the Hugo, Nebula, Locus, and Alex Awards.



# Memories of Mort

by **BRIAN WALKER**

My father, Mort Walker, drew his final panel on December 16, 2017. He passed away on January 27, 2018, at the age of 94. He produced *Beetle Bailey* for 67 years, 3 months, and 12 days—that’s 24,576 strips, the longest tenure by any cartoonist on an original creation.

**H**is numerous accomplishments and awards have been well documented. He received every honor that could be bestowed on a cartoonist and is universally regarded as one of the all-time greats.

I would like to share some thoughts about what kind of person he was.

## **MORT WALKER, THE MAN**

He was a good father, grandfather, and great-grandfather: He lived to see the birth of his first great-granddaughter, Lily. He was a good husband: He was married to my mother, Jean, for over 30 years and to his devoted wife Catherine for 32 years. He loved being surrounded by children. His granddaughter Sarah wrote, “I’ll never forget how happy he looked when the whole family was gathered at the countless Christmases we spent together.”

When I was growing up in Greenwich, Connecticut, most of my friends’ fathers worked in Manhattan and went on business trips. Every day, when I returned from school, Mort was always up in the studio drawing his strip. I felt sorry for kids who didn’t have a father who was home all the time.

He was a good friend. Cullen Murphy, in his book *Cartoon County*, documented the large fraternity of cartoonists who lived in southern Connecticut. My father was the social director for this group. He organized golf tournaments and bowling leagues. He attended cocktail parties and backyard barbecues. He outlived almost all of his closest friends.

He was a good boss. Jerry Dumas worked with him for over 60 years and claimed they never had a disagreement. Bill Janocha started as my father’s assistant in 1987 and was with him until the end. Mort was fair and generous

“  
He was  
a good role  
model for  
aspiring  
cartoonists.”

with all of his employees. He did not offer praise very often. He expected us to do our jobs.

He was a hard worker. He followed a rigid daily routine and almost never missed a deadline. In an early photo, he sits at his drawing board, pen in hand, already a pro at age 14.

He was a good partner. His 35-year collaboration with Dik Browne was one of the legendary team efforts in comic strip history. They were truly the odd couple of cartooning.

He was a good role model for aspiring cartoonists. Tom Gammill, an accomplished comedy writer who grew up in Darien, Connecticut, came to the Museum of Cartoon Art in Greenwich when he was young to show Mort his idea for a strip. Tom would go home thinking, “I wish my dad was as cool as Mort Walker.” Tom’s father was a respected doctor.

When Rick Stromoski, creator of the comic strip *Soup to Nutz*, attended his first National Cartoonists Society dinner, Mort spotted Rick standing alone and came over and introduced himself. “He was genuinely interested in what I had to say,” Rick remembered, “like a long-lost favorite uncle...and he treated me like a peer. He bought me a drink and introduced me around to Stan Drake, Jerry Dumas, Gill Fox, and a few others.”

A cartoonist from faraway Finland once wrote about the time he discovered my father’s picture in a magazine: “In this photo he was young and handsome like a movie star, and the *Beetle Bailey* strips on his drawing board showed what a success he had become. And he was a cartoonist! Just like I wanted to be! He was what America looked like to me.”

He was a good leader—a pied piper of projects. In 1974 he asked me to help him clean up an old mansion in Greenwich where we started The Museum of Cartoon Art. The rest of our friends and family pitched in. We are still keeping that dream alive by working with the Billy Ireland Cartoon Library and Museum where our collection is now preserved.



Mort at age 14.

When Mort was president of the National Cartoonists Society, he enlisted many of his friends to edit newsletters, organize special events, and put together the first membership directory. He started a family company and we got into greeting cards, books, screensavers, newspapers, and sculptures. He was constantly coming up with ideas for new comic strips. It could get exhausting at times.

He was a good golfer—but maybe not as good as he thought he was, although I didn’t see him play in his prime. He claimed he once won Pebble Beach and had a single-digit handicap. Anyone who played with him became familiar with his “Cartoonist Rules.” He always lived by his own rules.

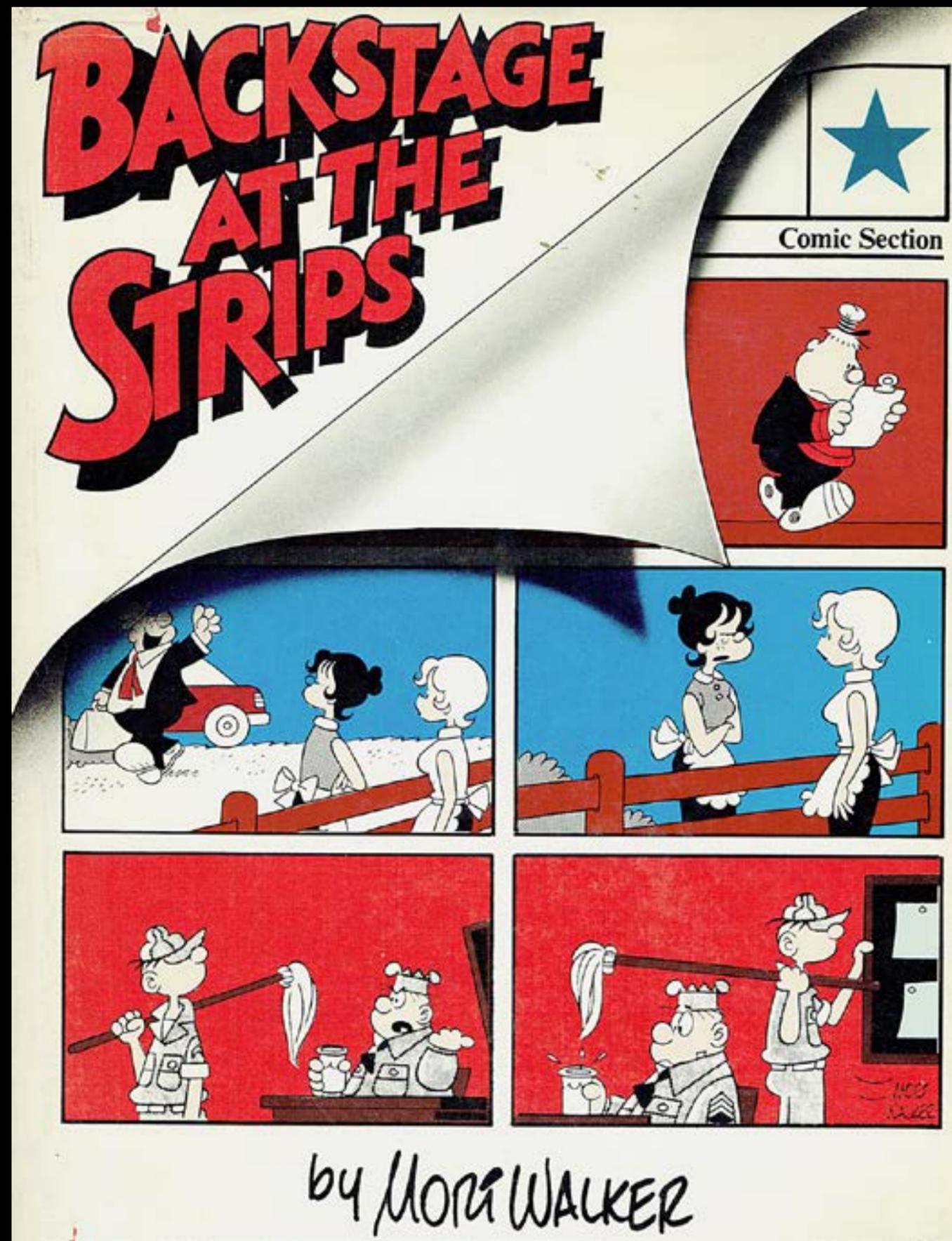
He was a good storyteller. His autobiography, *Backstage at the Strips*, was filled with amusing anecdotes about the profession. Cartoonists are not the most reliable sources for accurate information. They’re storytellers. They’ll embellish a funny story if it gets a bigger laugh. This was true for my dad, who loved to share tall tales about his life.

He was a regular guy and treated everyone

equally. One family tradition was to go to the grocery store with him on Saturdays. He knew everyone by name—the manager, the butcher, the baker, the cashier, the bag boy. As each of us got older, we wanted to spend Saturdays with our friends so we stopped going with him. My father would just take the next child in line. He said it was one of the saddest days in his life when Roger, the youngest of his seven kids, told him he didn’t want to go to the grocery store any more.

After he passed away in his studio on Saturday, January 27, we were waiting for the funeral home to take him away. The mailman pulled in the driveway to deliver the mail. He asked if he could go inside and pay his last respects.

I could go on and on with fond memories of my father. I will say in conclusion that he was a great human being and will be missed by millions.





### BACKSTAGE AT THE STRIPS

In addition to *Beetle Bailey* and *Hi and Lois*, Mort was involved in the creation of seven other comic strips. *Mrs. Fitz's Flats* (1957–1972) was about a little old lady

who ran an apartment building and was produced by Mort's first assistant, Frank Roberge. *Sam's Strip* (1961–1963) featured a character who managed his own comic strip and was done with Jerry Dumas. *Boner's Ark* (1968–2000) starred a bumbling sea captain on a ship of animals and was continued for many years by Frank Johnson. *Sam and Silo* (1977–2016) was a spinoff of *Sam's Strip* set in a small town and was co-created with Jerry Dumas. *The Evermores* (1982–1986) portrayed a family in different historical settings and was a collaboration with Johnny Sajem. *Betty Boop* and *Felix* (1984–1988) combined two classic animation stars and

was produced by four of Mort's sons, Greg, Brian, Morgan, and Neal. *Gamin and Patches* (1987–1988) starred a street urchin and his dog and was done with help from his long-time assistant Bill Janocha.

*Beetle Bailey* has one of the largest casts of any newspaper comic strip. In the 1960s the lineup included Beetle, Sarge, General Halftrack, Zero, Killer, Cookie, Captain Scabbard, Lieutenant Fuzz, Major Greenbrass, Chaplain Staneglass, Rocky, Cosmo, Julius, Otto, Plato, Pop, Miss

Blips, Martha, Roz, Doc, Mom, Gurney and Chigger Bailey, and Bunny, Sue, and Peter Piper. Doctor Bonkus, Lieutenant Flap, Miss Buxley, Sergeant Lugg, Corporal Yo, and Chip Gizmo were added in subsequent years.

The strip is, essentially, about a bunch of funny people who happen to be in the army. They could just as easily be firemen or policemen or office workers. Mort always said, "I try to create recognizable characters based on someone I've known."

Mort and his staff developed a foolproof process for delivering daily laughs. Ideas for strips, known as "gags," were sketched up and brought to monthly "gag conferences" to be graded. The best of these were then sorted and used to create the finished strips. In the endless search for fresh material, the writers occasionally came up with ideas that were unsuitable for American newspapers. Many of these "censored gags" were sent to Sweden to be published. Censorship and size reduction are just two of the creative challenges that cartoonists face on a daily basis.

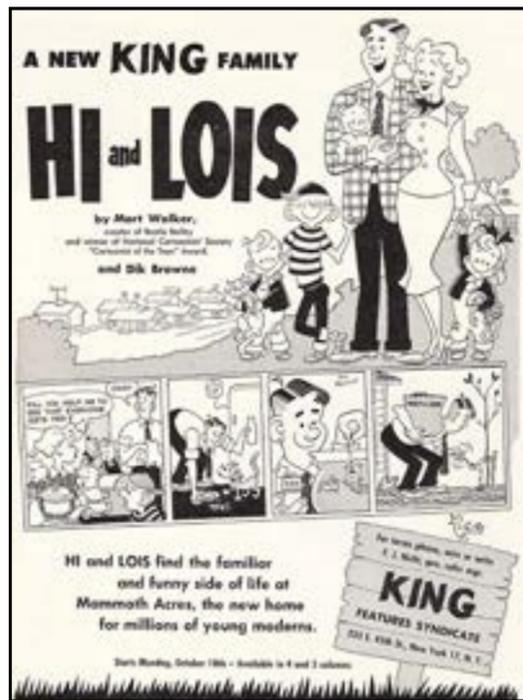
*Beetle Bailey* was, and still is, done in a traditional hand-drawn process. Mort sketched the original strips on sheets of 3-ply Strathmore plate-finished paper with a standard graphite pencil, at a size about twice as large as they appeared in newspapers. The pencil lines and lettering were then inked over with India ink applied with a flexible nib pen, the Gillotte 170, which Chance Browne once called "the singing sword of cartooning." Since Mort's passing, the penciling is being done by Neal Walker. The inking and lettering have been handled by Greg Walker since the late 1970s.

Sylvan Byck, the comics editor of King Features Syndicate, once told Mort, "Have your character get hit over the head at least once a week." Mort never forgot these words of wisdom. He regularly put his characters in physical peril by pummeling them with custard pies,

meatballs, swift kicks, and flying fists. Beetle frequently finds himself shattered in pieces on the ground, and Sarge is always falling off precipitous cliffs. Fortunately, none of the characters ever gets permanently injured, and they always manage to bounce back for another day of punishment. Some ideas for *Beetle Bailey* work so well that they evolve into running gags that take on a life of their own. In the 1960s, Sarge had a series of colorful Sunday-page dreams, induced by snacking before bedtime, which cast him in such far-fetched scenarios as "Thunderbelly," "Fatman," and "Little Orphan Orville." Lt. Fuzz's nervous reaction to the

shrill sounds emanating from Sarge's office chair have produced a string of gags that continue to this day. Other ongoing themes involve Sarge's never-ending diet and Cookie's bouncy meatballs. Graphic images, such as the scribbles of Beetle's beaten body or the silhouette of Cookie sulking on the mess hall roof, are also familiar to regular readers.

Mort was always a cartoon fan, as well as a cartoonist, and enjoyed making references to his favorite comic characters in *Beetle Bailey*. He was also a student of the artform and in 1980 published *The Lexicon of Comicana*, a book that humorously



Mort's second syndicated strip was *Hi and Lois*.



Mort collaborated with his staff, sometimes known as "King Features East," on the strip *Boner's Ark*, which they had a lot of fun with.



In the Sunday *Beetle Bailey* strips Sarge would often have colorful dreams brought on by late-night snacks.



Life at Camp Swampy: Beetle and Sarge were often at odds, but ultimately they were fellow soldiers.

cataloged the visual symbolism of cartooning. “Jarns,” “quimps,” “nittles,” and “gawlixes” are among the “maladicta” Sarge employs when he wants to give Beetle a good tongue lashing. When Beetle makes a quick escape, he leaves behind “hites” (speed lines) and “briffits” (dust clouds). These terms can now be found in many dictionaries and have even been translated into foreign languages.

Mort published two autobiographies, *Backstage at the Strips* in 1975 and *Mort Walker's Private Scrapbook* in 2000. These provided a unique inside look into his funny factory, sometimes known as “King Features East,” and revealed tricks of the trade to aspiring cartoonists.

*Beetle Bailey* pokes fun at the military establishment as well as other serious topics such as war, politics, and human relationships. Social commentary is a natural by-product of the strip’s humor. “Being controversial never appealed to me,” admitted Mort. “While Beetle is a satire on military disorder, it’s a gentle satire. Burning issues belong on the editorial page. But I do believe that we have to keep current or we won’t reflect the truth of the times we live in. And since we are in show business, I think we need to take risks in order to hold the reader’s interest.”

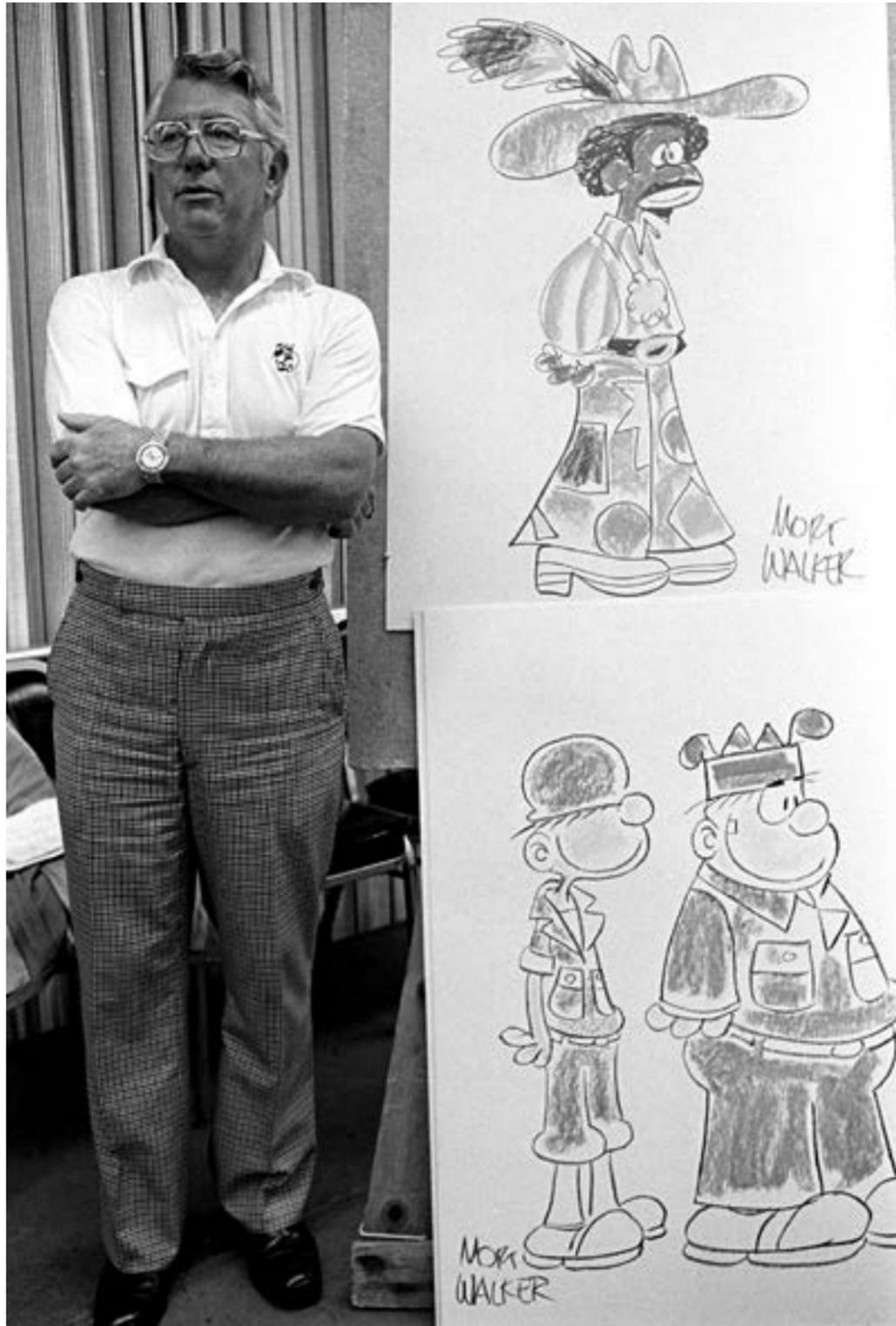
Mort took up golf early in his career when he discovered that walking eased the strain on his back from the endless hours of leaning over the drawing

board. Before long, he was playing three times a week and tried to get out as often as possible. The game is also a great source for humor, so, not surprisingly, golf has always been a major element in *Beetle Bailey*. The matches usually involve General Halftrack and the other officers, although Beetle and Sarge occasionally hit the links. Team sports such as football and baseball are a way to get the enlisted men some exercise and are ideal for visual antics. Ping pong and poker are other favorite pastimes at Camp Swampy.

### GIVING BACK

Mort served as president of the National Cartoonists Society and the Newspaper Features Council and was the founder of the Museum of Cartoon Art. He won numerous awards and citations from cartoonist groups and government organizations. He did special drawings for charities, including the Red Cross, the President’s Committee to Hire the Handicapped, and the U.S. Postal Service. He worked on advertising campaigns for Sprite, FedEx, and General Electric. “I’m thankful for the good life cartooning has given me,” explained Mort, “and I try to give back to the profession and the public.”

Mort shared some of his cartooning wisdom in a 1984 interview. “We all know the ingredients. You must create interesting characters that readers care about. The gags should be rewarding enough to make the reader feel



Mort was a Special Guest at the 1979 San Diego Comic-Con, where he did a chalk-talk about his characters. Photo by Jackie Estrada.

he or she hasn't wasted their time. The drawing doesn't have to be great but it should put across the idea."

"It sounds simple but only a handful of cartoonists have done it," Mort concluded. "Out of 2000 submissions each year, syndicates launch only a handful of strips.

Of those, about one in every ten years becomes really successful."

*Beetle Bailey* reached a peak of over 1800 newspapers in the 1980s and has maintained this list ever since. It is a remarkable success story.

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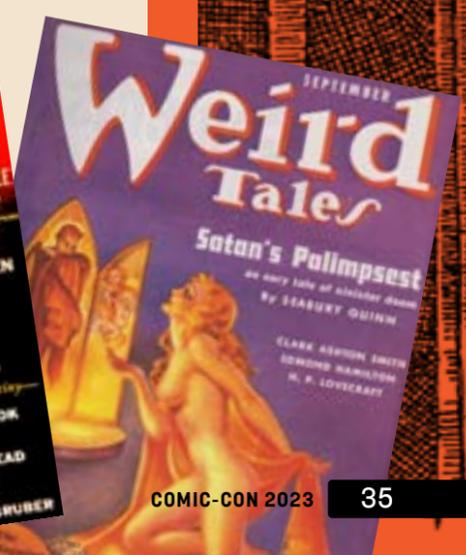
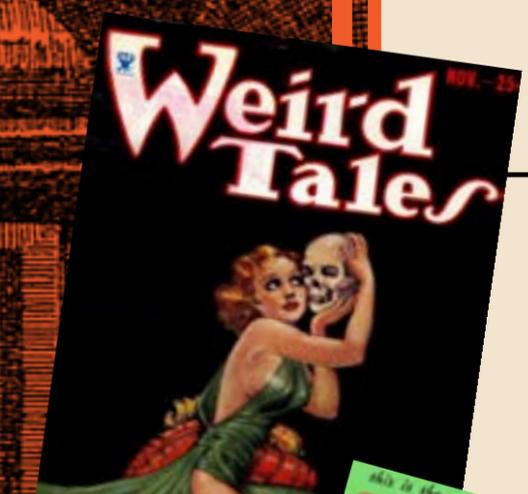
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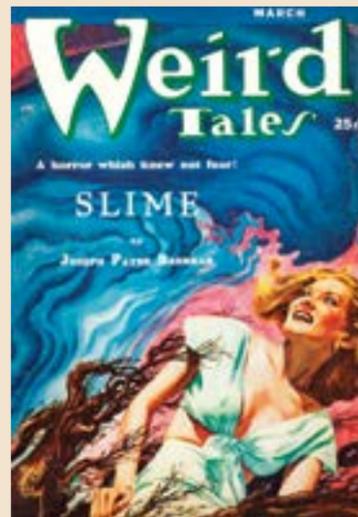
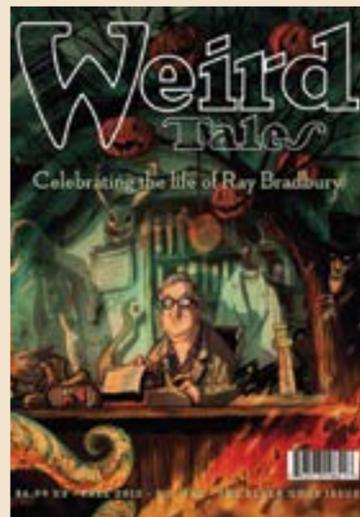
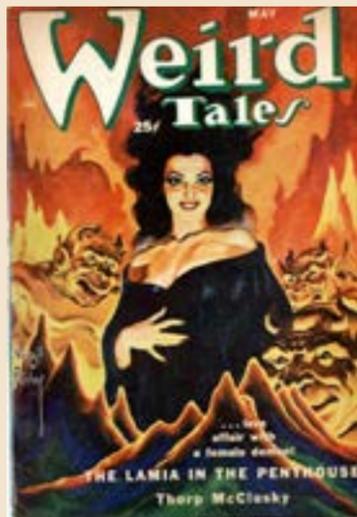


WEIRD TALES MAGAZINE

# 100 YEARS of Weird

by Jonathan Maberry





## THE ORIGIN STORY

One of the nicknames used to describe *Weird Tales* was “The Unique Magazine.” Truth in advertising.

There is nothing quite like *Weird Tales* because it was built that way. With pulp magazines springing up all over in the early 1920s focusing on science fiction, horror, mystery, adventure, and more, it became clear that there wasn’t a periodical that would focus on those tales not clearly defined by genre lines. Nor was there one that explored and showcased the different subgenres of fantasy.

So, in March 1923, *Weird Tales* was founded by J. C. Henneberger and J. M. Lansinger. Their names may not be well known these days, but the writers who would come to infuse the pages of *Weird Tales* with fantastic fiction certainly are.

These are just some of the writers who either got their start in *Weird Tales* or brought their unique literary vision to stories for that magazine: H.P. Lovecraft, Robert E. Howard, C.L. Moore, Manly Wade Wellman, Seabury Quinn, Edmund Hamilton, Ray Bradbury, Robert Bloch, Isaac Asimov, August Derleth, Clark Ashton Smith, Jorge Luis Borges, Brian Lumley, Thomas Ligotti, Frank Belknap Long, Fritz Lieber, T.E.D. Klein, Colin Wilson, Joanna Russ, Mike Mignola, Christopher Golden, Roger Zelazny, George Alec Effinger, Ramsey Campbell, James Chambers, Gregory Frost, Basil Copper, David Conyers, Lindsay Ellis, Philip José Farmer, Lois Gresh, Henry Kuttner, Graham Masterton, China Miéville, Joanna Russ, Brian Stableford, Akihiro Yamada, Victor LaValle, Matt Ruff, Jonathan L. Howard, Ruthanna Emrys, Edward Lee, L. Sprague de Camp, Lin Carter, Tennessee Williams (writing as Thomas Lanier Williams), David Wong, Ted E. Grau, Ron Marz, Jeff VanderMeer, Morgan Llywelyn,

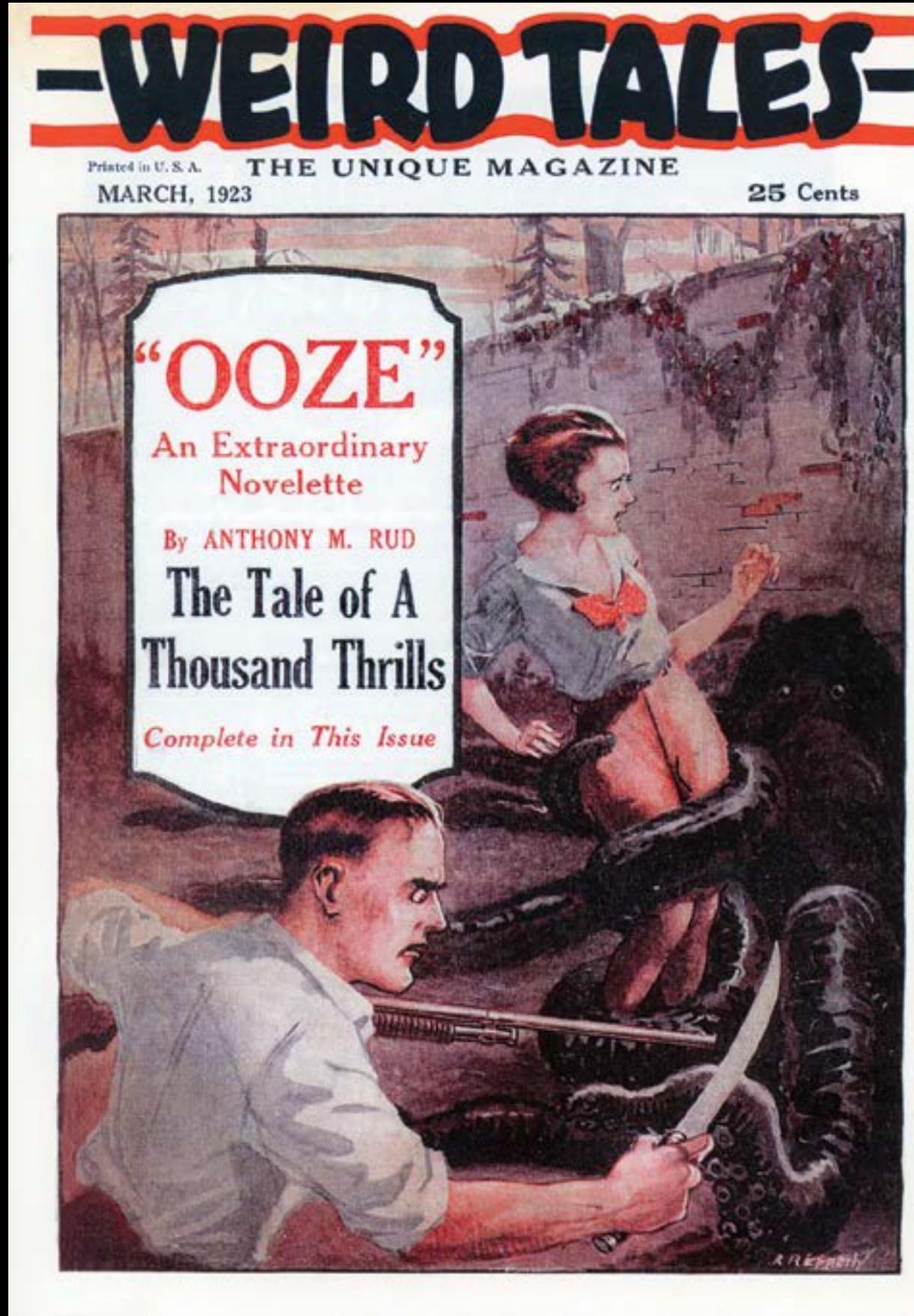
Tanith Lee, Darrell Schweitzer, Chet Williamson, Gemma Files, Alan Moore, Laird Barron, David Drake, Caitlín R. Kiernan, Junju Ito, Joe Hill, Josh Malerman, Brett Talley, John Hornor Jacobs, Algernon Blackwood, Jim Butcher, Nick Cutter, Joe R. Lansdale, Richard F. Seairight, Hugh B. Cave, Gordon Linzner, J. G. Ballard, William S. Burroughs, F. Paul Wilson, Gene Wolfe, Harlan Ellison, Alan Dean Foster, Thomas F. Monteleone, Tim Lebbon, Richard Laymon, Yvonne Navarro, Poppy Z. Brite, Weston Ochse, Brian Hodge, Elizabeth Bear, Cherie Priest, Tim Pratt, John Shirley, David J. Schow, Molly Tanzer, Michael Chabon, Cody Goodfellow, Tum Curran, Steve Rasnic Tem, Carrie Vaughn, Neil Gaiman, Tad Williams, William F. Nolan, Stephen King, and . . . well, just about everyone whose fiction is a bit odder than the norm. Writers who think so far out of the box that it took a *unique* magazine to provide them with the opportunity to go a little (or a lot) wild.

Call it a license to be *weird*.

## ENABLERS OF WEIRD

I am beyond delighted to be the current editor of *Weird Tales*. It wasn’t something I ever imagined, though selling a story to the magazine was a bucket list item to be sure. And, I have a bit of—yes—*weird* history with the magazine.

My exposure to stories from that magazine began when, at 10 years old, I bought my very first paperback novel. It was actually a collection of short sword and sorcery stories—*Conan the Wanderer* (the old Lancer edition, though—sadly—not one that sported a Frank Frazetta cover). The front matter said that two of the stories—“Shadows in Zamboula” and “The Devil in Iron”—were first published in *Weird Tales*.



OPPOSITE:  
The first issue, March 1923.

A few short years after that, my middle-school librarian, who was involved in two different clubs of genre writers, began taking me to their meetings. It was there I met and became lifelong friends with L. Sprague de Camp, who had been responsible for bringing the Conan stories back from post-pulp-era obscurity. I also met people key to the legacy of *Weird Tales*, such as George Scithers, Ossie Train (co-founder of the Philadelphia Science Fiction Society), and others. The other group was a kind of loose, ongoing cocktail party at a publisher's penthouse in NYC, held whenever enough genre writers were in town. At those events I got to meet—and to a degree be mentored by—Richard Matheson, Ray Bradbury, and Harlan Ellison. *Weird Tales* was often a conversational topic because so many members of that club had been published there.



**ABOVE:**  
Ray Bradbury at the San Diego Comic-Con in 1983. He was a guest at the very first Comic-Con and appeared almost every year until his death in 2012. Photo by Jackie Estrada.

Now, roll forward to the late 1990s. While going through photo albums with the woman who would later become my wife, Sara Jo, she gasped at one pic and asked why I was standing there with "Uncle Sprague." Turns out de Camp was a close family friend who was besties with her grandfather, the pulp writer/anthology editor/literary agent Oscar J. Friend, junior partner of the Otis Kline Agency. They were both involved with *Weird Tales* and represented many of the writers whose work appeared in the magazine, including Isaac Asimov, Ray Bradbury, Robert E. Howard, Eando Binder, Manly Wade Wellman, and others. I am now the curator of all

the files from that agency, and those papers include original typescript manuscripts of Lovecraft's "Cool Air" and Howard's "People of the Black Circle." Oh, and it was Oscar who gave the unfinished Conan stories to de Camp in the hopes he could do something to revive the stalwart barbarian hero.

Yes, it's a very small, very weird world.

And, looking back, it seems like *Weird Tales* has been a not-unwelcome shadow over much of my life. Becoming first editorial director and now full editor of the Unique Magazine is deeply surreal. It's also a hell of a lot of fun.

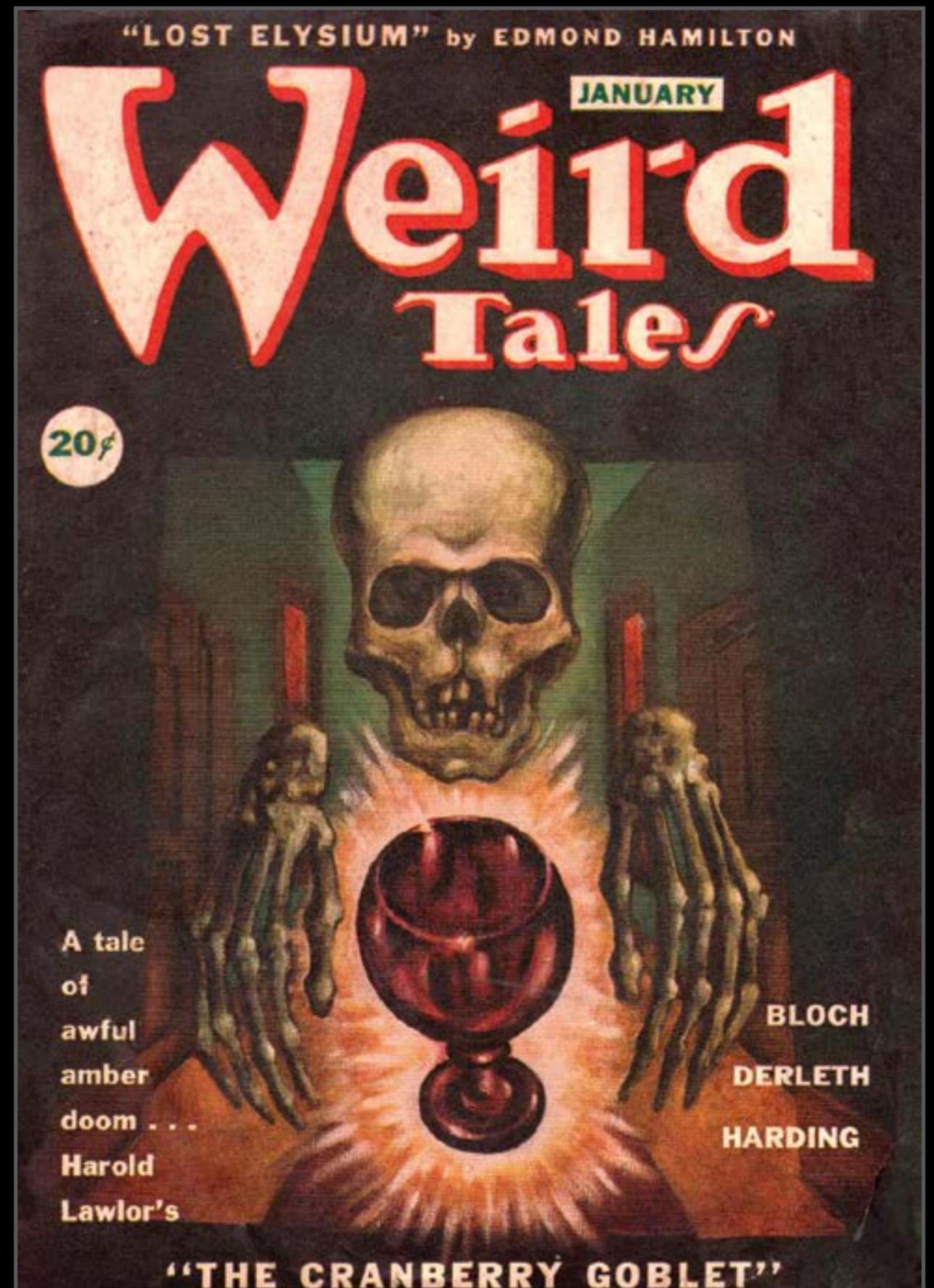
### SUPERHEROES OF WEIRDNESS

One of the things that, early on, defined something about *Weird Tales* that is still a major driving force today: cultivating new talent and encouraging these writers to carve out their own territory and build solid careers.

It was in our pages that Robert E. Howard introduced his slate of brawny, brooding heroes who pitted their innate savagery and brutal swordplay against monsters, ghouls, sorcerers, and strange gods. Conan the Barbarian is Howard's most famous creation, but he also debuted the dour puritan swordsman Solomon Kane, the noble savage Bran Mak Morn, and the embattled monarch King Kull.

C.L. Moore, one of the early female writers of fantasy fiction, introduced the world's first sword and sorcery heroine, Jirel of Joiry. This opened the door for generations of women writers to bring their characters to the forefront as deadly fighters rather than helpless victims to be rescued. And *Weird Tales* would go on to publish stories by more than a hundred women in its first 10 years alone, which was not common in many of the other pulps. Those women include G. G. Pendarves, Bassett Morgan, Greye La Spina, Eli Colter, Allison V. Harding, Mary Elizabeth Counselman, and Margaret St. Clair. Women writing these kinds of stories became a staple of the magazine that is reflected in more recent issues with stories by Seanan McGuire, Alma Katsu, Lee Murray, Marie Whittaker, Dana Fredsti, and so many others.

Another tentpole for *Weird Tales* was the genre of "cosmic horror." Though writers such as Edgar Allan Poe, Lord Dunsany, Robert W. Chambers, and Arthur Machen had laid the foundation, it was H. P. Lovecraft and his tales of the Elder Gods, the Great Old Ones, and other pan-dimensional beings that established cosmic horror as a new and lasting genre; and Lovecraft invited all of his pulp colleagues to use his characters and setups to craft their own tales. Robert E. Howard, August Derleth, and many others jumped at the chance, and today we see the genre thriving still with works like Stephen King's *The Mist*, Mike Mignola's *Hellboy*, Victor LaValle's *The Ballad of*





## “Lovecraft’s centerpiece monster, Cthulhu, even shows up in memes, plushy toys, and pet costumes!”

*Black Tom*, and so many others. Lovecraft’s centerpiece monster, Cthulhu, even shows up in memes, plushy toys, and pet costumes!

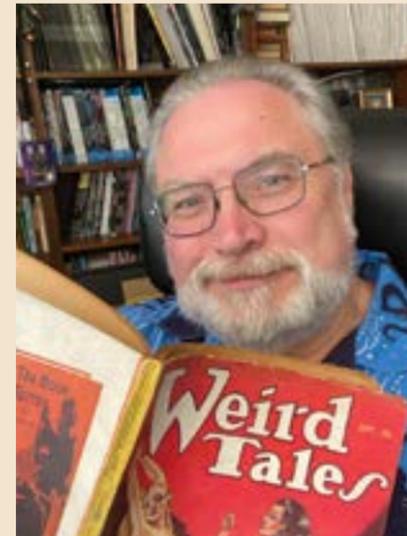
Occult mystery was another huge part of *Weird Tales*, such as the paranormal investigator of the many Seabury Quinn “Jules de Grandin” stories, and the adventures of Manly Wade Wellman’s John Thunstone, among others. The DNA of that format of storytelling can be seen in *Kolchak: The Night Stalker*, *Supernatural*, *Fringe*, and *The X-Files*.

But there were landmark one-shot stories whose impact both defined *Weird Tales* and became influential to other writers—including screenwriters. An example is “Yours Truly, Jack the Ripper,” written by *Psycho* author Robert Bloch, which was later adapted for the TV series *Thriller* and became wildly influential for what is otherwise known as the “Hitchcock ending” or the “*Twilight Zone* twist.” And there’s Everil Worrell’s “The Canal,” an unusual vampire tale adapted as *Death on a Barge* for Rod Serling’s *Night Gallery*—and Leonard Nimoy’s first gig as a director. There are a lot of other examples of what we call the “*Weird Tales* effect,” and they are sewn all through the fabric of bizarre storytelling over this last century.

### EVIL OVERLORDS

Editing *Weird Tales* is, as I mentioned earlier, a lot of fun. I follow in the footsteps of those editors who have come before me, each putting their own mark on the magazine. They include Edwin Baird, Farnsworth Wright, Dorothy McIlwraith, Sam Moskowitz, Lin Carter, Forrest J Ackerman, Gil Lamont, Gordon Garb, Darrell Schweitzer, George Scithers, John Betancourt, Stephen Segal, Ann VanderMeer, and Marvin Kaye.

I’ve been editing the magazine since its 2019 rebirth and have enjoyed curating each issue to reflect the diversity and breadth of dark fantasy storytelling. Part of the fun of this is working with the writers to discover new ways of crafting tales that do not fit easily into any other magazine’s “box” but that whisper to the dark heart of . We came out of the gate strong with stories by Victor LaValle (whose story “Up from Slavery” went



on to win a Bram Stoker Award), Lisa Morton, Josh Malerman, Sherrilyn Kenyon, and Hank Schwaeble, poetry by Stephanie M. Wytovich, Jeff Wong, Tori Eldridge, and Marc Bilgry, and a gorgeous cover by Abigail Larson whose design honors the great Margaret Brundage, the artist for many of the magazine’s classic covers in its early days.

Since then it’s been my honor and pleasure to include original short stories, novel excerpts, flash fiction, poetry, and essays by such folks as Joe R. Lansdale, Neal Gaiman, Michael Moorcock,

Weston Ochse, Gregory Frost, Gabrielle Faust, Stoker, Maurice Broaddus, Heather Graham, Alma Katsu, Yvonne Navarro, Prima Sharma, Christina Sng, Fran Wilde, Jezzy Wolfe, Samantha Underhill, Kevin J. Anderson, James A. Moore, Christopher Golden, Mike Mignola, Jane Yolen, Ramsey Campbell, Paul Cornell, Tim Lebbon, Nancy Kirkpatrick, Angela Yuriko Smith, F. Paul Wilson, and many more.

The crafting of each magazine is fun because we primarily focus on themes, such as Sword and Sorcery, Occult Detectives, and Cosmic Horror, along with occasional unthemed issues. Some of the players are household names to every pop culture fan, while others are new gunslingers who bring unique voices and perspectives to the Unique Magazine. I did get my bucket list moment, too. Before I was asked to edit *Weird Tales*,

ABOVE:  
Jonathan Maberry.

OPPOSITE:  
Lovecraft’s Cthulhu as rendered by  
William Eggleston.

“It’s an exciting time to be weird,  
let’s face it.”

I was invited to write a story. I did, and “The Shadows Beneath the Stone” combined my two loves of sword and sorcery and cosmic horror. Shortly after I submitted it and had the tale approved, I was asked to step up as editorial director because the editor was ill. With my second issue, #364, I became full editor, and I have been smiling ever since. Granted, it’s kind of a creepy, dark, and possibly insane smile, but that seems to be entirely in keeping.

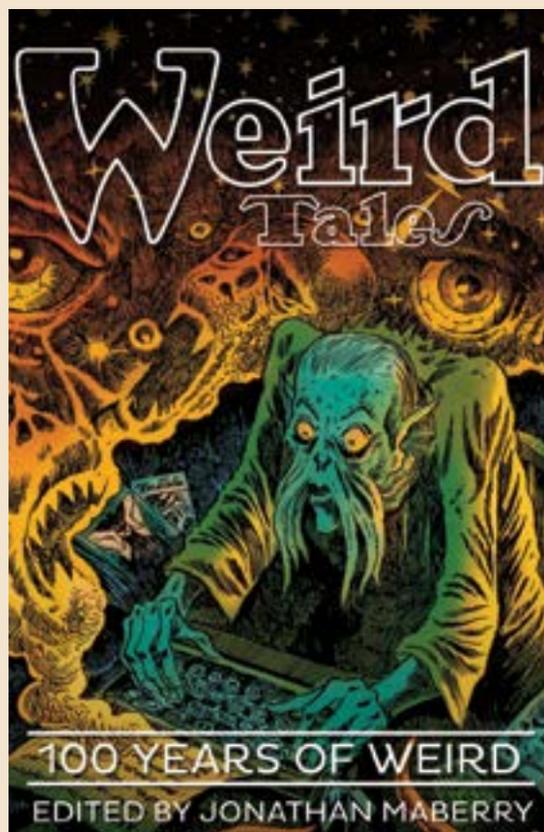
One of the other things we’re doing—and this is wildly fun—is that *Weird Tales* has partnered with Blackstone Publishing to launch a new novel imprint called Weird Tales Presents. These will be original novels—standalones and series—that embrace the heritage, themes, and tone of the magazine. It’s my very great honor to have my novel, *NecroTek*, launch that new imprint. The other authors signed to the imprint will be announced soon, and it’s truly awesome.

### A CENTURY OF WEIRD

Later this year we’ll release a special volume of *Weird Tales* to celebrate its first century of disquieting fiction. *The Weird Tales: 100 Years of Weird* celebrates the legacy of the Unique Magazine with new stories by a group of writers who really do show the wide range of storytelling styles and themes. So, under one cover you’ll have original short stories by R. L. Stine, Laurell K. Hamilton, Scott Sigler, Keith DeCandido, Blake Northcott, Hailey Piper, and James Aquilone; poetry by Jessica McHugh, Marge Simon, Anne Walsh Miller, Michael A. Arnzen, Owl Goingback, and Linda Addison; flash fiction by Usman T. Malik and Dana Fredsti; and essays by Charles Rutledge, Henry Herz, Jacopo della Quercia & Christopher Neumann, James A. Moore, Lisa Kastner, and Lisa Morton.

And it will reprint some classic tales from the first century of the magazine to celebrate and honor those who helped build *Weird Tales* into the cultural landmark it’s become. So, look for stories by H. P. Lovecraft, Robert E. Howard, C. L. Moore, Ray Bradbury, Tennessee Williams (as Thomas Lanier Williams), Allison V. Harding, Isaac Asimov & Frederik Pohl, Richard Matheson, and Karin Tidbeck.

It’s an exciting time to be weird, let’s face it. Everyone associated with *Weird Tales* is embracing the new magazine. Hollywood is leaning in to take close looks at what we’re doing, and a whole new generation of readers is joining us for our first steps into our second century. Someday another editor will be writing something similar to this to celebrate



another weird century; and likely a lot of attendees at Comic-Con in 2123 will be being even weirder, and proudly so. And that is a fun thought!

All of us at *Weird Tales* and Blackstone hope that everyone here at Comic-Con has a wonderfully weird time!

Jonathan Maberry is a *New York Times* bestselling author and editor of *Weird Tales*.

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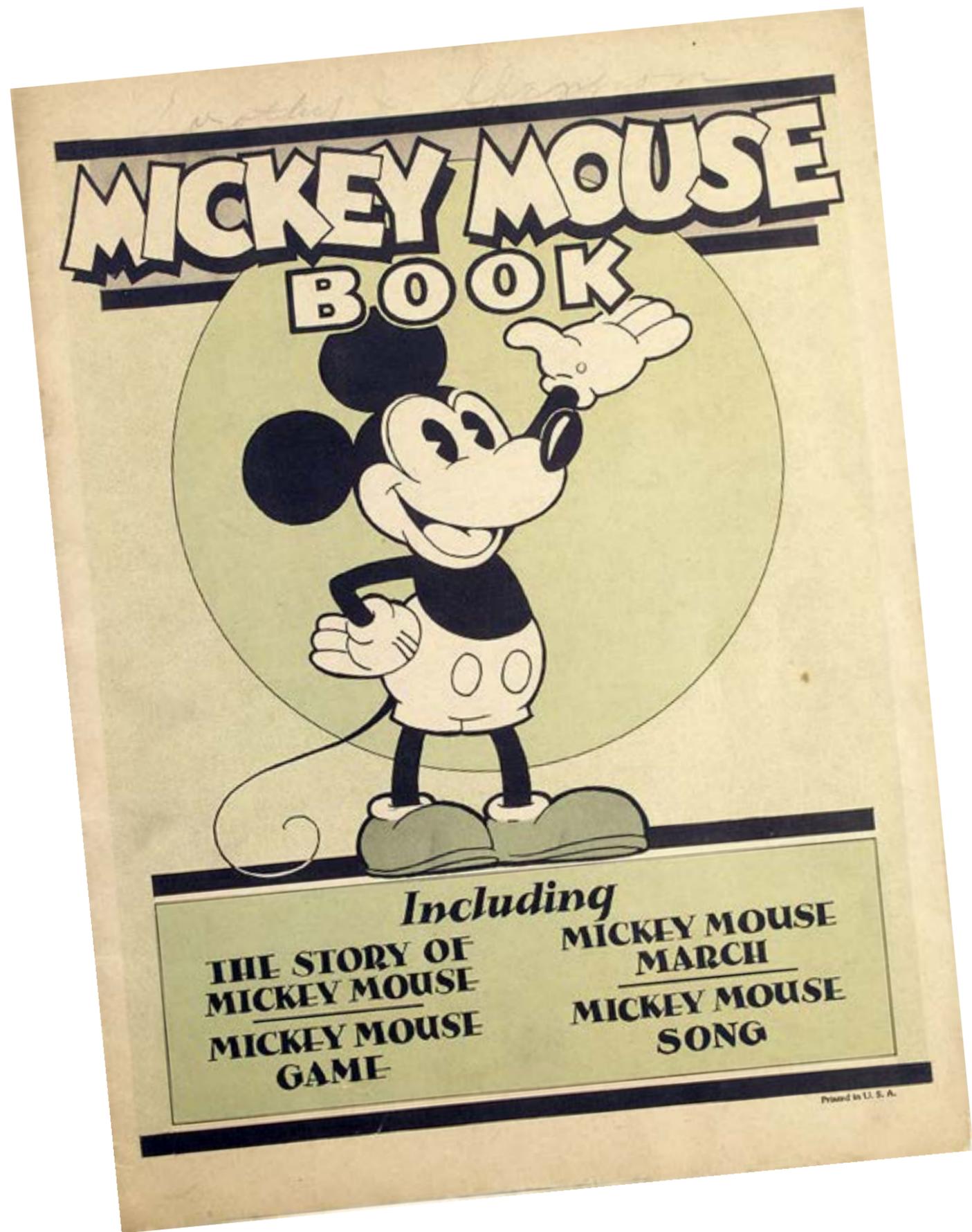
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FEATURING





# 100 YEARS OF DISNEY ANIMATION, COMIC ART, AND SUPERHEROES

by  
**JERRY BECK**

**W**alt Disney signed a contract to produce a series of the “Alice Comedies” on October 16, 1923—and with that, a world-changing entity known as Walt Disney Productions (today The Walt Disney Company) began.

There is no dispute that the man himself was a creative genius. His contributions to cinema are countless, and the company that carries on since his passing in 1966 has kept his vision alive.

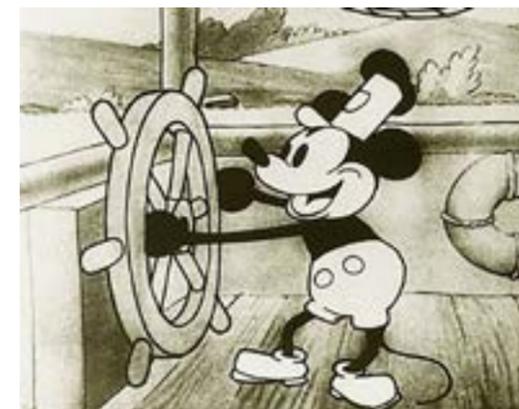
Those “Alice Comedies” mentioned above were groundbreaking combinations of live-action and animation. In 1928, the first synchronized-sound Mickey Mouse cartoons became iconic symbols for a new era of “talkie” movies—an advancement in the field of animation, ushering in a new, popular mass entertainment and a welcome tonic for the Depression.

The popularity of Mickey Mouse shorts created a demand for animated cartoons in movie theaters, virtually creating the basis of the animation industry that exists to this day.

Walt Disney wanted to make movies and tell stories, and it was drawing and animation where he found his earliest success. But he was never one to rest on his

accomplishments—he built upon them. Beginning with Mickey Mouse, the studio then pioneered personality animation (the Silly Symphony shorts, introducing the Three Little Pigs, Donald Duck, etc.) and pursued feature animation, dominating that arena for most of the 20th century.

But this is Comic-Con, and if I’m going to write about Disney’s 100 years here, I think it would be worth acknowledging Disney’s role in comic strips, in comic books, and with superheroes. And in fact, Disney’s role in comic arts may be a lot larger than you’d imagine.



## DISNEY COMIC STRIPS

The history of Disney comics is really a reflection of the success the company had in its primary medium of animated films, as well as later live-action motion

pictures, television series, and Disneyland.

Ever since Mickey Mouse made his debut in November 1928, the public demand for Mickey merch was overwhelming. And so a daily *Mickey Mouse* newspaper comic strip began, first penciled by mouse designer/ animator Ub Iwerks and inked by studio publicity artist Win Smith, in January 1930. Starting with *Mickey Mouse Book*, a 1930 story and activity book (not a comic book),

**ABOVE:** Mickey Mouse made his first appearance in the 1928 short *Steamboat Willie*.

**OPPOSITE:** Mickey had his first print publication in a 1930 story and activity book.



followed by *Mickey Mouse Comic* (a 1931–1934 series of annuals reprinting the daily comic strip), leading to *Mickey Mouse Magazine* (1935–1940), and culminating with *Walt Disney's Comics and Stories* (1940–2018), Disney comics became a mainstay in people's lives.

The artists on these strips were some of the finest at the studio. Floyd Gottfredson had hoped to become a newspaper cartoonist but deferred that dream for a job as an inbetweener on early Silly Symphony cartoons in 1929. When Iwerks and then Smith left the studio, young Floyd's interest in comic strips led Walt to task him with taking over writing and drawing the Mickey strip, and he remained its chief artist for the next 45 years, sometimes also scripting its masterful adventure serials during the 1930s.

Mickey's strip was followed by a *Silly Symphonies* Sunday page (in color, naturally) that, at first, followed the adventures of Bucky Bug (whose sole big-screen appearance was 1932's *Bugs In Love*) drawn by animator Earl Duvall. Two years later, the weekly strip began adapting specific Silly Symphonies cartoons, most importantly *The Wise Little Hen* (1934), the cartoon that introduced Donald Duck (who made his print debut in

the September 16 strip). Al Taliaferro would be handed the plum assignment of becoming the artist on a new Donald Duck newspaper strip in 1938, a job he would keep for 31 years, until his passing in 1969.

### DISNEY COMIC BOOKS

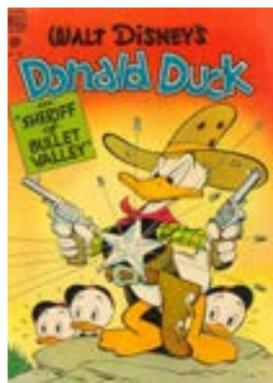
Original Disney comic books started in 1941 with an adaptation of Disney's then-current feature *The Reluctant Dragon* (Four Color [series I] #13, drawn by Irving Tripp). That was followed by a landmark Donald Duck comic story, "Donald Duck Finds Pirate Gold" in 1942 (Four Color [series II] #9, written by Bob Karp and drawn by Disney story men Jack Hannah and Carl Barks): one of the most valuable comics you might spot in the convention's Exhibit Hall.

The immediate success of these original Disney comic book stories led to expanding Western Publishing's Disney line for Dell Comics. Carl Barks would go on to write and draw a large percentage of the Duck comics, most significantly introducing Donald's Uncle Scrooge McDuck in 1947 (in Four Color #178) with "Christmas on Bear Mountain." Later, Barks would also create Gyro Gearloose and Magica De Spell, among others.



**ABOVE:** Floyd Gottfredson was the chief artist on the daily *Mickey Mouse* newspaper strip for over 45 years.

**OPPOSITE:** Disney comic books started in the early 1940s, published by Western Publishing/Dell.



## “Barks was the most significant homegrown comic book creator the studio ever employed.”

Barks was the most significant homegrown comic book creator the studio ever employed. He began at Disney in 1935 and quickly became a gag man, then a story man on Donald Duck shorts. In fact, he worked on almost nothing but Duck cartoons for six years, mainly devising humorous plots on which to hang the visual animation gags and learning a lot from Walt Disney himself about how to craft a longer narrative. In late 1942, Barks left in-house employment at Disney to become a full-time comics freelancer, a role in which he would continue for decades.

While Barks was not permitted to sign his comics work, fandom sought him out, finally uncovering his identity in the 1960s; historian Michael Barrier was the first to write about Barks in 1967, penning essays praising the “duck man” in the earliest comics/animation fanzines, such as *Capa-Alpha*, *Comic Art*, and Barrier’s own *Funnyworld*.

Quoting from a Barrier piece in the 2017 Comic-Con Souvenir Book: “It’s hard to exaggerate how radically the characters and stories from Barks differed from what filled most comic books . . . what Barks did was to depict a cartoon world in which characters, settings, and plots were all remarkably concrete and insistently possible. He

drew the broadest emotions with impressive precision. He treated the kinds of stories that are often handled carelessly and contemptuously—slapstick, farce, pulpish adventure—with respect.”

The 1987 TV series *Ducktales* was based largely on Carl Barks’ characters and stories. Barks was a Special Guest here at Comic-Con in 1977 and 1982.

But Barks wasn’t alone as an American Disney comics leading light. Animator Paul Murry became the main driver of Western Publishing’s Mickey Mouse comic books. He and writer Carl Fallberg produced the first really popular Mickey stories done for comic books in the USA. These were largely the serialized stories of Mickey and Goofy as detectives working for Chief O’Hara, which ran in *Walt Disney’s Comics & Stories* for 20 years. Murry also drew similar stand-alone stories for Mickey’s own title.

One of Western’s most unusual comics experiments was the three-issue run of *Mickey Mouse Super Secret Agent* (#107–#109, 1966). Decades before Roger Rabbit, a traditionally cartoony Mickey interacted with “real life” realistically drawn special agents and spies in a (relatively) straight espionage adventure. Murry teamed up with art-

ist Dan Spiegle; Murry did Mickey, while Spiegle handled the realistic backgrounds and adversaries.

Beyond the funny animals, the first Disney adventure comics—all based on Disney features, of course—came in the early 1950s. Walt Disney’s *Robin Hood* (the live-action feature starring Richard Todd) was the first, with art by Morris Gollub and Jon Small. *The Sword and The Rose*, featuring art by Dick Rockwell, was the second. Frank Thorne adapted Disney’s blockbuster *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* in Four Color #614. Most exciting was Dell’s adaptation of *Zorro*—a masked avenger, dressed in black, with a secret identity—with art by Alex Toth at first, then later by Warren Tufts.

### DISNEY AND SUPERHEROES

Also worthy of note are Disney’s few forays into superhero territory, decades before the company would acquire Marvel.

Merlin Jones, played by Tommy Kirk, could arguably be considered the first Disney character with “super powers”: a teenaged “Tony Stark,” if you will, played for laughs. In his first film, *The Misadventures of Merlin Jones* (1964), Medfield College student Jones devises an elec-

tronic helmet that gives him the ability to read minds. In the sequel, *The Monkey’s Uncle* (1965), Merlin perfects the ability to fly, using a flying bicycle and a super adrenaline formula of his own invention.

Kurt Russell continued the superheroics at Medfield College in a trio of feature films, acquiring a computer brain (*The Computer Wore Tennis Shoes*, 1969), invisibility (*Now You See Him, Now You Don’t*, 1972), and super-strength (*The Strongest Man in the World*, 1975). Needless to say, Gold Key comic books were created for all these Medfield shenanigans.

The 1960s were an era that included the superhero revival, so we can’t ignore “Super Goof,” who first appeared in Gold Key’s *The Phantom Blot* #2 (1965). George Sherman, head of Disney’s publications department, worked with writers Del Connell and Bob Ogle and artist Murry to create the hilarious concept of Goofy becoming a Superman-like hero, complete with a red union suit and a blue cape. *Super Goof* earned his own title starting in October 1965, in which it was established that Goofy gained his powers by eating handfuls of “super goobers”—meteor-irradiated peanuts. The *Super Goof* comic book ran nonstop until issue #74, in

**ABOVE:** “The Good Duck Artist” Carl Barks wrote and drew comics featuring Donald Duck and such Barks creations as Uncle Scrooge and Gyro Gearloose. Barks was a Special Guest at the 1982 San Diego Comic-Con (with his wife, Garé). Photo by Jackie Estrada.

**OPPOSITE:** *Zorro* was among the many comics based on Disney TV movies and TV series. The great Alex Toth handled the art chores.



**ABOVE:** Disney's comic book foray into superheroes included the introduction of "Super Goof" in 1965.

**PHOTO:** Disney promoted its *Condorman* film by giving out masks at the 1982 Comic-Con. Gary Owens sported one as MC for the Masquerade. Photo by Jackie Estrada.

**OPPOSITE:** Don Rosa brought back Uncle Scrooge with his *Life and Times of Scrooge McDuck* series.

## "...it was with the purchase of Marvel in 2009, that the company truly consummated its relationship with comics fandom."

July 1984, with the character reappearing elsewhere up to the present day.

Also, we shouldn't leave out *Condorman*, whose three issues in 1981, drawn by Frank Bolle, were based on a Disney movie starring Michael Crawford (Broadway's Phantom Of The Opera).



### DISNEY COMICS INTERNATIONALLY

Slowly, Disney comics became a bigger success internationally than in their home country. In the late 1960s, Western Publishing refocused its American Disney comics titles almost exclusively toward preschoolers, leading to a more childish product, causing a drop-off in teen and adult interest. European publishers, worried about losing their market share, took the opportunity to begin producing more of their own comics content locally, often shooting for a Barks-inspired touch of satire, sophistication, and complexity. This bifurcation—with Europe keeping an all-ages approach while the American publishers skewed young—led to foreign publishers now having a much stronger Disney comics cultural tradition than the United States.

Cleverer Disney comic books (often translated from foreign editions) returned to the USA in the late 1980s and continue to attract new readers and reviewers. High-profile stories like Don Rosa's *Life and Times of Scrooge McDuck* miniseries and Gottfredson-inspired Mickey Mouse adventures by Italy's Romano Scarpa have won fandom and industry acclaim. But it is largely due to modern animated TV projects, such as *DuckTales* and *Legend of the Three Caballeros*, that many minor characters created for the comics are known in the USA at all.

Beyond Rosa and Scarpa, accomplished Disney comics creators in recent decades have included Flemming Andersen (Denmark), Francesco Artibani (Italy), Luciano Bottaro (Italy), Daniel Branca (Argentina), Renato Canini (Brazil), Andrea "Casty" Castellan (Italy), Giorgio Cavazzano (Italy), Byron Erickson (USA), Mau and Bas Heymans (Netherlands), Lars Jensen (Denmark), Daan Jippes (Netherlands), Amy Mebberson (USA), Freddy Milton (Denmark), Marco Rota (Italy), and William Van Horn (Canada), just to name a few.

### DISNEY AND THE MCU

One of my favorite pieces of Disney comic art trivia is the involvement of Jack Kirby in the Disney universe, decades before the company bought Marvel. Kirby and Mike Royer created the syndicated newspaper comic strip adapting *The Black Hole* starting in October 1979. (The comic book adaptation, by Mary Carey and Dan Spigle, was a standalone entity.)

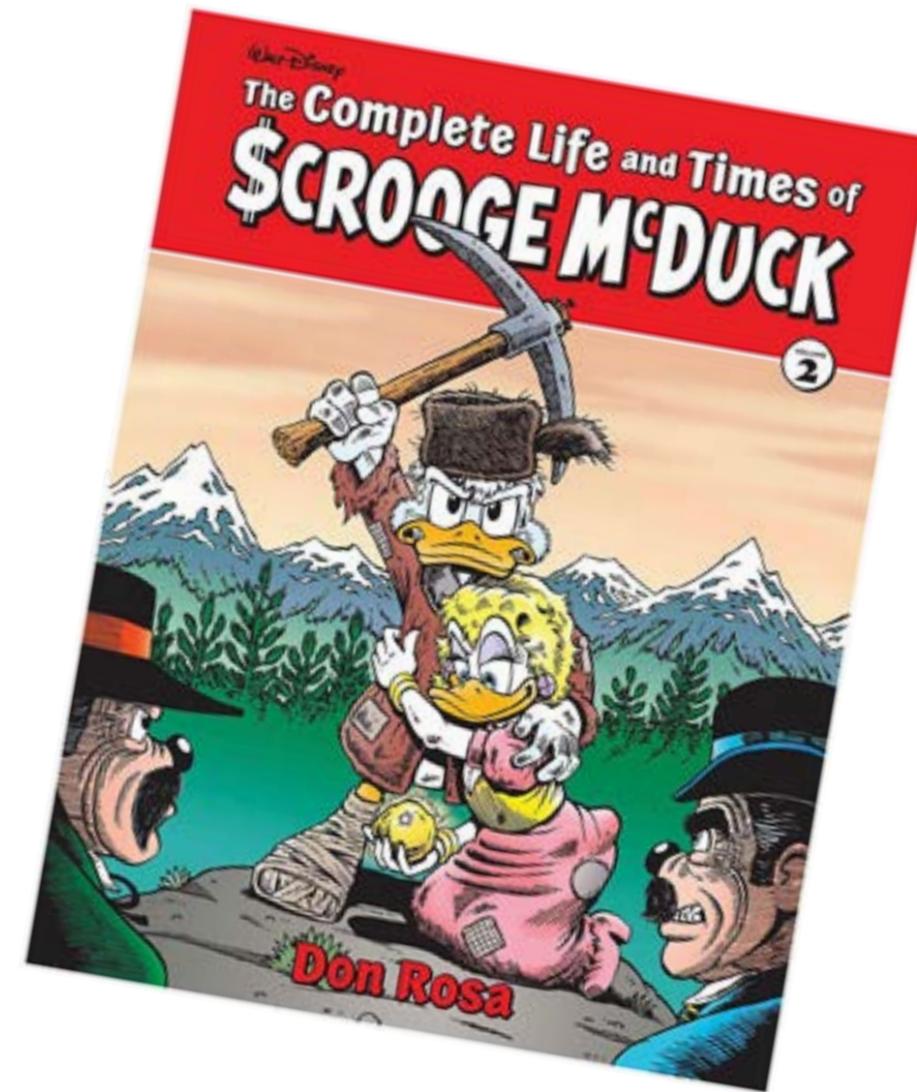
But it was with the purchase of Marvel in 2009, that the company truly consummated its relationship with comics fandom. And because of that purchase, the Disney studio has come to dominate theatrical movies today. The MCU (Marvel Cinematic Universe) itself is a clever adaptation, unimaginable by long-time fans, of the sprawling Marvel universe of connected stories and characters. Such interconnective storytelling—spanning dozens of movies and series—has changed cinema history. And let's not forget that Stan Lee has a cameo in every one of the first 23 MCU features.

Fantasy films, literature, and experiences; adventure, humor, and imagination—Once upon a time, a man

named Walt Disney, his brother Roy, and a staff made up of a dozen other artists from Kansas City started a studio that still thrives today. It will no doubt be around for centuries to come, and its lasting connection to comics is assured.

*Special thanks to David Gerstein for his help with this article.*

*Comic-Con Special Guest Jerry Beck is a noted animation historian.*



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Elementary

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The Great North

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Goosebumps

Disney  
PERCY JACKSON  
AND THE OLYMPIANS

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ARCHER

SOLAR OPPOSITES

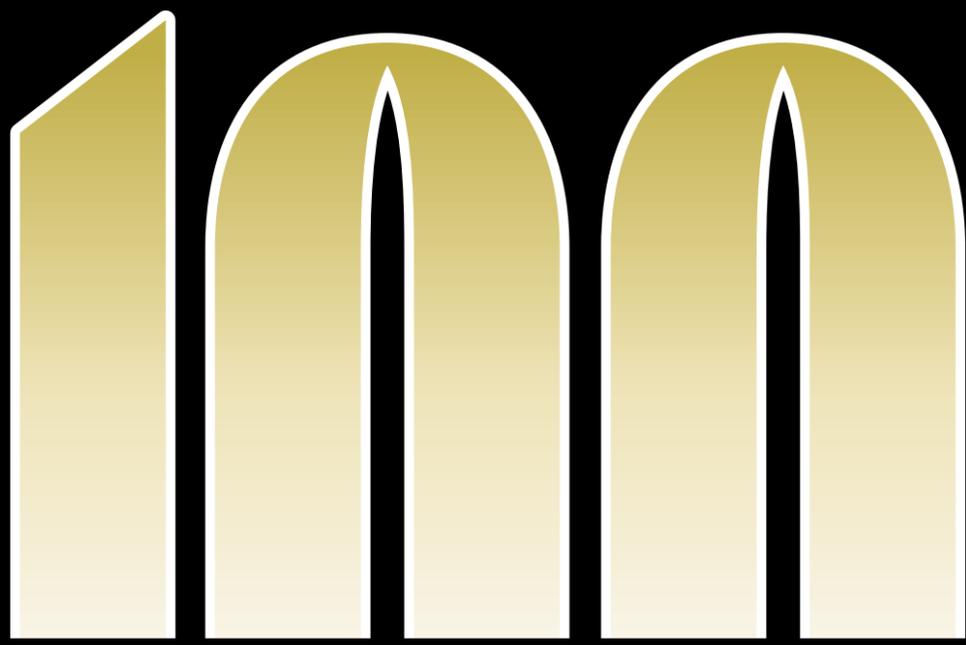
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POSTER  
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WHAT WE DO IN THE  
SHADOWS





YOU **MUST** REMEMBER THIS:

# CELEBRATING WARNER BROS.

AT ONE HUNDRED



by Beth Accomando

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**W**arner Bros. immediately makes me think of my dad, gangster movies, and the Dead End Kids. My dad was a tough New York street kid and connected with films like *Angels with Dirty Faces*, *Dead End*, and *Public Enemy* because they reminded him of his neighborhood. Stars like James Cagney, Humphrey Bogart, Edward G. Robinson, and John Garfield felt real to him.

The film education my dad gave me as a kid growing up in the 1960s gave me an appreciation for all the cinema that came before me and a special affection for Warner Bros. (WB) movies. Since the 1930s, the studio has evolved into a global media empire that makes far more than just movies. But to me, WB is first and foremost a movie studio that has helped shape our culture through the images it has put up on the screen.

WB is not the oldest studio; that honor goes to Paramount and Universal. It never boasted more stars than in the heavens as MGM did. But it did have four street smart sons of Jewish immigrants with the determination to find success.

The brothers were Harry, Albert, Sam, and Jack Warner. They started their film business in Pennsylvania in 1911 before heading out west. Then on April 4, 1923, they officially incorporated as Warner Bros. Pictures, Inc. So here's a look back on 100 years of WB.

## 1920s

The first decade that WB operated as a studio it was rescued by a dog. Rin-Tin-Tin was a male German shepherd whose potential for onscreen heroism was quickly recognized by the studio, which cast him in *Where the North Begins*. The canine got top billing as "Rin-Tin-Tin, the famous police dog."

But in the 1920s WB proved that it not only had a nose for talent but a passion for innovation. Sam saw the possibilities for sound in movies even though early attempts at them were problematic.

In 1926, *Don Juan*, starring John Barrymore, was the first feature-length film to utilize the Vitaphone sound-on-disc technology that provided a synchronized musical score and sound effects but no dialogue. It was WB's most expensive but also most profitable film at the time.

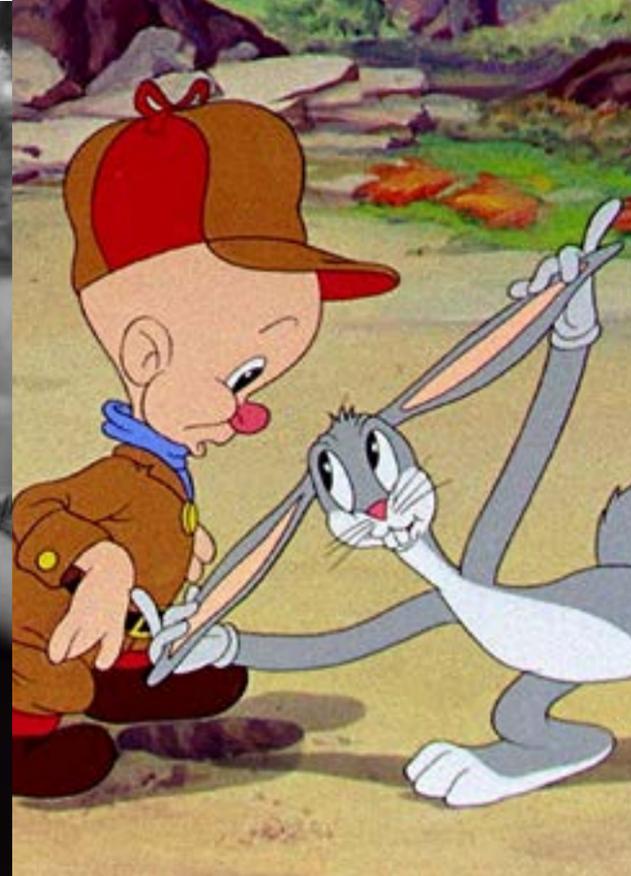
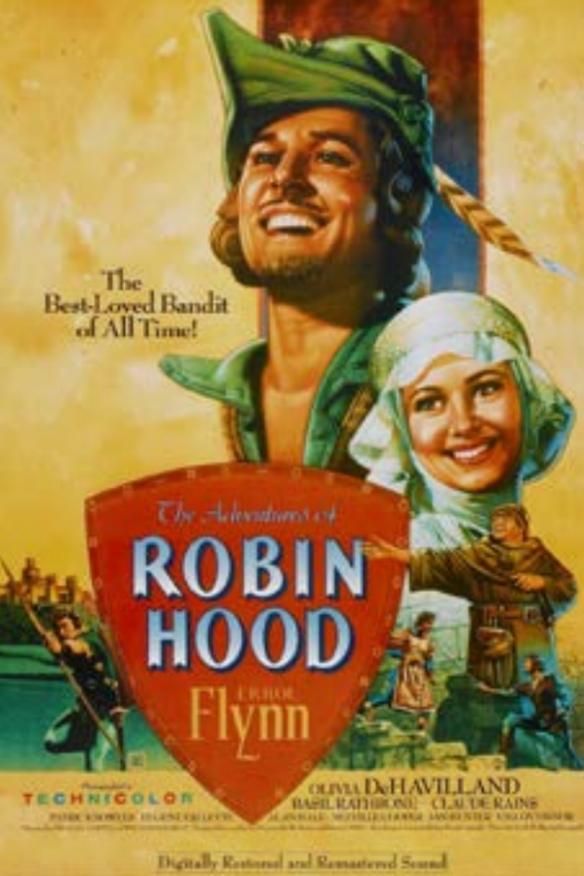
A year later, WB revolutionized the film industry with *The Jazz Singer*, which proclaimed, "you'll see and hear" Al Jolson. This was the first feature to boast spoken dialogue, including Jolson's famous line, "You ain't heard nothing yet."



In 1928, *Lights of New York*, a crime drama filmed with Vitaphone, became the first all-talking full-length feature film. The wild success WB had with its sound films forced the rest of the industry to embrace the "talkies."

In 1929 the studio released its first film with color footage,

*The Desert Song*. It employed two-strip Technicolor that used only green and red. Later that year, WB released *On with the Show*, regarded as the first all-talking, all-color feature-length film.



## 1930s

The nation entered the 1930s in the midst of the Great Depression. Movies offered a much-needed escape, but with people struggling to afford basic necessities like food, it wasn't easy to fill theaters. While some studios leaned into comedy and escapism, WB took a different tack. The brothers, along with their head of production Daryl F. Zanuck (who would leave in 1933 to form Twentieth Century Fox), knew poverty and had empathy for what the country was going through. They made WB a working-class studio where films tackled stories about real life.



Brash actors like Cagney and Robinson hailed from New York's Lower East Side and brought gangsters to vivid life in films such as *The Public Enemy*, *Angels with Dirty Faces*, and *Little Caesar*. These films reveled in the swagger of their stars, ripped-from-the-headlines stories, lurid violence, and a dose of moral retribution.

During this pre-Code era (when the Motion Picture Production Code was not fully enforced), WB produced films such as *Baby Face*, *Red-Headed Woman*, *Blonde*

*Crazy*, *The Divorcee*, and *I am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang* that tackled sensational social issues including drugs, poverty, and prostitution.

When WB ventured into musicals, which other studios treated as frivolous fare, there was an edge to them. There might be a glossy musical number thanks to the genius of Busby Berkeley, but stories also showed the hard life people faced off the stage. Even musical numbers had grit. In *Gold Diggers of 1933*, Joan Blondell sings a haunting ballad called "Remember My Forgotten Man" that referenced the veterans of World War I who had become dispossessed. The song has a powerful political edge as it demands action to correct a social injustice.

Social injustice could even be found in the Errol Flynn swashbucklers *Captain Blood* and *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (both nominated for Best Picture Oscars), in which the star stood up for the underdog and against those in power.

Real-world politics came into play as the Warners witnessed the rise of Hitler. As the children of Polish Jews who had fled to America to escape anti-Semitism, they saw the danger of Nazism. As the decade closed, WB produced *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, the first openly anti-Nazi film from a major Hollywood studio. It arrived

just months before the start of World War II.

The studio picked up its first Best Picture Oscar for the prestige 1937 biopic *The Life of Emile Zola*, starring Paul Muni. The studio also purchased a record company and launched an animation division. Famously, WB established Looney Tunes and Merrie Melodies, which would delight us with the creation of such iconic characters as Bugs Bunny, Elmer Fudd, Porky Pig, and Daffy Duck. These cartoons delighted audiences with a mix of wit, irreverence, and frequently classical music. Those brands still drive WB animation to this day with TV shows and feature films.

## 1940s

The decade boasted multiple iconic roles by Bogart, with the two most memorable being Sam Spade in *The Maltese Falcon* (1941) and Rick Blaine in *Casablanca* (1942). *The Maltese Falcon* gave rise to the hard-boiled anti-hero and laid the groundwork for the film noir movement. It famously had Bogie's Spade refer to the Black Bird of the title as "the stuff that dreams are made of"—a slogan WB now uses as its tagline.

*Casablanca* reflected the Warners' empathy for

refugees and opposition to Nazism. The film originally had Ronald Reagan and Ann Sheridan for the leads, but fortunately Bogart and Ingrid Bergman were cast. The film went on to win the studio its second Best Picture Oscar and a Best Director award for Michael Curtiz.

Curtiz was an incredible asset to WB because he could work on anything and deliver a well-crafted product. He began at WB in 1927, made more than 170 films, and worked in every genre. He excelled at swashbucklers (*Captain Blood*, *Adventures of Robin Hood*), horror (*Doctor X*, *Mystery of the Wax Museum*), women's pictures (*Marked Woman*), film noir (*Mildred Pierce*), social dramas (*Black Legion*), westerns (*Dodge City*, *Santa Fe Trail*), biopics (*Jim Thorpe—All-American*), war films (*Dive Bomber*, *Captain of the Clouds*), and musicals (*King Creole* starring Elvis). His work displayed an unfussy sense of artistry and craft and a dynamic visual style.



The 1940s saw Bogart find his perfect match both on screen and off in 1944 when he co-starred with 19-year-



old Lauren Bacall in *To Have and Have Not*. They were married the following year and would make three more classic noirs together at WB: *The Big Sleep* (1946), *Dark Passage* (1947), and *Key Largo* (1948).

Cagney, after fighting to play more than charismatic gangsters, got to portray song-and-dance man George M. Cohan in *Yankee Doodle Dandy*. The film received Oscar nominations in multiple categories and won a Best Actor Oscar for Cagney, a former hoofer. Cagney would close out the decade returning to a gangster role in *White Heat*, where he delivered one of his most memorable lines, "Made it, Ma. Top of the world!" as he is about to be blown up atop a gas tank.

## 1950s

Television invaded American homes in the late 1940s, but its impact on the film industry was not really felt until the 1950s. The studio tried to lure people away from their TVs with gimmicks like Cinemascope in films as diverse as *The Command* (western), *A Star Is Born* (musical), and *King Richard and the Crusaders* (historical). The John Wayne–John Ford western *The Searchers* used Vistavision, while *House of Wax* tried 3D and *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms* gave us the stop-motion animation of Ray Harryhausen.

Alfred Hitchcock had a productive decade at WB with *Stage Fright*, *Strangers on a Train*, *Dial M for Murder* (in 3D), and *The Wrong Man*. Burt Lancaster tapped into his circus roots to deliver swashbuckling fun in *The Flame and the Arrow* and *The Crimson Pirate*.

But the most exciting thing to hit the screen in the 1950s was not a gimmick but rather a new breed of actors epitomized by Marlon Brando in *Streetcar Named Desire* and James Dean in *East of Eden* and *Rebel Without a Cause*. Brando in his torn T-shirt yelling, "Stella!" was a magnetic presence, but Dean, who died in a car crash after making only three films, would come to symbolize the 1950s and the teenager.

The studio finally succumbed to television and

started making westerns (*Cheyenne*, *Maverick*, *Colt .45*, *Lawman*, *Bronco*) as well as detective shows (*77 Sunset Strip*, *Hawaiian Eye*, *Bourbon Street Beat*, *Surfside 6*).

Behind the scenes, Jack Warner negotiated a shrewd business deal that also betrayed his two remaining brothers in order to gain control of the studio. His actions caused a family rift that never healed.

## 1960s

The decade started with a return to what had been successful in the past for WB: musicals. *The Music Man* (1962) and *My Fair Lady* (1964, nabbing a Best Picture Oscar) did well for the studio but lacked the grit and innovation of the 1930s musicals and felt out of date.

Behind the scenes, the studio system was breaking down. Changing times prompted an aging Jack Warner to sell a percentage of the studio and music business to Seven Arts Productions, which led to the rebranding of the company as Warner Bros.–Seven Arts in 1967. Warner officially retired from the studio in 1969.



The changes led to a bold new direction. Jack Warner had kept a tight reign over the studio, but the sixties brought a new sense of rebellion and challenge to old Hollywood. *The Wild Bunch* served up an elegy to the western genre, while *Bonnie and Clyde* announced a new cinematic style. Both shocked audiences with

a level of violence they had not seen before. *The Wild Bunch* employed slow motion for graphic shootouts, while *Bonnie and Clyde* mixed upbeat banjo music with violence.

Actors such as Paul Newman rose to stardom playing anti-heroes in *Cool Hand Luke* and *Harper* (paying homage to past WB detectives like Sam Spade). WB also provided a supportive environment where a star like Newman could also try his hand at directing with *Rachel, Rachel*.

Gordon Parks became the first Black director to helm a major studio picture with *The Learning Tree*. A new

breed of directors were making their presence known, and WB had Francis Ford Coppola, fresh from film school, make *You're a Big Boy Now* and then move on to both a studio feature, *Finian's Rainbow*, and a more personal project, *The Rain People*.

## 1970s

The '70s were still a period of upheaval for WB. In 1971, Warner expanded into the cable television business and then created the successful channels MTV and Nickelodeon. In 1972, Steve Ross was

appointed CEO, president, and chairman of the rebranded Warner Communications. In contrast to Jack Warner, Ross had a hands-off management style and put people in top executive positions who represented the counter-culture.

The studio went after young directors who were breaking the rules and defining a new American cinema. The decade saw bold films in George Lucas' *THX1138*, Robert Altman's *McCabe and Mrs. Miller*, Martin Scorsese's *Mean Streets*, and Terence Malick's *Badlands*.

WB served up Black casts in *Come Back Charleston Blue*, *Super Fly*, and *Cleopatra Jones*. The *Dirty Harry* franchise launched in 1971 and began a long and successful partnership between WB and star

Clint Eastwood, who, like Newman, would turn to directing with the studio's support.

The decade also marked the beginning of a collaboration with director Stanley Kubrick, who made *Clockwork Orange* in 1971.

Highlights from the decade include the sharp political satire *The Candidate*, the Bruce Lee actioner *Enter the Dragon*, the phenomenon of *The Exorcist*, Al Pacino's finest work in *Dog Day Afternoon*, the tense political thriller *All the President's Men*, and the comic masterpiece *Blazing Saddles*, in which Mel Brooks skewered the tropes of TV westerns that WB had been making.

WB also found success on TV with *Alice* (inspired by Scorsese's *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore*), *Welcome*

*Back Kotter*, and *Chico and the Man*. But its biggest impact on TV was the groundbreaking miniseries *Roots*, based on Alex Haley's book. It aired over eight nights in 1977 with 130 million Americans tuning in.

The decade was also noteworthy for bringing the studio into the era of comic book superheroes with the TV series *Wonder Woman* (1975–1979) starring Lynda Carter and Richard Donner's 1978 film *Superman* that promised, "You'll believe a man can fly." And with Christopher Reeve as Superman, we absolutely did.

## 1980s

WB's purchase of Atari in 1976 would come back to haunt it in the '80s. Gaming initially brought in a hefty profit, but in 1982 the release and failure of Atari's E.T. game led to a half-billion-dollar loss. This forced WB to sell MTV.

It was a tough way to start the decade, but Steven Spielberg came onboard to produce *Twister* and *Gremlins* and to direct *The Color Purple* and *Empire of the Sun*. Tim Burton arrived to deliver his unique vision in *Pee Wee's Big Adventure*, *Beetlejuice*, and the hugely successful *Batman*. And WB partnerships with Eastwood (*Bronco Billy*, *Round Midnight*) and Kubrick (*The Shining*, *Full Metal Jacket*) continued.

The studio produced a diverse array of films (*Blade Runner*, *Excalibur*, *Altered States*, *Stand and Deliver*) and the hugely popular TV show *Murphy Brown* (1988-1998) starring Candice Bergen.

## 1990s

The decade started with a merger that created the media giant Time Warner. It also began with Scorsese at the top of his game making *Goodfellas*, which harkened back to the WB gangster pictures of the 1930s but with brash new energy.

Oliver Stone made his controversial *JFK*. Mario Van Peebles' *New Jack City* and Spike Lee's *Malcolm X* scored hits for Black directors. WB found another moneymaking franchise with the cop buddy film *Lethal Weapon* and the dystopian *The Matrix*. Kubrick made his final film, *Eyes Wide Shut*. And Gregory Nava got to pay tribute to a Latina superstar with *Selena* and in the process created another one out of Jennifer Lopez.



WB's relationship with Eastwood paid off big with the western *Unforgiven*, which took home the Best Picture and Best Director Oscars for Eastwood, who dedicated them to Ross, who had just passed away.

Ross' death was a big loss for WB. He was not just a leader but also a father figure. As a memorial to his legacy, the studio built a museum and theater.

TV success also dominated the decade with the sitcoms *Ellen* (1994–1998) and *Friends* (1994–2004), the medical drama *ER* (1994–2009), the political dramedy *The West Wing* (1999–2006), and my personal favorite, *Animaniacs* (1993–1998)—“Hellooooo nurse!”

## 2000s

Change also marked the start of a new millennium as America Online (AOL) merged with Time Warner, and corporate styles clashed.

But the good news was that the studio found a huge hit and new franchise in J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter books and racked up a pair of Best Picture Oscars for Eastwood's *Million Dollar Baby* (2004) and Scorsese's *The Departed* (2006).

George Clooney, who had starred in *ER*, was now defining a new kind of actor/producer, mixing big studio films (*Batman and Robin*) with personal projects (*Good Night and Good Luck*). Filmmaker Christopher Nolan also found a home at WB, turning once again to a DC superhero to make *Batman Begins* (2005) and *The Dark Knight* (2008) with an electrifying performance by Heath Ledger as The Joker.

In the TV realm, Ellen DeGeneres, who had come out as gay in 1997 on her comedy show, returned to TV in 2003 with a comedy talk show called *The Ellen DeGeneres Show*; WB embraced reality TV with *The Bachelor* and found a hit in nerdy pop culture with *The Big Bang Theory*.

## 2010s

Superheroes dominated the decade as DC expansion began on TV with *Arrow*, *The Flash*, and *Supergirl*. On the big screen Superman returned in *The Man of Steel*,

while Batman was back in Nolan's *The Dark Knight Rises*. *Wonder Woman* got her own feature, directed by Patty Jenkins. WB ended the decade giving a DC villain his own film, *Joker*.

WB invested in more franchises with Peter Jackson's *Hobbit* movies, an American *Godzilla* (2014), and a new King Kong in *Kong: Skull Island* (2017). Ben Affleck's *Argo* nabbed a Best Picture Oscar for the studio, and John Chu proved that Asians can make box office hit rom-coms with *Crazy Rich Asians* in 2018.



## 2020s

The current decade has seen a merger with AT&T, the first woman executive in Ann Sarnoff, the struggle through COVID, the end of Zack Snyder's DC films, and the wild success of the streaming show *Ted Lasso*. Entering the company's second century, there is excitement about James Gunn leaving Marvel to take over the DC Extended Universe. He already made the best DC film of the millennium with *The Suicide Squad*, so that's promising.

But whatever is to come, WB has a century-long legacy of providing audiences with some of the best, most innovative, most compelling, most exciting stuff that dreams are made of.

And that's not all folks. Far from it.

Beth Accomando is the KPBS arts and culture reporter and is host of the *Cinema Junkie* podcast and *Geeky Gourmet* videos. She programs films at multiple venues through Film Geeks San Diego.



# "MORE OR LESS OF A BIRTHDAY"

BY  
**MAGGIE  
THOMPSON**

## CELEBRATING 75 YEARS OF THE POGO COMIC STRIP

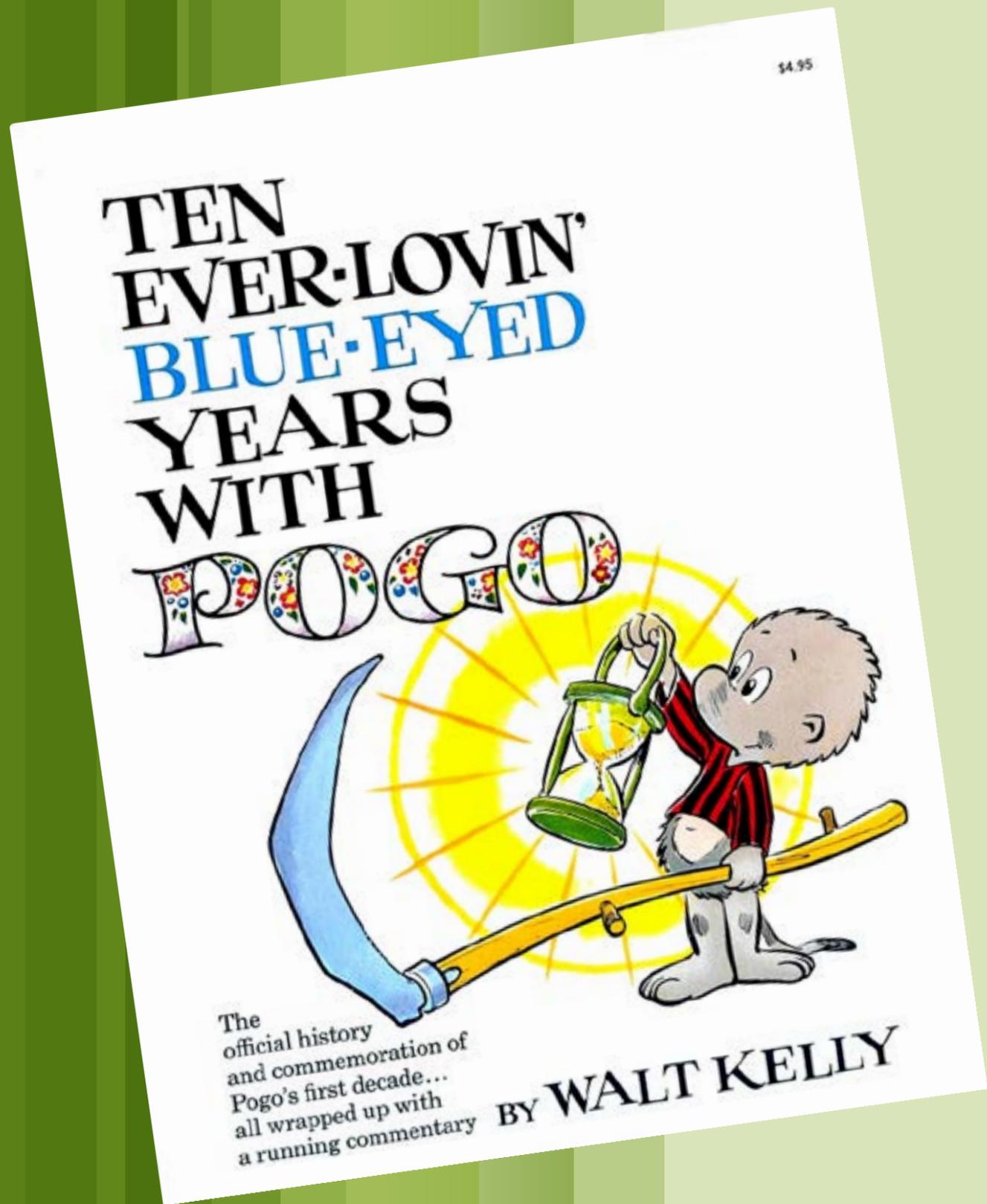


Paying tribute to the beginning of his *Pogo* newspaper comic strip a decade after its initiation, Walt Kelly hinted that the character's origin had been complex. Now, it's the 75th anniversary of *Pogo* as a comic strip and a good time to revisit its origins.

In *Ten Ever-Lovin' Blue-Eyed Years with Pogo* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1959), Walt described the venue of the first such outing, the *New York Star*, "This ill-fated newspaper had a brief but gaudy life from June 1948 until January 1949. In an unguarded moment, management decided to entrust me with the duties of political cartoonist, art director, comic-strip editor, and comic-strip artist."

He also wrote, "There's not much doubt in any of our minds that no complete idea springs fully formed from our brow, needing only a handshake and a signature on the contract to send it off into the world to make twenty-five billion dollars. The germ of the idea grows very slowly into something recognizable. It may all start with the mere desire to have an idea in the first place. So it was that this particular comic strip, *Pogo*, went through a long and tenuous birth."

A decade after his first appearance in the 1948 newspaper strip, Pogo pointed out that there had been more than one start to his career.



Ten Everlovin' Blue-Eyed Years with Pogo (Simon & Schuster, 1959, Kelly recounts the origins of the strip.

## “WITH A GOAL OF WORKING FOR WALT DISNEY PRODUCTIONS, HE MOVED TO CALIFORNIA, WHERE HE WORKED FOR THE STUDIO FROM 1936 TO 1941”

### BEGINNINGS

Celebratory Pogo anniversaries involve a variety of dates, beginning 110 years ago. Walter Crawford Kelly, Jr., was born August 25, 1913, and he was an active cartoonist while still in high school.

His “Disclaimer” in the first collection of *Pogo* newspaper strips (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1951) included citing responsibility for the book’s contents: “Practically everybody that Kelly knows or has ever met is equally guilty. His own mother is not entirely blameless. She early aided and abetted him, never broke him to the muzzle or the leash. His father, an otherwise virtuous man, taught him how to draw. His sister sharpened his pencils and corrected his spelling. These misdemeanors were compounded by later associates, many of whom, masquerading as school teachers, encouraged him in a shameless manner. Newspapermen, artists, writers, and Hollywood animators taught him the rudiments of anti-social behavior until he became fit for nothing but comic strip work.”

His March 20, 1947, letter in the August William Derleth Papers correspondence collection in the Wisconsin Historical Society provided more background: “Very early in life I was interested in comic strips and I can remember *Foxy Grandpa* and *Buster Brown* pretty easily. . . . I have worked on newspapers as a reporter as well as an artist . . . for Disney, as an animator . . . and just now in New York I’m attempting to establish myself as child-book illustrator. The Albert and Pogo strip may be syndicated one of these days. . . . it has

certainly attracted considerable attention and much extravagant praise from various sections. However, it seems to be one of those things which people either like a lot or it leaves them cold.”

In his contribution to the autobiographical anthology *Five Boyhoods* (edited by Martin Levin, New York: Doubleday, 1962), Walt wrote, “In my early teens I started work as a high-school reporter for the Bridgeport *Post*. . . . Thus, after high school, there was a brief period of factory work, and then the *Post* called me back and wondered if I would lend my highly imaginative style to general assignments. By sheer drift I was next assigned to the art department—indeed, for a long spell, I was it.” He worked for the *Post* and added freelancing jobs in New York City, including 1935 contributions (“Down by the Old Mill Stream” and illustrations for Dorothy Brown Thompson’s “Ballad of a Hunter of Renown”) to *St. Nicholas Magazine*. He provided comic book features to DC’s *New Comics* #1 (December 1935) and #2 (January 1936); DC’s *More Fun* #7 (January 1936) and #8 (February 1936); and Comics Magazine Company’s *The Comics Magazine* #1 (May 1936) and #2 (June 1936).

With a goal of working for Walt Disney Productions, he moved to California, where he worked for the studio from 1936 to 1941 on such films as *Fantasia* (uncredited) and *Dumbo* (credited). When family necessities pulled him back to the East Coast, he took with him a July 1941 letter of recommendation from Walt Disney himself.

<u>English</u>	<u>Japanese</u>
South	mee-NA-mee
West	nee-SHEE
here	ko-KO
there	a-SKO
near	chee-KA_ee
far	to_o-EE_ee
Is it far?	to_o-EE_ee dess-ka?

### OTHER USEFUL PHRASES

The following phrases will be useful:

To find out someone's name you say, "Your name, what is it?"

Your name a-NA-ta-no na-MA\_ay

What is your name? a-NA-ta-no na-MA\_ay-wa, NAHN dess-ka?

My name is John wa-TAHK-shee-no na-WA JOHN dess

How do you say pencil in Japanese? PENCIL wa, nee-HOHNG-go-day, NAHN-to ee\_ee-MA-ska?

Good night go-keeng-en-YO\_o

Goodbye sa-yo-NA-ra

22



**“REJECTED AS A VOLUNTEER, HE CONTRIBUTED TO PUBLICATIONS AIMED AT THOSE SERVING IN THE ARMED FORCES.”**

## THEN...

Trying for a fresh career as a freelance cartoonist at age 27 in 1941, Walt soon—as was the case with the rest of the country—had to cope with the chaos that followed December 7. Some of the coping involved projects for a limited audience. Rejected as a volunteer, he contributed to publications aimed at those serving in the Armed Forces.

In 1943 and 1944, The War Department published a series of 29 4¼ x 5½ inch pocket translation guides

(ranging from 64 to 88 pages) subtitled “A Guide to the Spoken Language.” The first four were *Spanish, Portuguese as Spoken in Brazil, French, and Italian*. Most were illustrated by other artists, often with text simply switched for each language. Walt provided art for at least two under the direction of J Milton Cowan, who directed the Intensive Language Program of the American Council of Learned Societies, working with the Army Specialized Training Program.

Walt also provided cartoons to illustrate guidelines for Agnes Ilo Spangler’s War Department Education Manual EM 101 (*The Mechanics of English*) and EM 102 (*Building Good Sentences*).

And early in 1942, he contributed to a comic book series aimed at readers in the service. His “Seaman Sy Wheeler” appeared in all three issues of *Camp Comics* (February–April), and he provided one story starring Bugs Bunny and Elmer Fudd.

### Linking Supporting Thoughts to Main Thoughts 21

Angela kissed me because I had been eating onions.

But few girls act this way. Perhaps because:

Angela kissed me after I had been eating onions.

More likely it was this:

Angela kissed me although I had been eating onions.

Notice what happens in all these sentences. The second thought supports and explains the first. The first one becomes the main thought in the sentence, and the joining word shows how the second, or minor, part supports the main one.

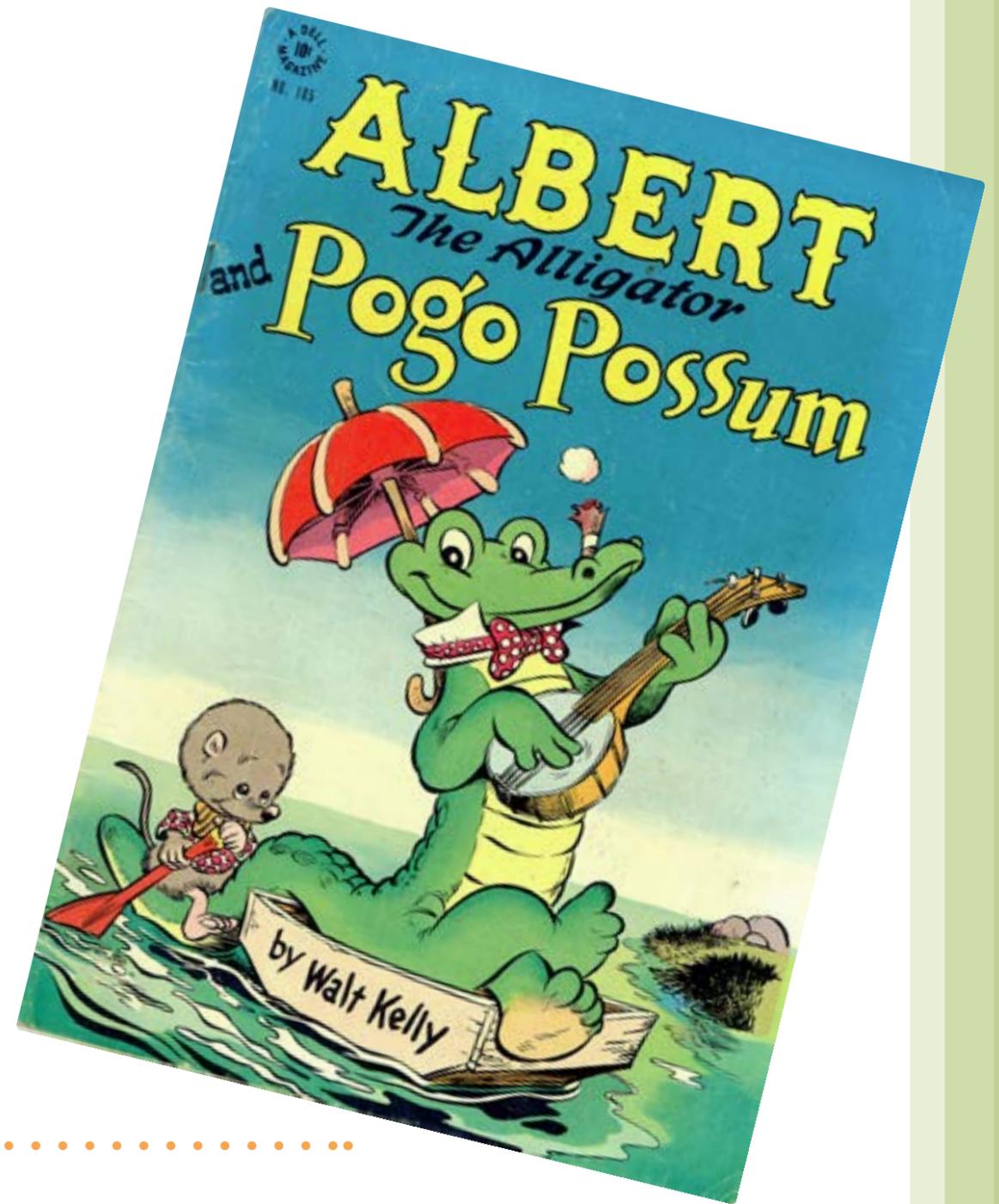


WHY NOT LINK THEM?

Walt Kelly's work for the War Department in World War II included brightening language guides and clarifying writing lessons for Armed Forces members.



POGO CIRCA 1948



**ABOVE:**  
It was in *Animal Comics* #1 (December 1942) that Pogo the Possum made his first appearance. When Walt redrew the art to show readers in 1959, he made the possum more cute.

**RIGHT:**  
In this issue, Pogo was elevated to title status, along with Albert the Alligator.

## ON NEWSSTANDS FOR A DIME AND ...

The company producing *Camp Comics* was Western Printing and Lithographing—and that publisher also produced comic books that Dell distributed to public newsstands. Walt’s editor there was Oskar Lebeck, and it was in comics dated 1942 that Walt’s work began to appear for a mainstream audience.

It’s fair to guess that Walt’s *Fairy Tale Parade* #1 (June 1942) had begun as a sample to demonstrate his skills. In addition to that, other work for newsstand comics that year included the anthology titles *Looney Tunes and Merrie Melodies* #3–#5, #8, and #11; *Our Gang Comics* #1–#2; and *Santa Claus Funnies* #1.

It was at the end of 1942 that Walt contributed two (unsigned) stories to the first issue of the Lebeck-edited anthology series *Animal Comics*. One was an 11-page “Muzzy and Ginger” tale involving a chimpanzee and a kitten. The other was the five-page “Albert Takes the Cake” with a focus on Albert Alligator, featuring Pogo Possum as a supporting character. The cast as introduced consisted of “a big old Alligator named Albert who loved chocolate cake,” “Pogo the possum,” “Bumbazine, the little boy who lived on the edge of the swamp,” and a few other swamp animals. The Black child Bumbazine (clearly the most intelligent

member of the cast) last appeared in #12 (December 1944–January 1945) of the original *Animal Comics* run.

Discussing that 1942 beginning, Walt wrote in *Ten Everlovin’ Blue-Eyed Years with Pogo*, “The early material was fairly frightening. Albert kept eating things. As time went on, his manners improved, and Pogo stepped forward as a sort of Jeff to Albert’s Mutt. Bumbazine was dropped because, being human, he was not as believable as the animals.”

By the end of comics dated 1943, Lebeck also had Walt producing comics features—mostly uncredited—for such other titles as *Looney Tunes and Merrie*

*Melodies Comics*, *New Funnies*, *Tiny Tots Comics*, and *Walt Disney’s Comics and Stories*.

As months went on, so did a variety of Walt’s other comic book work, some credited, some anonymous. (His name didn’t appear on the swamp-critters stories until *Animal Comics* #11 (October/November 1944). And Pogo production continued. By the time of the two Four Color issues #105 (1946) and #148 (1947, which added “by Walt Kelly” to the logo), Pogo had worked his way up to co-billing (Albert the Alligator and Pogo Possum).

## A BRIEF DIGRESSION

Whether other readers noticed it or not, Walt included treats for those who knew him and those of his friends who had, returning from the war, also found work in comic books. In fact, it's a good guess that Walt provided text as well as cartoons for at least one of those 1940s War Department manuals, judging by page 88 of *Building Good Sentences*. In a practice session on using pairs of linking words appears the sequence:

6. At Torpid River Junction there is either a spur line or an old tractor takes you to Gormley.

7. At Gormley not only the old tractor is waiting, but you also find a horse and buggy to take you back to Torpid River Junction.

Dan Gormley was another artist, and over the years Kelly used his name in a variety of ways—including as an exclamation. (In Volume 7 of the Fantagraphics Pogo strip reprints, for example, Grundoon's uncle Gormley Groundhog appears briefly in early 1962, and one 1964 strip in Volume 8 refers to someone known as Mr. Gormley Snowdrip Hale.)

## BACK TO POGO

In 1948, *Animal Comics* having ended with #30 (December 1947/January 1948), Walt continued to provide other comic-book stories for Western. Then, he took on another project. The *New York Star* newspaper hit city newsstands on June 23, 1948, and, at age 34, Walt was involved.

My parents had corresponded with Walt for about a year when he wrote to them about it on September 5: "The NY STAR is a lot of fun. It also is a lot of work. They have made me a 'senior editor'. This despite the fact that I can't give them my full time. So you can see how desperate they are. Kelly is supposed to be in charge of pictures, layout, burglar, cartoons, comics, men's room and related subjects. We have discussed P. Possum and I have finally got it into daily shape. Still not satisfied but may use."

Celebrating this 75th anniversary of that October 4, 1948, event, it should be noted that 2023 marks more than the genesis of Pogo in the new format of a daily newspaper strip. It is also the 75th anniversary year of Walt's working with an assistant: George Ward. Ward spoke with Bill Crouch, Jr., in *The Okefenokee Star* about the challenges saying, "Working with Walt you sure as hell didn't get much sleep." (The interview was reprinted in *The Best of Pogo*, an anthology of such material, in 1982.)

So it was that Walt was able to continue not only his work on the *Star* but also on a number of other ongoing comic book contributions, even while maintaining the pressures of a daily strip (and, by the way, a daily political cartoon).



NEW YORK STAR, MONDAY, OCTOBER 4, 1948

POGO

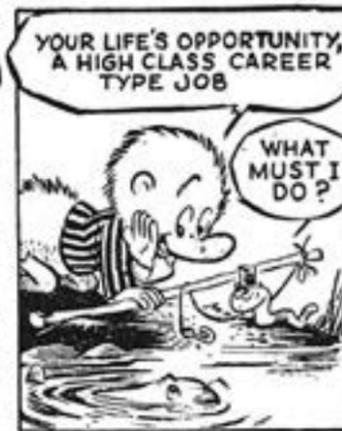
Walt Kelly



NEW YORK STAR, TUESDAY, OCTOBER 5, 1948

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POGO



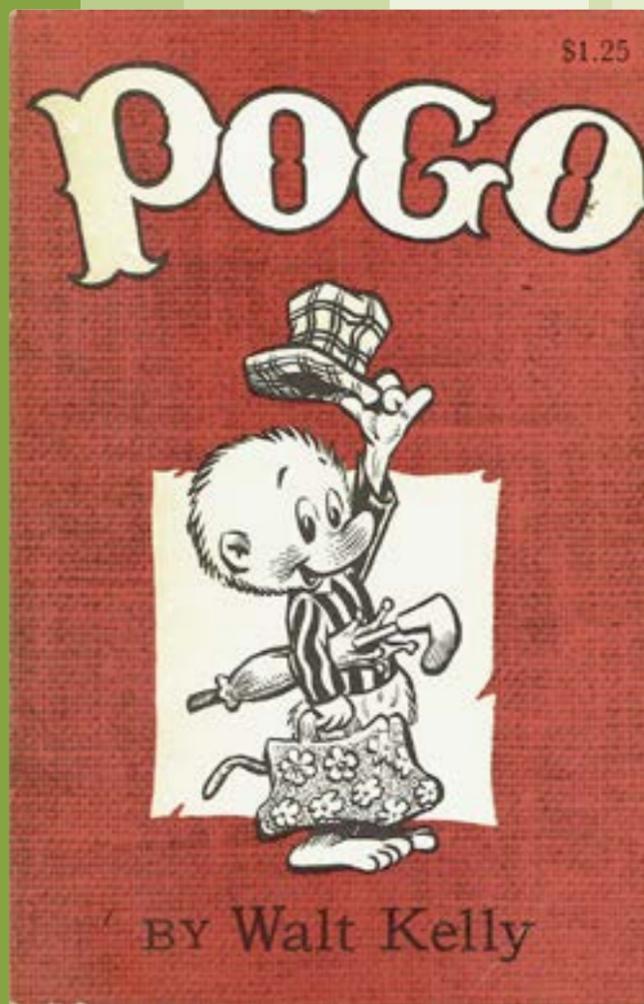
TOP

Pogo's adventures in *Four Color* #105 (April 1946) included hat tips to fellow artists. "Perty Boy John" was John Stanley, especially known for adapting Marjorie Henderson Buell's Little Lulu to Western's comic-book tales. "Front view" was Walt himself. "Side view" was Dan Noonan, whose "Rover" was also appearing in *Animal Comics*. The Dan Gormley reference appeared in another story in the issue.

RIGHT:

The Pogo comic strip made its debut on June 23, 1948 in the *New York Star* newspaper.

**“THE POSSUM . . . IS SIMPLE AND UNSPOILED WITH MONEY, INASMUCH AS HE HAS NEVER BEEN PAID. A FINE TYPE OF EMPLOYEE.”**



ABOVE: The *Pogo* comic strip was reprinted in numerous paperbacks.

## BUT . . .

The last issue of the *Star* was dated January 28, 1949—the cancellation coming even as Walt was in the midst of preparing yet another daily strip, this one to feature human characters in modern adventures.

“Thus, loaded with Kelly art,” he wrote in *Ten Ever-Lovin’ Blue-Eyed Years with Pogo*, “the *Star* plunged out of orbit after a staggering eight months of furious activity. We might not have been so active, but we were certainly furious.”

He wrote to my parents on February 26, 1949, “The effort at the *Star* was all out. There wasn’t much time for being friendly . . . not even with my family . . . though we are usually on the best of terms.

“The backing ran out on us in effect . . . money promised was not delivered and we needed about another six months to become a newspaper. We had been promised that much time. Needless to say we didn’t get it.

“Without being maudlin, the closing of the *Star* was a major emotional crisis for all of us there. The fact that some of us were out of a means of livelihood did not sink home for days. It was like seeing everybody you loved in the world die at one time. Enough of that.

“*Pogo* will continue, as you probably suspected, one of the New York papers will pick him up, I will retain control and he will be syndicated.”

## NATIONAL DISTRIBUTION

With its first daily installment published on May 16, 1949, *Pogo* was released to several papers by the Post-Hall Syndicate, which added a Sunday strip on January 29, 1950. Given that Walt was no longer producing daily political cartoons, he began to add social commentaries to what had until then primarily been a simple funny-animal strip.

Eventually, *Pogo*’s presence expanded beyond newspapers. A *Pogo Possum* comic book from Western ran from 1949 to 1954. Simon & Schuster’s strip reprints began with *Pogo* in 1951. In 1953, Western published a *Pogo Parade* one-shot subtitled, “A collection of outstanding *Pogo* stories over the past years.” Walt’s introduction in that included the comment, “The Possum, as can be seen from his record, started off in life as a spear carrier. Later he became a featured player, and when the comic strip was started he graduated to stardom. He is simple and unspoiled with money, inasmuch as he has never been paid. A fine type of employee.”

Walt’s real-world employees included more assistants. By the 10th year of the strip, they had included Ray Burley, Nate Aleskovsky, and Henry Shikuma.

Walt died on October 18, 1973, making 2023 yet



**WE HAVE MET THE ENEMY AND HE IS US.**



another anniversary year—the 50th anniversary of his death—although the *Pogo* strip continued into 1975.

## CELEBRATING IN 2023

It’s clear that an article this brief can touch on only a few of the aspects of Walt’s career. His daughter Carolyn worked to bring the strip to another generation of fans with Fantagraphics’ hardcover strip reprints starting in 2011, and she brought delights to Comic-Con. Other discussions of family, friends, and influences received and given still await a voluminous, lavishly illustrated biography that would include such information, a summary of his many awards and influences, and more. In the meantime, far more details than appear here can be found in that series of *Pogo* strip reprints.

In the next-to-concluding page of his 1959 celebration of the strip as a strip, Walt quoted his opening to the

third strip collection, *The Pogo Papers* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1953). In that opening, he had tweaked the words of Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry in 1813. Walt’s remarks were true then and are quoted to this day:

There is no need to sally forth, for it remains true that those things which make us human are, curiously enough, always close at hand. Resolve then, that on this very ground, with small flags waving and tinny blasts on tiny trumpets, we shall meet the enemy, and not only may he be ours, he may be us.

Maggie Thompson has written and edited news and articles about comic books and comic strips for more than half a century.

Note: Walt Kelly’s work used in this 2023 celebration is © 2023 Okefenokee Glee & Perloo, Inc.

ABOVE: Fantagraphics Press has been publishing the *Pogo* newspaper strips in chronological order in lavishly produced book collections.



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# BLADE: 50 YEARS OF FANGS FOR THE MEMORY

by  
**Marv  
Wolfman**

**H**aving created a surprising, even to me, number of comic book heroes and villains, from *Destiny*, my earliest, appearing in the first issue of *Weird Mystery Tales* (and now one of Neil Gaiman's *Endless*) to *Spider-Man's* love/hate interest the Black Cat, to *Daredevil's* Bullseye, most of the new *Teen Titans*, *Vigilante*, and many others, I'm often asked: How did I create them? Did they just appear out of nowhere, or did I spend months developing them until they were ready for prime time?

Most of the time the answer is B. Character creation is a long process, and it could take forever to build their lives and make them something new and hopefully special. But, only twice in my 50-plus-year career the answer was, amazingly, A. One of those two characters is Deathstroke, originally from the pages of DC's *New Teen Titans*, but the other instant creation, and the focus of this article, is Blade, the Vampire Hunter. These two characters literally did come out of nowhere. I wasn't trying to create anyone, in fact, in the case of Blade, all I was doing was...well, he's the focus of this article, so keep reading.

It was 1972. I was a freelance writer and soon

became an editorial assistant to both Joe Orlando and Joe Kubert, two of DC's most creative editors. My job was to do whatever they needed—assemble reprint books, write letter columns, proofread stories, occasionally write short stories, and so forth. It was a great job for a fledgling comics writer to get. Working in an editorial capacity with the two Joes taught me so much more than I would have learned solely as a newbie writer.

As I said, it was a great job. Unfortunately, comics sales were down, and in what has since been called "The DC Implosion," books were canceled. As was the need for all the assistants.

I started to look for a new job when I heard that Warren Publishing, which produced black-and-white comic magazines such as *Creepy*, *Eerie*, and *Vampirella*, was looking for an editor. As I had been writing "horror" stories for DC and Marvel and served as editorial assistant to the Joes, I had a good résumé and was hired to edit the Warren horror line.

Like the somewhat mild horror stories published by DC and Marvel, and especially the brilliant though grisly EC comics horror line from the 1950s, the Warren

**OPPOSITE:**  
Marv Wolfman at the 1987  
Comic-Con. Photo by Jackie Estrada.



ABOVE: Blade made his first appearance in *Tomb of Dracula* #10 (July 1973). He appeared in issues #10–21.

magazines contained not one novel length story but rather a number of short stories. Each issue might feature a half dozen or more unrelated tales. As the new editor, I felt that though many of those stories were pretty good, there wasn't anything special about them that made you want to buy the next issue—or, indeed, any further issues—since they'd all be the same 8- or so page stories and have no relation to what would come next. Just because one story out of six might be great, it didn't mean the next would be any good. I felt we needed

something that would lure readers back to buy subsequent issues.

I decided we should have theme issues, where each story would lead to the next, and the next after that, and so on. The first concept I came up with was an all-vampire issue of *Eerie*, starting with the first vampire and moving through time to the present day and finally a story about the last vampire sometime in the future. I assigned a few of the stories to our writers but kept the present-day vampire story for me to write.

Now all I had to do was come up with a story.

While all this was going on, Roy Thomas, the editor at Marvel Comics, asked me to write a new horror comic that Marvel had been publishing. It was called *Tomb of Dracula* and it was based on their original Bram Stoker novel, *Dracula*.

Marvel writer Gerry Conway had written issues 1 and 2. Archie Goodwin, who had been the writer and editor at Warren before me, wrote issues 3 and 4, and longtime DC Comics writer Gardner Fox wrote issues 5 and 6. I would start with issue 7.

Gardner was just about to begin his two-issue run, which gave me a few months to think about what I wanted to do with the book. I was anxious to get started, especially because I'd be working with Gene Colan, one of the very best artists in the history of comics. He could draw real people in a real world better than almost anyone. Gene was, in every possible way, the very best artist for the book as I was envisioning it.

And, of course, in the meantime I still had to come up with a modern-day vampire story for my all-vampire issue at

Warren. So, yes, vampires were on my mind, but at that moment nothing specific.

So, one day I was coming home from my day job at Warren, not thinking about much of anything, when—and I remember this clearly—I suddenly stopped walking. For a moment my eyes glazed over, and suddenly I had this idea for a vampire hunter named Blade; and despite the fact that only a few seconds ticked by, I somehow knew pretty much everything about him.

In that instant the character of Blade had come to

me full blown. As I've often said, I wish I knew exactly how that happened, as I'd definitely try to replicate that creative spark. Sadly, it only happened to me one more time with *Deathstroke*, but I guess better twice than never.

I had what I felt was a great character concept, but now I needed a story to put him in.

While I was trying to figure that out, Roy Thomas asked if I'd be interested in becoming an editor at Marvel and help them put together their line of black-and-white magazines, pretty much what I'd been doing at Warren but with Marvel characters. Also, unlike the books at Warren, the Marvel magazines would not be all horror stories. Marvel wanted all different kinds of books, including a humor magazine in the vein of *MAD*.

Creating an entire line of comics? That was definitely a dream come true.

So naturally I turned Roy down.

The offer was great. The pay was better than I was getting at Warren, but I had just started working there and didn't feel it was fair to take the job and then suddenly quit. I was young and still relatively new to the job market, and didn't yet know the rules, but it felt wrong.

Oh, there's something I forgot to mention.

Although I broke into DC and Marvel writing for their horror line and then worked at Warren on their horror books, I was never a horror fan. At that point I'd never even seen a *Dracula* movie, and for the most part I still haven't. In fact, I never watched horror movies at all. I had read the Bram Stoker novel when I was younger and liked it, but that was probably because *Dracula* himself only appears in about 90 pages of a 400- or so page book. Generally, I didn't like horror stories, but I did like writing about how people reacted to those dark moments in life. How people dealt with their dark monsters fascinated me.

Time passed and because I was busy with my Warren editorial job as well as writing *Tomb of Dracula*, I still hadn't come up with my modern-day vampire story.

In the meantime, my relationship with Warren Publishing was going south and I was thinking about leaving. I decided that rather than use my Blade

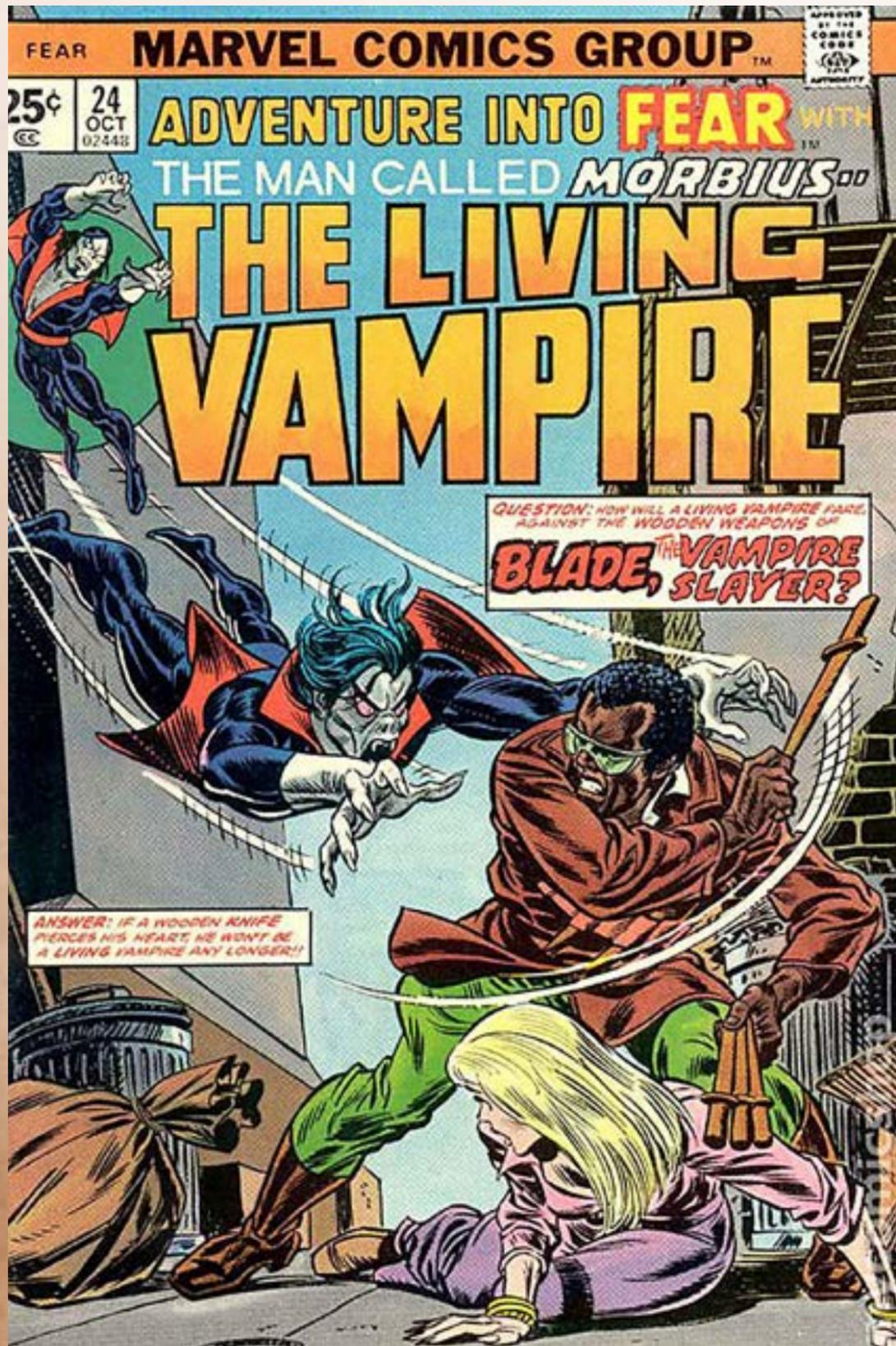


PHOTO (LEFT): Gene Colan at the 1989 Comic-Con. Photo by Jackie Estrada.

PHOTO (RIGHT): Roy Thomas at the 1987 Comic-Con. Photo by Jackie Estrada.

ABOVE: Colan brought Blade to life in the character's debut in *Tomb of Dracula*.





**ABOVE:** Blade went up against Morbius in *Adventure into Fear* #24 (October 1974), written by Steve Gerber, with art by P. Craig Russell.

character in a short 8-page story I'd put him into my *Tomb of Dracula* series, where I could feature him whenever I wanted. I was already working on the story for issue 10 and Blade would fit in nicely. By the way, in case you're wondering, I never did write that modern-day vampire story for Warren.

Why not? Continue reading.

Flash forward. It was Halloween. A good number of us shockingly young comics writers and artists had gone to Rutland, Vermont for their annual Halloween festival, where we would all dress up as comic book characters. I came as Aquaman. It was an easy costume to put together.

We had chartered a bus and had a great time. On the return trip, Roy Thomas was sitting in the seat in front of me. At some point he leaned back and said that the person they had originally hired for the editorial job wanted to become a freelance writer instead, so that editorial job was available if I wanted it.

This time I said yes. Definitely yes!

So now I was at Marvel, and I was about to start my run on *Tomb of Dracula* when I realized that Blade, the character I had come up with but never used, would be perfect for that book.

Because of that sudden inspiration I had had, I knew

pretty much everything about him, but the hard work was just beginning.

I had already written three issues of *Tomb*, so I had

established a style and approach to the book that Blade had to fit into. As much as I loved Marvel comics, I wanted *TOD* to exist in our so-called "real world" rather than the Marvel superhero universe.

That meant I didn't want him dressed in typical spandex. Blade would not wear a costume. Instead, he'd wear a long brown leather jacket, jodhpurs, and boots. My thought was that he could pretty much walk down Fifth avenue and people would barely think he was out of place.

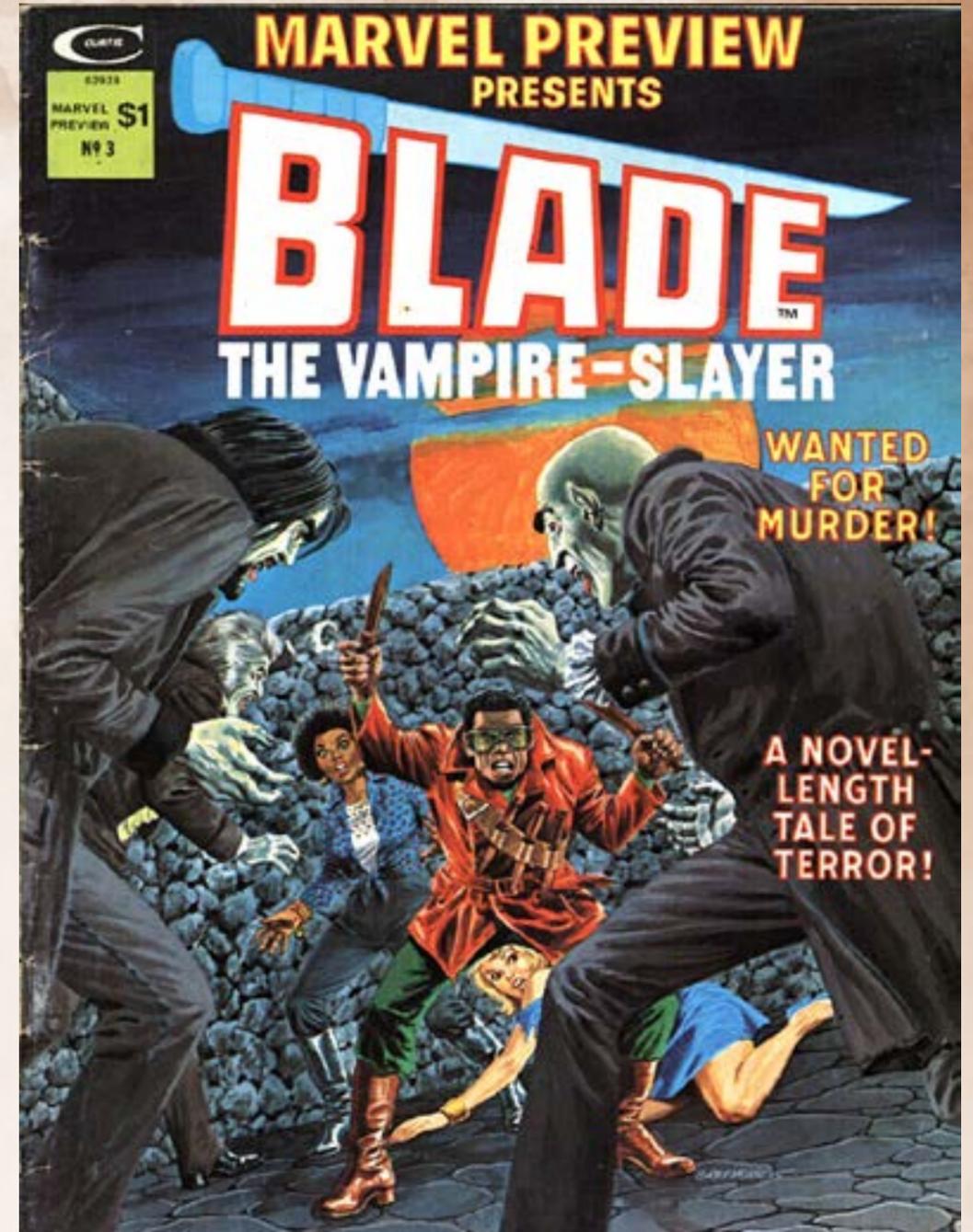
I knew that his mother had been bitten by a vampire while pregnant, which meant he had some vampire blood in him, so Gene and I gave him special goggles to help block out the harsh sunlight. The only real nod to comic convention was having him wear a bandoleer, but its pocketed belt would hold wooden knives, carved from teak, rather than bullets. The wooden knives would be our version of the deadly (to vampires, and actually, if you think about it, to everyone) wooden stake.

I described to Gene how I wanted Blade to look, and man, when he handed in his pencil designs, they were everything I could have hoped for, and more. Blade was now truly real.

In that moment when I was walking home and Blade suddenly came to me, I saw him as a black man. Later on, I was told how revolutionary having a black vampire hunter was, but honestly, maybe because his existence came to me in one second, I never thought twice about that. What possible difference would his skin color make? I mean, whether a vampire is killed by a black vampire hunter or a white one, the vampire's dead all the same.

Funny story: Years ago I was on the set of the first *Blade* movie. The vampire blood bath scene was being filmed in a warehouse less than a mile from where I lived, and I was invited to come by. I was introduced

**"So now I was at Marvel, and I was about to start my run on *Tomb of Dracula* when I realized that Blade, the character I had come up with but never used, would be perfect for that book."**



**ABOVE:** Blade appeared in a 56-page solo story in the black-and-white showcase magazine *Marvel Preview* #3 (September 1975), written by Chris Claremont, with two chapters each drawn by Tony DeZuniga and by Rico Riva.

to Wesley Snipes, and when he learned I had created Blade, he quietly asked if Blade had always been black in the comics. Before I went to the warehouse, I decided, just in case, that I should bring along a copy of *Tomb of Dracula* #10 with Blade's first appearance. Wesley was thrilled when I showed him the book.

Blade was popular from day one, and I honestly don't recall getting any negative letters due to his race. Because I was trying to write a somewhat real-world character, Blade lived in the real world and even had a girlfriend, and the two shared an obvious sexual relationship. Remember, this was published in 1973 and live-in girlfriends were not something you ever saw in comics back then, but it helped ground Blade in some sort of reality.

I had created a few characters before I did Blade, and many more after, but from day one I knew Blade was something special. Since I saw Blade as existing in the real world, writing him actually helped teach

me how to write characters with real emotions rather than the standard comic book writing at the time. I truly feel that if I hadn't spent eight years writing Blade and those other characters from *The Tomb of Dracula*, I might never have been given the opportunity to grow, perfect my craft, and become a full-time writer.

Thanks, Blade. And thanks, Roy, for helping make my comic book writing dream come true.

One final note: Remember I said I was putting together a vampire theme issue of *Eerie* magazine for Warren where we'd follow vampires from the very first to the very last in the distant future? I had commissioned the stories from our writers but left Warren before they could be scheduled. The editor who followed me did publish those stories, but not in the chronological order they were meant to be in. My idea of writing the life story of vampires never saw the light of day. What a shame. I would have loved to see if that idea worked.



# SCAN ME!

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# The **TARGET** **HITS 50**

By **PAUL LEVITZ**

**It was a unique and auspicious moment. Probably the only time in comics' history that three people who had each been the creative leader of a major comics company came together to collaborate on a single story, and the creation of a new character.** Len Wein would lead Marvel for the shortest time, in the mid-1970s, but at a very fertile moment in the company's expansion. Carmine Infantino was the driving force at DC for a decade, shaking up the entrenched order there and presiding over a wide range of experimentation.

And Dick Giordano presided over the most creative period in Charlton Comics' long history, introducing their action heroes in the 1960s, and would go on to two decades playing a pivotal role in DC taking the creative leadership of the field. All three would be inducted into the Eisner Hall of Fame.

This combination didn't come about from a careful analysis of how to combine top talents for a magical result; in many ways, it was a triumph of fannish joy. Julie Schwartz was taking over *Action Comics*, consolidating his role as the Superman editor at a time when that was still the bestselling franchise at DC. He wanted to differentiate the title from *Superman* itself and was planning to draw on an old DC tradition by using backup short

stories, rotating several existing characters who didn't have their own titles, like Green Arrow. But Schwartz had been a member of science fiction's First Fandom (the attendees of the very first science fiction World Con, in many ways the direct ancestor of Comic-Con International) and an early fanzine editor. He recognized the value of the enthusiasm on Len Wein's face, as the young writer came bounding into his office, his puppy-dog grin a mile wide.

Wein was in the midst of writing a well-regarded run of *Justice League* for Schwartz and had just launched *Swamp Thing*, based on a short story he and Bernie Wrightson had done for editor Joe Orlando a few doors down the hall. The eight-page original "Swamp Thing" tale done with Bernie Wrightson had

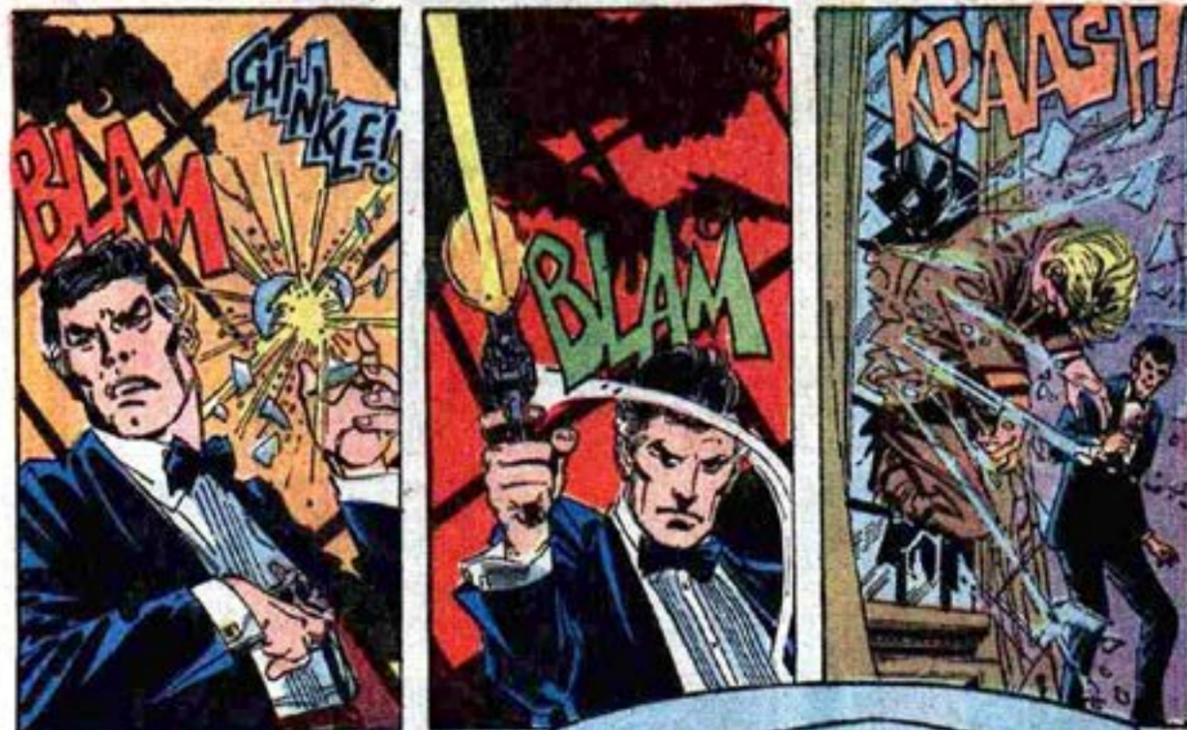
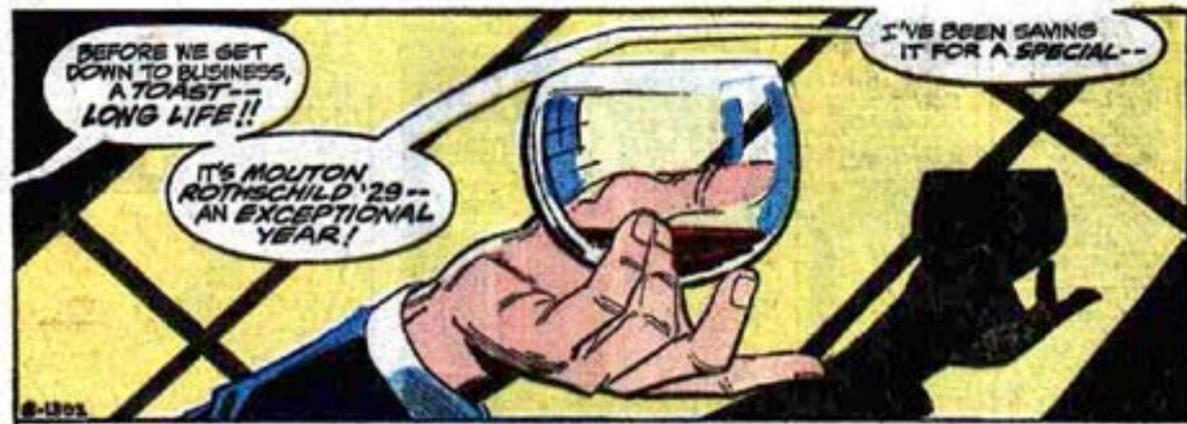
pushed the issue of *House of Secrets* it was in to extraordinary sales, and the office buzz about the new ongoing title was optimistic that it would do the same. Wein was one of the first cohort of writers to come up through comics fandom, practically growing up in the DC offices on the legendary tours given there in the 1960s. In a few months he would capture the industry's Shazam Award (that period's closest equivalent to the Eisners) as Best Dramatic Writer.



**OPPOSITE LEFT:**  
Julius Schwartz at the 1981 Comic-Con.  
Photo by Jackie Estrada

**OPPOSITE RIGHT:**  
Len Wein at the 1985 Comic-Con. Photo  
by Jackie Estrada.

**ABOVE:**  
The latest version of *The Human Target*,  
by Tom King and Greg Smallwood.



"Why not do something new, instead?" It had been a decade since the last backup feature character at DC graduated into a successful ongoing title (and that had been Aquaman, who had been swimming through a handful of DC titles for three decades already), but given the recent phenomenon of Swamp Thing, there had to be a small glimmer of hope that the lightning could strike twice. It's unlikely that Wein or Schwartz thought much about that, but equally unlikely that the idea didn't at least cross their minds.

It was the usual pattern of the two men to plot together: Schwartz was particularly fond of writers who would be open to his reacting to their premises, questioning and quibbling and teasing the stories into shape; and Wein, of the newer generation, was particularly open to that process. It's unknowable where the basic premise and title came from in that moment. There had been a Batman story about a man named Fred Venable who became "The Human Target," impersonating endangered men to raise money to care for his daughter. But if Wein had read it, it was probably a very vague memory from when he was five years old. Remember that in those years, collected book volumes reprinting classic tales hadn't become the norm for comics, and in fact that particular story wasn't reprinted until this decade. It's credited to Edmond Hamilton, one of the top science fiction pulp writers to migrate to comics, with Sheldon Moldoff and Charles Paris ghosting the art under Bob Kane's signature. Hamilton had been a close friend of Schwartz's, but Schwartz rarely read any comics he wasn't actively working on.

There was also a story with the same name and featuring a detective with the same modus operandi that appeared a few years later in *Gangbusters*, a title DC based on the successful radio program. This story came from editor Jack Schiff's office, and was illustrated by Nick Cardy, with the scripter's name lost to history. But

while the original series is largely forgotten, this story was reprinted in the Schwartz-edited *Detective Comics* just a few months before he and Wein sat down for their plotting session and certainly had been read by both of them then.

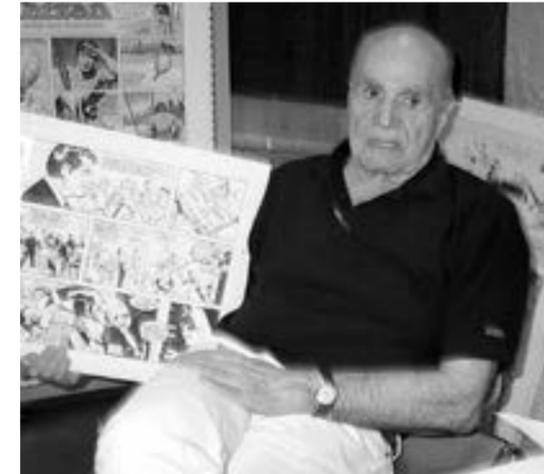
By the time Schwartz and Wein were finished bouncing bits back and forth, this new Human Target would have only the most tangential relationship to his predecessors, but it's an interesting coincidence to have a hero whose career is based on imposture to have his origin in echoes of earlier, largely forgotten characters.

There was another thread to the Target's origins, as revealed by E. Nelson Bridwell in the letter column discussing that first story, a few months later: Bridwell commented that the idea of a human target had come up in discussions years before between Wein and his often collaborator Marv Wolfman when they discussed a story for Showcase that would be one of Wolfman's first credits as a plotter, the story of the aptly named detective Jonny Double. Did the ancient Batman tale influence that, too?

In any case, the new Human Target was a very different character for the DC universe of 1972. Christopher Chance was

debonair, a man of expensive tastes whose first panel introduces him toasting with Mouton Rothschild '29. For a fee, he would impersonate you if you were marked for murder and prevent the killing by bringing the would-be murderer to justice. It's likely that the tonality, so unusual for the dedicated DC heroes who sought to make the world better without reward, was influenced by a then fairly new television series, *Banacek*, starring George Peppard as a dapper private eye with a taste for the good life.

The story plotted, the question arose of who was to draw it. Schwartz had a strong stable of regulars and was occasionally using a talented newcomer on short



**OPPOSITE:** The Human Target made his first appearance in *Action Comics* #219 (December 1973).

**ABOVE:** Carmine Infantino at the 1998 Comic-Con. Len Wein and Dick Giordano at the 1981 Comic-Con. Photos by Jackie Estrada.

stories. It's likely that Wein had the inspiration to go down the hall of the DC offices to publisher Infantino, who had put down his pencil five years before in favor of improbably using ballpoint pen to sketch the designs for most of DC's covers. Infantino had been DC's star artist before switching to the administrative side of the company and had even edged out Jack Kirby as the winner of best artist in comics books' first awards, the Alleys, from 1961 to 1964 for his work on *The Flash*, *Adam Strange* and *Batman* while Kirby was launching the Marvel universe. Wein had helped tally those early awards, and it's easy to envision his boyish enthusiasm talking Infantino into "it's only 10 pages..."

The remainder of the team was easier to cast. Giordano was DC's star inker (and arguably the industry's, having won his peers' acclamation as Best Inker the year before in the short-lived Shazam Awards bestowed by the field's Academy of Comic Book Arts. It also made sense since Giordano could go on to provide artwork on subsequent Human Target tales, which he would for a handful for Schwartz in *Action Comics*, and several years later, several more for me when I was editing *Brave & Bold* and *Detective Comics* and revived the feature.

Rounding out the team were a fourth future Eisner Hall of Famer, letterer Gaspar Saladino (also acknowledged as the field's best in that same Shazam Awards for the year before), and the uncredited coloring was most likely an early assignment done by Glynis Oliver Wein, who would collect her Shazam Award as Best Colorist the following year.

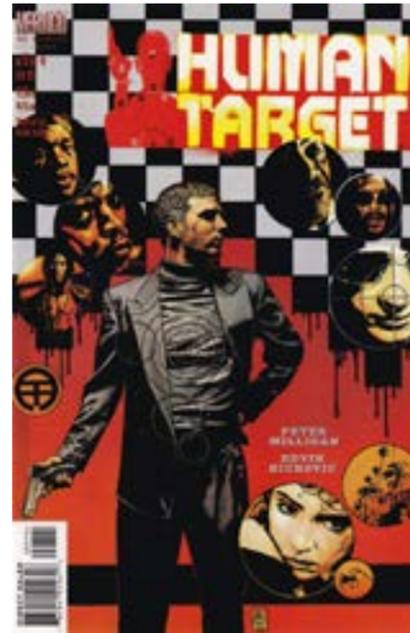
"The Assassin-Express Contract" set up the premise, and was a fairly straight forward impersonation for

Chance, compared to some of the subsequent episodes. Future stories would reveal Chance had adopted his calling after watching his father get murdered as he came face to face with the killer responsible, walk across a circus tightrope, ride in a rodeo, and age himself apparent decades. The series would go into abeyance as page counts shrunk, and come back a few years later, with Wein and Giordano collaborating again.

In a sense, the Human Target series was a bridge between eras of DC Comics: a "gimmick" backup series, in many ways similar to those that had populated the anthologies for years, and in tonality utterly different, reflecting the styles of a younger generation of creative talent that came to DC at the end of the Silver Age displacing many of the longstanding contributors to the line. Whatever the reason for its appeal, it became one of the best-remembered short series in the company's history.

Chance would pop up again in Batman tales and even make a 1991 appearance in *Action Comics*, but he'd basically faded into the background of the DC Universe. Except...his core premise was perfect for television. As comic characters began their migration into TV series, the Human Target got his chance with a summer ABC series starring Rick Springfield. It was a brief seven-episode try-out, and didn't lead to any more. But there was a tie-in comic produced, the Target's first solo edition.

It was DC's mature readers Vertigo imprint that would take on the Target next, first with a four-issue miniseries by Peter Milligan and Edvin Biukovic in 1999, then a graphic novel by Milligan and Javier Pulido in 2002, and finally an ongoing series launched by Milligan and Pulido in 2003.



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**THIS PAGE AND OPPOSITE:** Writer Peter Milligan kept the character alive with a miniseries for Vertigo in 1999 and ongoing series that started in 2003.



The *Human Target* TV series ran for two seasons in 2010–2011 on Fox.

The continued life of Christopher Chance sparked a second television debut, this time as a series on Fox starring Mark Valley and Chi McBride, which launched in 2010 and ran for two seasons. DC tied into it with a TV-derived miniseries in 2010, but when the broadcasts ended, it seemed like the life of the Human Target ended.

But this is comics, and heroes never seem to stay dead. DC's successor to Vertigo as a mature readers line, Black Label, brought Chance back in 2022 for an Eisner Award-winning series in the capable hands of Tom King and Greg Smallwood, with the unusual assignment of protecting Lex Luthor from an unknown

assassin. After this, will Chance remain a consistent part of the DC Universe again, or return to the world of film and television? For a 50-year-old character who people keep trying to kill, one thing's for sure: Being the Human Target is a risky career.

Paul Levitz has been a comics fan (editor of *The Comic Reader*, winner of two Best Fanzine Comic Art Fan Awards), editor (*Batman*), writer (*Legion of Super-Heroes*, including the acclaimed "Great Darkness Saga"), and staffer (38 years at DC, ending as President & Publisher).

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# THEY CALL HER **RED SONJA**

AN UTTERLY UNSCHOLARLY LOOK  
AT THE IMPACT OF A SHE-DEVIL ON THE WORLD  
(AND ALSO ON ME)

*by Gail Simone*

When I first began reading comics as a bratty little red-headed kid, I must admit that I wasn't particularly discerning in my taste. I read superhero comics, westerns, monsters, martial arts, humor—essentially whatever was put in front of me, found mostly second-hand at garage sales. We lived on a very remote farm; choice was limited. But I did have a special love for what they used to call Sword & Sorcery books, so finding a Conan, a Warlord, those were very special finds, very precious indeed.

One day, we found a treasure: a small stack of comics featuring a single character I'd never seen before. She had red hair. And they called her Red Sonja.

I had always put a priority on any comic with a female lead. I'd read *Betty and Veronica*, *Lois Lane*, and *Wonder Woman* over just about any other choice. And they were all lovely role models. But they were polite.

This Red Sonja, she was far from polite. She danced, she fought, she took no crap from anyone. She could even fight Conan to a standstill. She was brash, bold, and dangerous, and I loved her immediately.

But she didn't begin as a comics legend.

**OPPOSITE:**  
Frank Thorne is the best-known artist  
on the Marvel Sonja series.

## SONJA PAST

**1934: Magic Carpet magazine publishes “The Shadow of the Vulture,” a new story by Robert E. Howard, creator of Conan the Barbarian and the Hyborian Age mythos. A new character makes her appearance in this tale, Red Sonya.**

R.E.H. wrote in many genres and had a great love for historic fiction. In “The Shadow of the Vulture,” we are introduced to Red Sonya of Rogatino, who bears little resemblance to the character we are all familiar with, apart from hair color and attitude. She is instead a pistol-packing Russian woman, fighting against a particular sultan of the Ottoman Empire in the 16th century.

While far from the woman in the chainmail we know and love, Sonya is the clear highlight of the story, rescuing the hero and exacting gleeful revenge on the villain. In short, she steals it. This will become a theme with all versions of her.

It’s undeniable that a lot of material from the pulp stories of this era does not hold up well to scrutiny today, and R.E.H. is no exception. But when he created heroines, he often imbued them with personality, agency, and vitality

quite beyond the helpless damsels of many other adventure writers of the day. In this way, his Sonya and “our” Sonja are very much sisters of their kind. Charismatic and lethal sisters, in fact.

**1973: Red Sonja makes her first appearance in Marvel Comics’ Conan the Barbarian #23, making this year her 50th anniversary as a comics character.**

It was comics legend Roy Thomas, with the equally renowned artist Barry Windsor Smith, who created the “She-Devil with a Sword” that we all know, taking inspiration from her pulp roots and building something wonderful. Sonya became Sonja, and instead of being a gunslinging swashbuckler, she was moved to the Hyborian Age and given a blade.

I spoke with Mr. Thomas (confession: It’s difficult for me to call him “Roy”) about the creation of the character (sometimes my job is awesome).

“I had already decided that I wanted to bring a female hero, a (very rough) Conan equivalent, as an occasional foil and/or companion for him. Blonde Valeria wouldn’t

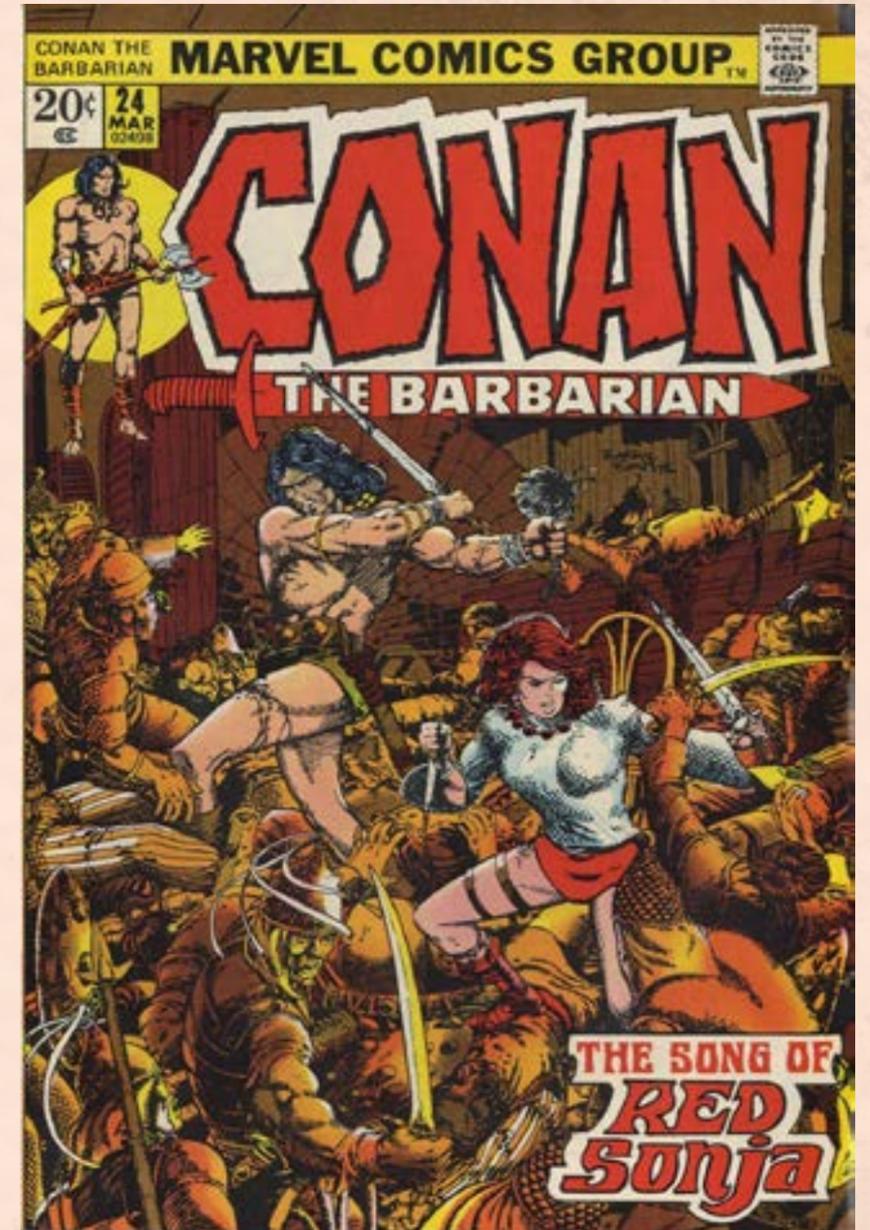
“IT WAS COMICS LEGEND ROY THOMAS, WITH THE EQUALLY RENOWNED ARTIST BARRY WINDSOR SMITH, WHO CREATED THE “SHE-DEVIL WITH A SWORD” THAT WE ALL KNOW, TAKING INSPIRATION FROM HER PULP ROOTS AND BUILDING SOMETHING WONDERFUL.”

come along till later in his life, and black-haired Belit already had her life and death mapped out for her, so I decided I would make this character a redhead. I’d have probably used the name Krimsa, which was batting around in my brain off and on.

“However, at about this time, I read an article in a book that reprinted pieces from the S&S fanzine *AMRA*, as collected by L. Sprague de Camp. The article was by one Allan Howard, apparently no relation to R.E.H. He mentioned that that story’s Germanic hero battle “in company with a red-headed Russian she-cat who would have made a fit companion for Conan. In fact, she might have been a bit too much for him.

“Well, I hardly needed a yurt to fall on me to realize, why should I make up a new character from whole cloth when R.E.H. already done it for me, by sheer coincidence, several years before I was born?”

Having Roy Thomas and Barry Windsor-Smith as your creators is a pretty remarkable pedigree, and Sonja definitely made a crimson splash. It is my opinion that her characterization—that of the free-spirited, dangerous female warrior—made an impact not just on the Conan



**ABOVE:** Red Sonja made her first comic book appearance in *Conan the Barbarian* #23 (1973; story by Roy Thomas and art by Barry Windsor-Smith).

**ABOVE:** Sonja makes it to her first cover.

### 1975: Sonja gets a new artist and a new look.

After her appearances in Conan, Sonja had seven issues of *Marvel Feature* before gaining her own book. During this period, Frank Thorne became Sonja's artist, drawing her with an attitude that seemed to scorch the page. In some panels, her hair seemed literally to be on fire, and there was a gorgeously unabashed sensuality to her look, even in combat. That particular mix of ferocity and sex appeal

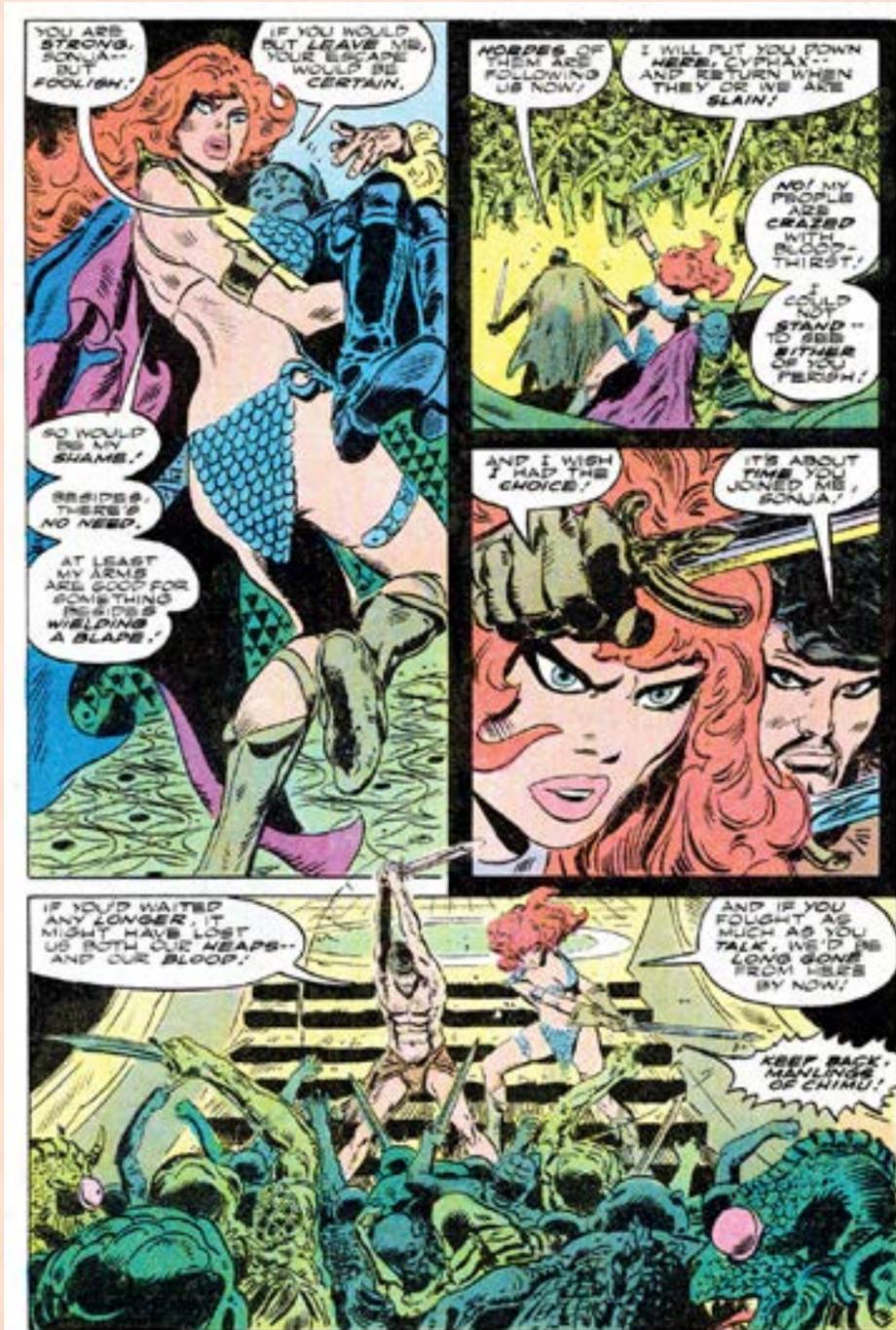
was never more acutely felt in a Marvel comic.

Famously, Frank and *Elfquest* co-creator and artist Wendy Pini would cosplay as "The Wizard and Red Sonja" at conventions during this time, especially Comic-Con. (I can't help it, I love the photo of them!)

Under Thorne's pencil, Red Sonja looked like no other book on the stands and remains a constant inspiration for creators who followed.



**ABOVE:** Artist Frank Thorne liked to dress up as "The Wizard" and appear with Wendy Pini as Sonja at Comic-Con. This photo is from 1978. Photo by Jackie Estrada



**RIGHT:** When Red Sonja got her own book, Frank Thorne was now the artist, and left his own distinctive mark on the character.

## THE OUTFIT

Around this time, one of the most controversial (beloved by some, loathed by others) elements of Red Sonja was created: the chainmail "bikini." Despite numerous attempts to give her a new look, it was clearly established that readers weren't having it, and the outfit became iconic.

Me, I like it. Conan wears even less clothing most of the time, and is drawn well, it provides some spectacular imagery. I get the dissenters, but to me, it's akin to Black Canary's fishnets—a look is a look.

Fun aside: When I was asked to write *Red Sonja* by Nick Barrucci of Dynamite comics, I agreed, on the condition that every cover (variant or otherwise) be drawn by a female artist. We were lucky and got Jenny Frison, Colleen Doran, Nicola Scott, and dozens more. I told each of them they could dress her as they pleased, any outfit they wanted. They could put her in a parka and jorts if they chose.

Every single female artist drew her in the skimpy chainmail.

## WRITING RED SONJA

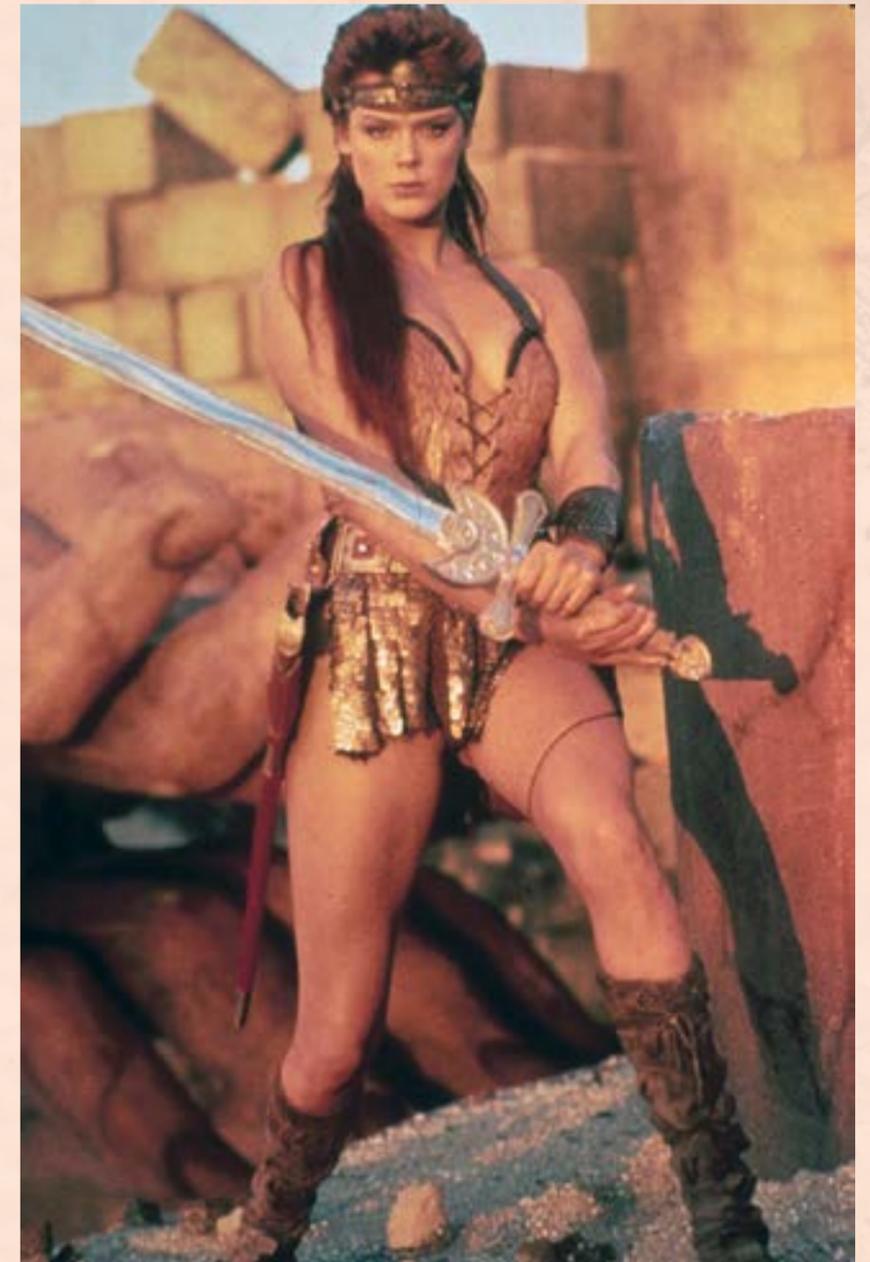
I don't think I have ever confessed this before. I have never seen the entire 1985 *Red Sonja* film that starred Brigitte Nielsen. It wasn't until I became Red Sonja's writer that I realized that this movie was tremendously important to a great many people around the world. Despite mixed reviews and middling box office, I couldn't go to a con without someone telling me how important this film was to them.

Turns out, my own mother was one of these people, and begged me to take the Red Sonja title when it was offered to me. I had no idea!

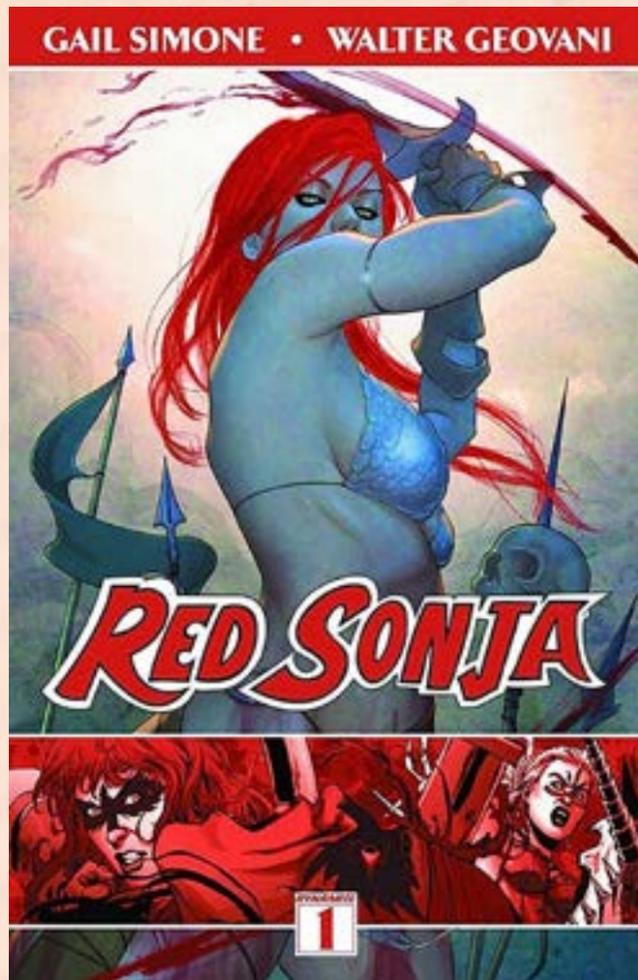
Marvel stopped publishing Red Sonja stories in 1995 with a final one-shot issue. That could well have been the beginning of a descent into obscurity, but fortunately, a new (at the time), scrappy publisher picked up the sword.

I asked Nick Barrucci, of Dynamite Comics, what made him choose the flame-haired Hyrkanian for his new publishing initiative.

"When Dynamite launched, our first title was *Army of Darkness*. And we were successful with AOD and were looking at other properties. A lot of people looked at Red Sonja and thought, "She's not as popular as Conan, Dark Horse didn't even want her," or some such. We looked at it and said, 'Red Sonja hit heights with Barry Windsor-



**ABOVE:** Brigitte Nielsen starred as Sonja in the 1985 film.



**LEFT:**  
Gail Simone came on board to write Red Sonja when Dynamite took on the character.

**MIDDLE:**  
Yes, Red Sonja even teamed up with Spider-Man!

**RIGHT:**  
Gail wrote a series for Dynamite that teamed Red Sonja with other female characters in their stable.

Smith and Roy Thomas. What if we could put together a creative team that fans would love and take her to those heights, and beyond, again?" So we challenged ourselves and succeeded!"

Luke Leiberhan, for whom taking care of Sonja has been a family affair for decades, had this to say: "In terms of the history, she was among the first iconic female warriors in comics and a trailblazer. The stuff Roy Thomas wrote with art from the likes of Frank Thorne, Barry Windsor-Smith, John Buscema, Esteban Maroto and others really brought people to the campfire. It was iconic and elemental, high fantasy and core sword and sandal.

"When I was old enough to get involved around 2005, the character had been largely dormant since Marvel stopped publishing in the early '90s. It was an opportunity to relaunch and bring Sonja to a new generation—my generation. I partnered with Nick Barrucci at Dynamite and got back to the lab again with Michael Avon Oeming, Mike Cary, and Mel Rubi. There was some magic there, and Sonja just took off like shot!"

For fans of Sonja, this has been a lifeline, publishing hundreds of issues, including major events and even inter-company crossovers. They even let me write some

and I didn't accidentally blow up the building or anything.

Wait, which crossovers? I'm so glad you asked! Red Sonja has, in her wanderings, crossed over with characters like Spider-Man, Claw the Unconquered, Witchblade, Archie, Evil Ernie, Mars Attacks! and more.

I adore writing crossovers and have written a few featuring Sonja myself: Red Sonja/Conan (their first meeting in 15 years!), Red Sonja/Tarzan, and *Swords of Sorrow*, a massive crossover featuring nearly every great female character Dynamite has published, including Vampirella, Dejah Thoris, Jennifer Blood, Kato, and more. I was thrilled to write this last one, partially because we believe it includes the first licensed crossover between characters from both Robert E. Howard and Edgar Rice Burroughs!

One of the intimidating things about writing Sonja is the huge footsteps you have to try to fill. Aside from the creators above, she's had memorable stories by Mike Oeming, Margueritte Bennett, Mark Russell, Amy Chu, Mirka Andolfo, Eric Trautmann, Nancy Collins, Jimmy Palmiotti and Amanda Conner, and many more.

Brilliant artists who have drawn her tales include Walter Geovani, Ken Lashley, Valentina Pinti, Stephen Sadowski, and Estaban Moroto.

That's barely scratching the surface! Comics have done all right by our girl, I'm just saying.

## SONJA TODAY

This might be the most exciting time in Sonja's half-century of swordplay and sex talk. Her current series is highly recommended, written by Torunn Grønbekk and drawn by my friend and frequent collaborator, Walter Geovani.

There's a Sonja board game, an animated film, statues and figurines. I bought a pair of Red Sonja socks at GameStop, for Mitra's sake. And more is coming.

Luke Lieberman kindly said this about this time in her history: "Gail and the other female creatives she brought with her added a needed and new dimension to Sonja's legend. That is why, fast-forward to now, when the opportunity to start publishing real full prose novels presented itself, Gail was the only writer I would consider. Today the fire is spreading, comics, novels, a new movie . . . I can't wait to invite new storytellers to

“THERE'S A SONJA BOARD GAME, AN ANIMATED FILM, STATUES AND FIGURINES. I BOUGHT A PAIR OF RED SONJA SOCKS AT GAMESTOP, FOR MITRA'S SAKE. AND MORE IS COMING.”

take a turn by the fire, and bring new fans into Sonja's legend.”

The new Red Sonja movie, directed by M. J. Bassett, is on the way. And there was much rejoicing!

## SONJA FOREVER

I asked several of my extended Sonja family what it was that made her feel special, why she is only getting more popular when a million imitators have been forgotten. I liked Luke's response best: "From my unique perch I have seen many storytellers touch the character over the years in different mediums. The best of them find the authentic core of Sonja, that gutsy, wild, tortured free spirit, forged in fire and unafraid of life or death. I think that is the reason her stories resonate through the decades, holding loyal fans, finding new ones—there is no artifice about Sonja, she just is. That is what keeps her stories compelling after all these years.”

And that's where we are. From a guest appearance in Conan's comic 50 years ago to today, Sonja not only abides, but thrives.

It makes me happy that the future, my friends, is HYRKANIAN.

Note: All opinions unless stated otherwise are purely my own meanderings, not to be taken seriously at all. Thanks to all contributors. Also, go read some Sonja comics, why don't you?

Gail Simone is a writer best known for her work in comics on DC's *Birds of Prey*, *Batgirl*, and *Wonder Woman*, as well as Dynamite Entertainment's *Red Sonja*.



# HOWARD the DUCK

at  
**50**



**Howard the Duck wasn't meant to stick around for 50 years.** In fact, he barely managed to survive his first month. His downy head first popped up as a tossed-off non sequitur of a joke in *Fear* #19, published by Marvel Comics in September, 1973. *Fear* was, as its title suggests, a horror series, starring the mute swamp monster Man-Thing, although writer Steve Gerber and artist Val Mayerik gave it a peculiar, surreally satirical edge. In that issue, an extradimensional barbarian named Korrek (who has emerged from a jar of peanut butter) is complaining about the absurdity his life has become, when a cigar-smoking duck stomps into view, grouching "find-

ing yourself in a world of talking hairless apes—now *that's* absurdity!" Howard, like Popeye or Spider-Man, was one of those characters who showed up perfectly formed. His appearance would change a bit with time, but his core was there from that first panel: a weary Everyduck who's so far out of his element that he's literally in the wrong world (and is deeply annoyed about it), a comedy caricature to whom human existence as we know it is the real joke. The month after *Fear* #19, Man-Thing graduated to a series of his own. In its first issue, as the story continues,

**OPPOSITE:**  
Art by Joe Quinones, for the 2015 miniseries written by Chip Zdarsky.

**ABOVE:**  
Howard's first appearance, in *Fear* #19 (September 1973).



the previously nameless duck is identified as Howard, fights demons for a few panels and then falls off a floating stone and into an interdimensional void. (That was apparently at the behest of editor Roy Thomas, who found a chatty anthropomorphic duck excessively silly as a supporting character in what was nominally a horror story.)

The readers were not having it; letters demanding the anatine vagabond's return poured in. ("Man-Thing #2 was pretty good, but where was Howard the Duck?" asked one.) By the time *Man-Thing* #9 came out, letters on the fourth issue were still inquiring about Howard—not bad for a character who had appeared in a grand total of seventeen panels.

Gerber wrote a short story bringing him back, called "Frog Death," which Neal Adams agreed to draw. "As for which magazine it will grace, we don't know," Gerber noted in *Man-Thing*'s letter column. "At this point, it's kind of a toss-up among the *Haunt Of Horror*, *Crazy* and *The Deadly Hands Of Kung Fu*."

Adams never got around to drawing the story, but in early 1975, "Frog Death" appeared in the fourth issue of *Giant-Size Man-Thing* (go ahead, snicker, it's fine), drawn by Frank Brunner, who was then best known for his work on *Doctor Strange*. Howard's months-long fall through space ends when he crash-lands in Cleveland, where he finds himself in conflict with Garko the Man-Frog, a parody of the sort of monsters who had been a staple of early-'60s Marvel.

That was followed by "Hellcow!" in *Giant-Size Man-Thing* #7—the final issue of that series, as Gerber noted on its letters page. "Now our only problem is...what happens to Howard the Duck?" he wrote. "And on that question, we'd like to hear from you! A magazine of his own? A back-up strip in one of our other 50¢ books? A spot in *Crazy*? Let's hear your suggestions!"

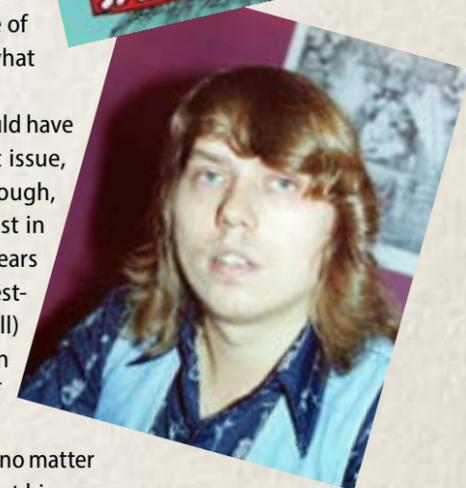
Gerber and Brunner's *Howard the Duck* #1 appeared on newsstands just before Halloween, 1975. Its enduring cover strapline read TRAPPED IN A WORLD HE NEVER MADE!—a variation on a line from A. E. Housman's poem "The Laws of God, the Laws of Man": "I, a stranger and afraid/in a world I never made." (Gerber may have picked it up by way of 1969's *Silver Surfer* #10, "A World He Never Made!") That issue is a Conan parody, in the course of

which Howard contemplates suicide, battles a sorcerous accountant called Pro-Rata, and encounters a slightly confused Spider-Man. He also rescues a woman named Beverly "Bev" Switzler, loosely modeled on Gerber's longtime friend and writing partner Mary Skrenes.

*Howard the Duck* #1's print run was 275,000, low for the time, and it disappeared instantly; it was arguably the first comic book to have been snapped up by speculators. But it was an immediate hit, and Howard and Bev's ongoing adventures were a perfect vehicle for Gerber's barbed sense of humor (and, occasionally, for him to see what he could get away with).

Frank Brunner, who argued that he should have been given co-writing credit for the first issue, left after the second. Soon thereafter, though, *Howard the Duck* found a permanent artist in Gene Colan. He was an unlikely choice: 20 years Gerber's senior, Colan was a veteran of western, romance, superhero, and (most of all) horror comics, and was in the middle of an unbroken 7--issue run penciling *Tomb of Dracula*. He had almost never drawn comedy before. But that was what made it work: no matter how ludicrous the concepts Gerber threw at him were (a monstrous gingerbread creature, the bell-headed Dr. Bong, a "scrubbing bubble that walks like a man"), Colan played them straight. "You took to it immediately and understood exactly what I was trying to do," Gerber told Colan in a conversation for *Back Issue* magazine in 2006. "We had a collaboration the likes of which I have never had with any artist since."

Gerber also had another idea for capitalizing on Howard's success, since 1976 was an election year. He negotiated a contract with Marvel to let him manufacture and sell pinback buttons featuring a drawing of Howard by Bernie Wrightson: "GET DOWN, AMERICA! Vote Howard the Duck in '76." *Howard the Duck*'s letter column plugged the buttons; the duck's presidential campaign began in issue #7 (in which he's drafted as a candidate by the All-Night Party), and attracted some



OPPOSITE:  
Howard leaped back onto the comics pages in *Giant-Size Man-Thing* #4.

ABOVE:  
*Howard the Duck* #1 published in October 1975.

PHOTO:  
Frank Brunner at the 1979 Comic-Con. Photo by Jackie Estrada.

# “Never waste an idea, as they say. It’s a trick that could only really work once, but it worked magnificently”

mainstream press coverage—a real rarity for comics in those days.

*Howard* Continued to surf the cultural zeitgeist. His earliest appearances, which commanded princely sums by mid-1970s standards, were reprinted in an oversized *Marvel Treasury Edition*. A pair of early 1977 issues guest-starred the rock band KISS, their first appearance in comics. And a daily-and-Sunday *Howard the Duck* newspaper comic strip, initially by Gerber and Colan, debuted June 6, 1977, only a few months after Stan Lee and John Romita’s *Amazing Spider-Man* strip.

That was where things started to go afoul. Gerber, who was notoriously bad with deadlines, ran so late on that month’s issue of *Howard* that there was no hope of Colan drawing it in time—but *something* had to go to the printer. So Gerber punted. *Howard the Duck* #16 is a stream-of-consciousness prose essay about himself, Howard, and comics in general, illustrated with double-page images by a handful of guest artists. (The issue’s “obligatory comic book fight scene,” between a Las Vegas chorus girl, an ostrich and a “killer lampshade,” later became the source of Gerber and Phil Winslade’s 1998 miniseries *Nevada*. Never waste an idea, as they say.) It’s a trick that could only really work once, but it worked magnificently.

By mid-1977, *Howard the Duck* had become a big enough deal that the owners of *another* cartoon duck started paying attention: the Walt Disney Company let Marvel know that Howard’s appearance was too close to Donald Duck’s for their liking. An agreement was worked

out by which he would have a modified design going forward, including the smaller eyes with which Val Mayerik had initially drawn him, toes rather than webbed feet, and (most conspicuously and un-Donald-ish-ly) pants. Those design changes might have been an editor’s job to enforce—but Gerber was also the editor of *Howard the Duck* by that point. In issue #21, the offending trousers are forced on Howard by a cult leader (a thinly disguised version of anti-gay activist Anita Bryant), and he’s abandoned them within six pages.

Gene Colan found himself stretched too thin by the *Howard* newspaper strip and left it after four months. Val Mayerik took over and drew it for another four and a half months, before Alan Kupperberg replaced him. Marvel fired Gerber from the strip in March 1978. (By most accounts other than his own, it was because he was habitually very, very late with scripts.) Over the next few months, Gerber’s business relationship with Marvel disintegrated. The *Howard the Duck* comic book went bimonthly, ran a few issues with inventory stories and scripts by writers other than Gerber, then was cancelled as of issue #31 in early 1979. The newspaper strip, written by Marv Wolfman for its last six months, ended in October 1978.

There are readers for whom *Howard the Duck* without Steve Gerber was, and still is, unthinkable. But Gerber had taken pains to show him alongside Spider-Man and the Defenders and the Circus of Crime—“It was very important to me to establish that Howard really did exist in the Marvel Universe,” he said—and the alien-

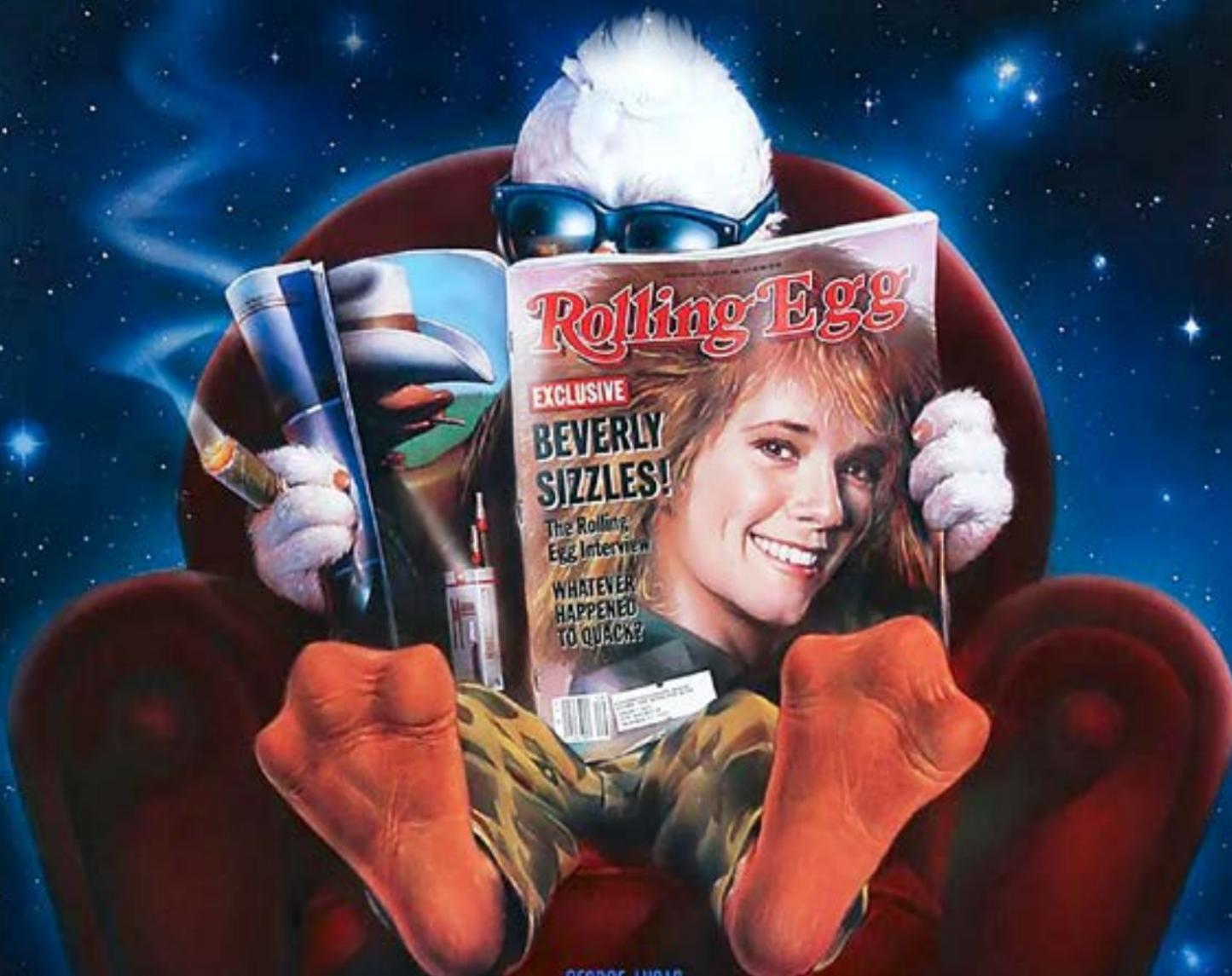


PHOTO: Steve Gerber at the 1986 Comic-Con. Photo by Jackie Estrada.



ABOVE: Howard ran for president in 1976...

Trapped in a world he never made.



# HOWARD THE DUCK

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More adventure than humanly possible.

ated waterfowl had become part of that universe's fabric. Howard did actually make his long-foreshadowed debut in Marvel's black-and-white *Mad* knockoff *Crazy* in 1979, appearing in 15 short strips over a few dozen issues.

He also got a new series of his own that year, the relatively short-lived, black-and-white *Howard the Duck Magazine*, largely written by Bill Mantlo, with a stellar artistic lineup that included Colan as well as the likes of Michael Golden and Marshall Rogers. And *Marvel Team-Up* #96, released in the spring of 1980, was a Spider-Man/Howard the Duck team-up—notable as the first Marvel newsstand comic to be written, penciled, inked, lettered and colored by a single creator, Alan Kupperberg.

Later in 1980, as a *Howard the Duck* radio serial starring Jim Belushi was going into production, Steve Gerber sued Marvel and its parent company Cadence Industries Corporation over the intellectual property rights to Howard—although he had previously signed several contracts attesting to Marvel's ownership of the character. Gerber ran up massive legal bills with the suit, and his many friends in comics contributed to fundraising projects on his behalf, most famously the first issue of *Destroyer Duck*, created by Gerber with Jack Kirby.

In September 1982, Gerber settled with the defendants of his lawsuit. The settlement's exact terms were not disclosed, but the upshot was that Marvel owned Howard.

With that, they more or less buried the hatchet. Marvel's then-editor-in-chief Jim Shooter was a fan of Gerber's work; he called him "one of the most gifted wordsmiths I ever encountered. He was also among the most talented creators." Gerber had gone on to a successful career as an animation writer, but in 1985, with the *Howard the Duck* film in the works, Shooter invited him to write a new *Howard* title. Gerber wrote a script for a first issue but withdrew it over proposed editorial changes. Instead, *Howard the Duck* #32 and #33 appeared in 1986 with no contributions from Gerber; the first of those, by Steven Grant and Paul Smith, had been sitting in Marvel's inventory for years at that point.

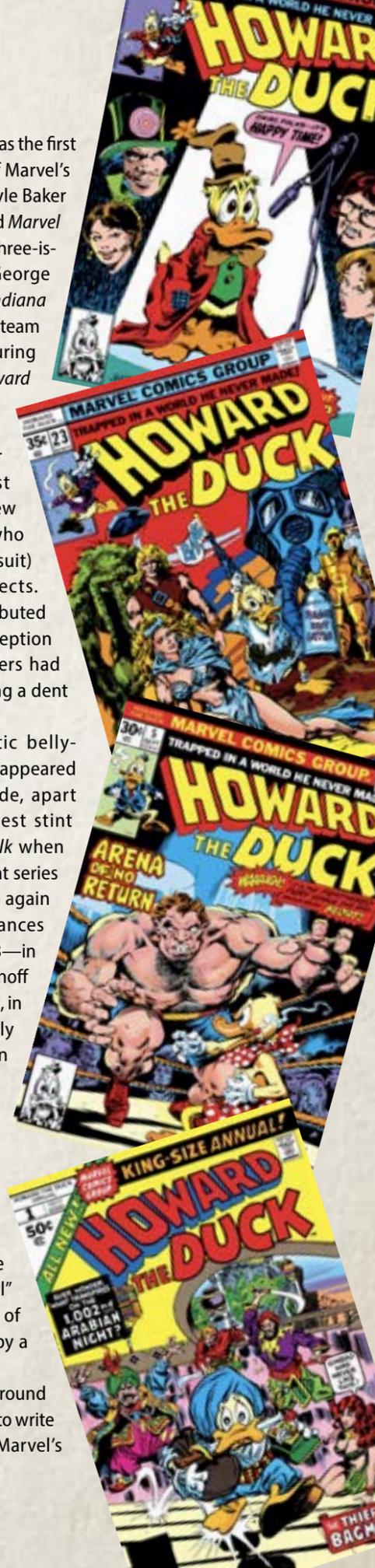
The *Howard the Duck* movie, meanwhile, was the first theatrical feature film to be based on one of Marvel's comics. Writer Danny Fingerh and artist Kyle Baker adapted it into an issue of the magazine-sized *Marvel Super Special*, which was also serialized as a three-issue comic book. Executive-produced by George Lucas, co-written by the *American Graffiti/Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* screenwriting team of Willard Huyck and Gloria Katz, and featuring music by John Barry and Thomas Dolby, *Howard* was released August 1, 1986, and bombed spectacularly. It won that year's Golden Raspberry Awards for Worst Picture, Worst Screenplay, Worst New Star (the six people who wore Howard's duck suit) and Worst Visual Effects. And it arguably contributed to the movie-biz perception that Marvel's characters had no hope of ever making a dent at the box office.

**"The Howard the Duck movie, meanwhile, was the first theatrical feature film to be based on one of Marvel's comics"**

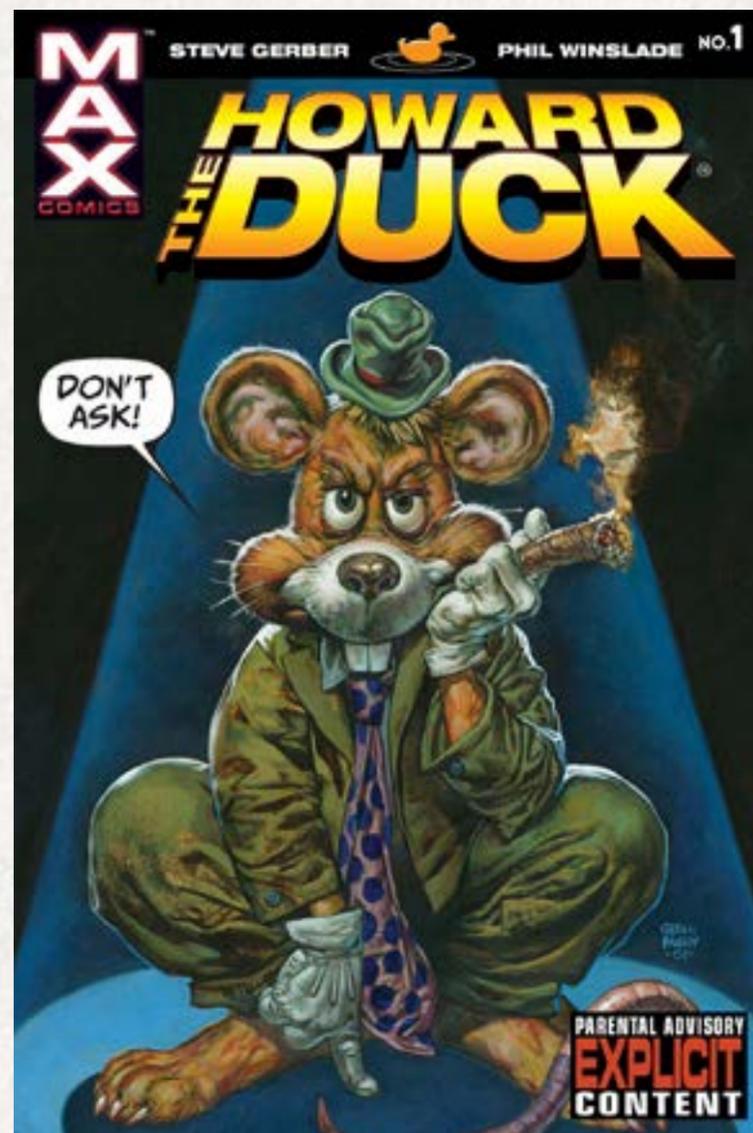
After his cinematic belly-flop, Howard scarcely appeared in comics for a decade, apart from a four-issue guest stint in *Sensational She-Hulk* when Gerber was writing that series in 1990. He turned up again in a flurry of appearances between 1996 and 1998—in *Generation X* and its spinoff miniseries *Daydreamers*, in *Man-Thing*, and slightly more infamously in *Spider-Man Team-Up* #5, the only Howard story of that period

that Gerber wrote. That issue was an unofficial crossover with *Savage Dragon/Destroyer Duck*, a one-shot by Gerber, Chris Marrinan, and Erik Larsen published by Image Comics around the same time. The implication of the two stories, taken in tandem, was that the "real" Howard had been spirited away to the land of creator-owned comics and been replaced by a double in the Marvel universe.

Surprisingly, that wasn't Gerber's last go-round with Howard; in 2002, he returned once again to write a six-issue *Howard the Duck* miniseries for Marvel's



“He also returned, briefly, to the big screen: In 2014, he made a fleeting appearance in the first *Guardians of the Galaxy* movie”



mature-readers imprint MAX, drawn by Phil Winslade. It's as ferociously satirical as anything Gerber had ever written and features parodies of a handful of Vertigo comics, including Gerber and Winslade's own *Nevada*, to bring things full circle. Also, Howard does indeed appear in his Disney-mandated trousers in the first issue . . . and then spends most of the rest of the miniseries transformed into an anthropomorphic mouse. Touché.

Gerber died of pulmonary fibrosis on February 10, 2008; he was posthumously inducted into the Will Eisner Hall of Fame in 2010. Over the past couple of decades, Howard has again become a familiar presence in comics. In 2007, he starred in a miniseries by writer Ty Templeton and artists Juan Bobillo and Marcelo Sosa; in 2015–2016, there was an ongoing *Howard the Duck* title by writer Chip Zdarsky and artist Joe Quinones (its revised cover strapline: “Trapped in a world he’s grown accustomed to”). And he’s turned up on panel alongside everyone from Deadpool to the Silver Surfer to Phil Coulson.

He also returned, briefly, to the big screen: In 2014, he made a fleeting appearance in the first *Guardians of the Galaxy* movie and has since turned up in its two sequels

(as well as *Avengers: Endgame*, in which he can be seen for literally a fraction of a second). Every time he appears, in print or on film, it serves as an immediate reminder of how weird and wide Marvel’s fictional universe can be—that it includes a talking duck, accidentally exiled from his home dimension, who briefly ran for president, has been to outer space, and currently works as a private investigator, and he’s still not that big a deal in the scheme of things. Now *that’s* absurdity.

Douglas Wolk is the author of *All of the Marvels: A Journey to the Ends of the Biggest Story Ever Told*.

ABOVE: Steve Gerber’s last Howard project was a 2002 six-issue miniseries, drawn by Phil Winslade.



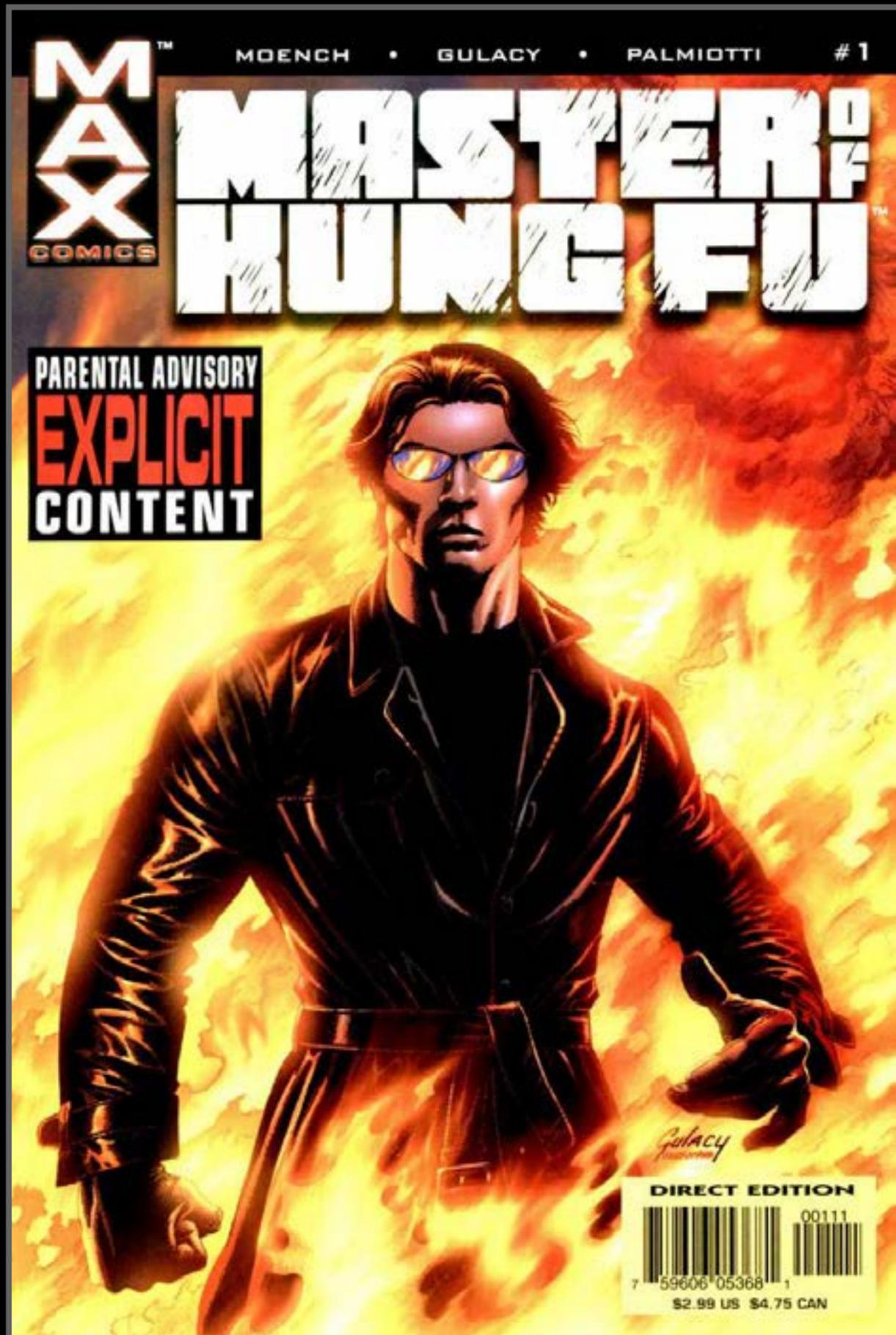
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# 50 YEARS OF Shang-Chi

BY GENE LUEN YANG

**I started collecting comic books when I was in the fifth grade.** My mom bought me a copy of *DC Comics Presents #57* starring Superman and the Atomic Knights off a spinner rack at my local bookstore. I was immediately smitten.

When I found out about the comic shop in my hometown, I couldn't believe it. An entire store, just for comics? Every weekend, I would pester my mom to take me. Every now and then, she would relent.

Even though my very first comic book was from DC, I quickly became a die-hard Marvel fan. This was the mid-1980s. Spider-Man wore a black suit. She-Hulk had just joined the Fantastic Four. The Avengers were guests on the David Letterman show. I loved it all. I even loved the obscure characters like Frog-Man and Jack of Hearts. I loved everything Marvel . . . except Shang-Chi.

By the time I started collecting, Shang-Chi no longer had his own monthly series, but he was still around. I'd come across him in back-issue bins and the quarter box. Whenever I did, I'd flip to the next book as quickly as possible. In late elementary school and junior high, I began to feel uncomfortable with who I was as a Chinese

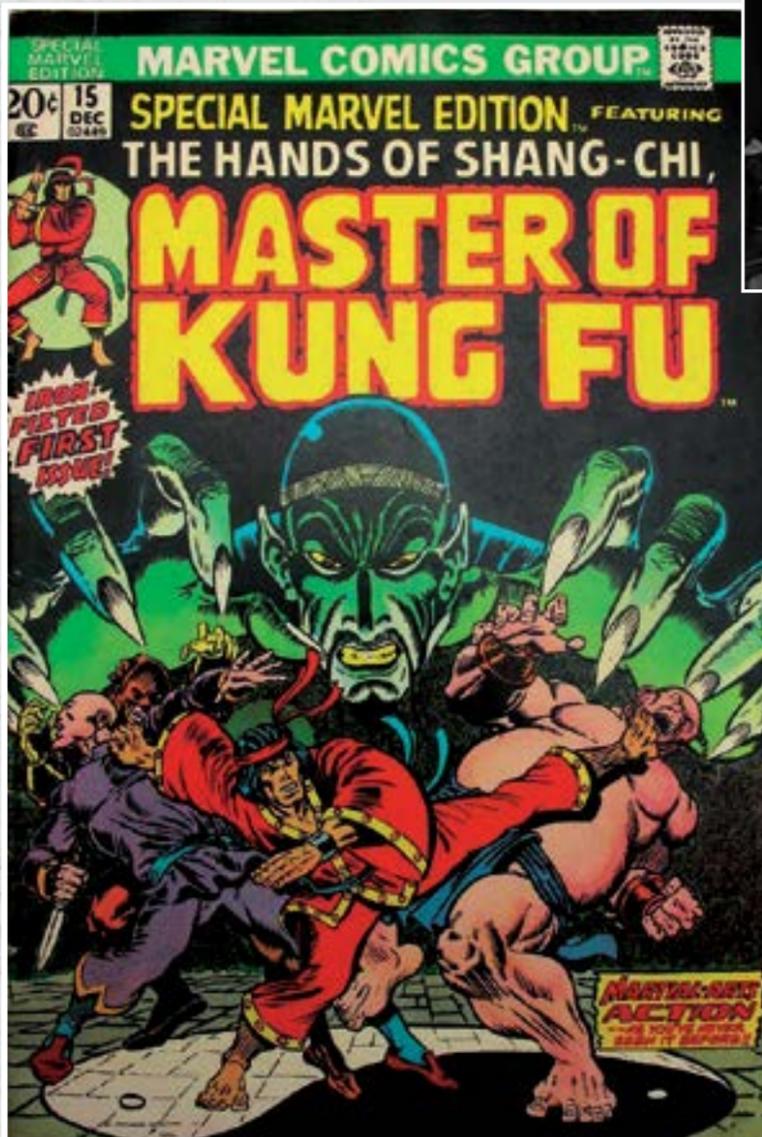
American. I felt embarrassed by the language we spoke at home, the food that we ate, my parents' accents, and the shape of my eyes because they made me different from most of the other kids at school.

The thought of bringing a comic with a Chinese American hero on the cover up to the register horrified me. It would've highlighted everything about me that I wanted the world to forget.

I didn't read a Shang-Chi comic until I was in my twenties, long after I'd made peace with—and then found pride in—my own heritage. It was the first issue of the 2002 Marvel MAX miniseries *Master of Kung-Fu: Hellfire Apocalypse*, written by Doug Moench and drawn by Paul Gulacy. Instead of his original red-and-yellow outfit, Shang-Chi wore a black leather jacket and sunglasses. There was a confidence about him that I found intriguing.

I didn't really do a deep dive into Shang-Chi, however, until 2019, when Marvel editor Darren Shan contacted me about possibly writing a Shang-Chi miniseries. After our conversation, Darren sent me a digital collection of all those comics from the 1970s, the ones I'd ardently avoided since I was a kid.

**FACING PAGE:**  
Gene's first Shang-Chi comic:  
*Master Kung Fu: Hellfire Apocalypse #1*,  
cover by Paul Gulacy.



**TOP:** Shang-Chi was created by writer Steve Englehart (shown here at Comic-Con in 1979) and artist Jim Starlin (shown here at Comic-Con in 1982).

**MIDDLE:** The debut of Shang-Chi: Marvel's *Special Marvel Edition* #15 in December 1973, with art by Jim Starlin.

**BOTTOM:** Paul Gulacy's dynamic art can be seen in the original art for a chapter-opening page for Giant-Size *Master of Kung Fu* #1.



## The Birth of Shang-Chi

Shang-Chi was born in 1973, the same year as me. America was going through a collective obsession with martial arts at the time, largely because of a charismatic Chinese American martial artist by the name of Bruce Lee.

Kung fu was so popular that there was even a television show called *Kung Fu*, starring a decidedly not-Chinese actor named David Carradine. Comic book writer Steve Englehart and artist Jim Starlin wanted to do a series that tied into the show. They approached DC Comics, whose parent company Warner Brothers owned the rights to *Kung Fu*.

DC wasn't interested in a martial arts comic. But Marvel was.

Shang-Chi debuted in the pages of *Special Marvel Edition* #15 in December 1973. He proved to be a hit, so much so that two issues later, Marvel changed the series title to *The Hands of Shang-Chi, Master of Kung Fu*.

Paul Gulacy replaced Starlin as the regular artist in issue #18. Doug Moench replaced Englehart as the regular writer in issue #20. All four creators are now rightly considered comics legends, and their work on *Master of Kung Fu* shows why.

The page layouts are inviting and innovative—sometimes elaborate but always clear and easy to read. The panel compositions accentuate the dynamism of our hero and his opponents. The fights are meticulously choreographed to bring out both the beauty and the brutality of martial arts. I especially appreciated the moment-to-moment transitions, a rarity in American comics of the 1970s.

I also appreciated Shang-Chi's swagger. Under Gulacy's pen, especially, our hero channels Bruce Lee's charisma. And more than once, the Asian guy gets to kiss the girl, another rarity in American comics of the 1970s.

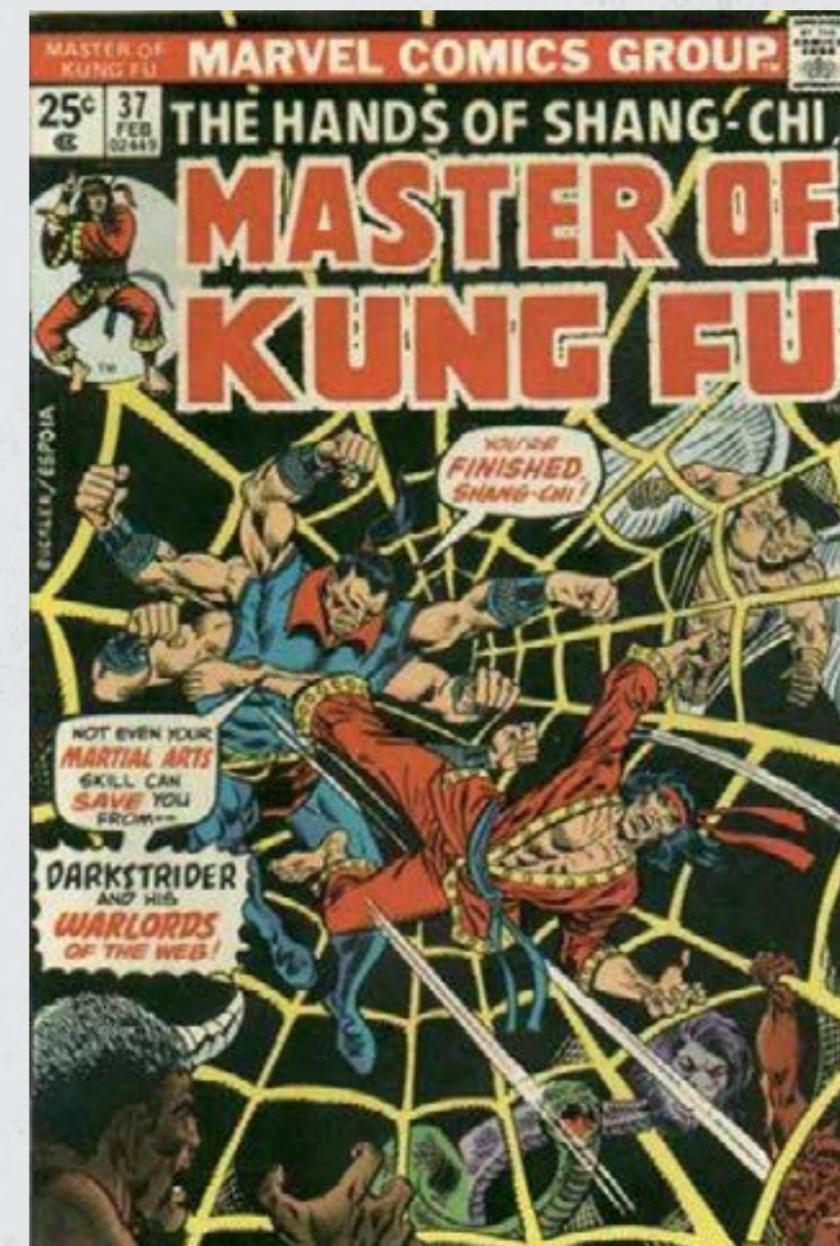
The best storylines have a dreamlike quality, as if the writer had spent hours meditating (or perhaps participating in other mind-expanding activities) before sitting down at his typewriter. One of my favorites begins in issue #36 and concludes in issue #37. Shang-Chi comes across a traveling circus of strange human-animal hybrids. When he speaks to the hybrids individually, he finds their memories conflict with one another. By the end, Shang-Chi finds himself questioning the very nature of memory and perception.

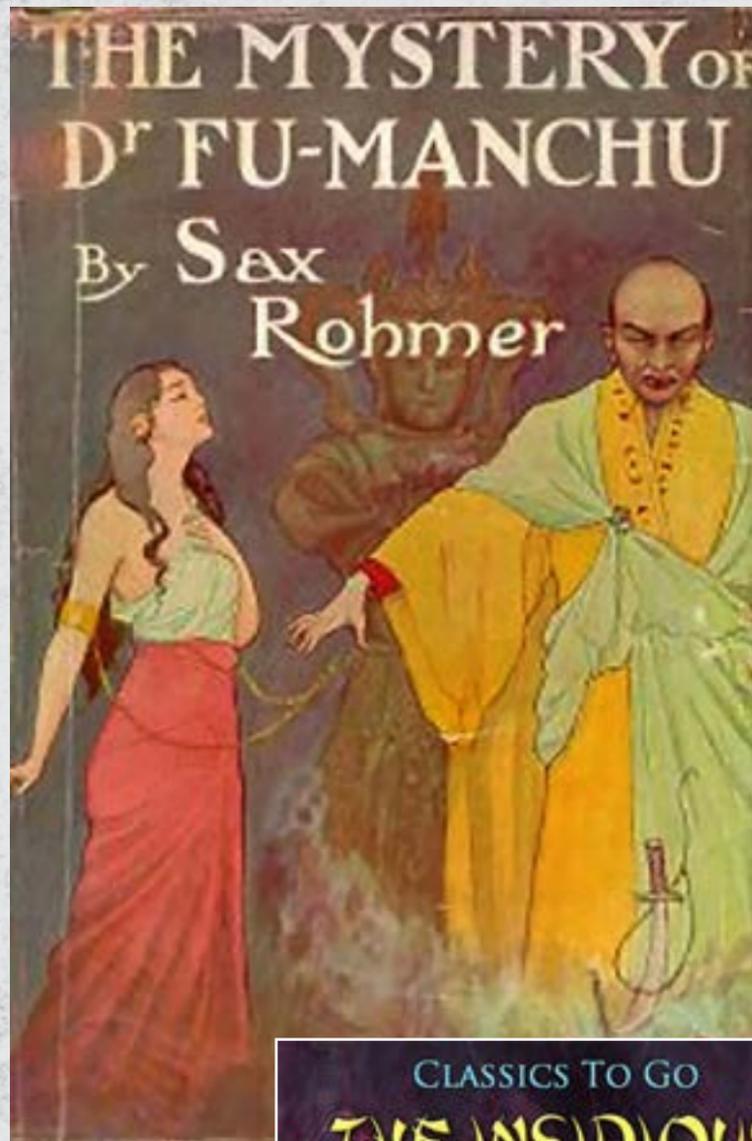
Despite their merits, the early Shang-Chi comics are clearly a product of their time. Western media has a long

history of stereotyping Chinese and Chinese Americans, and some of those stereotypes made their way onto the pages of *Master of Kung Fu*. Most glaringly, a major character in Shang-Chi's initial supporting cast is a walking, talking stereotype.

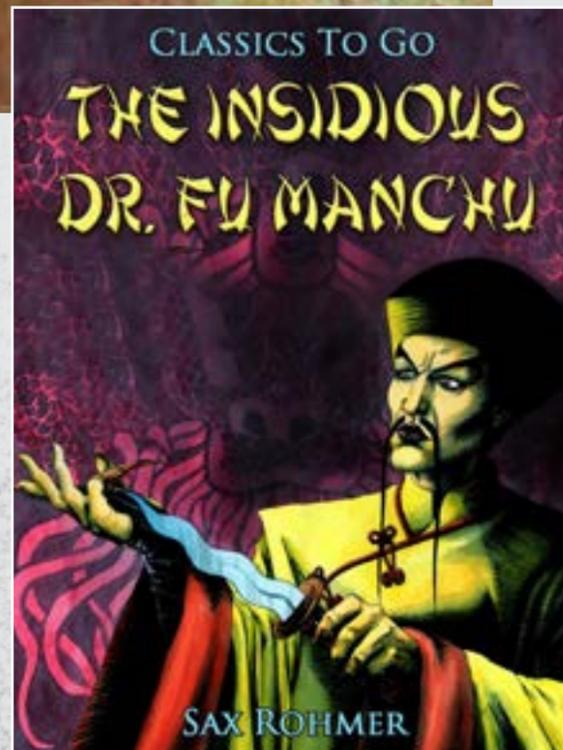
In *Special Marvel Edition* #15, Shang-Chi's father is revealed to be Fu Manchu, the granddaddy of all Yellow Peril villains.

**BELOW:** Cover of *The Hands of Shang-Chi, Master of Kung Fu* #37 by Rich Buckler.





**ABOVE:**  
The original cover of the novel *The Mystery of Dr. Fu-Manchu* (1913) by Sax Rohmer.



**RIGHT:**  
The "Fu Manchu moustache" was evident on the cover of later books by Rohmer.

## Fu Manchu

Fu Manchu was created in 1912 by British novelist Sax Rohmer. Supposedly, Rohmer's search for financial success led him to a Ouija board. When he asked the board how he might make his fortune, it answered by spelling out a single word: C-H-I-N-A-M-A-N.

From that inspiration, Rohmer created his most famous character. Fu Manchu is tall, slender, and looming. He has yellow skin and "a face like Satan." He keeps his fingernails dangerously long and his facial hair in a thin, drooping mustache that would eventually come to bear his name. He cultivates his genius-level intellect and aptitude for cruelty for a single purpose: to destroy the Western world.

Rohmer first wrote about Fu Manchu in the short story "The Zayat Kiss." He then collected it and nine other stories into a novel that was published as *The Mystery of Dr. Fu Manchu* in the United Kingdom and *The Insidious Dr. Fu Manchu* in the United States.

Fu Manchu became a cultural phenomenon. Rohmer wrote a total of 14 Fu Manchu novels, which inspired countless film serial and motion picture adaptations. They also inspired countless knockoffs. Fu Manchu became the archetype of a new kind of character: the Yellow Peril villain, an emotionless Asian super-genius antagonist designed to capitalize on Western fears of the East.

By the end of his life, Sax Rohmer had sold 20 million copies of his novels. The Ouija board, it seems, was right.

When Fu Manchu's rights were licensed by Marvel in the 1970s, he'd already been a household name for decades. Perhaps Marvel had hoped to leverage his name recognition to shine a light on Shang-Chi, a brand-new character original to the Marvel Universe.

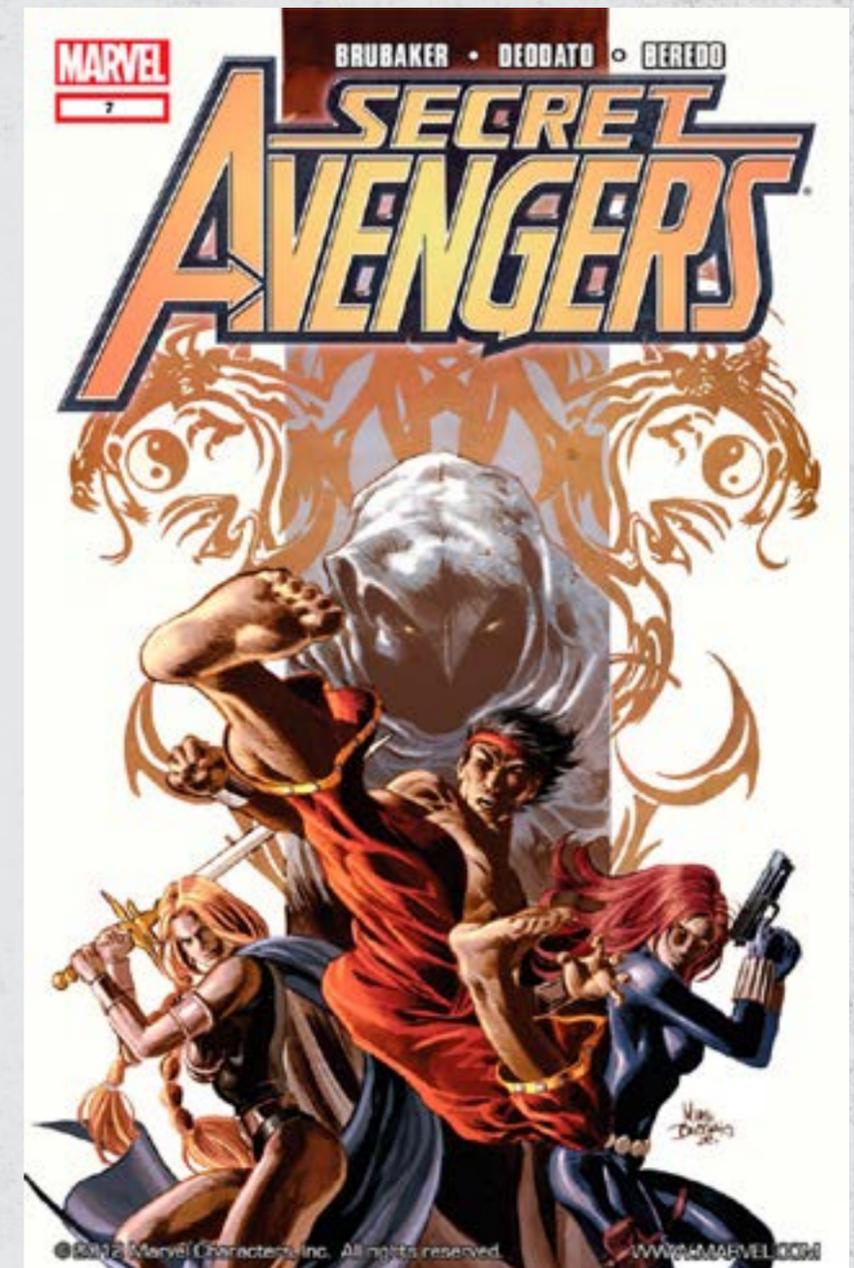
As time went on, though, Fu Manchu's name became a liability. After Marvel gave up the rights, they had to figure out how to handle Shang-Chi's backstory. What's a hero to do when he can't even speak the name of his own father?

In 2010, writer Ed Brubaker and artist Mike Deodato Jr. came up with a solution. In the story arc "Eyes of the Dragon" in *Secret Avengers* #6-10, Shang-Chi's father is partially resurrected by his own evil secret society. We learn that he has gone by many different names throughout his life. Presumably, Fu Manchu is one. Zheng Zu, the name by which he'd be known moving forward, is another.

## Secret Avengers

I read *Secret Avengers* #6-10 as part of my Shang-Chi deep dive. They're fun and well-crafted. Instead of a leather jacket and sunglasses, Shang-Chi wears a black graphic tee and red kung-fu pants. He's earnest, smart, and a loyal teammate to the Secret Avengers. The dynamism of Deodato's figure work reminded me of Gulacy's work from decades earlier. Top-notch superhero comics.

It's fitting that Shang-Chi appeared in a series called *Secret Avengers*. For most of his existence, he's been a secret to anyone outside of comics. After *Master of Kung Fu* ended with issue #125 in 1983, Shang-Chi had mostly been regulated to guest star and back-up roles, the very definition of a D-list Marvel character.



**ABOVE:**  
Mike Deodato's cover for *Secret Avengers* #7

“Fu Manchu became a cultural phenomenon. Rohmer wrote a total of 14 Fu Manchu novels, which inspired countless film serial and motion picture adaptations.”



## The Movie

This all changed in September 2021, when *Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings* opened theaters nationwide.

At the time, the world was in the middle of a pandemic that many blamed on China. The news reported story after story of Asian Americans, often senior citizens, being violently attacked on the streets. My friends told me stories of getting harassed while jogging, walking, or shopping, often in neighborhoods they'd lived in for years. My father and my parents-in-law were afraid to go to the grocery store, and not because of the virus. American fear of the East, the same fear that characters like Fu Manchu were designed to exploit, was more palpable than it had ever been during my lifetime.

It was in this environment that the Shang-Chi movie was released. Many predicted it would fail. People were not yet ready to go to movie theaters, the reasoning went, and they certainly wouldn't go for a movie that had so many Chinese and Chinese Americans in it.

I went. So did my friend and fellow cartoonist Thien Pham. We pulled on our masks and drove to a nearby cineplex for an afternoon matinee. It was the first movie either of us had seen in a theater since the pandemic began.

I absolutely loved it. Thien did, too. For my money, the bus fight scene is the single best fight scene of any Marvel movie, as meticulously choreographed as the fights in Moench and Gulacy's comics. Simu Liu's Shang-Chi is a likeable everyman with the same earnestness as the Shang-Chi in Brubaker and Deodato's

*Secret Avengers*. Awkwafina, playing Shang-Chi's slacker best friend, had us laughing out loud all the way through. And Michelle Yeoh graces the screen with her usual gravity and knack for kicking bad guys' butts.

Most impressive, though, is the villain. Shang-Chi's father goes by yet another name in the movie: Wenwu. He's still a Chinese super-genius. He's still the head of an evil secret society. But, played by Hong Kong superstar



Tony Leung, his face doesn't remotely resemble Satan.

Far from Sax Rohmer's cardboard cut-out antagonist, Wenwu is driven by deeply human motivations. His is a story of how grief over a loved one, if left to fester, can corrupt us to our very souls. I would argue that of all the villains in the Marvel Cinematic Universe, Shang-Chi's father is the most sympathetic.

Thien and I weren't alone. Audiences across America loved it, too. *Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings*, a pandemic-era movie starring a mostly Chinese and Chinese American cast, went on to become one of the most celebrated films of the year.

The movie owes much of its success to the vision of its director, Destin Daniel Cretton. Destin is an Asian American who grew up in Hawaii. He has a keen eye for both quiet, intimate moments and broad, spectacular action. I had the privilege of getting to know him while we worked together on the television adaptation of my 2006 graphic novel *American Born Chinese*. "With *Shang-Chi*, I wanted to get all the specifics right: the accents, the food, the martial arts," he told me. "It's this odd, magical thing in movies. You get the specifics right and the whole thing becomes universal."

I agree with Destin. Fu Manchu's specifics make him alien and threatening. Wenwu's specifics tear at our hearts.



**OPPOSITE (LEFT):**  
Movie poster for *Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings*.

**OPPOSITE (RIGHT):**  
Gene and fellow cartoonist Thien Pham ventured to see the movie during the pandemic.

**ABOVE:**  
Writer Gene Luen Yang with *Shang-Chi* movie director Destin Cretton, who also directed the television adaptation of Yang's graphic novel *American Born Chinese*.



**ABOVE:**  
In Gene Yang's series *Shang-Chi: Brothers & Sisters*, Shang-Chi meets his siblings. The art is by Dike Ruan, with coloring by Sebastian Cheng.

## Writing Shang-Chi

Writing comics about Shang-Chi, the one Marvel hero I'd avoided when I was a kid, turned out to be a joy. Darren paired me up with a few of the best artists in the business: Dike Ruan, Philip Tan, Marcus To, Michael Yg, Leinil Francis Yu, and Jim Cheung. We initially signed to do five issues. Because of fan support, we did 24.

We got to introduce a new supporting cast for Shang-Chi, including half-siblings that irritate him to no end but that he would also die for. We were also able to pay homage to his past. Darkstrider, one of the human-animal hybrids from *Master of Kung Fu* #37, shows up in our "Game of Rings" storyline (*Shang-Chi and the Ten Rings* #4-#6). In *Shang-Chi: Master of the Ten Rings* #1, we visit the site of Zheng Zu's resurrection from Brubaker and Deodato's "Eyes of the Dragon" storyline.

We tried our best to get the specifics right, to make Shang-Chi as universal, and as human, as possible.

There's no doubt that Shang-Chi's 50-year legacy is a checkered one, especially for Asian Americans. But it is still worth preserving. It is still worth building upon. Ultimately, the long arc of his story can be read as a fight. It's a fight against stereotypes and dehumanization. It's a fight for heroism, progress, and hope.

Happy 50th birthday, Shang-Chi! You truly are Marvel's greatest fighter!

Gene Luen Yang's graphic novel *American Born Chinese*, a National Book Award finalist and Printz Award winner, has been adapted into an original series on Disney+. His two-volume graphic novel *Boxers & Saints* won the LA Times Book Prize and was a National Book Award Finalist.

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# CELEBRATING 50 YEARS of the DIRECT MARKET

by Rob Salkowitz

If you ask fans today where you get comic books, the answer is simple: the local comic shop! The LCS isn't merely the place that carries all the books, periodicals, and merchandise that fans crave; it's also the center of the geek culture community and a driving force behind nearly the \$2.1 billion in comics sales in North America in 2022.

But 50 years ago, comic stores as standalone businesses barely existed, and those that did specialized exclusively in collectibles. How did they become the central institutions of the hobby and the main place to buy monthly comic books? For that we have to look to one of those rare cases where a change on the business side of an industry fundamentally changed the creative output, largely for the better: The Direct Market Revolution.

## Secret Origins of the Direct Market

Prior to the mid-1970s, comics were sold mostly on newsstands, in drug stores, and in other mass market outlets, supplied by national magazine distributors based on a subdistributor ("indirect market") system that dated from the 1950s. As comics became more popular and collectible in the 1960s, fans became dissatisfied with having to track down issues all over town, often in less-than-great condition, sold by indifferent or patronizing vendors.

Worse, some wholesalers noted customers who stockpiled dozens or hundreds of copies of "hot books" for later resale to collectors, and they began falsifying sales reports to publishers, claiming that vast numbers of unsold copies had been destroyed when in fact they were selling them under the table to comic dealers. Publishers, creators, and fans lost out when ambitious titles like Neal Adams and Denny O'Neil's *Green Arrow* or Jack Kirby's *Fourth World* series got canceled due to mysteriously low sales and others, like Marvel's *Conan the Barbarian*, were afflicted by "regional distribution scarcity."

In the late 1960s, the underground comix movement pioneered a system of direct distribution, with publishers like Rip Off Press, Last Gasp, Print Mint, and Kitchen Sink selling to specialty stores—in this case, hippie-oriented head shops and record stores—on a nonreturnable basis. This worked well because underground comix were standalone stories and sold like books rather than serialized comics. People began wondering whether this kind of model could work on a larger scale with mainstream comics from DC, Marvel, and the other major publishers.

FACING PAGE:

Before comic book stores, kids bought comics in drug stores and on newsstands.

Enter Phil Seuling, the organizer of some of the first large comic conventions in the late '60s-early '70s, and the owner of one of the first comic specialty stores. In 1972, Seuling recognized the potential for a dedicated marketplace for comic books and began promoting direct sales to retailers as a way to bypass the limitations of newsstand distribution and connect directly with readers.

In 1973, Seuling established Sea Gate Distributors and struck deals with DC, Marvel, Warren, and Archie to distribute directly to the growing network of specialty comic book stores starting in the fall of 1973. The direct market allowed retailers to order comics on a nonreturnable basis, eliminating publishers' risks and losses associated with unsold copies. For retailers who knew they could sell unsold back issues to collectors at a premium, the deeper discounts associated with nonreturnable comics were a win-win. A few pioneering entrepreneurs around the country—including many who later became import-

ant figures in the comics business—signed up, hoping to leverage their understanding of market dynamics to make it easier for fans to get the comics they wanted.

## The Golden Age

As the direct market gained traction, distributors such as Capital City Distribution and Diamond Comic Distributors entered the scene, further expanding the reach and availability of comic books. This new distribution model not only provided a reliable supply chain for retailers but also enabled publishers to experiment with a wider range of titles and genres that might not have fared well on newsstands.

By the late 1970s, enough comic stores existed around the United States that independent publishers like Wendy and Richard Pini's Warp Graphics (*Elfquest*), Dave Sim's

Aardvark-Vanaheim (*Cerebus*), the Schanes brothers' Pacific Comics (*Rocketeer*), Gary Groth and (later) Kim Thompson's Fantagraphics (*Love and Rockets*) and Dean Mullaney and cat yronwode's Eclipse (*Sabre*) could experiment with more mature-themed, higher quality comics aimed at fans and build enough of an audience to make them commercially viable. They could also experiment with new formats like the recently christened "graphic novels," which presented comics material in a more deluxe, permanent format.

The big publishers quickly recognized the advantages that the direct market posed over the risky, opaque, and increasingly corrupt newsstand distribution model. By the late 1970s, both DC and Marvel were producing more comics aimed squarely at fans and experienced readers, departing from the decades' long editorial edict to treat every issue like it was somebody's first comic book.

The loosening of editorial constraints coincided with the arrival of a new generation of artists, writers and edi-

tors who grew up reading—and respecting—comics. These young creators had ambitions beyond churning out silly stories for kids and wanted to pick up the threads of continuity and artistic expression they'd caught glimpses of in the '60s and '70s. And now, they had a direct channel to reach fans who were just as hungry to read bigger, better-crafted stories.

Storylines got longer and more complex because editors knew readers could reliably pick up each new issue at their local comic shop or buy back issues to bring them up to date. Publishers splurged on better paper stock, higher page counts, and new color technology, knowing that comic shop buyers were willing to pay a higher cover price for better quality. Artists like Frank Miller, Bill Sienkiewicz, Walt Simonson, and Art Adams took advantage of the better reproduction to produce stunning, detailed work reminiscent of European-style comics, which excited readers and drove more sales.

### BELOW:

Brothers Steve and Bill Schanes founded Pacific Comics in 1971 as a comics retailer but moved into distribution in 1974. Pacific started publishing comics in 1979, producing such titles as Jack Kirby's *Captain Victory*, Mike Grell's *Starslayer*, and Dave Stevens' *The Rocketeer*. Here's Steve at the 1984 Comic-Con. Photo by Jackie Estradar

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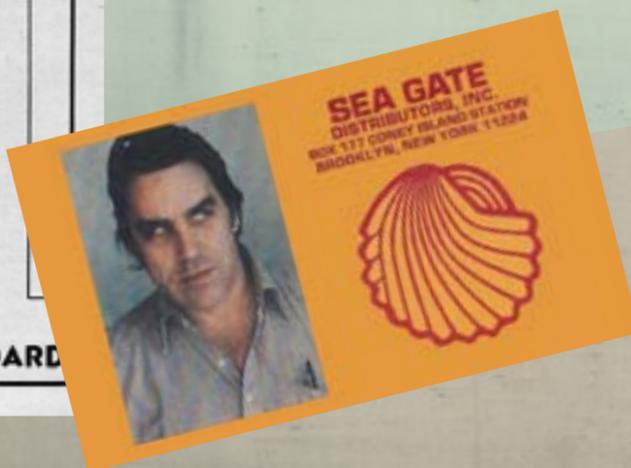
For years, the team (partnership) of Phil Seuling and Jonni Levas has been the supplier of comic books and comics-related materials to every good comics shop in this country (and half a dozen overseas). We created a new way of doing business based on responsibility, trust, independence, and a concern for the best possible retailer-wholesaler-publisher relationship. Every comic book buyer has benefited, directly or indirectly from the accurate, quick, and economical distribution we instituted. Your success and our success have been mutually dependent.

Now, for reasons of importance only to accountants, lawyers, the I.R.S. and our employees, we are taking a step towards more solid foundations - the incorporation of our business. No longer will the operations of our distribution system go under the name of "Phil Seuling"; which is a reasonable change considering the small part one person plays in the large cooperative effort we make.

And therefore we announce our new name, which makes our 50 - 50 partnership a 50 - 50 corporation. We are still Phil and Jonni, and we are still 100% responsible for the best possible comic book distribution in the country. We hope you'll find it as reliable as you've known us to be. We pledge that to be true.

Sincerely,  
*Jonni Levas Phil Seuling*

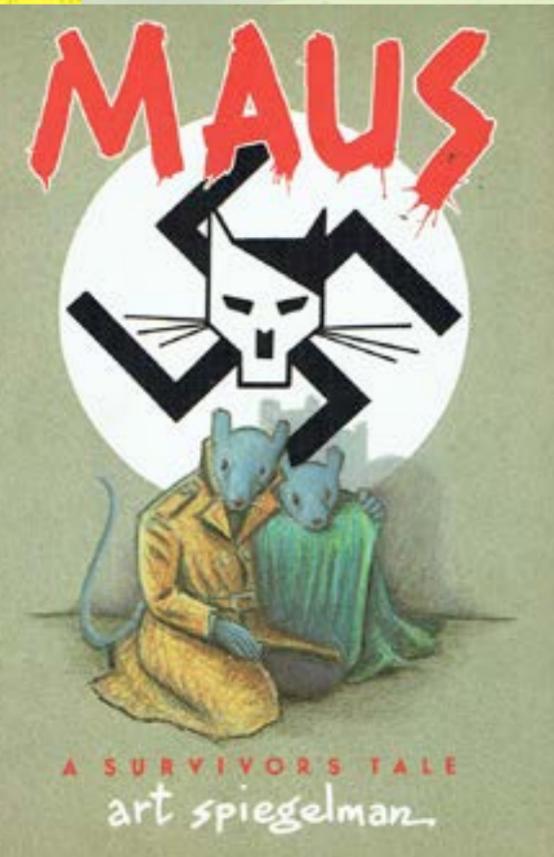
**JONNI LEVAS, PRESIDENT**  
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**LEFT:** Phil Seuling is considered the father of comics' direct market, with his founding of Sea Gate Distributors in 1973.

**TOP CENTER:** Capital City Distribution was founded in Madison, Wisconsin in 1980 by Milton Griep (seen here at his Comic-Con booth in 1986) and John Davis. Photo by Jackie Estrada

**BOTTOM CENTER:** Baltimore-based comics retailer Steve Geppi (seen here at the 1995 Comic-Con) founded Diamond Comic Distributors in 1982. Photo by Jackie Estrada



This all reached a peak in 1986, a year dubbed the greatest ever for the medium as it saw the publication of Frank Miller's *Dark Knight Returns*, Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons' *Watchmen*, Art Spiegelman's *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*, and more than a dozen other works that made an enduring artistic and commercial impact on American comics.

At the center of all that creativity was the direct market, creating an upward spiral of quality, excitement, and money that seemed to go on forever. It consolidated the dominant positions of DC and especially Marvel at the top of the business, but also left room for creator-owned titles like *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* and new publishers like Dark Horse to come out of the woodwork and mainline their work straight into popular culture.

## The Bubble Bursts

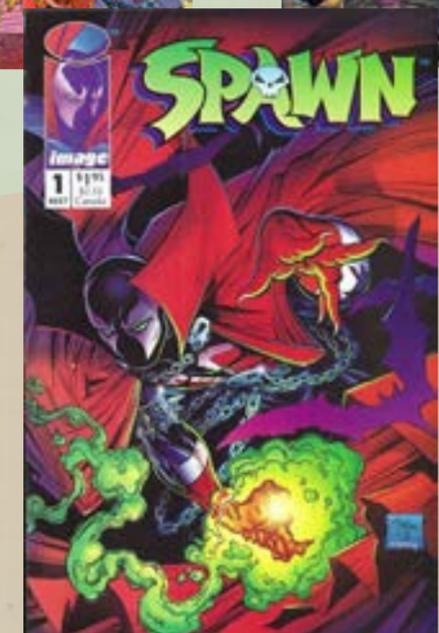
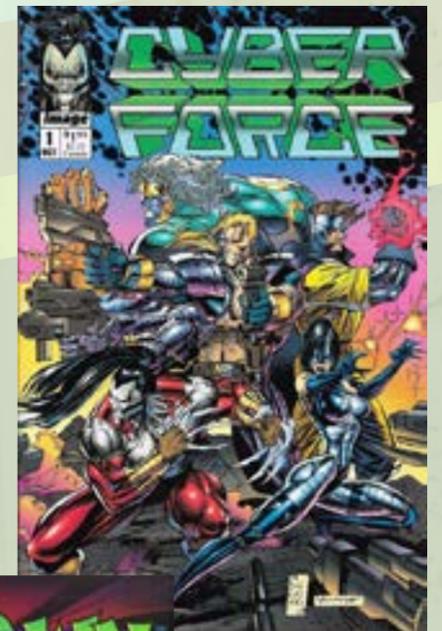
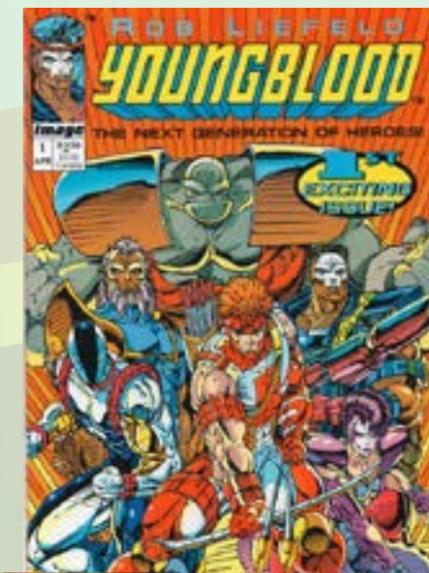
One secret of the direct market's success was that fans were not just readers. They were also collectors who saw their purchases as potential investments. Then, as now, hardcore collectors would buy multiple copies of a single book for later resale, hopefully at a

profit. Publishers, retailers, and comics media fed into that perception by pumping out "instant collectibles" that capitalized on enthusiasm for particular characters, creators, story events, or simple marketing gimmicks like metallic-sheened covers, issues pre-sealed in polybags, or limited variant editions.

By the early 1990s, Marvel was doing sales volumes in the hundreds of thousands or millions on some titles, matching the heyday of pre-Comics Code sales in the 1940s and 1950s, except with higher cover prices, higher profit margins, and sold on a nonreturnable basis to comic shops. The company's top artists—Jim Lee, Rob Liefeld, Todd McFarlane, Eric Larsen, Whilce Portacio, Marc Silvestri, and Jim Valentino—took note of this and asked why they should continue making

money for Marvel when they could go into business for themselves, reach this same fan audience through the same direct market system, and do the kind of books they wanted. So, in 1992, Image Comics was born.

That kicked the direct market up to another level, with lots of new comics retailers springing up to feed the seemingly endless appetite of collectors sure that the boxes of brand-new comics they bought today would bring them riches tomorrow. Of course, it couldn't last. Image was chronically late, shipping titles months after fan excitement had dissipated, and hopes raised by DC's *Death of Superman* led to unsustainable orders. By late 1994 and into 1995, unsold inventory piled up, and stores riding high on the speculator bubble flamed out.



**ABOVE:** The pivotal year for the comics medium was 1986, with the publication of Frank Miller's *Dark Knight Returns*, Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons' *Watchmen*, and Art Spiegelman's *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*.

**ABOVE:** First issues that launched Image Comics in 1992.

The collapse rippled back to publishers. Rising stars like Valiant and longtime stalwarts like Kitchen Sink were sucked into the maelstrom. Even mighty Marvel, which had badly miscalculated by moving its distribution to an under-resourced company called Heroes World, teetered on the brink of bankruptcy. The direct market faced a moment of crisis, as there was no longer enough volume to support multiple national distributors. The big publishers decided to throw their lot in with Diamond, which acquired rival Capital City in 1998 and became the single lynchpin of the entire comics ecosystem.

## Challenges of the 21st Century

The comics industry eventually recovered from the near collapse of the mid-1990s. Hollywood discovered superheroes and launched the media gold rush that thrust geek culture into the center of global popular culture. Manga brought a new cohort of readers into comics fandom. Graphic novels, which had been growing in popularity, suddenly became a fixture on the shelves of bookstores. A few bleeding-edge pioneers even started thinking about ways to distribute comics digitally, although it would take a few years for the big tech companies to build a device that made reading them on the screen satisfying.

Many of those trends left comic shops on the outside looking in, at least initially. Companies were sometimes slow to align publishing with their media strategies, which meant new fans coming into shops after having seen movies or TV shows had no easy places to start reading the comics. The rise of graphic novels meant a shift in the business toward trade collections and mainstream booksellers like Barnes and Noble, Borders, and of course Amazon. Once Scholastic got into the game and put their gigantic market influence behind efforts to expand the market for graphic novels for younger readers, many comic shops—which had built their business selling comics to teens and adults—were not set up to capitalize.

The rise of manga exposed another crack in the foundations of the direct market. As the American comics business oriented more toward longtime readers and collectors, who were almost exclusively superhero fans, the gender balance within comics fandom became overwhelmingly male. The more publishers chased young male fans with over-the-top sex and violence, the less welcome many girls and women felt within the hobby, and within the boys' club environment of traditional comic stores.

### FACING PAGE:

Many comic shops have endured through several decades, including Golden Apple in Los Angeles (top, founded by Bill Liebowitz in 1979), Ralph Mathieu's Alternate Reality in Las Vegas (far right, existing since 1987), and Atlantis Fantasyworld in Santa Cruz (left, founded by Joe Ferrara in 1976). All are past winners of the Eisner Spirit of Comics Retailer Award, which Ferrara announces each year at the Comic-Con awards ceremony.



# Meet the Artists

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## Lee Bermejo

Lee Bermejo is a highly-acclaimed comic book artist who gained recognition for his work with writer Brian Azzarello, collaborating on projects like "Joker" and "Lex Luthor: Man of Steel." Bermejo's art is characterized by meticulous detail, atmospheric lighting, and a blend of realism and stylization. His contributions to iconic characters like Batman and Superman have earned him a devoted fanbase and numerous accolades. With his exceptional talent and storytelling skills, Lee Bermejo continues to be a respected and influential figure in the comic book industry.



## Crisis and Evolution

The first months of 2020 saw the global economy grind to a halt as fears of COVID-19 and public health emergency precautions forced lockdowns and supply chain disruptions. Diamond made the fateful decision to suspend deliveries to comic stores in April, leaving already hard-hit retailers with nothing to sell to homebound customers, and leaving publishers sitting on mountain of inventory with no cash coming in.

That decision caused years of simmering frustration with Diamond to boil over. DC announced it was moving distribution to a new partner, Lunar. Marvel signed a deal with trade book publishing giant Penguin Random House (PRH), which made a big new investment in comics distribution. Smaller publishers chose sides, leaving retailers to piece together ways to manage a newly fragmented marketplace.

## The Next 50 Years?

After a half century of growth, innovation, and adaptation, the direct market again finds itself at a crossroads. Many of the original comic shops of the '70s and '80s, sometimes under the same continuous ownership, are having to reinvent themselves in a much more uncertain and complicated environment. New stores coming into the business have access to a much wider fandom than ever existed before, but they have to buck headwinds facing all brick-and-mortar retail in the digital era.

As fans and professionals, we should be rooting for their success. The rise of comic stores fundamentally changed comics from a disposable newsstand product into a specialty publishing business capable of exploring the limits of its artistic and commercial ambitions. Comic stores are the embassies of comics culture worldwide: community centers and oases for fans to gather and express themselves. They are the place where our biggest dreams come true on the page, and the people who own and manage them are real-life superheroes. And if you're looking for a way to celebrate this milestone,

Here's to the next 50 years!

Rob Salkowitz is an author, educator, industry consultant and journalist based in Seattle. He writes about comics for Forbes, ICv2, and Publishers Weekly, teaches at the University of Washington, and is the author of several books, including *Comic-Con and the Business of Pop Culture*. He is a 2023 Eisner Award nominee for Best Comics Journalism.

Manga started to gain a foothold in the U.S. in the 1990s, and reached an audience with much greater gender balance. Publishers like TOKYOPOP found it was easier to reach those readers in bookstores, with low-cost trade paperbacks and collected editions, than through comic stores where a lot of their target readers simply didn't feel comfortable. As manga built a greater and greater market share through the first decades of the 21st century, comic stores and owners who were not themselves fans had to play catchup.

In 2010, Apple released the iPad and ushered in the era of the tablet computer. With a screen measuring roughly the size of a comic book page, the iPad promised to be the ideal delivery system for digital comics, and a bunch of startups piled into the space. Retailers saw digital distribution as a knife to their throats, and comics publishers, who depended on retailers for their physical sales, were hesitant to commit to digital strategies for fear of alienating their main source of revenue.

By the 2010s, more comic stores began adapting. Stores changed their design, staffing, and image to appeal to a broader demographic, and added manga and kid-friendly titles to the product mix. The arrival of digital, remarkably, did not cut into print sales but actually drove more business to comic shops as fans sought out community and other merchandise like toys and games.

The comic business at the end of the 2010s looked as healthy as it had ever been. There were more publishers in the space, more movies and media being adapted from comics, and a stable distribution system that, though imperfect, kept products on the shelves.

At the same time, more readers were finding comics through channels other than the direct market. In 2019, for the first time sales through bookstores and digital platforms accounted for a greater percentage of total revenue in North America than sales through comic shops, even as the entire pie grew bigger. The future looked bright; what could possibly go wrong?

**“After a half century of growth, innovation, and adaptation, the direct market again finds itself at a crossroads.”**



## Tom Ruegger

Tom Ruegger is a highly-regarded writer, producer, and creator in the animation industry. He is best known for his work on the iconic series "Animaniacs," where he served as the creator and executive producer. He played a crucial role in developing the show's witty humor, memorable characters, and clever pop culture references. Ruegger's creative talent and leadership have left a lasting impact on the world of animation, making him a celebrated figure among fans and industry peers alike.

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Photo by Katie Rainbow

**ABOVE:**  
Ron Turner at Comic-Con, 1987.  
Photo by Jackie Estrada.

**OPPOSITE:**  
Last Gasp's first publication,  
*Slow Death* #1 (1970). Cover art  
by Greg Irons

# Last Gasp

## After 53 Years and The Enduring Legacy of the Undergrounds

by  
**BRIAN  
DOHERTY**

**R**on Turner, a former railroad brakeman and Peace Corps volunteer and at the time a psychology graduate student at San Francisco State University, was like many thousands of others in the revolutionary cultural and political tumult of the San Francisco Bay Area in the late 1960s: He'd had his mind blown by *Zap* comics.

*Zap* launched underground comix in nationally distributed periodical form, alternately shocking and delighting the world with a new form of outrageous, personal, youthfully zany, and sometimes obscene comic book storytelling spearheaded by Robert Crumb.

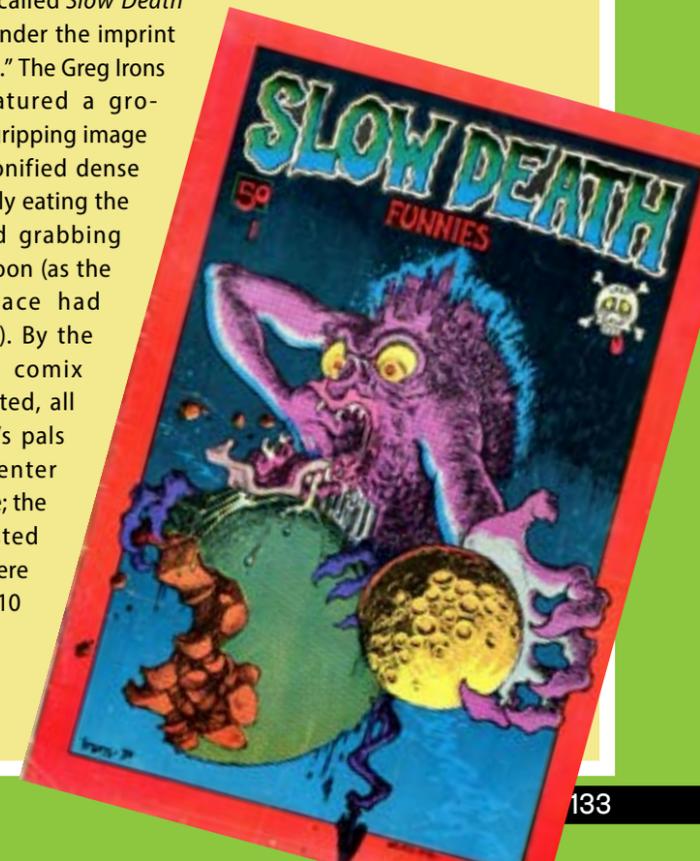
A friend handed a *Zap* to Turner at a New Year's Eve party; he was stoned, and engrossed, so he hid himself away in a back bedroom to enjoy it uninterrupted. His long-dormant childhood affection for comics came back to life. He began keeping "a big stack of comix" around his pad "so at night people could relax a bit reading them," he said in an interview for my underground comix history *Dirty Pictures*. The comix both captured and often lightly parodied the generational and cultural changes going on around them, communicating directly youth to youth without corporate timidity or any sort of censorship.

### THE BIRTH OF LAST GASP

Turner saw a natural connection between the radical politics of the day and this new style of comics. When the

first Earth Day was approaching in 1970, buoyed by knowledge and connections he'd picked up from Don Donahue (publisher of the first issue of *Zap*) and Gary Arlington (majordomo of the San Francisco Comic Book Company store, the clubhouse and intellectual salon of the burgeoning underground comix scene), he figured he could help the Berkeley Ecology Center by printing an ecology-themed comic book for them to sell as a fundraiser.

It was called *Slow Death Funnies*, under the imprint "Last Gasp." The Greg Irons cover featured a grotesquely gripping image of a personified dense city literally eating the Earth and grabbing for the Moon (as the human race had just done). By the time the comix book existed, all of Turner's pals at the Center were gone; the uninterested staffers there took just 10



copies of the 20,000 he'd printed. Out of the need to do something with this comic, the longest-lasting underground comix publisher was now born.

*Slow Death* copped contributions from most of the cartooning stars of this rising art movement, including Crumb himself, along with Gilbert Shelton (inventor of the Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers and a partner in Rip Off Press, one of the bigger underground publishing imprints), Barbara "Willy" Mendes, Kim Deitch, Dave Sheridan, Rory Hayes, and Jack "Jaxon" Jackson, all telling tales of human environmental follies and abuses.

Turner, then, turned out to be different breed than the typical student rebel comix reader: He began publishing them, widely and relentlessly. Thirteen years after having his mind blown by *Zap* at a party, his company began publishing that very periodical, the flagship of the underground comix movement for 48 years, with its 8th issue.

Ron considered his personal politics to arise from his lifelong dislike for bullying—he has a teen memory of threatening a Border Patrol agent with a shotgun who was abusing a migrant of Turner's acquaintance—and what bigger bully in our culture than the patriarchy? "I liked the idea that we could attack social issues through comic books" as a universally understood and appreciated form, Turner says. The second Last Gasp comix book thus also had a political edge: *It Ain't Me Babe*, edited by Trina Robbins and likely the first comic book, certainly the first underground, entirely written and drawn by women. (Most of its contents worked more on the level of fable and myth than didactic politics, though it did feature a humorous story about various female comic character icons having their feminist consciousness raised.).

## CELEBRATING FIVE DECADES

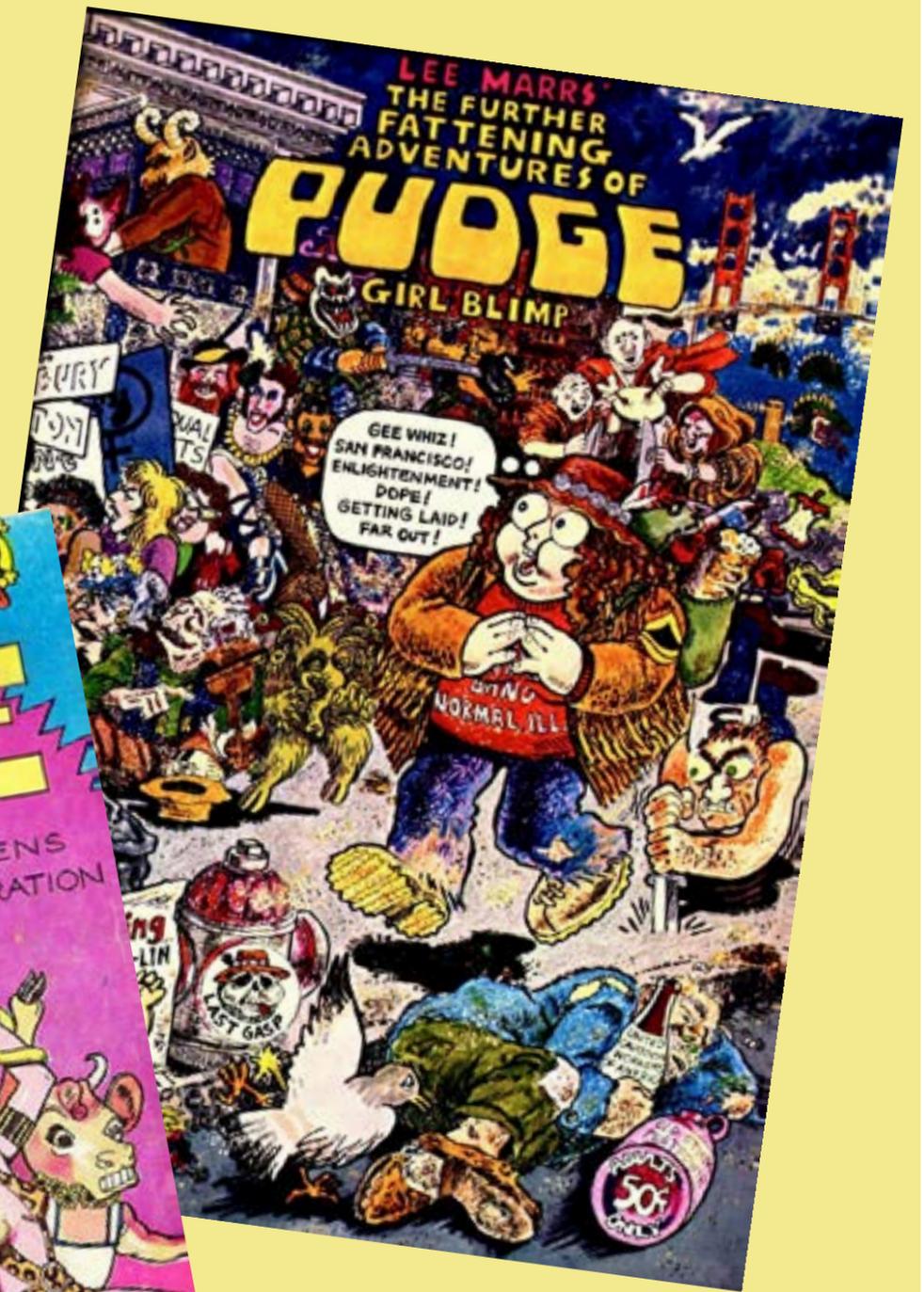
Last Gasp, whose 53rd anniversary is being honored this year with founder Ron Turner as a Special Guest (Comic-Con was not held physically in their 50th anniversary year of 2020 due to COVID), was the last major entrant in the field of underground comix publishers. It quickly claimed an outsized place in a field initially cleared by the likes of fellow Bay Area operations Print Mint and Rip Off Press (both were early customers buying and distributing Last Gasp's comics, as was he of theirs; underground comix was a combination small business and art scene that could be as friendly as it was competitive).

Turner kept Last Gasp going as an active publishing concern decades past his friendly competitors. Last Gasp pioneered and/or significantly furthered many of the underground's most vital trends, from women-created comix to nonfiction comix to historical comix to comix that Disney tried to sue out of existence. (Under the publishing pseudonym of "Hell Comics," to try to avoid the very legal troubles that indeed arose, Turner was patron and publisher to *Air Pirates Funnies*, which drew nearly a decade of legal action from Disney against publisher and cartoonists for allegedly violating their trademarks.)

Last Gasp over its five decades and counting, with well over 300 individual issues of underground comix printed, published nearly all of the underground's most memorable and enduring characters, from Ted Richards' Dopin' Dan to Larry Welz's Cherry Poptart, from Rand Holmes's Harold Hedd to S. Clay Wilson's Checkered Demon, from Richard Corben's Den to Lee Marrs's Pudge, Girl Blimp.

But at the start, the underground scene was in many respects just that: underground, for good reasons. People could and did get arrested for selling comix—it hurt Turner's heart that in the city where he lived and worked, the art and culture of his tribe was often treated as "vice" to be harassed by vice cops. (Not that the undergrounds could always stay on the right side of the law: Some early financing for the publisher came from drug dealers Turner knew; some of its early distribution overlapped with local distribution networks for dope.) Turner found that all sorts of urban merchants in the Bay Area were "looking for something to latch on to in this new culture that seemed to be developing alongside the music" and the lifestyle changes of the '60s generation.

"Before long we had 200 accounts in the Bay Area we were serving on a regular basis," Ron told me. "It was just so fresh and new, no one knew how to say 'no' to them.



**OPPOSITE LEFT:**  
Last Gasp's second publication was *It Ain't Me Babe*, edited and with a cover by Trina Robbins.

**OPPOSITE RIGHT:**  
Lee Marrs's *The Further Fattening Adventures of Pudge, Girl Blimp* was among the many undergrounds published by Last Gasp.



**ABOVE:**  
Bill Griffith co-edited (with Jay Kinney) the long-running Last Gasp title *Young Lust*.

They were very powerful things," underground comix when they were fresh. But in that very cultural power, fierce opposition arose as well—Turner recalls problems with people at binderies or printers "suddenly see some tits go by on a page and start screaming" and you could find "your books didn't get printed, or they got dumped, and maybe they destroyed your negatives at the same time" when up against people trying to enforce earlier generation's religious-based sense of aesthetic propriety on Turner and his artists and his audience.

## FOUR UNDERGROUND ARTISTS WHO CHANGED COMICS FOREVER

Last Gasp was an important publisher for four underground cartoonists inducted this year into the Eisner Hall of Fame: Justin Green, Aline Kominsky-Crumb, Diane Noomin (who all passed away in 2022) and Comic-Con Special Guest Bill Griffith.

Griffith, after training and practice as a painter, published his first solo comix book, *Tales of Toad* #1, with the Print Mint in 1970. Like so many of his underground peers, Harvey Kurtzman's early *Mad* comic book shaped his destiny; "the very subversive message of in the Kurtzman years was, don't trust anyone, everyone's lying to you, especially your parents, and that message came through loud and clear," Griffith told me. He (and Jay Kinney) edited for decades one of underground comix most popular titles, *Young Lust*. Along with his friend Art Spiegelman, who shared with Griffith a desire to elevate comix beyond some of the drug and sex and/or horror and science fiction clichés with which they were often mired, he launched a magazine of comix called *Arcade* in 1975 that is still seen by many cognoscenti as for its seven issues the finest anthology series American comics has ever known. It featured, naturally, plenty of work from Green, Noomin, and Kominsky-Crumb.

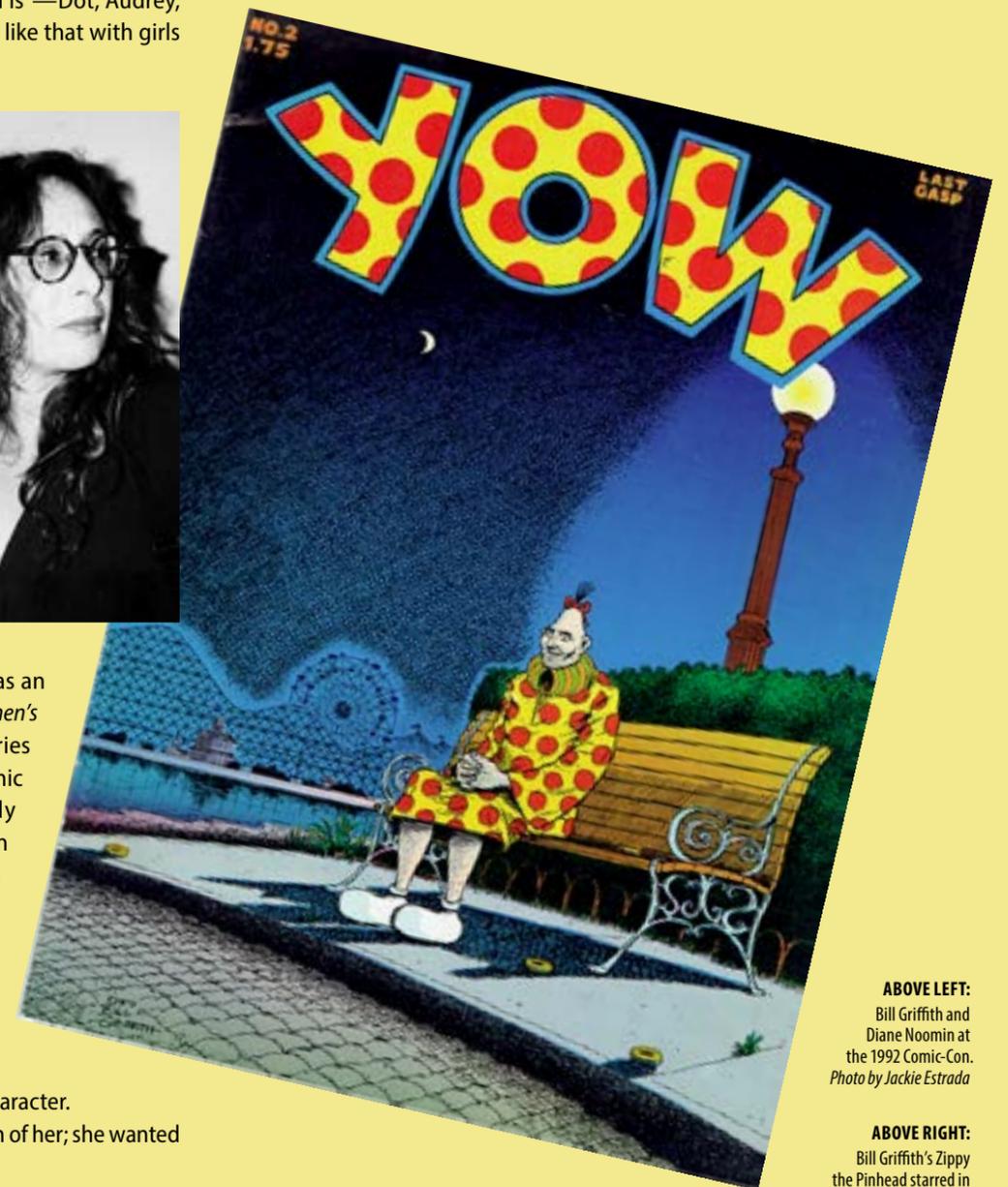
Griffith's most unlikely success for the cause of comix was getting a character from this subterranean scene into the most sunlit place any cartoonist could hope for: the pages of the daily newspaper, where his *Zippy* had been syndicated by King Features since 1986. Griffith's pinhead hero has been puzzling Americans over breakfast with his perplexingly amusing ability to constantly

shift media and cultural and historical references and moods from absurd sentence to strangely moving sentence, capturing the twisted reality of modern information overload. Alongside his daily strip, he has also produced in the past decades a series of book length graphic biographies and memoirs, most recently one about *Nancy* cartoonist Ernie Bushmiller.

Griffith's wife, Diane Noomin, was also an important underground cartoonist, who told me she "learned to read at a very early age because she was impatient waiting for my parents to read me the comics. I loved Little Lulu and was attracted to all the "Li'ls"—Dot, Audrey, whatever, a whole bunch of comics like that with girls as heroes."



It was natural, then, that she was an early contributor to Last Gasp's *Wimmen's Comix*, an all-female anthology series that ran from 1972 to 1992. Her iconic character Didi Glitz, a parodically overdone but still tender and human explosion of nearly campy Long Island feminine fabulosity, was, as Griffith told the *New York Times*, "an amalgam of all the parents, all the housewives in Canarsie when she was growing up, the person she was afraid she might become... That's why DiDi is such a powerful character. Diane wasn't interested in making fun of her; she wanted to deeply explore who she was."



**ABOVE LEFT:**  
Bill Griffith and Diane Noomin at the 1992 Comic-Con. Photo by Jackie Estrada

**ABOVE RIGHT:**  
Bill Griffith's Zippy the Pinhead starred in *Yow* for Last Gasp.



Noomin was proud in 1992 to edit an anthology of underground and underground-influenced female cartoonists for Penguin Books, *Twisted Sisters* (also the title of a 1976 duo comix book from Last Gasp she made with Aline Kominsky). This was an early victory for serious comics in the respectable book store market, and it was “wonderful,” Noomin told me, “after being invisible for so many years to all of a sudden see your work in *shopping malls*.”

Justin Green had been doing uniquely funny short strips for a variety of undergrounds from *Yellow Dog* to *Bijou Funnies* when he cemented a trust-based patron relationship with Turner, who kept him alive on a monthly sinecure while Green drew one of the most important comix book's ever, *Binky Brown Meets the Holy Virgin Mary* (1972). It was the first extended neurotic-autobiographical comic, detailed the bizarre antics of his sexually psychotic, OCD-haunted, bullied Catholic schoolboy alter ego. It won praise from the likes of Federico Fellini and Kurt Vonnegut, as well as blowing away all his cartooning comrades; Art Spiegelman said that

in it “some brand new way of seeing and thinking was being born.” Green saw his cartoonist comrades in the underground scene in San Francisco in the '70s, he told me, as bound by “almost a mystical calling, a gravitational force to bring these renegade artists together to rectify in some ways the social ills of the dominant class.”

Aline Kominsky-Crumb was already under Green's influence when she drew her first comix story, which appeared as the first story in the first issue of Last Gasp's *Wimmen's Comix*. Its crudely delineated self-laceration broke new territory in self-abasing but still humorously alive female memoir in popular art. Kominsky-Crumb, who did unique collaborative comics for decades with, and about her life with, her husband Robert Crumb, fended off with some humor angry Crumb fans who felt her twisted surface-primitive but highly layered and textured linework didn't deserve to be on the same page with his cartooning classicism.

In one conversation, she could say both that “I was not in it for money at all, or recognition, which is a good thing because I never got any money or any recognition” and later note with bemused pride how much of her

DNA she sees in modern female storytellers in and out of comics who delve into brutally honest self-exploration without fear of seeming gross or excessive, and how she lived to see her cartooning “getting academic attention.”

## LAST GASP'S LEGACY

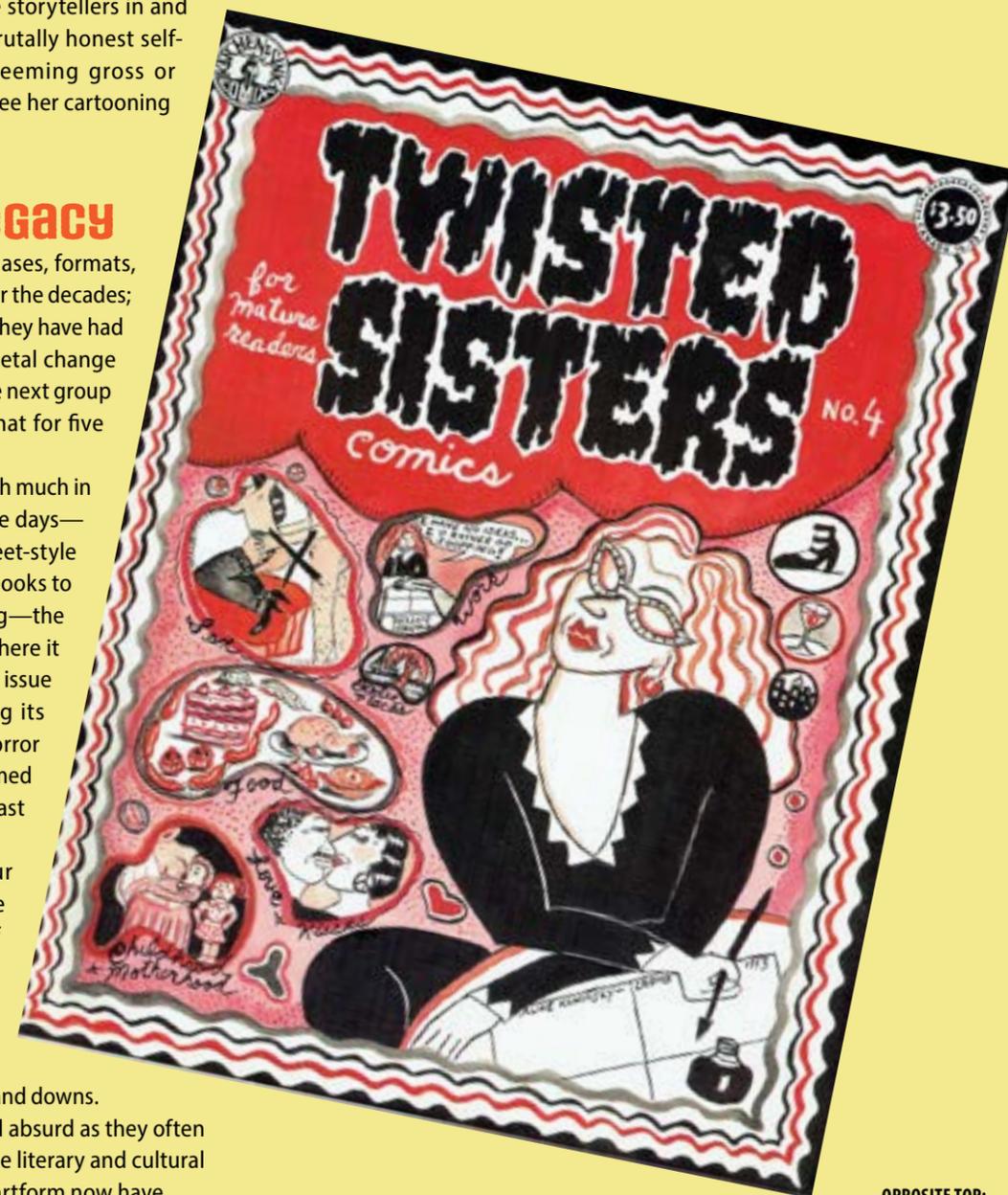
Last Gasp has changed its emphases, formats, artists, and distribution styles over the decades; Turner says to continue to thrive they have had to “always be involved with societal change and be able to figure out what the next group wants, and so far we've done that for five decades.”

While Last Gasp doesn't publish much in the way of comics narrative these days—specializing more in modern street-style art from tattoos to hip coloring books to pop surrealist/“lowbrow” painting—the company did in 2021 return to where it all began, with a new booksized issue “zero” of *Slow Death* continuing its exploration of environmental horror in an age that should be more primed for it than when it all began for Last Gasp.

The publisher, and the four cartoonists it published who are honored by the Eisner Hall of Fame this year, were driven by a belief that weird, outrageous, meaningful, personal comix were a cause worth fighting for through market and cultural ups and downs.

The undergrounds, as rough and absurd as they often were, became the ur-source of the literary and cultural respectability that comics as an artform now have.

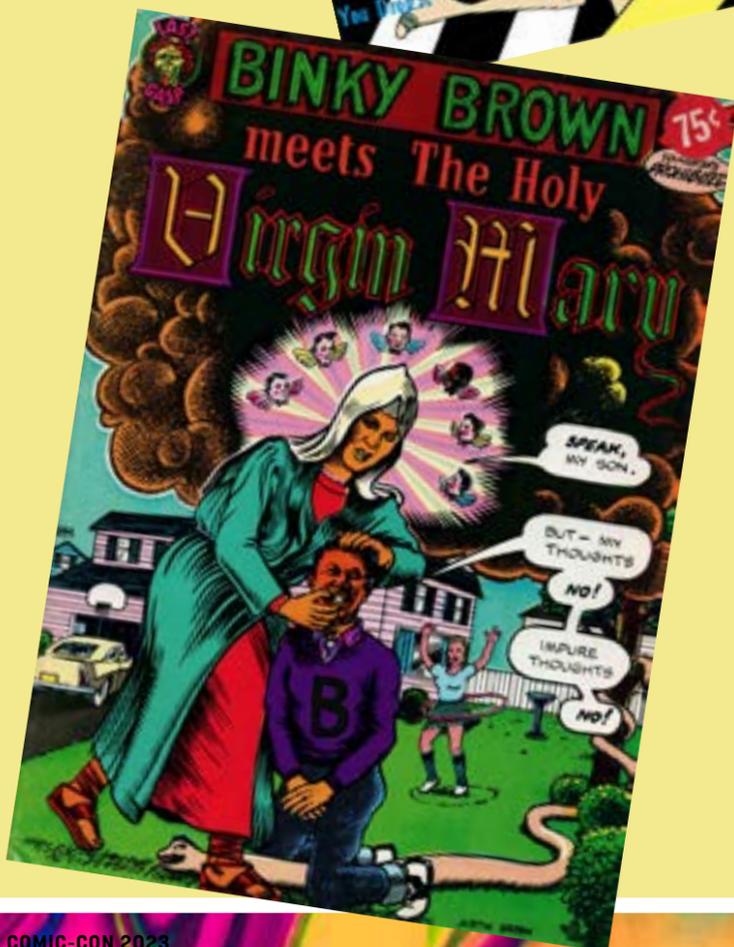
Justin Green, particularly, through his work for Last Gasp, set it all in motion by inspiring fellow underground cartoonist Art Spiegelman (who literally moved into the apartment where Green drew *Binky Brown*) to dare to delve into his own personal experiences and neuroses. This gave him the will to delve into his tortuous and troubled efforts to get his Holocaust survivor to tell of his (and Spiegelman's dead mother's) experiences before and at Auschwitz in his epochal graphic novel *Maus*.



**OPPOSITE TOP:** Diane Noomin was an editor and contributor to both the *Wimmen's Comix* and *Twisted Sisters* anthologies.

**OPPOSITE BELOW:** Justin Green's *Binky Brown Meets the Holy Virgin Mary* (1972) is considered by many to be the first autobiographical comic book.

**ABOVE:** Aline Kominsky-Crumb edited various iterations of the *Twisted Sisters* anthology.



**WORLD PREMIERE** THURSDAY JULY 20TH • 2PM  
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 COMMANDER MARK LIVE IN-PERSON



From *Maus*, by an underground comix artist rooted in underground comix techniques of using cartooning to express the artist's unique concerns and mentality, not hemmed in by an imagined mass audience or corporate I.P., came an unexpected artistic, commercial, and reputational success that cemented comic art's current status in mainstream New York publishing, museums, and academia, all dizzyingly higher than a stoned Ron Turner could have dreamed when he was handed that fateful issue of *Zap*.

As Griffith told me, he knew he and some of his fellow underground cartoonists were "making art that would one day be seen as worthy of attention from the artistic gatekeepers of the culture, and so when it did finally happen over the years, slowly, I fully expected it to happen. It just took a long time. But I never doubted that what we were doing was worthy of inclusion" in any canon of American art. "Popular culture after all is American culture. You can't say high art, low art—that bifurcation is artificial. It is all one big culture that America created," and among its most hallowed successes are "jazz, rock 'n' roll and comics."

Brian Doherty is the author of *Dirty Pictures: How an Underground Network of Nerds, Feminists, Misfits, Geniuses, Bikers, Potheads, Printers, Intellectuals and Art School Rebels Revolutionized Art and Invented Comix* (Abrams).

**TOP:**  
 In 1992 Zippy went to Comic-Con.

**BOTTOM:**  
 Ron Turner at a Last Gasp party in 1991. Photo by Jackie Estrada.





# Will Eisner Comic Industry Awards

## NOMINATIONS | 2023

### Best Short Story

- "The Beekeeper's Due," by Jimmy Stamp and Débora Santos, in *Scott Snyder Presents Tales from the Cloakroom* (Cloakroom Comics)
- "Finding Batman" by Kevin Conroy and J. Bone, in *DC Pride 2022* (DC)
- "Good Morning," by Christopher Cantwell and Alex Lins, in *Moon Knight: Black, White & Blood #4* (Marvel)
- "Silent All These Years," by Margaret Atwood and David Mack, in *Tori Amos: Little Earthquakes* (Z2)
- "You Get It," by Jonathan Hickman and Marco Checchetto, in *Amazing Fantasy #1000* (Marvel)

### Best Single Issue/One-Shot

- *Batman: One Bad Day: The Riddler*, by Tom King and Mitch Gerads (DC)
- *Mary Jane & Black Cat Beyond*, by Jed Mackay and C. F. Villa (Marvel)
- *Moon Knight: Black, White, and Blood #3*, edited by Martin Biro (Marvel)
- *Star Trek #400*, edited by Heather Antos (IDW)
- *A Vicious Circle Book 1*, by Mattson Tomlin and Lee Bermejo (BOOM! Studios)

### Best Continuing Series

- *Daredevil*, by Chip Zdarsky, Marco Checchetto and Rafael de Latorre (Marvel)
- *The Department of Truth*, by James Tynion IV and Martin Simmonds (Image)
- *Killadelphia*, by Rodney Barnes and Jason Shawn Alexander (Image)
- *The Nice House on the Lake*, by James Tynion IV and Alvaro Martinez Bueno (DC)
- *Nightwing*, by Tom Taylor and Bruno Redondo (DC)
- *She-Hulk*, by Rainbow Rowell, Rogê Antônio, Luca Maresca, and Takeshi Miyazawa (Marvel)

### Best Limited Series

- *Animal Castle*, by Xavier Dorison and Felix Delep (Ablaze)
- *Batman: One Bad Day*, edited by Dave Wielgosz and Jessica Berbey (DC)
- *The Human Target*, by Tom King and Greg Smallwood (DC)
- *Miracleman*, by Gaiman & Buckingham: *The Silver Age*, by Neil Gaiman and Mark Buckingham (Marvel)
- *Superman: Space Age*, by Mark Russell, Michael Allred, and Laura Allred (DC)

### Best New Series

- *The Atonement Bell*, by Jim Ousley and Tyler B. Ruff (Red 5)
- *Love Everlasting*, by Tom King and Elsa Charretier (Image)
- *Public Domain*, by Chip Zdarsky (Image)
- *Star Trek*, by Collin Kelly, Jackson Lanzing, and Ramon Rosanas (IDW)
- *Traveling to Mars*, by Mark Russell and Roberto Meli (Ablaze)

### Best Publication for Early Readers (up to age 8)

- *Beneath The Trees: A Fine Summer*, by Dav (Magnetic Press)
- *Fox + Chick: Up and Down: and Other Stories*, by Sergio Ruzzier (Chronicle Books)
- *Grumpy Monkey: Who Threw That?*, by Suzanne Lang and Max Lang (Random House Studio)
- *Hey, Bruce!: An Interactive Book*, by Ryan Higgins (Disney/Hyperion)
- *The Pigeon Will Ride the Roller Coaster!* by Mo Willems (Union Square Kids)

### Best Publication for Kids (ages 9-12)

- *Adventuregame Comics:*

- *Leviathan*, by Jason Shiga (Amulet/Abrams)
- *Frizzy*, by Claribel A. Ortega and Rose Bousamra (First Second/Macmillan)
- *Isla To Island*, by Alexis Castellanos (Atheneum/Simon and Schuster)
- *Little Monarchs*, by Jonathan Case (Margaret Ferguson Books/Holiday House)
- *Swim Team*, by Johnnie Christmas (HarperAlley)

### Best Publication for Teens (ages 13-17)

- *Chef's Kiss*, by Jarrett Melendez and Danica Brine (Oni)
- *Clementine Book One*, by Tillie Walden (Image Skybound)
- *Do A Powerbomb!*, by Daniel Warren Johnson (Image)
- *Heartstopper Volume 4*, by Alice Oseman (Scholastic Graphix)
- *Wash Day Diaries*, by Jamila Rowser and Robyn Smith (Chronicle Books)

### Best Humor Publication

- *Cryptid Club*, by Sarah Andersen (Andrews McMeel)

- *I Hate This Place*, by Kyle Starks and Artyom Topilin (Image Skybound)
- *Killer Queens*, by David Booher and Claudia Balboni (Dark Horse)
- *Mr. Lovenstein Presents: Failure*, by J. L. Westover (Image Skybound)
- *Revenge of the Librarians*, by Tom Gauld (Drawn & Quarterly)

### Best Anthology

- *Creepshow*, edited by Alex Antone and Jon Moisan (Image Skybound)
- *The Illustrated AI: The Songs of "Weird AI" Yankovic*, edited by John Bernstein (Z2)
- *The Nib Magazine*, edited by Matt Bors (Nib)
- *Sensory: Life on the Spectrum*, edited by Bex Ollerton (Andrews McMeel)
- *Tori Amos: Little Earthquakes, The Graphic Album*, edited by Rantz Hoseley (Z2)

### Best Reality-Based Work

- *Alfred Hitchcock: The Master of Suspense*, by Noël Simsolo and Dominique Hé, translation by Montana Kane (NBM)
- *Alice Guy: First Lady of Film*, by José-Louis Bocquet and Catel Muller, translation by Edward Gauvin (SelfMadeHero)
- *But I Live: Three Stories of Child Survivors of the Holocaust*,

- edited by Charlotte Schallié (University of Toronto Press)
- *Flung out of Space*, by Grace Ellis and Hannah Templer (Abrams ComicArts)
- *Invisible Wounds: Graphic Journalism*, by Jess Ruliffson (Fantagraphics)
- *Pinball: A Graphic History*, by Jon Chad (First Second/Macmillan)

### Best Graphic Memoir

- *Down to the Bone: A Leukemia Story*, by Catherine Pioli, translated by J. T. Mahany (Graphic Mundi/Penn State University Press)
- *Ducks: Two Years in the Oil Sands*, by Kate Beaton (Drawn & Quarterly)
- *It's Lonely at the Centre of the Earth: An Auto-Bio-Graphic-Novel*, by Zoe Thorogood (Image)
- *So Much for Love: How I Survived a Toxic Relationship*, by Sophie Lambda (First Second/Macmillan)
- *Welcome to St. Hell: My Trans Teen Misadventure*, by Lewis Hancox (Scholastic Graphix)

### Best Graphic Album—New

- *The Book of Niall*, by Barry Jones (Ellie & Beatty)

- *Crushing*, by Sophie Burrows (Algonquin Young Readers)
- *The Night Eaters, Book 1: She Eats the Night*, by Marjorie Liu and Sana Takeda (Abrams ComicArts)
- *Ultrasound*, by Conor Stechschulte (Fantagraphics)

### Best Graphic Album—Reprint

- *Days of Sand*, by Aimée de Jongh, translated by Christopher Bradley (SelfMadeHero)
- *Geneviève Castrée: Complete Works*, by Geneviève Castrée, translation by Phil Elverum and Aleshia Jensen (Drawn & Quarterly)
- *Mazebook Dark Horse Direct Edition*, by Jeff Lemire (Dark Horse)
- *One Beautiful Spring Day*, by Jim Woodring (Fantagraphics)
- *Parker: The Martini Edition—Last Call*, by Richard Stark, Darwyn Cooke, Ed Brubaker, and Sean Phillips (IDW)
- *Super Spy Deluxe Edition*, by Matt Kindt (Dark Horse)

### Best Adaptation from Another Medium

- *Chivalry*, by Neil Gaiman, adapted by Colleen Doran (Dark Horse)

- *Rain*, by Joe Hill, adapted by David M. Booher and Zoe Thorogood (Image)
- *Ten Days in a Madhouse*, by Nellie Bly, adapted by Brad Ricca and Courtney Sieh (Gallery 13/Simon and Schuster)
- *Tori Amos: Little Earthquakes, The Graphic Album*, edited by Rantz Hoseley (Z2)
- *A Visit to Moscow*, by Rabbi Rafael Grossman, adapted by Anna Olswanger and Yevgenia Nayberg (Turner)

### Best U.S. Edition of International Material

- *Always Never*, by Jordi Lafebvre (Dark Horse)
- *Blacksad: They All Fall Down Part 1*, by Juan Díaz Canales and Juanjo Guarnido, translation by Diana Schutz and Brandon Kander (Dark Horse)
- *Down to the Bone: A Leukemia Story*, by Catherine Pioli, translation by J. T. Mahany (Graphic Mundi/Penn State University Press)
- *The Pass*, by Espé, translation by J.T. Mahany (Graphic Mundi/Penn State University Press)
- *Tiki: A Very Ruff Year*, by David Azencot and



# Will Eisner Comic Industry Awards

## NOMINATIONS | 2023

Fred Leclerc, translation by Nanette McGuinness (Life Drawn/Humanoids)

### Best U.S. Edition of International Material—Asia

- *Black Paradox*, by Junji Ito, translation by Jocelyne Allen (VIZ Media)
- *The Hellbound* vols. 1–2, by Yeon Sang-Ho and Choi Gyu-Seok, translation by Danny Lim (Dark Horse)
- *Look Back*, by Tatsuki Fujimoto, translation by Amanda Haley (VIZ Media)
- *PTSD Radio* vol. 1, by Masaaki Nakayama, (translation by Adam Hirsch Kodansha)
- *Shuna's Journey*, by Hayao Miyazaki; translation by Alex Dudok de Wit (First Second/Macmillan)
- *Talk to My Back*, by Yamada Murasaki, translation by Ryan Holmberg (Drawn & Quarterly)

### Best Archival Collection/Project—Strips (at least 20 years old)

- *Bungleton Green and the Mystic Commandos*, by Jay Jackson (New York Review Comics)
- *Come Over Come Over. It's So Magic, and My Perfect Life*, by Lynda Barry (Drawn & Quarterly)
- *The George Herriman Library*:

*Krazy & Ignatz 1922–1924*, by George Herriman, edited by J. Michael Catron (Fantagraphics)

- *Macanudo: Welcome to Elsewhere*, by Liniers, edited by Gary Groth (Fantagraphics)
- *Pogo The Complete Syndicated Comic Strips: Volume 8: Hijinks from the Horn of Plenty*, by Walt Kelly, edited by Mark Evanier and Eric Reynolds (Fantagraphics)

### Best Archival Collection/Project—Comic Books (at least 20 Years Old)

- *The Deluxe Gimenez: The Fourth Power & The Starr Conspiracy*, by Juan Gimenez, edited by Alex Donoghue and Bruno Leigne (Humanoids)
- *The Fantastic Worlds of Frank Frazetta*, edited by Diane Hansen (TASCHEN)
- *Home to Stay! The Complete Ray Bradbury EC Stories*, by Ray Bradbury and various; edited by J. Michael Catron (Fantagraphics)
- *The Simpsons Treehouse of Horror Ominous Omnibus 1* (Abrams ComicArts)
- *Walt Disney's Uncle Scrooge: The Diamond Jubilee Collection by Carl Barks*; edited by David Gerstein (Fantagraphics)

### Best Writer

- Grace Ellis, *Flung out of Space* (Abrams ComicArts)
- Tom King, *Batman: Killing Time, Batman: One Bad Day, Gotham City: Year One, The Human Target, Love Everlasting, Supergirl: Woman of Tomorrow* (DC)
- Mark Russell, *Traveling to Mars (Ablaze), One-Star Squadron, Superman: Space Age* (DC); *The Incal: Psychoverse* (Humanoids)
- James Tynion IV, *House of Slaughter, Something Is Killing the Children, Wynd* (BOOM! Studios); *The Nice House on the Lake, The Sandman Universe: Nightmare Country* (DC), *The Closet, The Department of Truth* (Image)
- Chip Zdarsky, *Stillwater* (Image Skybound); *Daredevil* (Marvel)

### Best Writer/Artist

- Sarah Andersen, *Cryptid Club* (Andrews McMeel)
- Kate Beaton, *Ducks: Two Years in the Oil Sands* (Drawn & Quarterly)
- Espé, *The Pass* (Graphic Mundi/Penn State University)
- Junji Ito, *Black Paradox, The Liminal Zone* (VIZ Media)
- Zoe Thorogood, *It's Lonely at the Centre of the Earth* (Image)

### Best Penciller/Inker or Penciller/Inker Team

- Jason Shawn Alexander, *Killadelphia, Neil Hawes' Nightmare Blog* (Image)

- Alvaro Martinez Bueno, *The Nice House on the Lake* (DC)
- Sean Phillips, *Follow Me Down, The Ghost in You* (Image)
- Bruno Redondo, *Nightwing* (DC)
- Greg Smallwood, *The Human Target* (DC)

### Best Painter/Multimedia Artist (interior art)

- Lee Bermejo, *A Vicious Circle* (BOOM! Studios)
- Felix Delep, *Animal Castle* (Ablaze)
- Daria Schmitt, *The Monstrous Dreams of Mr. Providence* (Europe Comics)
- Sana Takeda, *The Night Eaters: She Eats the Night* (Abrams ComicArts); *Monstress* (Image)
- Zoe Thorogood, *Rain* (Syzygy/Image)

### Best Cover Artist (for multiple covers)

- Jen Bartel, *She-Hulk* (Marvel)
- Bruno Redondo, *Nightwing* (DC)
- Alex Ross and Josh Johnson, *Astro City: That Was Then . . .* (Image); *Fantastic Four, Black Panther* (Marvel)
- Sana Takeda, *Monstress* (Image)
- Zoe Thorogood, *Joe Hill's Rain* (Syzygy/Image)

### Best Coloring

- Jordie Bellaire, *The Nice House on the Lake, Suicide Squad*

- Blaze* (DC); *Antman, Miracleman by Gaiman & Buckingham: The Silver Age* (Marvel)
- Jean-Francois Beaulieu, *I Hate Fairyland 2022, Twig* (Image)
- Dave McCaig, *The Incal: Psychoverse* (Humanoids)
- Jacob Phillips, *Follow Me Down, The Ghost in You, That Texas Blood* (Image)
- Alex Ross, *The Fantastic Four: Full Circle* (Abrams ComicArts)
- Diana Sousa, *Critical Role: Vox Machina Origins; Mighty Nein Origins: Yasha Nydoorin; Mighty Nein Origins: Fjord Stone; Mighty Nein Origins: Caleb Widogast* (Dark Horse)

### Best Lettering

- Pat Brosseau, *Wonder Woman: The Villainy of Our Fears* (DC); *Creepshow, Dark Ride, I Hate This Place, Skybound Presents: Afterschool* (Image Skybound)
- Chris Dickey, *The Night Eaters: She Eats the Night* (Abrams ComicArts)
- Todd Klein, *Chivalry* (Dark Horse); *Fables* (DC); *Miracleman by Gaiman & Buckingham: The Silver Age* (Marvel)
- Nate Piekos, *Black Hammer Reborn, Minor Threats, Shaolin Cowboy, Stranger Things: Kamchatka* (Dark Horse), *I Hate Fairyland, Twig* (Image)
- Stan Sakai, *Usagi Yojimbo* (IDW)

### Best Comics-Related Periodical/Journalism

- *Alter Ego*, edited by Roy Thomas (TwoMorrows)
- *Comic Book Creator*, edited by Jon B. Cooke (TwoMorrows)
- *The Comics Journal* #308, edited by Gary Groth, Kristy Valenti, and Rachel Miller (Fantagraphics)
- *PanelXPanel* magazine, edited by Hassan Otsmane-Elhaou and Tiffany Bobb (panelxpanel.gumroad.com)
- Rob Salkowitz, *Forbes, ICv2, Publishers Weekly* (see submissions letter for pdf downloads)

### Best Comics-Related Book

- *The Art of the News: Comics Journalism*, edited by Katherine Kelly-Stebbins and Ben Saunders (Oregon State University Press)
- *Charles M. Schulz: The Art and Life of the Peanuts Creator in 100 Objects*, by Benjamin Clark and Nat Gertler (Schulz Museum)
- *The Charlton Companion*, by John B. Cooke (TwoMorrows)
- *Gladys Parker: A Life in Comics, A Passion for Fashion*, by Trina Robbins (Hermes Press)
- *Resurrection: Comics in Post-Soviet Russia*, by José Alaniz (Ohio State University Press)

### Best Academic/Scholarly Work

- *Bandits, Misfits, and Superheroes: Whiteness and Its Borderlands in American Comics and Graphic Novels*, by Josef Benson and Doug Singsen (University Press of Mississippi)
- *Graphic Medicine*, edited by Erin La Cour and Anna Poletti (University of Hawai'i Press)
- *How Comics Travel: Publication, Translation, Radical Literacies*, by Katherine Kelp-Stebbins (Ohio State University Press)
- *The LGBTQ+ Comics Studies Reader*, edited by Alison Halsall and Jonathan Warren (University Press of Mississippi)
- *Teaching with Comics and Graphic Novels*, by Tim Smyth (Routledge)

### Best Publication Design

- *A Frog in the Fall (and later on)*, designed by Olle Forsslöf (PEOW)
- *Joan Jett & the Blackhearts 40X40: Bad Reputation/I Love Rock-n-Roll*, designed by Josh Bernstein and Jason Ullmeyer (Z2)
- *Mazebook Direct Edition*, designed by Tom Muller (Dark Horse)
- *Parker: The Martini Edition—Last Call*, designed by Sean Phillips (IDW)
- *Tori Amos: Little Earthquakes, The Graphic Album*, designed by Lauryn Ipsum (Z2)

### Best Webcomic

- Deeply Dave, by Grover, deeplydave.com
- Delilah Dirk: Practical Defence Against Piracy, by Tony Cliff, delilahdirk.com
- Lore Olympus, by Rachel Smythe (WEBTOON)
- The Mannamong, by Michael Adam Lengyel, mannamong.com
- Spores, by Joshua Barkman, falseknees.com

### Best Digital Comic

- *All Princesses Die Before Dawn*, by Quentin Zuttion, translation by M. B. Valente (Europe Comics)
- *Barnstormers*, by Scott Snyder and Tula Lotay (Comixology Originals) Behind the Curtain, by Sara del Giudice, translation by M. B. Valente (Europe Comics)
- *Ripple Effects*, by Jordan Hart, Bruno Chiroleu, Justin Harder, and Shane Kadlecik (Fanbase Press)
- *Sixty Years in Winter*, by Ingrid Chabbert and Aimée de Jongh, translation by Matt Madden (Europe Comics)



# Will Eisner Comic Industry Awards

## HALL OF FAME | 2023

The following 15 people are being inducted into the Eisner Hall of Fame, as chosen by this year's judges.

### DECEASED INDUCTEES

#### Jerry Bails (1933–2006)

Known as the “Father of Comic Book Fandom,” Jerry Bails was one of the first to approach comic books as a subject worthy of academic study, and he was a primary force in establishing 1960s comics fandom. He was the founding editor of the fan-zines *Alter-Ego*, *The Comicollector*, and *On the Drawing Board*, the forerunner to the long-running newszine *The Comic Reader*, designed to showcase the latest comic news. He then headed the drive to establish the Academy of Comic-Book Fans and Collectors. Another important contribution was his *Who's Who of American Comic Books*, published in four volumes during 1973–1976.

#### Tony DeZuniga (1932–2012)

Tony DeZuniga was the first Filipino comic book artist whose work was accepted by American publishers and was instrumental in recruiting many other Filipino artists to enter the U.S. comics industry in the early 1970s. He is best known for co-creating Jonah Hex and Black Orchid. DeZuniga divided his time

between DC and Marvel, drawing not only Jonah Hex and Conan but also many other well-known characters including Doc Savage, Thor, The X-Men, Swamp Thing, Batman, Dracula, Iron Man, Doctor Strange, Red Sonja, The Punisher, and Spider-Man.

#### Justin Green (1945–2022)

Justin Green is most noted for the 1972 underground title *Binky Brown Meets the Holy Virgin Mary*. This autobiographical comic book detailed Green's struggle with a form of OCD known as scrupulosity, within the framework of growing up Catholic in 1950s Chicago. Intense graphic depiction of personal torment had never appeared in comic book form before, and it had a profound effect on other cartoonists and the future direction of comics as literature. The underground comix pioneer was also a contributor to such titles as *Bijou Funnies*, *Insect Fear*, *Arcade*, *Young Lust*, and *Sniffy Comics*. In the 1990s, Green focused his cartooning attention on a series of visual biographies for *Pulse!*, the in-house magazine for Tower Records. It ran for ten years and was later collected as *Musical Legends*.

#### Jay Jackson (1905–1954)

Jay Paul Jackson was an African American artist who spent many years working for the *Chicago Defender*, in addition to working as an illustrator for science fiction magazines such as *Amazing Stories* and *Fantastic Adventures*. Jackson introduced the world to the first black superhero on January 6, 1945 in the “the oldest, longest continuously running black comic strip,” *Bungleton Green*, in the *Chicago Defender*. Bungleton Green, the name of the character as well as the strip, became the literal embodiment of the black ideal, a man who in all ways was equal, even superior, to the whites whose relentless oppression Jackson constantly fought.

#### Jeffrey Catherine Jones (1944–2011)

Jeff Jones began creating comics in 1964. While attending Georgia State College, Jones met fellow student Mary Louise Alexander, whom he married in 1966. After graduation, the couple moved to New York City but split up in the early 1970s (writer/editor Louise Jones Simonson was inducted into the Eisner Hall of Fame in 2020). In New York Jones

found work drawing for King Comics, Gold Key, *Creepy*, *Eerie*, and *Vampirella*, as well as Wally Wood's *Witzend*. In the early 1970s when *National Lampoon* began publication, Jones had a strip in it called *Idyl*. From 1975 to 1979 Jones shared workspace with Bernie Wrightson, Barry Windsor-Smith, and Michael Wm Kaluta, collectively named The Studio. By the early 1980s Jones had a recurring strip in *Heavy Metal* titled *I'm Age*. In the late 1990s, Jones started taking female hormones and had sex reassignment surgery. She passed away in May of 2011.

#### Aline Kominsky-Crumb (1948–2022)

Kominsky-Crumb was born Aline Goldsmith in 1948, in Long Island, New York. In 1971 she moved to San Francisco and fell in with the all-female collective that founded *Wimmen's Comix*, and contributed stories to the anthology's inaugural issues. In 1975, she departed *Wimmen's Comix* and with fellow former contributor Diane Noomin launched *Twisted Sisters*, which would eventually spawn an anthology and a limited series featuring work by

many *Wimmen's Comix* contributors. Kominisky married Robert Crumb in 1978, a few years after the couple began co-creating the comic *Dirty Laundry*, about their life together. Aline drew her own character, “the Bunch,” later collected into *Love That Bunch*. In 1981 she took the editorial reins of Crumb's *Weirdo* anthology and remained the series' editor through its 1993 conclusion. In 1990, the Crumbs moved to a small village in southern France, where they continued to collaborate. Aline's 2007 memoir, *Need More Love*, earned her critical acclaim.

#### Win Mortimer (1919–1998)

Canadian artist James Winslow Mortimer began working for DC Comics in 1945 and quickly became a cover artist for comics featuring Superman, Superboy, and Batman. He succeeded Wayne Boring on the *Superman* newspaper strip in 1949, leaving it in 1956 to create the adventure strip *David Crane* for the Prentice-Hall Syndicate. During the same period, Mortimer returned to DC and worked on a large variety of comics, ranging from humor titles such as *Swing with Scooter*

to superhero features starring the Legion of Super-Heroes and Supergirl. He and writer Arnold Drake co-created *Stanley and His Monster* in 1965. By the early 1970s, he was freelancing for other publishers. At Marvel, he drew virtually every story in the TV tie-in children's comic *Spidey Super Stories* (1974–1982) as well as the short-lived *Night Nurse* series. Mortimer's work at Gold Key Comics included *Boris Karloff Tales of Mystery*, *The Twilight Zone*, and *Battle of The Planets*.

#### Diane Noomin (1947–2022)

Pioneering female underground cartoonist Diane Noomin (married to cartoonist Bill Griffith) is best known for her character Didi Glitz and for editing the groundbreaking anthology series *Twisted Sisters*. Noomin's comics career began in the early 1970s and included appearances in *Wimmen's Comix*, *Young Lust*, *Arcade*, *Titters*, *Weirdo*, and many others. DiDi first appeared in a story called “Restless Reverie” in *Short Order Comix* #2 (Family Fun, 1974). Noomin has said that she used DiDi as a shield in addressing material which in later years was increasingly

autobiographical. Most recently, Noomin edited the anthology *Drawing Power: Women's Stories of Sexual Violence, Harassment, and Survival* (Abrams ComicArts, 2019), which was inspired by the global #MeToo Movement. The book won the 2020 Eisner Award for Best Anthology.

#### Gaspar Saladino (1927–2016)

Gaspar Saladino started at DC in 1949 and worked for more than 60 years in the comics industry as a letterer and logo designer. It has been calculated that he designed 416 logos, lettered 52,769 comic book pages and 5,486 covers, and produced 411 house ads. The logos he designed for DC included *Swamp Thing*, *Vigilante*, *Phantom Stranger*, *Metal Men*, *Adam Strange*, *House of Mystery*, *House of Secrets*, and *Unknown Soldier*, among others. For Marvel, Saladino's logos, which he either created or updated, include *The Avengers*, *Sgt. Fury and his Howling Commandos*, *Captain America and the Falcon*, and *Marvel Triple Action*. During the early 1970s Saladino lettered the interiors for the then-new *Swamp Thing*. It was in the pages

of this series that he created the concept of character-designated fonts, with Swamp Thing's distinctive outlined, “drippy” letters.

#### Kim Thompson (1956–2013)

Kim Thompson was born in Denmark in 1956 and grew up in the rich and varied publishing world of European comics. He arrived in the U.S. in the 1970s and immediately joined with Gary Groth, founder of Fantagraphics, to serve as co-publisher for the next three decades. Kim began working with *The Comics Journal*, helping produce the news reports, interviews, criticism and commentary that would guide and outline the growth of both mainstream comics and the independent comics publishing movement going into the 1980s. By the early 1980s Fantagraphics began publishing a list that included many of the most acclaimed comics and graphic novels of the era—among them the Hernandez Brothers' *Love and Rockets* and many others—and Thompson was instrumental in their acquisition and publication. Thompson was also a key figure in bringing



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the best of European graphic novels to the U.S., acquiring and translating works.

### Mort Walker (1923–2018)

Mort Walker was one of the best-known gag-a-day cartoonists in the world. He created three long-running and famous newspaper comics: his signature series *Beetle Bailey* (1950– ), *Hi and Lois* with Dik Browne (1954– ), and *Boner's Ark* (1968–2000). Mort Walker was not only a creative spirit in comedy, but he also loved his profession. He wrote various essays and books about comics. He was the first to think up names for comics symbols and imagery which had previously remained unnamed. The man also turned the National Cartoonists' Society into an actual professional organization and established its annual Reuben Award to honor artists and writers. He founded a Museum of Cartoon Art (1974–2002), whose huge collection of original artwork is nowadays part of the Billy Ireland Cartoon Library & Museum.

### LIVING INDUCTEES

### Bill Griffith (1944– )

Known for his non sequitur-spouting character Zippy

the Pinhead, Griffith had his first work published in 1969 in the *East Village Other* and *Screw*. His first major comic book titles included *Tales of Toad* and *Young Lust*, a bestselling series parodying romance comics. He was co-editor of *Arcade*, *The Comics Revue* for its seven-issue run in the mid-'70s. The first Zippy strip appeared in *Real Pulp* #1 (Print Mint) in 1970. The strip went weekly in 1976, first in the *Berkeley Barb* and then syndicated nationally. Today the daily *Zippy* appears in over 200 newspapers worldwide. Most recently, he produced the autobiographical *Invisible Ink: My Mother's Love Affair with a Famous Cartoonist*.

### Jack Katz (1927– )

Jack Katz began his career at the age of 16, doing art for Archie Comics and Fawcett's *Bulletman*, and working as an assistant on several strips for King Features in the second half of the 1940s. In the early 1950s, he went to work as a comic book penciler for Marvel/Atlas Comics and continued into the early 1970s. He did art on many war, mystery and romance titles, mainly for Marvel, but also for Better Publications. Katz was additionally present in DC's romance titles and in the horror magazines of Warren Publishing and Skywald in the 1970s. Then he dropped out of

mainstream comics to devote 12 years to his *First Kingdom* project: a complex science fiction epic that tells of man's migration into space, the ensuing galactic battles, and the great mystery of mankind's origin before the fall of civilization. Katz completed this series with issue number 24 in 1986.

### Garry Trudeau (1948– )

Trudeau attended Yale University and was a cartoonist and writer for *The Yale Record*. He also created a comic strip called *Bull Tales* that moved to the *Yale Daily News* in 1969. Universal Press Syndicate bought the strip and started selling it nationwide to over 400 newspapers under the title *Doonesbury*. In his long career, Trudeau has been groundbreaking in dealing with topics like homosexuality in comic strips. He also has been a strong advocate of cartoonists rights. In 1975, Trudeau was the first comic strip artist to win the Pulitzer Prize, followed by the Rueben Award in 1996. *Doonesbury* was made into an animated short film in 1977 and a Broadway musical in 1984.

### Tatjana Wood (1926– )

Tatjana Weintrob immigrated from German to New York in 1948, attending the Traphagen School of Fashion. In 1949, she

met comics artist Wally Wood, and they married in 1950. During the 1950s and 1960s, she sometimes made uncredited contributions to Wood's artwork. Beginning in 1969, she did extensive work for DC Comics as a comic book colorist. She was the main colorist for DC's covers from 1973 through the mid-1980s. She did coloring on the interiors of such acclaimed series as Grant Morrison's acclaimed run on *Animal Man*, Alan Moore's issues of *Swamp Thing*, and *Camelot 3000*. She won the Shazam Award for Best Colorist in 1971 and 1974.

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# EVENTS GUIDE

## COMPLETE SCHEDULE OF EVENTS



# JULY 20-23, 2023

## PREVIEW NIGHT: JULY 19



## Best Short Story

"Funeral in Foam," by Casey Gilly and Raina Telgemeier, in *You Died: An Anthology of the Afterlife* (Iron Circus)

## Best Single Issue/One-Shot

*Wonder Woman Historia: The Amazons*, by Kelly Sue, DeConnick and Phil Jimenez (DC)

## Best Continuing Series (TIE)

*Bitter Root*, by David F. Walker, Chuck Brown, and Sanford Greene (Image)  
*Something Is Killing the Children*, by James Tynion IV and Werther Dell'Edera (BOOM! Studios)

## Best Limited Series

*The Good Asian*, by Pornsak Pichetshote and Alexandre Tefenkgi (Image)

## Best New Series

*The Nice House on the Lake*, by James Tynion IV and Álvaro Martínez Bueno (DC Black Label)

## Best Publication for Early Readers (up to age 8)

*Chibi Usagi: Attack of the Heebie Chibis*, by Julie and Stan Sakai (IDW)

## Best Publication for Kids (ages 9-12)

*Salt Magic*, by Hope Larson and Rebecca Mock (Margaret Ferguson Books/Holiday House)

## Best Publication for Teens (ages 13-17)

*The Legend of Auntie Po*, by Shing Yin Khor (Kokila/Penguin Random House)

## Best Humor Publication

*Not All Robots*, by Mark Russell and Mike Deodato Jr. (AWA Upshot)

## Best Anthology

*You Died: An Anthology of the Afterlife*, edited by Kel McDonald and Andrea Purcell (Iron Circus)

## Best Reality-Based Work

*The Black Panther Party: A Graphic History*, by David F. Walker and Marcus Kwame Anderson (Ten Speed Press)

## Best Graphic Memoir

*Run: Book One*, by John Lewis, Andrew Aydin, L. Fury, and Nate Powell (Abrams ComicArts)

## Best Graphic Album—New

*Monsters*, by Barry Windsor-Smith (Fantagraphics)

## Best Graphic Album—Reprint

*The Complete American Gods*, by Neil Gaiman, P. Craig Russell, and Scott Hampton (Dark Horse)

## Best Adaptation from Another Medium

*George Orwell's 1984: The Graphic Novel*, adapted by Fido Nesti (Mariner Books)

## Best U.S. Edition of International Material

*The Shadow of a Man*, by Benoît Peeters and François Schuiten, translation by Stephen D. Smith (IDW)

## Best U.S. Edition of International Material—Asia

*Lovesickness: Junji Ito Story Collection*, by Junji Ito, translation by Jocelyne Allen (VIZ Media)

## Best Archival Collection/Project—Strips

*Popeye: The E.C. Segar Sundays*, vol. 1 by E.C. Segar, edited by Gary Groth and Conrad Groth (Fantagraphics)

## Best Archival Collection/Project—w/Comic Books

*EC Covers Artist's Edition*, edited by Scott Dunbier (IDW)

## Best Writer

James Tynion IV, *House of Slaughter*, *Something Is Killing the Children*, *Wynd* (BOOM! Studios); *The Nice House on the Lake*, *The Joker*, *Batman*, *DC Pride 2021* (DC); *The Department of Truth* (Image); *Blue Book*, *Razorblades* (Tiny Onion Studios)

## Best Writer/Artist

Barry Windsor-Smith, *Monsters* (Fantagraphics)

## Best Penciller/Inker or Penciller/Inker Team

Phil Jimenez, *Wonder Woman Historia: The Amazons* (DC)

## Best Painter/Multimedia Artist

Sana Takeda, *Monstress* (Image)

## Best Cover Artist

Jen Bartel, *Future State Immortal Wonder Woman* #1 & 2, *Wonder Woman Black & Gold* #1, *Wonder Woman 80th Anniversary* (DC); *Women's History Month variant covers* (Marvel)

## Best Coloring

Matt Wilson, *Undiscovered Country* (Image); *Fire Power* (Image Skybound); *Eternals*, *Thor*, *Wolverine* (Marvel); *Jonna and the Unpossible Monsters* (Oni)

## Best Lettering

Barry Windsor-Smith, *Monsters* (Fantagraphics)

## Best Comics-Related Periodical/Journalism

*WomenWrite* AboutComics.com, edited by Wendy Browne and Nola Pfau (WWAC)

## Best Comics-Related Book

*All of the Marvels*, by Douglas Wolk (Penguin Press)

## Best Academic/Scholarly Work

*Comics and the Origins of Manga: A Revisionist History*, by Eike Exner (Rutgers University Press)

## Best Publication Design

*Marvel Comics Library: Spider-Man vol. 1: 1962–1964* (TASCHEN)

## Best Webcomic

Lore Olympus, by Rachel Smythe (WEBTOON)

## Best Digital Comic

*Snow Angels*, by Jeff Lemire and Jock (Comixology Originals)

## Hall of Fame

*Judges' Choices*: Marie Duval, Rose O'Neill, Max Gaines, Mark Gruenwald, Alex Niño, P. Craig Russell  
*Voters' Choices*: Howard Chaykin, Kevin Eastman, Moto Hagio, Larry Hama, David Mazzucchelli, Grant Morrison

## Bob Clampett Humanitarian Award:

Annie Koyama

## Russ Manning Promising Newcomer Award:

Luanna Vecchio

## Bill Finger Excellence in Comic Book Writing Award:

Bob Bolling, Don Rico

## Will Eisner Spirit of Comics Retailer Award:

Books with Pictures, Portland, Oregon

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# IN MEMORIAM

*Remembering Those We've Lost*

## REMEMBERING JOHN ROMITA (1930–2023)

by Danny Fingeroth

**It's early 1977. Recently graduated from college, I had managed to score an informational tour of the Marvel Comics offices because I thought it might be fun to work in comics for a few months.** Because of that tour, I did indeed end up working at Marvel for close to 18 years. And while everyone I met on that visit was polite, they were all quite busy. I could hear my résumés landing in their trash cans before I even exited their offices.

But there was one significant exception.

When I was introduced to John Romita, he treated me as if I was a VIP. The whole encounter lasted maybe two minutes, but John made me feel welcome and at ease. And he did the same when I did come to work at the company in the summer of 1977 and in all the years after. Of course, that's how he made pretty much *everybody* feel. Whatever the opposite of a prima donna is, that's what John Romita was.

Which is not to say he wasn't fiercely proud of the work he did. I think John was aware of his legendary status, but he didn't seem to think that gave him the right to be indifferent or abusive to anybody. He was a mensch.

John had the classic comics artist's background. Born in Brooklyn, he enthralled his friends by drawing on the asphalt streets with bits of plaster, since his family couldn't afford chalk. In this manner, young John created illustrations that included a 100-foot-long Statue of Liberty figure sketched from manhole cover to manhole cover. He drew the scenery for school plays, eventually attending the legendary School of Industrial Art (later called High School of Art and Design) in Manhattan.

In 1951, John went to work for Atlas Comics (formerly Timely and later Marvel). There, he drew stories in a wide variety of genres, including tales of Captain America during a short-lived superhero revival, and began his professional relationship with Stan Lee, who Romita came to see as the best writer and editor in comics. While other editors

seemed uninterested in Romita's—or anyone's—artistic development, Lee, John recalled, was the first editor to take the time and effort to evaluate his work, whereas most other editors would brusquely accept or criticize it.

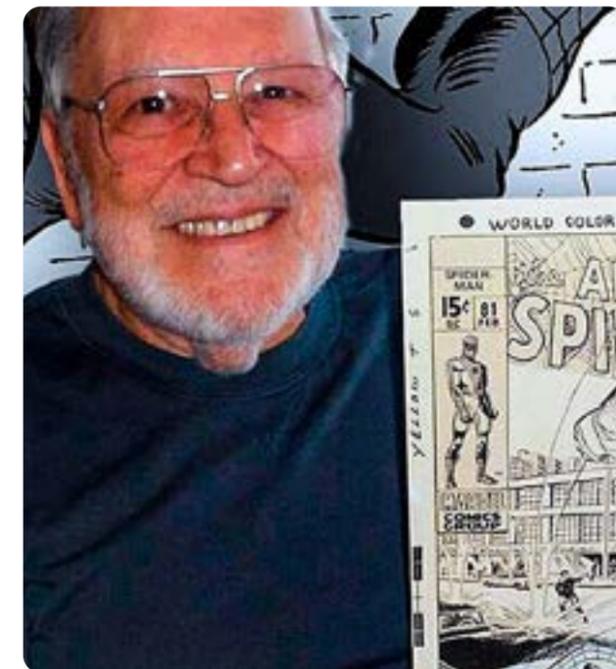
Of course, when Atlas imploded in 1957 and Lee pulled a job away from Romita without paying for the finished pages, John did famously instruct his wife Virginia that "if Stan Lee calls, tell him to go to hell."

Unable to take a hint, Lee remained in touch with Romita and, years later, after John had drawn countless romance stories for DC—where he became pigeonholed in that genre—and just as he was on the verge of leaving comics to take a well-paying advertising job, convinced him to come back to Marvel. John agreed, but just to do some inking. He felt he was burned out on penciling after eight years of drawing romance stories.

But Stan knew John was too good a visual storyteller and designer to not do any penciling, and John was soon the penciler on *Daredevil*, where Spider-Man guest-starred for a couple of issues. And, of course, when Steve Ditko left *Amazing Spider-Man*, Lee enlisted John to take over as penciler—a gig John through would be temporary, because surely Ditko would come to his senses and return—and pretty soon John's version of Spider-Man became the one most identified

with the character. With John as penciler, *ASM* soon became Marvel's bestselling title. And in 1977, he and Stan launched the *Spider-Man* syndicated newspaper strip, the first Marvel character to ever appear in that prestigious format. John was also Marvel's de facto art director, the title becoming official in 1973.

Together, Stan and John (who Stan nicknamed John "Ring-a-Ding" Romita after a popular Frank Sinatra song) did countless issues of *Amazing Spider-Man*, often with John developing a brief story conference with Stan into a fully fleshed-out comic that Stan would then



dialogue, often modifying the storyline as he went. As John once told me: “When deadlines forced me to send out the work, I had doubts whether it was sound, clear storytelling. When the lettered pages [scripted by Stan] came in I was invariably amazed at how well planned and clever my story looked.” Obviously, even if he didn’t realize it when he was drawing it, John had provided the ingredients for that well-planned and clever story. This was a collaboration that worked.

John worked on *Spider-Man* as penciler and/or inker and/or layout artist—often working in tandem with other artists, including Gil Kane, John Buscema, Jim Mooney, Mike Esposito, and Larry Lieber—to give Marvel’s flagship title a consistent, high-gloss, energetic look. Perhaps most famously, John was deeply involved with the plot of the controversial “Death of Gwen Stacy” storyline, a saga that excites passions to this day.

John worked on countless special projects for Marvel. One that stands out in my memory is John’s design work, from which sculptures were done, for the Spider-Man 30th anniversary hologram covers, done when such covers were still a novelty. Even after being translated into sculptures and holograms, the figures were still unmistakably recognizable as John Romita artwork. John also trained up-and-coming artists—“Romita’s Raiders”—who served under him as the workhorses of Marvel’s art department, learning (from a master) while they earned.

## GREG BEAR (1951–2022)

by David Clark

I first connected with Greg Bear in 1967, when we were both 16 years old. I was in downtown San Diego on a Saturday afternoon, prowling the many used bookstores in search of used science fiction and fantasy p backs, old pulp magazines, and other volumes of quaint and curious lore. He and his cousin Dan were coming out of Mrs. Lanning’s bookstore as I was walking in. Greg recognized me from school and we stopped to chat. Comparing our book purchases, we discovered that we had a common passion for the rare and wonderful, especially science fiction!

We were both students at San Diego’s Crawford High, a massive school with around 3,700 students. It’s been said that it is a proud and lonely thing to be a fan, but there was nothing lonely about being a fan at Crawford.

There was an active coterie of science fiction, horror, comics, and film fans. In addition to Greg and me were Scott Shaw, John Pound, and Roger Freedman—all future Comic-Con co-founders and all friends to this day. Greg was in no small way responsible for the Comic Con’s early focus on sf.

Virginia and John were the first family of Marvel, both of them working in the office, John giving the line a consistent, powerful look and feel, Virginia making sure that the books got to the printers on time. Even after his 1996 “retirement,” John frequently produced Spider-Man stories for special occasions. (And, of course, their son, John Romita, Jr., continues the family legacy, pursuing a uniquely successful career at both Marvel and DC, including making his own very significant mark on the Spider-Man mythos.)

In 2010, years after we’d last worked together, I was scheduled to moderate a spotlight on John panel at the New York Comic Con. My mother, though, passed away just before the con, and I was unable to do the panel, handing off the moderating to Peter Sanderson. Nonetheless, John took the time to email me afterward: “Thinking of you and hoping it’s easing... had a huge crowd and would still be there talking if they didn’t move us out... you’d have enjoyed it.” The guy had a huge heart.

With John Romita’s passing, comics will forever be missing something. His talent, of course. But more than that, the man himself. Thanks for everything, John.

A longtime writer and editor at Marvel Comics, Danny Fingerth is the author of *A Marvelous Life: The Amazing Story of Stan Lee* and the upcoming *Jack Ruby: The Many Faces of Oswald’s Assassin*.



Greg Bear and Dave Clark at the 2019 Comic-Con, celebrating the show’s 50th.

Greg had known that he was going to be a science fiction author from the time he was eight. The first time I went to his house he showed me neatly typed manuscripts of early stories and a hand-drawn fanzine he and his cousin had created, with detailed reviews of then-current TV shows like *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea* and Hammer Horror films. He also showed me some very cool pen-and-ink drawings and several paintings he had done that showed a high degree of talent. Greg would eventually have to wrestle a bit with the question of which path to choose, writing or illustration.

Over the next few years, we shared many of what Greg called “adventures” in pursuit of our love of imaginative storytelling in all its forms. We made trips to Forry Ackerman’s house to attend screenings, met Ray Harryhausen

for the first time, visited King Kong’s creator Marcel Delgado in his home, and went to lunch with the man who would go on to be a friend and mentor to Greg: Ray Bradbury. Along with Scott Shaw, Greg and I attended the 1968 World Science Fiction Convention in Berkeley, where among a jillion other fascinating people, we first

met Greg’s future wife, Astrid Anderson, daughter of authors Poul and Karen Anderson.

In 1968, after seeing an early screening of *2001: A Space Odyssey*, Greg did a wonderful painting of the spaceship *Discovery*. This painting got us both invited into the green room of *The Bob Dale Show* to meet Arthur C. Clarke. Greg’s painting hung in the lobby of the theater in Fashion Valley where *2001* ran for the next year. A beautiful one-sheet for *2001* hangs in the media room of Greg’s house to this day, a gift from the theater manager.

Greg began his professional writing career in 1967, with a sale to “Doc” Lowndes magazine *Famous Science Fiction*. His short story “The Destroyers” appeared in issue #5. I’ll never forget going to the newsstand with him the day it came out; at my request he signed my copy, his very first autograph.

Over the span of 55 years, Greg wrote over 56 novels and short story collections. To mention just a few: *Blood Music*, *Eon*, *The Forge of God and Anvil of Stars*, *Queen of Angels and Slant*, *Darwin’s Radio*, *Darwin’s Children*, *Songs of Earth and Power* (with its villain, David Clarkham, named in my honor!) and the *Wardogs* and *Halo* trilogies. He wrote several notable shared-world novels including the Star Trek–based *Corona*, *Rouge One*, a Star Wars title, and a continuation of Asimov’s Foundation works, *Foundation and Empire*. A quick count

## DANNY BULANADI (1946–2022)

by Mark Evanier

How sad to find myself writing a piece for this section about Danny Bulanadi, a fine comic book illustrator who was born in 1946 in Manila, Philippines. He broke into the field as many did then and there—as an assistant for Tony deZuñiga. In that capacity and after he graduated to doing it all on his own, his work appeared in all the top-selling “komiks” in the Philippines until (and maybe even after) 1975.

That was the year he relocated to the U.S. One of his first jobs here was on a line of Tarzan comic books that were being prepared for publication (only) in other countries. The publishers wanted someone who could draw *The Lord of the Jungle* the way Russ Manning did, and Danny, who was kind of a chameleon of art styles, could. In fact, he did a few stories with Russ and you’d be hard-pressed to figure out which parts were Russ and which were Danny. When I took over as editor, he was one of my most valuable freelancers. His work was quite good and it was always on time.

When that series of comics ended, DC and Marvel put him to work, primarily as an inker. He inked some of the best artists in the business but also proved valuable when someone else penciled a job and it needed a lot of “fixing” in the ink stage. I’m not sure all his editors recognized how good Danny could be on his own.

In 1988, he moved to Southern California and worked as a storyboard artist and designer, primarily for Hanna-Barbera (and especially on *Jonny Quest*) and for Marvel Productions (especially on *The Transformers*) and a great many videogames. He did just about everything a comic book artist can do and even dabbled in painting nature and old west scenes.

shows something like 32 major Hugo, Nebula, and other award wins and nominations. If you haven’t read any of them yet, get busy. You have a treat in store!

Greg was interested in everything. He was vastly well read and collected books on an amazing array of subjects. Science, medicine, ancient and modern history, art, mythology, religion and literature were all in his wheelhouse. He was especially passionate on the intellectual history of science fiction, horror, and fantasy.

One of Greg’s defining traits was his kindness and generosity. Generous with his time, he mentored a number of aspiring writers, especially through his many years of involvement with the Clarion West Writers Workshop. As I look around the crowded bookshelves where I sit now, I see many volumes gifted to me by Greg over the years—books he thought I would be interested in and books he thought I *should* be interested in. He was usually right on both counts.

As to kindness, this final thought. Both from small families, Greg and I were the brothers that neither of us had. And no brother could ever have been kinder, and no brother will ever be missed more than he. Thanks, Bear!

San Diego native and poet David Clark was an early writer of underground comix and was one of the co-founders of the San Diego Comic Con.



Tribute by Emilio Soltero

Like I said, it’s sad to find him in this section of the souvenir book. The industry could use more people who are that versatile and that dependable.

**“I am vengeance! I am the night! I am BATMAN!”** The voice that uttered those words belonged to Kevin Conroy, who thrilled fans for 30 years and left an indelible stamp on the role of Batman in a way no other actor has, before or since.

To fans of *Batman: The Animated Series*, *Batman Beyond*, the Arkham Asylum video games, several incarnations of *Justice League* and many other DCAU appearances, Kevin Conroy truly was Batman. His command of the character seemed so intuitive that many admirers assumed he was born with a full run of Detective Comics in his hands. Not so. While Kevin remembered the 1960s Adam West series, he was, by his own admission, otherwise oblivious to the world of the Caped Crusader and his scores of allies and enemies. As a young man, Kevin had studied classical acting at Julliard and had never given the world of comic book superheroes much thought. That is, until he was approached by Warner Bros. voice director Andrea Romano.

After being introduced to the Batman series concept by Andrea and creators Bruce Timm and Eric Radomski, Kevin realized that the same elements of tragedy and melancholia that

define a character like Hamlet can also be applied to Batman. As a gay man who for many years felt he had to hide who he was in order to have a viable acting career, Kevin certainly knew what it was to have the burden of a “secret identity.” In the heartfelt and intensely moving illustrated short story memoir “Finding Batman” written by Kevin and rendered by J. Bone, Kevin writes how the *BTAS* creators described Batman as a character who “had formed dual personalities to deal with the agony of his childhood. A mask of confidence to the world, and a private one wracked by conflict and wounds.”

Kevin dug deep into his own past to draw upon feelings of alienation and loss and from that turmoil created his own personal take on the Caped Crusader. To Robin and other Bat-allies, his was the voice of a stern but caring patriarch no family member dared defy. Among other heroes, Kevin’s Dark Knight spoke with the force of cold authority, respected by his peers and perhaps a bit feared. And to the darker denizens of Gotham, his whisper sparked pure terror. The moments Kevin created in the recording booth with his fellow actors, particularly Mark Hamill, were magical. Mark has often stated that his Joker and Kevin’s Batman were a classic Hollywood pairing, as inseparable as Laurel was to Hardy.

And boy, could Kevin laugh! Most people didn’t realize how funny Kevin could be. No one ever recounted Catholic School nightmare

stories with such impish glee. In the recording booth, Kevin could turn a blown take into a comedy routine. While recording V.O. for a virtual reality View Master set, Kevin mistakenly referred to his crime-fighting partner as “Robert,” which launched him into a three-minute riff on “Batman and Robert, that Dynamic West Hollywood Duo! Fighting for the right to have brunch!”

Among fans, the laughter was particularly infectious. A gift of a T-shirt from a fan on a convention panel turned into an impromptu strip tease as Kevin playfully swapped one shirt for the other and

brought down the house. In those times Kevin’s eyes would twinkle, and that rich, hearty Irish laugh would come rolling out. It was warm and welcoming. Anyone lucky enough to spend any time with him heard it often, and we always joined in.

Kevin may not have known Batman at first, but he came to understand him in ways very few creators have. He understood what it meant for people to have a hero to believe in, even if only for 30 minutes every weekday afternoon. He understood that Batman’s voice brought comfort to those who needed a hero’s assurance.

A story Kevin frequently told took place in the wake of 9/11. He was living in New York at the time and volunteered at Ground Zero to help serve food to first responders. Even his regular speaking voice was instantly identifiable to a co-worker, and the crew’s morale was greatly buoyed knowing they had Batman himself working alongside them.

Kevin knew what Batman meant to people and he was always a generous steward of that legacy. No fan ever left a convention greeting without an autograph, a photo, or a kind word from “their Batman.”

Kevin Conroy passed away on November 10. He did not disclose publicly that he was battling intestinal cancer. He left behind his devoted husband Vaughn Williams, a legion of loving friends, and a world of fans forever grateful he was “our Batman.”

*Special thanks to Jonathan Dotan and David Bernbaum for their help in the preparation of this piece.*

**Paul Dini is a writer and producer known for his work on *Batman: The Animated Series* and a number of TV and comic book projects. Gary Miereanu is a faster-than-a-speeding-bullet publicist who has so much fun touting fanboy entertainment that he doesn’t even need vacations. Except right after Comic-Con.**



**Drew Ford died on October 2 at the age of 48 of COVID-related pneumonia.** While he wrote comics such as the series *Rib* and the graphic novel *Steam*, his true legacy was his work as an editor and publisher. He held a number of jobs before he became acquisitions editor at Dover Press, where he oversaw a newly created line of graphic novels and developed a sensibility and approach to reprinting older work that he continued after leaving Dover, founding IT’S ALIVE! Comics.

Ford republished a wide range of books by R.O. Blechman, François Boucq, Jerome Charyn, Paul Kirchner, Stephen Murphy, Trina Robbins, Teri S. Wood, and Michael Zulli. The creator that Ford has most closely been associated with is the late Sam Glanzman. Sam was an artist’s artist and a cult figure; Ford made bringing Glanzman’s work back into print his mission. The line at Dover launched with Glanzman’s *A Sailor’s Story*; the 2016 publication of *The U.S.S. Stevens*, collecting stories that Glanzman had been writing and drawing over decades, was a project that fans and critics had talked about for decades.

After leaving Dover, Ford founded IT’S ALIVE! Press, where he published new comics and reprinted older comics series. Ford was an ambitious, thoughtful publisher with good taste, whose championing of Glanzman, in particular, helped to add to our understanding of comics, and put out books that will outlast him. Ford was also his own worst enemy. Collaborating with Dark Horse, IT’S ALIVE! released a collection of *Aztec Ace*, but Ford did not live long enough to see the publication of *The Lonely War of Capt. Willy Schultz* by Will Franz and Sam Glanzman, which came out earlier this year.

I met Ford when he worked at Dover, having reached out after



the announcement of the line. We would meet in New York for coffee and talk about the comics and creators we loved. He was finishing work on the *U.S.S. Stevens* book the first time we met, and he detailed the complicated process behind assembling the book and getting all the rights. As with many of the people in comics whom I consider friends, we stayed connected over the years because we shared a sensibility. We could speak about writing and art and design with a shorthand that comes from loving so many of the same things. And from not having someone to talk with about so many of the things we loved.

When someone dies, it can be hard to remember how they really were. The good and the bad and how they died and the last time we saw each other get jumbled up, particularly if they die young. Even if we no longer think of ourselves as young. But I think of us drinking coffee in Manhattan and talking about *Puma Blues* or *Wandering Star*, the obscure comics

by J.M. DeMatteis and others we loved that no one else seemed to remember, the works that shaped us and remained so vivid to us, glad to have someone who knew them or wanted to hear all about them.

At the end, Ford was on life support, and before being taken off, his organs were donated. According to his wife, the first organ harvested was his heart, because that was the strongest. It was. We like to think that will be enough. In comics, that’s enough. Drew Ford loved comics with all his heart. Until he couldn’t.

**Alex Dueben is a writer and historian who specializes in comics and poetry, books and art.**

**Describing Joe Giella as an “inker” is like calling Willie Mays an outfielder.** It’s true but it’s still missing the point. Joe was a full-service artist who was often called upon to ink the pencil drawings of other artists, sometimes because the pencil art was great and they needed an inker who could do it justice—and sometimes because it wasn’t great and they needed an inker who could draw and redraw.

Joe drew very well for his entire career, even on his last steady gig, the *Mary Worth* newspaper strip, which he illustrated until he turned 88. After that, his drawing board was always full, mainly with commissioned pieces re-creating covers and scenes from the long, long list of wonderful comic books he’d worked on. If you ever see

one, you’ll kick yourself for not ordering one.

You had a lot of memorable scenes and characters to pick from. Joe was the star inker on so many of the hit Silver Age comics from DC such as *The Flash* and *Green Lantern*. When Batman got his “new look” in 1964, effectively saving his comics from cancellation, most of that “new look” meant inking by Joe Giella. He was officially finishing art by Bob Kane, but that art was actually ghosted by Sheldon Mayer, whose style represented the way Batman had looked in the ‘40s and ‘50s. It was mostly Joe’s assignment to bring that comic and the Caped Crusader into what we then called modern times, and he did it very well. Joe also drew the *Batman* newspaper strip

for a while. In addition his handiwork was evident at times on *The Phantom*, *Flash Gordon* and a couple others.

Joe was born in 1928, grew up in the Queens area of New York, and learned his craft at the High School of Industrial Art, the Art Students League, and Hunter College. His career in comics began around 1945, working for Hillman, Fawcett, and Timely; he soon did art for both of the great Captains of comics: Marvel and America.

Around 1949 he began a long, mutually beneficial relationship with DC Comics. In addition to the strips mentioned above, Giella's fine skills could be found on *Adam Strange*, *The Justice League of America*, *Rex the Wonder Dog*, *Strange Adventures*, *The Atom*, *Batgirl*, *Black Canary*, *Jimmy Olsen*, *Superman*, *The Phantom Stranger*, dozens of war comics, dozens of science fiction comics, dozens of romance comics, dozens of westerns, and just about every other feature there that lasted more than a few years. Sometimes in work inked by his friend

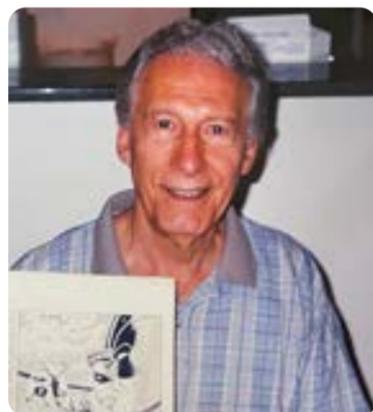


Photo courtesy of Frank Giella.

**Mark Evanier is a writer for comics and TV and is also a historian of comic books and animation.**

## ALAN GRANT (1949–2022)

**One of his generation's finest writers, Alan Grant combined a sharp eye for dialogue and political satire** with a deep empathy that made his characters seem incredibly human, and his work had a profound and enduring influence on the whole comics industry.

Born in Bristol in 1949 and growing up in Scotland, the frequent beatings he received from his teachers for being left-handed left him with a powerful distaste for authority and injustice, which saturated his writing but was leavened by a sense of humor at times mischievous and, at others, soulful.

After answering a newspaper advertisement for "trainee journalist," he joined DC Thomson, the Dundee-based publisher and home to *The Beano*, where he met John Wagner and Pat Mills. He wrote a horoscope column for the *Dundee Daily Courier*, with he and fellow sub-editors competing to see who could write the most ridiculous predictions. After moving to London in 1970 to work for IPC as a writer and sub-editor on romance magazines, he eventually ended up as a sub on the new science fiction title *2000 AD*, which he realized had an urgent need for new writing talent. It was in the unsolicited submissions pile that he found a script from an unknown writer named Alan Moore. His advice helped Moore get regular work at *2000 AD* and, without knowing it, changed the course of mainstream comics.

Dissatisfied with IPC, Grant quit and began writing with his housemate John Wagner, often under the pseudonym T.B. Grover. The pair



Alan Grant at Comic-Con in 1991. Photo by Jackie Estrada

became a writing powerhouse, their black humor and wild imaginations pumping out story after story about Judge Dredd, Robo-Hunter, Ace Trucking, and Strontium Dog—tales filled with action, pathos, and politics. Their work defined *2000 AD* in its first great golden age of the 1980s and has influenced generations of comics talent.

From the mid-1980s, Grant also wrote the solo adventures of irreverent psychic Judge Cassandra Anderson, but when the writing partnership drew to a close in the late 1980s, Wagner and Grant split their strips between them. Unhappy with IPC's policies over royalties and creator ownership, Grant killed off Strontium Dog lead character Johnny Alpha to put him out of the reach of other writers, a decision he later regretted and which co-creator Carlos Ezquerro refused to draw.

Although they no longer worked together regularly, Alan and John collaborated on projects such as the Batman/Judge Dredd crossover *Judgement on Gotham*, *The Last American* for Marvel's Epic imprint, *Outcasts* for DC Comics, and their creator-owned series *The Bogie Man*.

Grant had an acclaimed run on DC's *Detective Comics* and *Batman*—at first with Wagner and then solo—and worked with artist Norm Breyfogle for a decade. He also helped popularize DC's anarchic brute Lobo, initially with artist Simon Bisley.

He continued to work for *2000 AD* throughout the 1990s and into the 21st century, mainly on Judge Anderson, where his partner-

and neighbor Frank Giacoia you can find a page or three by Giella—just helping a pal meet a deadline.

And every so often, he would also pop up at Marvel, Archie, Tower Comics or... well, just about anywhere a good, dependable artist was needed. Among the many important, talented artists he worked with were Carmine Infantino, Mike Sekowsky, Alex Toth, Gil Kane, and Gene Colan. Editors loved Joe because the work was always right and always right on time.

They also loved Joe just because he was Joe. A nicer man, you couldn't meet. The last time I saw him was at the Heroes Con in Charlotte, North Carolina in 2019 and his table was mobbed with fans. I'm glad he lived long enough to know how many he had and how much the comics he worked on meant to them.

by Michael Molcher

ship with artist Arthur Ranson produced incredibly beautiful stories such as "Shamballa" and "Satan," and the three-volume *Mazeworld*, inspired by three months he spent in prison for possession of LSD in 1969.

Generations grew up reading Grant's work for *2000 AD*, touched by the pathos and compassion of his characters, feeling the joy of their victories and the sting of their deaths. One cannot separate *2000 AD* from Alan Grant; his humor, humanity, and intelligence made it what it is, and his talent was integral to its success. His impact on

## SAM GROSS (1933–2023)



Sam Gross at Comic-Con, 1980. Photo by Jackie Estrada.

**I knew Sam Gross before his heart attack.**

That was the old Sam Gross: more than a little on the heavy side, with a cigar seemingly glued to his lips. The *National Lampoon* offices at 635 Madison Avenue in the early 1970s were a great place to hang out with a bunch of smart and sometimes funny people, including Sam.

Cartoonist Bobby London and I were living with his parents in Queens Village then and got our monthly "Funny Pages" gigs by driving his mom's car into Manhattan and hanging out with the editors and the regulars in the art department. More often than not, the old Sam would be there. He was already a legend, for being not only clever and funny, but daring. He epitomized the groundbreaking *Lampoon* ethos of outrageous and edgy in-your-face style humor. His gravelly New York-accented comments and stories riveted our attention. At 40, he was already the godfather of our would-be Algonquin style group of writers.

The next time I saw Sam, I didn't recognize him until he announced in that familiar Manhattan drawl, "Yeah. I'm eatin' turkey burgers now." After his heart attack, he seemed to have instantly become the New Sam: slim and smoke-free. He had even more creative energy and ultra-confident attitude.

It's difficult to know what people hear when you tell them you're a cartoonist—the Sunday funnies, one-panel political or magazine cartoons, comic book or webcomic artist, graphic novelist, illustrator, or graffiti artist? The thing is, being any of those is more difficult than most people understand. There's a lot to learning and managing that career. Even more if you are good at it. Sam was great at everything, and always happy to share what he knew.

Even with a regular paying gig, panel artists like Sam draw dozens or even hundreds of cartoons that they shop around to editors and art directors. They aim for the highest first, which is usually *The New Yorker*, and work their way down. Can you see how complicated

comics and standing in the industry simply cannot be understated. But he was more than just a giant in his field—he was a fascinating man whose sharp wit and boundless warmth touched all those who met him.

**Michael Molcher is a comics journalist, award-winning podcaster, the brand manager for *2000 AD*, and author of *I Am The Law: How Judge Dredd Predicted Our Future*, out now from Rebellion.**

by Shary Flenniken

that might be? Sam devised a magnificent numbered filing system to keep track of his submissions. In another life, he might have been a NASA rocket engineer.

When PJ O'Rourke hired me to join *Lampoon* as an editor in 1979, the magazine had been faltering. After the success of the *Animal House* movie, the original editors had moved on to the big money and glory of Hollywood, and the energy was flowing to the west. I'd been living with Charley Lippincott, called by some the marketing wizard of *Star Wars* for his pre-promoting of the film at comic conventions, beginning of course, with San Diego. Seeing Charley's success, I knew cons would be a great way to connect with the *National Lampoon* fans.

Sam taught me my first big lesson at the 1979 Philadelphia convention. I brought Sam and several others to do Q&A panels about the magazine. Our first flopped. I had thought "Why Is the *Lampoon* Not Funny Anymore?" would stimulate a lot of unusual conversation. It was awkward at best. So, I called the next one "Where Do Our Ideas Come From?" Sam was a rock star. Everyone wanted to know how he came up with his outrageous ideas. We all learned a lot that day about his philosophy and his big heart. He explained that he'd been encouraged by the response to his most seemingly insulting cartoons about people (and other creatures) with various disabilities. [Sam's most famous cartoon is of a legless frog wheeling itself out of a restaurant kitchen as diners look on—editor.] Readers with disabilities liked the attention and appreciated being noticed. Like anyone, they could take a joke. They felt Sam was laughing with them, not at them. Screw the people that felt they had to be protected.

Agree or not, that is the way it was back then.

As a divorced person and two-time widow, I want to say a word about Sam's family. If you don't know how important it is to have a supportive spouse, then you probably aren't an artist. Sam's wife Isabelle was a working mom. She had a challenging career in social work and did a lot more than cook the turkey burgers to keep Sam alive, happy, and prolific. Their long marriage produced Michelle, a sane and delightful daughter. From my perspective, keeping love alive and producing an excellent offspring is as successful as life can be. A whole lot of laughs on top of that may be a miracle.

**Shary Flenniken is a cartoonist best known for her *Trots and Bonnie* strip.**

**Growing up in Yonkers, NY, Gary Guzzo was literally the kid in a candy shop,** working in a candy store that sold comic books and later moving to Dobbs Ferry, where he opened up his comic shop, Amazing Tales. Gary's mother, who shared his love of comics, had attended NYU with John Romita Sr., and John was one of the many artists who made appearances at Amazing Tales.

Gary loved rock 'n' roll along with comics, and his career would complement his two passions. He organized trade shows and corporate conferences and promoted concerts, including the construction of Simon & Garfunkel's reunion in Central Park, as well as other music events. Through his staging company, Gary got to know creators in the comics industry, and Marvel asked him to develop and promote a relief program for Hurricane Andrew victims. Trailer trucks of comics and toys were provided to the survivors, and Gary was soon hired as Marvel's director of publicity.

At Marvel Gary oversaw promotion of all major events and crossovers in the 1990s for the X-Men, Spider-Man, *Archie Meets the Punisher*, and, well, everything! My Marvel music comics were packed with bands' CDs, were sold on tours, and even hawked on MTV! Gary was instrumental in getting our first CD on the Marvel Music label, KRS-1's *Break the Chain*, to clubs, and the music video animated by Kyle Baker was heavily rotated on Yo! MTV Raps.

One favorite memory of Gary is working on the *Spumco Comic Book*. Gary envisioned a life-sized cut-out of Jimmy the Idiot Boy, his back pocket being a display rack. Whenever someone pulled a copy from the pocket, the stand-up would make a "raspberry" noise! Marvel didn't go for it.

Gary was point man for planning innumerable exhibits at conventions and beyond. He would also serve as Stan Lee's "body man," making sure Stan's public appearances went smooth.

Tammy Brown, a co-worker at Marvel, related, "He'd regale us with stories of his music days and other adventures that had us all laughing. Gary was very good at building bridges and juggling all the company needs that our team provided. His winning personality, good humor, and respect for comics were all part of why Gary was a wonderful friend and team leader."

While he was at Marvel, one thing majorly changed his life: he

met Dawn Geiger, the production manager of the fabled Marvel Bullpen. They had an incredible bond, followed with an authentic Navajo wedding ceremony in the Arizona wilderness.

After Marvel, Gary consulted for Acclaim, Valiant, and Broadway Comics among others. He and Dawn created Atomic Studios, providing multimedia production services for a variety of companies. They moved their operation to Boothbay Harbor, Maine, which made me happy as I had moved to the state, too.

Gary was most recently consulting and developing projects for Geppi Family Enterprises. Two years ago Gary drafted me to ally with his cool concepts. We worked diligently, and his legacy will change the future of comics publishing and distribution. No lie!

In 2017 a fire extinguisher exploded in the Guzzos home, a fluke accident authorities had never seen before. After that Gary had lung issues and laser knife treatments. His doctor didn't diagnose "smoker's lung cancer," feeling it was caused by the extinguisher discharge. Gary was determined to beat it, but a lung infection in December 2022 took him away from us soon after.

Steve Geppi, CEO of Geppi Family Enterprises stated, "Gary wore his passion for comics on his sleeve. He thoroughly enjoyed the challenges involved in making things better, and the only thing he loved more was his wife, Dawn. My condolences go out to her, his extended family, and his many friends. As devastating as this loss is, it would have been far, far worse if we'd never known him."

With his passing, we'll honor him and implement his innovative ideas, missing his omnipresent, infectious laugh with a brain that was always full of fun potential for our medium. I'm guessing Gary is now developing a multiversal crossover event with Rock 'n' Roll Heaven and Comic Book Heaven!

by Mort Todd with input from Dawn Guzzo, Steve Geppi, Tammy Brown, J.C. Vaughn and Melissa Bowersox.

**Mort Todd was editor-in chief of *Cracked* magazine and *Monsters Attack!* He launched the Marvel Music line and has lately been publishing comics with a lot of incredible creators.**



Portrait of Guzzo by Bill Sienkiewicz

**At Comic-Con in the 1970s, Eric Hoffman was ubiquitous in his black cape, an expert on all things Boris Karloff and Bela Lugosi.** From an early age he was a regular contributor to *Famous Monsters of Filmland* and worked closely with Forrest J Ackerman. In the science fiction and horror community, Eric was a legend with his endless enthusiasm for classic cinema and love of Golden Age horror films. He liked to play "creepy" but was quite erudite on a number of topics outside of fandom.

In the very early days of Comic-Con, thanks to Eric's vast film collection, the film room ran 24 hours a day. Many fans slept there to save the price of a room. Those of us on the Con committee had a room and invited friends and family to bring sleeping bags to save those precious bucks to spend in the Dealers' Room. Eric and the film room made it possible for "everyone in the know" to have a place to stay for free. We were fortunate that the San Diego fire marshals weren't aware of this.

In recent years, Eric was present at regular lunches at Big Jim's Mexican restaurant, which included George Clayton Johnson, Paul

M. Sammon, Paul Johnson, Greg Koudoulian, and others in the San Fernando Valley north of Los Angeles. Eric's sudden and shocking departure from this world, caused by a fire in his home, saddened our community. We are grateful to Eric for his many contributions, he received an Inkpot award in 1974.

**Wendy All began volunteering for Comic-Con in 1972. She went on to a career in illustration and toy design.**



Eric Hoffman (Dracula), Wendy Pini (Red Sonja), and Frank Thorne (The Wizard) at the 1978 Comic-Con Masquerade. Photo by Clay Geerdes.

**Comics historian, author, editor, and curator Maurice C. Horn passed away on December 30 at the age of 91.**

Born and raised in Paris, Horn was a voracious reader and a dedicated fan of cartoons. He developed his lifelong interest in American comics at a young age thanks to French reprints of Disney comics and American comic books brought to Europe by the United States military.

That love of comics stayed with him even as his studies led him to a law degree and a position in New York City as an interpreter for the State Department and later for the United Nations. During his frequent return trips to his native France, Horn joined two groups—Club Bande Dessinée and SOCERLID (Société civile d'études et de recherché des littératures dessinées)—that championed comics as "the Ninth Art" and a subject worthy of academic study.

From the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s, Horn, in varying degrees of collaboration with his SOCERLID compatriots, helped to build the

concept of "comics scholarship," the study and appreciation of the art, artists, and history of the medium from the ground up, through a series of essays, books, and museum exhibitions. Comics retrospectives in Paris, London, and New York City culminated in the publication of *A History of the Comic Strip* from 1968, co-written with Pierre Couperie, earning accolades from comics fans and creators alike.

Charismatic and enthusiastic, Horn became a familiar figure to comics enthusiasts on both sides of the Atlantic in the late 1960s. He was immortalized as the suave and sophisticated recurring character M'sieu Toute—the sound effect "toot" an obvious play on the name "horn" to those in the know—in Milton Caniff's comic strip *Steve Canyon* in the summer of 1968. But Maurice

also locked horns with members of the cartooning community in part because of his opinionated nature and his propensity for self-promotion and reluctance to acknowledge the contributions of his fellow comics historians.



Horn was an attendee and program participant at the first major multi-day U.S. comics convention, the New York Comicon, held at the Park Sheraton Hotel on July 23–24, 1966. (left to right): Gold Key Editor Bill Harris, Marvel Editor Roy Thomas, comics historian Maurice Horn, and writer-artist Gil Kane. © 2023 Margaret C. Thompson, used with permission.

Building on a string of successful books and essays, Horn signed a contract with publisher Chelsea House to produce the most ambitious and comprehensive history of comic strips and books ever attempted, *The World Encyclopedia of Comics*, which he described as “the first book to cover the entire field of comics in all of its aspects—artistic, cultural, sociological, and commercial—on a global scale.” Under Horn’s editorial supervision, 15 contributors from 11 countries compiled over 1,200 cross-referenced entries covering everything from Norwegian comic artist Håkon Aasnes to the Belgian comic strip *Zozo*.

*The World Encyclopedia of Comics* became an international best-seller and secured Horn’s place in comics history. Subsequent editions the book, which was published regularly in hardcover through the late 1990s, included corrections, revisions, and additional entries and contributors. Not content to rest on his laurels, Horn edited *The World Encyclopedia of Cartoons* in 1980, an attempt to create a comprehensive history of animation as a companion volume to his comics history.

The success of the encyclopedias gave Horn the financial stability and clout to write about other comics-related topics. Although

## SID JACOBSON (1929–2022)



Photo by Mark Arnold

**Sidney Jacobson passed away at the age of 92 on July 23, 2022.** For many comic book fans, the name may mean nothing, but if you were a fan of Harvey Comics from the 1950s through the 1990s or of Marvel Comics’ Star line in the 1980s, the name may mean something as he was the editor of most of the books at Harvey and all of the books for Star.

My encounters with Sid go back to the 1990s when I was editing and publishing *The Harveyville Fun Times!* fanzine about Harvey Comics. Back then, I would attend the San Diego Comic-Con regularly, as did the people from Harvey, but Sid would remain elusive to me, as one year he couldn’t make it due to illness and another year we just didn’t cross paths.

Finally, I did meet Sid at Harvey Comics on Wilshire Blvd. in Los Angeles. We discussed Harvey, Star, and Sid’s songwriting career.

I stayed in touch with Sid, interviewing him many times for my fanzine as well as my 2017 book *The Harvey Comics Companion*.

In the *Companion*, Jacobson related how he got started at Harvey in October 1951: “One of my sister’s friends said, ‘You should go up to

subsequent editorial efforts such as *Comics of the American West*, *Women in the Comics*, and *Burne Hogarth’s The Golden Age of Tarzan* were commercially successful, none had the lasting impact of *The World Encyclopedia of Comics*.

Horn returned to his roots in 1996 with *100 Years of American Newspaper Comics*, an illustrated encyclopedia belatedly published in celebration of the centennial of The Yellow Kid, which would prove to be Horn’s final major book. It is considered to be his most accurate and comprehensive work.

Horn was a complex individual, with one historian offering up the concise summary of his legacy as “pioneering but problematic.” But maybe that was exactly the kind of person that comics, dismissed by academics and even many in the field as a subject unworthy of respect, needed when Horn entered—and, in many ways, created—the study of comics history and comics appreciation.

**Andrew Farago, the curator of San Francisco’s Cartoon Art Museum, has written more than a dozen books on pop culture, comics, and animation, on subjects ranging from Peanuts to the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles.**

by Mark Arnold

Harvey because maybe they’d have a job for you while you’re finishing college.’ I was interviewed by Alfred Harvey and he said, ‘We’ve been talking about getting into the magazine business. Why don’t you start with us and we’ll see?’ After about six or seven months of being there, I oversaw the horror line and several other books. I was very proud of what it was. I looked at EC and I said, ‘My God, they’re head and shoulders over anything! The rest of this stuff is basically crap.’”

Eventually, the horror titles were canceled due to the Comics Code Authority, but fortunately, Harvey started publishing comics based on Paramount Pictures’ Famous Studios animated cartoons as well as their own creations. Sid became editor of titles featuring Casper, Wendy, Baby Huey, Hot Stuff, Richie Rich, Little Audrey, Little Dot, Little Lotta, and pretty much every character except for Sad Sack and the occasional newspaper reprint or superhero title.

Eventually, Sid branched out to pursue his other love, which was songwriting. As Jacobson said in the *Companion*, “I wrote about 300 songs: ‘The End of the Rainbow,’ ‘A Boy Without a Girl’ for Frankie Avalon, ‘Don’t Pity Me’ for Dion and the Belmonts, ‘Yogi’ by the Ivy Three, and ‘Warm’ by Johnny Mathis . . . I even had a Sinatra record—Nancy Sinatra!”

Between 1972 and 1974, Sid also composed songs based on the Harvey characters. They were released on 45s with picture sleeves and offered for sale through Harvey Comics.

The original Harvey company ceased publishing in 1982. At the time, he got an offer to edit the Star line of comic books for Marvel Comics. He readily agreed to the offer and took many Harvey artists and writers with him. When Harvey came back in 1986, they were now competing against this line, and by 1990, the Harvey family threw in the towel and sold off all of their characters except for Sad

Sack and The Black Cat to Jeff Montgomery, who proceeded to hire Jacobson back as editor, for a new line of Harvey Comics that lasted until 1994. Star eventually folded into Marvel Comics.

After Harvey stopped producing comic books, Sid teamed up with his longtime artist pal Ernie Colón to produce a series of nonfiction graphic novels, including *The 9/11 Report: A Graphic Adaptation* and *Anne Frank: The Anne Frank House Authorized Graphic Biography*,

## AL JAFFEE (1921–2023)

**It’s safe to say that everyone reading this has never lived in a world without Al Jaffee being a part of it.** He cast a long shadow on so much of pop culture—it says a lot about him that even at 102, he left us too soon.

Like most of us, I grew up reading Al in the pages of *MAD* magazine. His *Snappy Answers to Stupid Questions* paperbacks were my favorites, as was *The MAD Book of Magic and Other Dirty Tricks*. But I never imagined that one day I would meet him, much less edit collections of his work such as *MAD: Fold This Book!*, his first collection of Fold-Ins, or that we would become friends. Al and his wife Joyce lived on 56th and Lexington in New York City, and I lived on 56th and 8th. We used to joke that they lived “just down the block” from me, and at least once a month, for the better part of 30 years, we would get together for dinner, then go back to their apartment for tea and dessert. One night we talked about the play *Hamilton*, and I asked if he had seen it. “Not yet,” he said, “but I voted for him.” I was privy to so many spontaneous throwaway lines like that, and I wrote down as many of them as I could remember when I got home.

In 2016, I had the honor of inducting Al into the Harvey Kurtzman Hall of Fame. Taking a page from *Snappy Answers*, I began, “Am I here to introduce Al Jaffee? No, I am here to deliver his eulogy.” The crowd groaned. “Let’s face it,” I continued, “Al is so old, they used A.D. on his birth certificate.” Al laughed, and thankfully everyone followed.

Al considered himself a “reverse immigrant.” He was born in Savannah, Georgia, in 1921, but in 1927 moved to Zarasai, Lithuania,

after which he essentially retired. Sid received the Inkpot Award in 2003 for his efforts.

I considered him a good friend and he will be missed.

**Mark Arnold is a pop culture historian with books on Underdog, Pink Panther, Dennis the Menace, The Beatles, The Monkees, Disney, The Chipmunks, Pac-Man, Cracked, MAD, and of course, Harvey Comics, and is a writer for Back Issue.**

by Charles Kochman

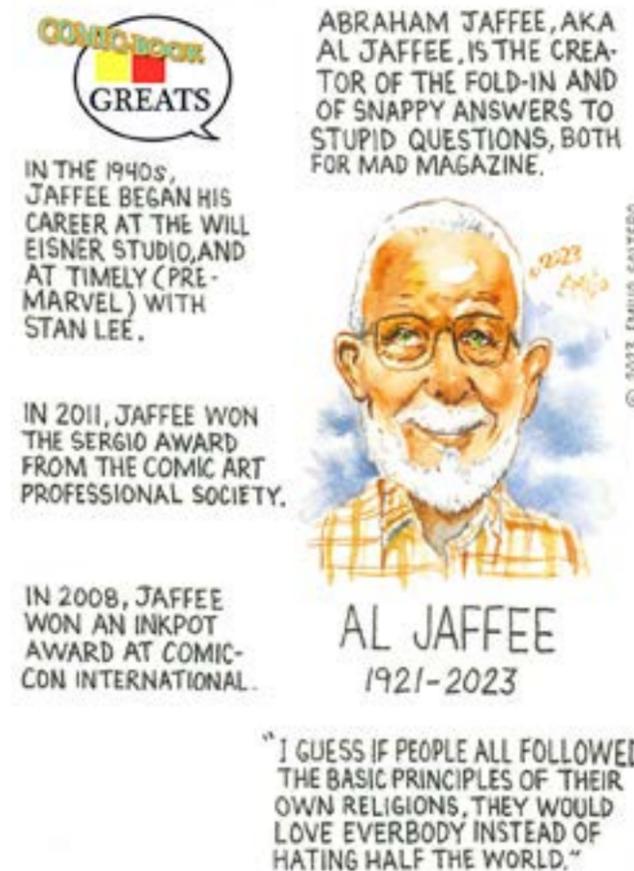
with his mother and three younger brothers. Leaving the comfort of modern life for a rural one in Europe was rough on Al and his siblings, Harry, Bernard, and David—they were bullied, neglected, and traumatized by the experience. A year later, their father came and took them back to the U.S., but he struggled to find work and they were essentially homeless. After the Great Depression in 1929, Al’s

mother took the family back to Lithuania. But as Hitler rose to power in Germany in 1931, Al’s father once again retrieved his sons and returned to the U.S. Although his mother and youngest brother remained behind, David managed to return in 1940, but they never learned the fate of their mother—presumably she was executed when the Nazis invaded Zarasai in 1941.

Al’s idiosyncratic childhood shaped him profoundly. Finding refuge in reading newspaper comics and in cartooning, it wasn’t until he attended the High School of Music & Art that he found his calling and met two friends who would change his life forever: Will Elder and Harvey Kurtzman.

Al Jaffee holds the World Record for the longest career as a comics artist—73 years, 3 months. In 2020, he was recognized by Guinness for working continuously since

his first publication in *Military Comics* #7 (February 1942), creating *Inferior Man* for Will Eisner and *Quality Comics*. That same year he also started working for Stan Lee and *Timely* on funny animal comics such as *Ziggy Pig* and *Silly Seal*, and in 1946 he took over as writer and illustrator on *Patsy Walker* (starting with issue 5 and continuing through 1956). As with many of his peers, Al’s early work was unre-



Tribute by Emilio Soltero

markable. But that changed when he found his voice with Kurtzman at *MAD*, one issue after it transitioned from comic book to magazine.

At *MAD*, Jaffee was the most unusual of the "Usual Gang of Idiots." His work first appeared in issue 25 (September 1955), a five-page article illustrated by Jack Davis called "Baseball . . . Science or Skill?" In the following issue he contributed two pieces, followed by three more in *MAD* 27 and another three in *MAD* 28. Then he left to follow Harvey Kurtzman, working on *Trump* and *Humbug*. Al returned to *MAD* starting with issue 43 (December 1958), appearing in virtually every issue until his retirement in 2019. In all, Al created over a thousand pages for *MAD*, including nearly 500 Fold-Ins and dozens of mass-market paperbacks over 65 years—a remarkable output by any measure, and one that is not likely to be surpassed.

In 2008 I edited *Tall Tales* for Abrams ComicArts, a collection of

## GREG JEIN (1945–2022)

**It's a year since we lost our friend Greg Jein.** He wasn't just a friend, he was a mentor, a wise man, a confidante, a collector, an expert, an aficionado, a guide, a "geek," an artist, a craftsman, a trickster, and, most important, a kind soul.

He started young, when "fandom" was young. His association with Majel Barrett's Lincoln Enterprises, the Roddenberry company that sold Star Trek memorabilia direct from the source, led him to collect photos, scripts, and other detritus that surfaced after the "demise" of the series. He was also present for the 20th Century Fox and MGM "garage sales," when they thought of their assets as no more than junk. Greg was one of the first to know their value, artistic and financial.

Greg's love of science fiction and making things led to his work as a model maker on small productions, including the odd but iconic *Flesh Gordon* (1974), a naughty parody of Flash Gordon. He learned early of the requirements of working on a film production. He was also drafted to create the model of the spaceship from John Carpenter's beefed-up student film *Dark Star* (1974) designed by the now legendary Ron Cobb.

In 1975 he was hired by Douglas Trumbull for *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. Greg's contributions were legendary: He changed the aspect of the real Devil's Tower in Wyoming to fit better into the wide-screen shots of the film by building a miniature of it that was slightly more stout, and his building of the amazing Mother Ship is something that wrote him into history. He was nominated for an Academy Award for *Close Encounters* and for his amazing re-creations of Los Angeles and Santa Monica Pier for Spielberg's *1941* two years later.

I met him when he was working on *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. I'd get to see him every few months, and we would talk and enjoy each other's interests. Those who worked with him knew of his sly



Al's wordless, vertical comic strip, which was syndicated from 1957 to 1963. The book featured an introduction by Stephen Colbert — a few years earlier, he and Jon Stewart commissioned Al to illustrate a Fold-In for *America: The Book*. Instead of sending a messenger to pick up the artwork, they asked Al to come to the studio and drop it off in person. When he walked in, the entire writing staff of the *Daily Show* fell to their knees. "Without you, none of us in this room would be here doing what we do," Stewart proclaimed. I think the same could be said for most of those reading this tribute.

Al once wrote to Bill Gaines, "Fun around the clock you bet we had our fill!" Yes, we did, Al. We certainly did.

Charles Kochman is editor-in-chief of Abrams ComicArts.

by Daren Dochterman

sense of humor and his fondness for practical jokes, both benign and otherwise. But I experienced his humor in a different way.

Several years ago, I got a call from Greg. "Hey, Daren, whatcha doing?" "Not a heck of a lot—what's up?" "Well, I'm kinda being forced to move a bunch of stuff from storage into another space; can you help? Might be nice to have another pickup truck here, if you can manage it." "Sure, I'll be right down."

I went to U-haul and rented a pickup truck and headed to Culver City where his storage space was closing down and booting him out unceremoniously. When I got there, Greg had a couple of storage garages open and was loading his own truck. I asked what he needed me to move for him, and he said, "Well, actually I think I have everything under control here, but wondered if you'd be interested in adopting something that's taking up too much room." Puzzled, I looked at him and said, "Well, sure, I guess so—what is it?"

He led me to another storage garage, raised door, and underneath some boxes and tarps was a classic wooden drafting table. "I've had this since we were doing *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*. I looked at the leg of the table and

there was a sticker that said "Property of Paramount Pictures." It was lovely and solid. and a piece of history in addition to being very useful.

"I figured you might want it..."

"I do," I smiled...

It is currently up in my loft. And a reminder of Greg and the time when he tricked me into him giving me a gift.

I'm gonna miss him.

Daren Dochterman has been a film designer for 35 years and is one of the creators of "Starship Smackdown" seen at Comic-Con since 2002.

## ERIC JONES (1971–2022)

by Landry Walker

**In September of 2022, artist and storyteller Eric Jones passed away unexpectedly in his sleep at the age of 51. His death was due to natural causes.**

Eric worked in the comics industry as a professional for 30 years, drawing and writing *Batman: The Brave and the Bold*, *Star Wars Adventures*, *Phineas and Ferb*, *Kim Possible*, *Ducktales*, *Tron: Ghost in the Machine*, and many more. He co-created and drew the all-ages *Little Gloomie* and *Kid Gravity* comic stories for *Disney Adventures Magazine* for most of a decade—creator-owned original comics that were distributed to more than a million readers every month. His original series *The Super Scary Monster Show* (SLG Publishing) was adapted to television (titled *Scary Larry*) and aired in a dozen countries. He drew the first poster art for Green Day and years later worked directly with the band to produce concept art for the album *American Idiot*. He is probably best remembered for drawing and co-creating the ridiculously popular all-ages series *Supergirl: Cosmic Adventures in the 8th Grade*.

His creator-owned comic books were where he found his joy. Eric preferred to work without the restrictions of financial interests, and in comics like *Danger Club* (Image Comics) and *Pepper Page saves the Universe* (First Second) he explored the history of the industry as well as the corrosive effect that corporate-mandated guidelines have over artistic expression.

As an advocate of the medium, Eric spent years speaking to large groups of librarians on the benefits of incorporating comics into their catalogs. He saw the need to reimagine the depiction of women in the medium and implemented nonsexualized, heroic female leads years before such practice became more standard. As an artist, Eric was passionate about inclusivity and diversity and worked to convey that in his comics.

In 2012 Eric helped me write a memorial on the passing of comics publisher Dylan Williams, used for that year's version of the SDCC

## KIM JUNG GI (1975–2022)

by Jim Lee

**Kim Jung Gi was a truly phenomenal talent whose pen and brush wizardry captivated and inspired millions of fans around the world.** While he drew some incredible comics, it was his live drawing and his sketchbooks about his life, travels, and dreams that spoke to me most. It was downright eerie and spellbinding to see someone with a near photographic memory bring an illustration to life with the style and flair that only Jung Gi could deliver.

And what I discovered is in this most humble of artists was an effortless ability to draw anything and everything from every angle possible. A fluidity to his line that breathes life into his subjects

souvenir book. Eric wrote these words about Dylan then: "The comics industry is full of unrecognized brilliance, of people who work tirelessly behind the scenes to bring comics to the world; people whose efforts have altered the course of the medium." Those words seem fitting to repeat here, because Eric was also one of those people. His name was largely unknown to fandom, but the work he did helped shape the mainstream comics of today.

Eric and I worked together for over 30 years, producing an absurd variety of stories, from the silly, to the grotesque, to the overly dramatic. So, I write these words from a very painful place. We were friends. I owe what and who I am—both as a writer of comics and as a human being—to his influence. But I'm not the only one; he left behind many people. It is a testament to his empathy and his energy that he maintained a close group of friends for close to 40 years along with all the new relationships he made as the years went on.

Jack Kirby once wrote, "Life is, at best, bittersweet." It was Darkseid giving those words voice, admittedly. But they still seem to be appropriate here. Eric will be missed by many,

greatly. But I also expect that few who read this will know his work. I would burn every page of it to bring him back, but as that is not possible all I can do is encourage you to check out the comics he poured his all-to-short life into. Start with the most recent: *Pepper Page Saves the Universe*. Try *Danger Club*, books one and two. Find the rare, alternate ending edition of issue 8 if you can. Look for issue 16 of *Batman: The Brave and the Bold* (volume 1), where Batman and Wonder Woman team up to stop Egghead (in his first proper comics appearance) from awakening an interdimensional monster. Most important: Read comics.

Landry Q. Walker is a comics writer who worked with Eric on almost everything for over 30 years.

whether they are graceful tigers, rugged black op soldiers, noble samurai, or just everyday people chilling inside a cafe. His imagery is both illuminating and educational and always inspirational. His range and talent speaks to his craftsmanship, but the resultant artwork is more than that. It speaks to the power and possibilities of art and how it should look, feel, and bring joy every time you experience it.

And it's a feeling that is shared by so many all over the world. It was truly fascinating to watch an audience watching Kim Jung Gi draw in one of his international art symposiums. Even though he often didn't speak the local language, nothing was lost in translation as



the audience was utterly transfixed and pulled into the moments he created in silence, using just brush, ink, and paper. He wasn't called "the Master" for no reason.

I remember encountering his tremendous work in late 2013 and helped him get some space at Comic-Con the following year. It fills me with honor to know that I played a very small role in exposing American audiences to his breathtaking art, but also humbly recognize that it would have happened regardless. Amazing talent has no borders, and the work of Kim Jung Gi is world class.

We always found time at Comic-Con to grab some Korean BBQ together, wind down, and do—what else—more sketching. I always assumed (for some ridiculous reason) that I was the only friend he had in the comic book art community (LOL), but in seeing so many of my peers sharing their lovely, touching stories about hanging with and learning from



Jim Lee and Kim Jung Gi at Comic-Con.

the Master—I realized that his boundless talent was only exceeded by his exceptional kindness and humility.

It's still unbelievable to me that he is gone. We were going to meet up again just the Saturday prior to last year's New York Comic Con to celebrate the return of in-person events, but like the rest of the comic book art community I was devastated to hear of his untimely, tragic passing as he was traveling from Paris to New York City for the show.

My deepest condolences go out to his family and loved ones. Kim Jung Gi was a singular talent; a true and unique genius in every sense of the word. You will be greatly missed, my friend.

**Jim Lee is a renowned comic book artist and the chief creative officer-publisher of DC Entertainment.**

## KEN W. KELLY (1946–2022)

**Experiencing the loss of creators, idols, and peers in our beloved field is the one inescapable part of reality** we must all face and become accustomed to. That stated, I was particularly crushed when my friend, colleague, and mentor, fantasy artist Ken W. Kelly, suddenly passed away last summer.

Many are familiar with Ken's iconic album covers including KISS's *Destroyer* and *Love Gun*, Rainbow's *Rising*, and several Manowar releases—and the millions of merchandise units sporting those same images. However, he also produced an incredible amount of science fiction and horror art used for book covers, magazines, toy packaging, and more.

Ken's early works were published by Skywald (*Castle of Frankenstein*, *Nightmare*, *Psycho*), Warren (*Creepy*, *Eerie*, *Vampirella*), and Berkley Publishing Corp., acknowledging the artist via its 1979 *Ken Kelly's Robert E. Howard Conan the Barbarian Calendar*. Later, Ken's images were collected in products including Friedlander Publishing Group's *The Art of Ken Kelly* book, numerous trading-card sets, and posters.

Although Ken enjoyed incredible opportunities throughout his career—including being hand-picked by comics master Will Eisner to collaborate with him on various covers for Warren's *The Spirit Magazine*—he was sometimes dismissed as a "poor man's Frazetta." Coincidentally, Frank just happened to be Ken's uncle through marriage!

"That comparison's a double-edged sword onto itself," Ken once told me. "Of course, it's nice to be associated with such a respected illustrator, both professionally and personally, but I prefer to think of my work having its own, identifiable style."

Among my favorite Ken Kelly images are his rendering of the 1976 King Kong (eventually featured on 2005's *Bud Plant's Incredible Catalog*); the cover of 1975's *Famous Monsters* #114 (featuring Godzilla and Rodan); and the November 2005 issue of *Heavy Metal* (unofficially named "Tigress Queen") that I pitched to then-publisher Howard Jurofsky, who loved it.

Speaking of the Tigress Queen, Ken often used his wife, Rose, as a muse

when painting females. I have seen dozens of her modeling pictures; she could have easily portrayed a real-life Vampirella in print and at conventions. Instead, Rose (who passed in 2019) assumed the role of Ken's agent and, in doing so, helped him become a highly sought-after commercial and private commission illustrator.

When Mattel re-introduced its line of He-Man and Masters of the Universe toys in 2001, the company called on Ken to render various images, including an exclusive print for SDCC. He later gave an autographed copy of that print to my eldest son, Victor, who was so excited to have met a famous artist.

One of my favorite experiences working with Ken was collaborating on his book, *Escape*. Visiting his Long Island home (less than an hour from mine) and seeing so many original paintings, transparencies, and sketches from one individual was truly mesmerizing. That book sold out and, thanks to Sal Quartuccio at SQP, an alternate edition was later published specifically for the Science Fiction Book Club.

Some of Ken's final rendered imagery will be published posthumously including 2024's *Larger Than Life*, by late rock band bodyguard Big John Harte.

Ken, I thank you for the honor and pleasure of being your colleague, editor, print broker and, most of all, my friend.

**Robert V. Conte is a 35-year veteran of the comic-book industry as a writer, editor, publisher, distributor, retailer, and album producer.**



Ken Kelly and Robert Conte at Comic-Con.

by Robert V. Conte

## SELECTED MEMORIES OF ALINE KOMINSKY-CRUMB (1948–2022)

by Denis Kitchen

**In the summer of 1979 Aline and Robert visited me in Princeton, a small central Wisconsin town I had moved to from Milwaukee in 1973.** I rented office and warehouse space for Kitchen Sink Press in the former Muk Luks factory in the town center and lived on a ten-acre farm not far from town. Aline and Robert, who shared my appreciation for country life, were living in a small town, too, in California, but they were feeling hemmed in by encroaching real estate growth and looking at options.

I mentioned that the mother of a friend a town away had put a wonderful property up for sale, and they asked to see it. Aline and Robert immediately fell in love with the cabin nestled by a bucolic stream deep in the woods. No neighbors were within view. They impulsively made an offer. For a day we excitedly talked about living just a few miles apart. An 8mm sound movie I filmed that day shows Robert and Aline talking about the move as if it were already a fact.

But, the following day, my "friend" convinced his mother that *he* should have the property, so she withdrew it from the market. Aline and Robert, disappointed, returned west, and the brief prospect of us being virtual neighbors and presumably even closer friends evaporated. Eventually, as we know, Aline convinced Robert that they should relocate to France.

I always found Aline's work exceptionally funny, so I readily agreed that same year to publish her solo *Power Pak Comics*: "Brought to you by the 'Aluminum Siding Saleswoman' of Comics." By that period the underground comix phenomenon was in its final throes; the only comix still selling well were titles created by Robert, or Gilbert Shelton's *Freak Brothers*. But my publishing decisions were seldom driven by sale prospects alone, a good reason the Kitchen Sink empire never made DC and Marvel nervous.

Aline's painfully autobiographic stories about her parents and her personal life reminded me of Justin Green, so it was not surprising that she later cited his *Binky Brown Meets the Holy Virgin Mary* as her most profound influence. But the big difference to me was that I laughed—sometimes out loud—at Aline's wince-worthy stories. In person Aline was also a delightful storyteller; I told her a number of times that she could be a successful stand-up comedian. But, for better or worse, she stuck with comics.

Despite lackluster sales on Aline's debut solo effort, I remained a fan and in 1981 agreed to publish *Power Pak Comics* #2. Our minimum underground print run of 10,000, for so long a routine number, seemed imprudent in the current market, so I more cautiously had 7,500 printed. Aline's distinctive but still crude drawing style and the issue's jarring abstract expressionist cover were evidently deterrents for many comix browsers at the time. Too many potential buyers didn't get past the disturbing imagery to read the darkly hilarious dialogue that—for me—worked so effectively with her style. Sales on the sequel were even worse than the first.

I had moved Kitchen Sink in 1980 from its downtown Princeton location to the large barn on my rural property. Carpenters carved out space room-by-room as needed and as the budget permitted. Eventually the entire barn was a three-floor beehive of offices, studios, and storage, but early in the remodeling stages my office was on the middle floor and the space above it was empty and unheated. So, to help keep out the frigid temperatures during a couple of long Wisconsin winters, cartons of unsold comics—including thousands of copies of *Power Pak* #1 and #2—were lined up above my thin ceiling.

During this transition period Aline and Robert visited again. As we sat in my relatively new office, the weak sales of *Power Pak* inevitably came up. Aline was apologetic about not delivering bestsellers to my company. "Don't apologize," I said. Then, unable to suppress a cheap joke, I pointed upward and blurted, "Your comics really are valuable to me. They're providing insulation for this office."

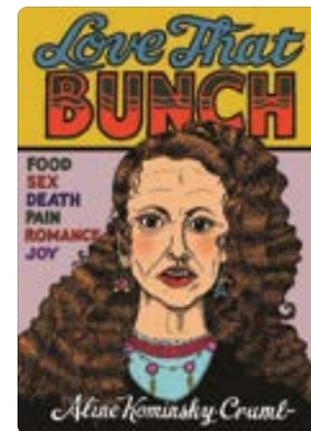
All copies of *Power Pak* eventually sold, but Aline never forgot my ill-advised remark. Almost any time

I saw Aline afterward in the company of others, I would hear her, in her Long Island accent, proclaim: "Did you know that Denis Kitchen uses my comic books for insulation?" The cheap laugh came back to haunt me, but it was self-deprecatingly funny for both of us and therefore worthy of repetition.

During their years in France, Robert's royalties continued steadily and his original art sales skyrocketed. With their relatively simple lifestyle at its desired comfort level, Aline—unquestionably the dominant partner in their open but successful marriage—decided to invest surplus revenue in real estate in their enchanting medieval village. She seemed quite astute in scoping out prospective acquisitions, not all of which could join her limited portfolio. The last time I saw her in their village she tried match-making me and a questionable unit several hundred years old. "It's a steal," she insisted, but I demurred.

Aline would acquire a chalet, then another unit, sometimes, she said, at bargain prices, but never with interest in being a conventional landlord. Instead, the apartments or stand-alone buildings were rented by Aline at well below market prices or without profit. One of my oldest friends, an expatriate, lived next door to the Crumbs with his fiancé. Their rent was exactly the pro-rated amount Aline and Robert pay in property taxes: zero markup. Aline also regularly bought paintings by local artists. The genuinely good-hearted gestures of low rent and art patronage made life much easier for a number of local artists, musicians, and friends in their small community, who had generally erratic earnings. Recognizing a life of quiet generosity to others, in the end, is the best thing you can say about anyone.

**Denis Kitchen is an American underground cartoonist, publisher, author, agent, and the founder of the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund.**



## PAT MCCALLUM (1961–2022)

by DC Staff

**Pat McCallum, former DC executive editor and *Wizard* magazine editor-in-chief, worked hard to give joy to others.** Many of us know the feeling well, this desire to share the excitement comic books give us. But while many feel it, Pat lived it. At *Wizard*, Pat and other like-minds created a space where fans could feel a part of something bigger than the bedrooms where they read their favorite comics.

"I consumed *Wizard* throughout my youth because each issue made me feel like I was part of the wondrous world of comics," says DC editor Andrew Marino. "Pat McCallum was a driving force behind my love of the medium. Creating the *DC Nation* magazine with him felt like a full-circle moment. Pat's goal was to open the door behind the scenes at DC and make the reader feel like a part of the magic. I'll always love and be grateful to Pat for the faith and trust he put in me, which made me the editor I am today."

In 2011, Pat made the transition from writing about comics to creating them, joining the ranks of DC on the eve of the New 52 initiative. "[Pat] was the heart and soul of *Wizard* magazine and added a bit of that to DC Comics for a time," says AWA executive editor and head of publishing operations Mike Cotton, Pat's longtime friend and colleague. "Pat McCallum was my friend and mentor for over two decades and taught me more about creativity, compassion, and comic timing than anyone else I've ever known."

Pat's path at DC eventually led him to video game development. "I had just left a job at Marvel when Pat hired me to work on video games at the Distinguished Competition," says Randy Ma, DC creative director/interactive. "On my first day, Pat coerced me into the first of many group lunches to introduce me to my wonderful co-workers at DC. The crossover between comics and video games fandom sometimes isn't a Venn diagram but a full circle. Pat knew that what makes games and comics so special is not just how this stuff connects with people, but also how it allows fans to connect with each other."

Connecting people and building community was a hallmark of Pat's life both professionally and personally. "*Wizard* was a home for people like me—a clubhouse where we could laugh and never feel alone," says DC group editor Paul Kaminski. "Every weekend we got together with friends to share dinner, games, and laughs. Pat welcomed me with a warm smile and a sense of belonging. Just like *Wizard* . . . wherever Pat went, he created a home."

Pat would eventually return to the comic book publishing side of DC, this time as executive editor. "I've worked with many smart, talented people in my tenure at DC, but I've never met anyone with the full-on passion for comics of Pat McCallum," says DC executive editor Chris Conroy. "He just loved them, down to his core—and the only thing he wanted, every single day that he woke up and came into the DC offices (often early, and leaving late), was to get it right. Nobody I've ever known worked harder to interrogate every choice, to ask, 'Does this measure up to the absolute best of the medium?'"

Ma adds, "It's easy to be a cynical comic fan and gamer, but seeing how Pat was always able to connect with the material and use it to interact with those around him reminds me why I love this stuff and why it's important to share it with the people you love."

*Love, service, passion, excitement, home, and heart* are just some of the words used to describe the life of Pat McCallum as we all knew it. Mike Cotton sums it up best: "I loved him very much and miss him dearly."

**Contributions from Pat McCallum's colleagues and friends.**



Photo © 2023 Steve Cook

## IAN MCGINTY (1985–2023)

by Sridhar Reddy

**In the seven years we at Z2 publishing worked with Ian McGinty, there was only one true mystery about him that was hard to ascertain: his age.** His social media would state his birthday, but it never seemed right. Here was a prodigiously talented cartoonist who drew with a youthful whimsy, channeling his love of contemporary animation and manga, but on the other hand he was an old soul, reveling in '80s new wave music, dark horror movies, and cooking restaurant-quality meals from scratch. He wanted to explore it all: music, comics, animation, prose, culinary art, and so many other interests he had.

He carried with him a darkly humorous self-deprecation that both served and haunted him, as he would at first doubt his ability and then deliver beyond it. It was a true joy to receive his art pages, all filled with ideas and experiments backed by his genuine desire to

tell good stories.

Perhaps my fondest memory of Ian was during the creation of our flagship Z2 series *Welcome to Showside*, which was a wild concept for a kids book: a pop culture take on the Cthulhu mythos set in a vast and color Ghibli-esque world. We had also done an animated pilot for the book, written by Ian and featuring his voice as the lead character of Kit. The first issue and the pilot launched at the same time, and by the time we'd hit the



convention circuit, the title had grown a small, loyal group of fans.

There was one fan in particular who made an indelible impression on Ian. His name was Patrick, he was maybe eight years old, bespectacled with mussed blonde hair. He had come to our table with his parents, recognizing the pilot from YouTube and seeking the first issue. Ian engaged with Patrick, and they had a quiet one-on-one conversation about how much Patrick liked that the characters in *Showside* stood up for themselves and each other. He also loved robots. Ian—always the kid at heart—drew a portrait of Patrick and with the parents' permission took a photo of the drawing. Patrick left happy and excited—he'd met his first superhero in Ian McGinty.

Cut to two months later when the second issue of *Welcome to Showside* hit shelves, and the book curiously featured a new

## SHO MURASE (1969–2022)

**When I met Sho Murase in 2006 at a publisher's party at Comic-Con, I had no idea she would have such a profound impact on my life.**

I had seen her work; we both released books through the same publisher, and I'd heard editors mention her. I was learning Japanese at the time, and I was aware of her Japanese heritage, but when I approached her, rather than annoying her with *Nihongo* or introducing myself in English, I spoke to her in Spanish, which she did not expect.

You see, Sho Murase was born in Nagoya, Japan, to a Japanese mother and a Korean father, but at age two she moved with her family to Barcelona, Spain, where she was raised.

Hearing Sho reply in the heaviest of Spaniard accents was great! I, too, grew up as a multicultural foreigner in a Spanish-speaking country, and that common experience would be one of the many things we would bond over.

Like many artists, Sho knew from an early age that she wanted to make art: sequential art. More specifically, manga, which she read voraciously as a child. Sho loved stories about girls with strong personalities. Stories that weren't just about romance. At a young age, she wrote and drew her own stories and showed them to her sister, who was her first reader. Many years after we'd met, she would eventually show me those early childhood comics she penciled. She was only a child when she made them, but they were remarkable! A clear sign of the superb artist she would become. By the time Sho was in high school, her artistic interests had expanded into the realm of Fine Art. On her own, she would study the work of her favorite artists; Rembrandt, Goya, Picasso, Munch, Egon Schiele, and Gustav Klimt.

Later on, while pursuing her fine arts degree in Barcelona, Sho became interested in film and decided to study cinema as well, soon becoming fascinated with animation. Bringing her characters to life thrilled her, and so she decided to study film animation in Vancouver, Canada.

A year later, she returned to Spain to work in TV animation on an educational series called *Twipsy*. The style of the show was very different from her own, and although it was a great working experience, Sho decided to move to San Francisco in search of an animation gig that would allow

character named Toulouse, who, strangely enough, was a young boy, maybe eight years old, with glasses and mussed blond hair. Toulouse sees his friends in *Showside* getting bullied by a meathead and bravely stands up to the goon, using his brain and skills to build a giant mech to defeat the bully. It was such a lovely gesture from Ian, as he envisioned Patrick's face seeing himself immortalized in his favorite comic book.

And that was classic Ian McGinty: thoughtful, sensitive, supremely talented, and wanting to genuinely build a family of comics. We were blessed to have his work, and even more so to carry him in our memories.

Sridhar Reddy is the publisher at Z2.

by Felipe Smith

her to stretch her artistic wings and take a crack at animation work in diverse styles.

She soon found challenging and rewarding animation work with a variety of talented artists as one of the founding members of Maverix Studios. This Bay Area collective of artists would also become her family away from home. At Maverix, Sho worked on a variety of animated projects, from Coca-Cola and Kentucky Fried Chicken ads to Japanese Anime and Bugs Bunny.

After a few years, Sho's independent art career began to flourish. In 2003 she released her creator-owned comic *Sei: Death & Legend* (Image), and in 2005 she became the artist for the manga-inspired revamp of *Nancy Drew* (Papercutz) in a full-color graphic novel series, drawing all 21 volumes. Shortly after, she was commissioned to author her own manga series, *Me2* (TOKYOPOP), about a teen with double personality disorder.

Sho's unmistakable graphic art style, which merges striking silhouette design with the beautifully sensitive, delicate line work of traditional Japanese *Sumi-e* art, is the embodiment of the artist herself. Her Western European and Asian influences are evident in her every brush stroke and design choice. Her signature style was sought by the likes of Marvel, Disney,

Warner Bros, DC, Wildbrain, Electronic Arts, Passion Pics, Twistory Studios, and NBM Publishing, to name a few, and has been exhibited at Disney's Wonderground Gallery, the German Film Museum in Frankfurt, and the Louisiana Art Museum in Denmark, among other locations.

Sho Murase was not only an accomplished artist. She was one of the kindest, most generous, reliable, and dependable people you could ever meet. She was a staple of Artists' Alley and one of the wisest souls I've ever met. She'll be sorely missed by her family, friends, and fans but never forgotten.

Felipe Smith is an American writer/artist best known for his Japanese manga series *Peepo Choo* (Kodansha) and as writer and co-creator of *Robbie Reyes, the All-New Ghost Rider* (Marvel).

## HAILING FREQUENCIES OPEN A TRIBUTE TO NICHELLE NICHOLS (1932–2022)

by Jean Graham

**If a single word could be said to define Nichelle Nichols' long career, that word would undoubtedly be "groundbreaking."**

When her childhood dream of becoming a professional ballet dancer was shattered ("There are," she was told, "no Black ballerinas"), she found a new outlet for her singing and dancing talents when, at the age of 16, she was discovered by and invited to tour with jazz great Duke Ellington and his band. She would go on to play small parts in a number of stage plays and films, including *Porgy and Bess* and *Mr. Budwig*.

But it would be her role in an episode of Gene Roddenberry's 1963–64 TV series *The Lieutenant* that ultimately led to her being cast as Uhura in his new show, *Star Trek*. It was a part that would not only bring her worldwide fame but lead to her becoming involved in the 1960s Civil Rights Movement.

In an era when most Black actresses were confined to playing maids and nannies, Uhura was one of the first nonstereotyped Black female roles in television history. Her on-screen kiss with William Shatner in the *Trek* episode "Plato's Stepchildren" marked the first time a White actor had ever kissed a Black actress on prime-time TV. She was the first Black female performer to have her handprints immortalized in the cement at Hollywood's Chinese (formerly Grauman's) Theatre.

Nichelle's groundbreaking deeds did not, however, stop there. Her portrayal of Lt. Uhura inspired thousands of Black women like Mae C. Jemison, NASA's first Black female astronaut, to achieve previously unobtainable goals. Hundreds of these women wrote to tell her that Uhura had given them the courage to pursue careers in science and technology. NASA was, in fact, so impressed by the scope of her influence that from 1977 to 2015 they kept her on staff as a volunteer ambassador, promoting NASA and recruiting applicants, particularly minority applicants, for its space program. She was instrumental in bringing on board, among many others, Dr. Sally Ride (the first female U.S. astronaut), Guion Bluford (first Black female U.S. astronaut), and Judith Resnick and Donald McNair, both of whom would later tragically lose their lives aboard the space shuttle *Challenger*.

Always ready and willing to meet her fans (even President Obama was one, and invited her to the White House), Nichelle appeared as a guest at dozens of *Star Trek* and science fiction conventions country-wide. These included local events such as Equicon 75/Filmcon 3 at the El Cortez Hotel, helmed by members of the science fiction group S.T.A.R. San Diego, and 2018's Comic-Con, where she received an Inkpot Award.

Nichelle's incredible journey, however, almost took a very different

path. In 1967, frustrated with entrenched racism in the studio system (Desilu execs even withheld her fan mail), as well as with the limitations placed on the Uhura character (she was forbidden to ever take command of the *Enterprise*), she handed Gene Roddenberry her resignation letter after season 1 had wrapped. He begged her to sleep on it and let him know the next day if she was sure this was what she really wanted, and she agreed.

As it happened, she'd promised to attend an NAACP fundraising event that same night. While there, she was told that one of her biggest fans wanted very much to meet her. The fan turned out to be Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who told her that he very much admired her portrayal of Uhura, and that *Star Trek* was the only TV show that he and his wife permitted their two young daughters to stay up for. When she told him of her frustrations and subsequent resignation, his response was adamant. "You cannot do that! Don't you know what a shining example you are to Black women everywhere? You have opened a door that must not ever be allowed to close. You absolutely must stay. You must be a role model!"

The next day, she related this encounter to Roddenberry and asked that he return her resignation letter. She later wrote in her autobiography that he handed it back to her with tears in his eyes. That autobiography, the complete story of Nichelle's groundbreaking life, was published in 1994 and titled *Uhura: Star Trek and Other Memories*.

The beautiful and multitalented Nichelle Nichols left us on July 30, 2022, at the age of 89. Fittingly, her ashes are scheduled to soon be shot into space, along with those of Majel Barrett and director Douglas Trumbull.

Soon after her passing, the following touching dedication appeared on screen at the end of *Star Trek: Strange New World's* second season premiere:

**For Nichelle,  
who was first through the door  
and showed us the stars.  
Hailing frequencies forever open.**

That quite eloquently speaks for us all.

Jean Graham is a short story and podcast writer, a Comic-Con committee emeritus, and founder of the long-standing *Star Trek* and science fiction organization S.T.A.R. [San Diego](#).



Nichelle Nichols receiving her Inkpot Award at the 2018 Comic-Con. Photo by C. Gawlik, ©SDCC 2018

## DIANE NOOMIN (1947–2022)

by John F. Kelly

**Diane Noomin, the pioneering underground cartoonist whose work inspired generations of women artists, died at her home in Hadlyme, Connecticut, on September 1, 2022.** The cause of death was uterine cancer. Noomin was 75 years old.

"I'm devastated by the loss of someone so alive, so funny, so complicated, so important to me, so beautiful," said the cartoonist Bill Griffith, Noomin's husband and partner for nearly 50 years.

"My heart is aching," said the cartoonist Aline Kominsky-Crumb, with whom Noomin founded and co-edited the women cartoonist anthology series *Twisted Sisters Comics* (Last Gasp, 1976). Kominsky-Crumb died herself, just months later.

Best known for her semi-alter ego *DiDi* Glitz, a flamboyant, uber-fabulous character with polka dot dresses and a bouffant hairdo, Noomin began her comics career in the early 1970s, with work appearing in *Wimmen's Comix*, *Young Lust*, *Arcade*, *Titters*, *Weirdo*, and many others. *DiDi* first appeared in a story called "Restless Reverie" in *Short Order Comix* #2 (Family Fun, 1974). With stories et in a world of garishly glamorous fashion, overly stylized homes, and romantic angst, Diane tackled real-life topics including abortion, body image, masturbation, motherhood, and miscarriages and presented them in intricately stylized comic strip panels. And they were often extremely funny. Noomin has said that she used *DiDi* as a shield in addressing material that in later years was increasingly autobiographical.

"I could do satire and use real-life situations and have *DiDi* experience them in her way, so that I'm one step removed," she told Nicole Rudick in a 2012 interview with *The Comics Journal*.

Noomin described *DiDi* as "a suburban Sisyphus striving to redecorate her life. She thrives on highly charged emotional scenes, valium and pepperoni pizza. She scrupulously examines and catalogs her physical flaws and any sign of incipient aging sends her into a panic. Wrinkles, dewlaps, crow's feet, cellulite, flab, and grey hairs

are all featured in her self-flagellating litany of disgust." In 2012, Fantagraphics published a collection of Noomin's short comics, with *DiDi* front and center, called *Glitz-2-Go*.

Beyond her talent as a cartoonist, Noomin was a skilled editor and brought to light the work of many gifted women cartoonists. Besides co-editing the original *Twisted Sisters Comics*, Noomin edited the sequel anthologies *Twisted Sisters: A Collection of Bad Girl Art* (Viking Penguin, 1991) and *Twisted Sisters 2: Drawing the Line* (Kitchen Sink, 1995, collecting a 1994 limited series), which featured the work of dozens of contributors. The first book and the limited series that made up the second one were nominated in the Best Anthology category of the Eisner Awards in 1992 and 1995. Noomin received an Inkpot Award at Comic-Con in 1992.

Most recently, Noomin edited the award-winning anthology *Drawing Power: Women's Stories of Sexual Violence, Harassment, and Survival* (Abrams ComicArts, 2019), which brought together the talents of more than 60 women cartoonists from around the world, portraying stories of sexual abuse and harassment against women. The book won a 2020 Susan Koppelman Award for Best Anthology, Multi-Authored, or Edited Book in Feminist Studies in Popular and American Culture, as well as the 2020 Eisner Award for Best Anthology.

Diane Noomin (née Rosenblatt) was born in the Canarsie neighborhood of Brooklyn, NY, in 1947. She attended the High School of Music & Art, Brooklyn College, and the Pratt Institute. She moved to San Francisco in 1972, where she soon met future husband Bill Griffith.

Griffith has completed a tribute to Noomin's life, *The Buildings are Barking* (Fantagraphics), which went on sale July 19, opening day of Comic-Con.

John F. Kelly has been writing for *The Comics Journal* since the early 1990s.



## KEVIN O'NEILL (1953–2022)

by David Roach

**Of the generation who so radically transformed comics in Britain—and then the world—Kevin O'Neill was unquestionably one of its most important members.** Wildly inventive, indisputably unique, and always provocative, he was the man the Comics Code Authority tried to ban and an artist who constantly pushed boundaries, even as he, paradoxically, remained charming and mild-mannered.

Born in 1953 on a working-class south London council estate, O'Neill grew up on British stalwarts *The Beano* and *Dandy* before a school friend introduced him to *MAD* magazine; it is not difficult to see its comedic grotesques in his anarchic and often scatological style that evolved. Forced to give up art school when his father retired early, he joined the art department of British publisher IPC, spending often-frustrating days correcting artwork and reformatting old strips

for reprint while also contributing art to small press comics fanzines.

After a brief period freelancing, he returned to IPC in 1976 on a new science fiction comic being put together by editor Pat Mills: *2000 AD*. From the beginning, O'Neill's alarming, angular, and attention-grabbing art helped define *2000 AD*, whether it was covers or occasional strip work or his volumes of adverts, free gift designs, and story logos filled with comic and sci-fi in-jokes.

It was there that he made history, introducing credit boxes for the first time to an industry that, fearful of poaching, had long refused to give creators the public recognition they deserved.

With Mills, he developed the popular robot rescue team series *Robusters* for *Starlord*, *2000 AD*'s short-lived stablemate. His style—by now highly polished but surreal, inventive, and bizarre—chimed with Mills' fiery anger, and the result was *Nemesis the Warlock*, *2000 AD*'s iconoclastic, bizarre, feverish, and violent series about an alien freedom fighter battling a xenophobic human galactic empire. Unlike anything comics had seen before, O'Neill conjured organic futuristic civilizations and unthinkable alien worlds in a rabidly heretical and anti-authoritarian series.

Even when he was part of 1984's "British Invasion" of creators lured to U.S. comics by DC, O'Neill neither changed nor compromised. He excelled at his own twisted interpretations of *Bat Mite* and *Lobo* with Alan Grant, and with Mills he co-created *Metalzoic*, the highly acclaimed DC graphic novel serialized in *2000 AD* that showcased Kevin's knack for crunching action, gorgeous coloring, and masterful designs as robot apes fought robot mammoths on a future Earth, one character declaring on a memorable *2000 AD* cover "I operated on my own BRAIN!"

Most famously, when shown his and Alan Moore's story for 1986's *Tales of the Green Lantern Corps Annual*, the Comics Code Authority

condemned his style wholesale as "objectionable." Naturally, he wore this as a badge of honor.

O'Neill and Mills' partnership reached its zenith with government-sanctioned superhero killer *Marshal Law*—a brazenly violent and gleefully searing satire on superheroes first published by Epic Comics in 1987 before eventually moving to Dark Horse.

In 1998, O'Neill reunited with Moore on *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*, which was to become his greatest success. The team-up of fictional icons Mr Hyde, The Invisible Man, Captain Nemo, Mina Harker, and Alan Quartermain saw O'Neill mixing intensely focused, densely detailed sequences with cinematic splashes and amazing flights of fancy. Despite the ill-received movie adaptation, the strip is remarkable testament of two of comics' greatest talents.

After the final story, Moore announced his retirement for comics, with many assuming O'Neill would join him. But instead Kevin

returned to where he had first made his name: *2000 AD*. He produced the meta-textual "Kids Rule OK" story with Garth Ennis for 2022's *Battle Action Special*, and his final work—published posthumously—was on "Bonjo From Beyond The Stars," an anarchic, greedy alien he had created in 1977.

Kind and generous, Kevin possessed a warmth that belied the gleeful violence of his work. In an industry that can often default to conformity, he never once tried to fit in or compromise, seemingly being incapable of being anything other than himself. Just like his art, he was always, completely, brilliantly original.

**David Roach is a British comic book artist and writer based in Wales. Roach actively illustrates for many companies, including 2000 AD, Panini, Marvel, DC, Dark Horse, and Wizards of the Coast. He is the author of *Masters of British Comic Art*.**



Kevin O'Neill at the 1991 Comic-Con. Photo by Jackie Estrada.

## TOM PALMER (1941–2022)

by Walter Simonson

**Tom Palmer was one of the most professional creators I've ever known in comics.** He was fun to work with. He could be depended upon to meet his deadlines regardless of the amount of work involved, regardless of however many late nights sitting at the drawing board it took. He could not only ink, he could draw, color, and paint. A dedicated family man, he worked hard to provide for his wife, Ann, and their children. He took heed of the economic history of comics, and split his professional time, working both in comics and in illustration, producing portraits, art for corporate reports, and advertising, just in case comics ever entered economically troubled times, as the field had in the 50s and the work dried up.

In comics, he was an extraordinary inker, finisher, and colorist.

The short form is that he made everybody's work look better. Some examples:

John Buscema's layouts were beautiful but incomplete in the sense that the viewer's eye filled in much of the detail that John left out. The work was lovely and fluid but, to me at least, incredibly intimidating to ink. Pencil is forgiving; ink is not. Tom, with his knowledge of form and drawing, was able to convert John's outlined layouts into wonderful finished artwork. One example can be found in the *Avengers* run I wrote. There were a couple of issues with dinodroids, essentially robot dinosaurs. John drew simply outlines of actual dinosaurs, and Tom brilliantly turned them into complex "transformer" dinosaur robots.

Gene Colan drew lovely comics, but Gene's work, especially as time went by, was extremely tonal, full of values in gray scale, almost painting with his pencil. This made for striking art, but comics, especially in the old newsprint days, didn't print values well. Production was designed to print drawings in the stark black and white of India ink. Converting Gene's tonal work into ink drawings required hatching, cross-hatching, fine linework, and sometimes zip-a-tone, an art material of yesteryear that allowed one to add gradational dot patterns to create shade and depth to a drawing. Gene's delicate tonal work on Marvel's *The Tomb of Dracula* was especially appropriate to that title's subject matter, and Tom, a master of all these techniques and more, captured Gene's moody work brilliantly with pen and brush. He was perhaps Gene's finest inker.

Neal Adams was a master draftsman whose work began with a photorealism not really seen in comic books before. As he developed, he brought a sense of exaggeration and style to his work that was unmistakable while maintaining his skills in realistic drawing. He brought a whole new sensibility to Marvel's *Avengers* title. Tom, who was at the beginning of his career back then, rendered that quality of realism beautifully, solidifying Neal's work in ink while maintaining its uniqueness. He caught both Neal's photorealism as well as his exaggeration masterfully.

In my own case, Tom and I worked together on *Star Wars* for Marvel back in the early '80s. I primarily drew layouts for the books and am by no means a photorealistic artist. Tom was able to convert my layouts into realistic and convincing portraits of the *Star Wars* characters and universe. He was especially good at inking the hardware of that universe. He captured the images of the iconic ships of the movies—the *Millennium Falcon*, X-wing fighters, *Star Destroyers*, and *TIE fighters*—with a conviction that anchored the comics firmly

in the *Skywalker* mythos. In fact, Tom had to be particularly careful to get the ships right because at the time we were doing the comic—shortly after the second film—his young son, Tommy, was already an enormous *Star Wars* fan and looked over his father's shoulder with an eagle eye making certain that Dad was getting the stuff right.

However, I wouldn't want folks to think that Tom was all work and no play. I've heard shadowy stories about his youth in Queens,

his participation in street racing, and his hanging with what to me seems to have been a pretty tough crowd. Once, for reasons I don't recall with certainty, Tom had to swerve off the city street and drive over some lawns before managing to steer back onto the road. His future wife was in the front seat and his mom was in the back seat. Fortunately, his mom was so busy talking that she didn't notice the brief detour, but Tom never forgot, and Ann told me that they almost hit a bus. He occasionally spoke of his youth spent at the Frank J. Reilly School of Art in Manhattan where he learned much about drawing, painting, and a solid work ethic—a formative experience despite the fact that he never finished the

TOM PALMER WAS INFLUENCED BY WALLY WOOD, JACK DAVIS, AL WILLIAMSON, AND FRANK FRAZETTA.



HE WAS MENTORED BY JACK KAMEN AND LATER, ASSISTED WALLY WOOD.

PALMER IS PRIMARILY KNOWN FOR HIS WORK AS AN INKER AT MARVEL COMICS, SPECIFICALLY FOR HIS FINE LINES ON *THE AVENGERS*, WITH JOHN BUSCEMA, AND ON *THE X-MEN*, WITH NEAL ADAMS.

PALMER WAS ARGUABLY THE MOST EFFECTIVE INKER ON GENE COLAN'S PENCILS, AS DEMONSTRATED ON THEIR RUN ON *THE TOMB OF DRACULA*.



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TOM PALMER  
1941 – 2022  
PALMER WAS AWARDED AN INKPOT AWARD IN 2010.

Tribute piece by Emilio Saltero

course work because of Riley's untimely death in 1967. But he never forgot the lessons he learned there, nor the support he got under the mentorship he received from Jack Kamen, a former EC artist.

He was an honest man of courage, a good man, and a good friend. Godspeed, pal.

**Walter Simonson is an award-winning comic book writer and artist perhaps best known for his run on Marvel Comics' *Thor* from 1983 to 1987.**



**I'll be honest, I was kind of reluctant to write this. I remember I got this way toward the end of everything after Darwyn Cooke had passed.** All the memorials, testimonials, interviews—it all takes its toll after a while. To ramp up those emotions and memories, time and time again, over and over, only to remind you that no matter what you say or how well you say it, your friend isn't coming back.

So when I was asked to write the memoriam for Mike Pasciullo, I was hesitant to go back there again. But, since you are reading this, I obviously decided to give it a go. The fact that my due date for this piece was June 22—exactly to the day Mike passed in 2022—had something to do with it, certainly (like somebody was trying to tell me something, I suppose). But it also had to do with the fact that this was for San Diego Comic-Con.

You have to understand, for many of us in the industry, SDCC is like our Superbowl. And me and Mike were certainly no different. Me as a writer and creator and Mike as—well, just about anything involving Marvel's presence at the show for roughly 25 years. Hall H, the celebs, the panels, the big ass booth, the giveaways—Mike had a hand in all of that. But hey, don't take my word for it—just ask Michael Douglas.

So, quick story—one of my favorite Mike stories, in fact—a story that sort of exemplifies the "Mike in SDCC" experience, if you will. It was the summer before *Ant-Man* came out. They were preparing to do a panel or some other promotional whatever the hell for the film when Mike, wearing a Philadelphia Flyers T-shirt, backwards baseball cap, and shorts, introduced himself to Douglas: "Hi, Mr. Douglas. I'm Mike Pasciullo. I'm senior vice president of marketing for Marvel." Douglas looked him over. "Well," said Douglas, "You certainly don't look like the senior vice president of marketing for Marvel."

And Mike often didn't. He was a regular joe who drank Miller Lite, rooted for the Eagles, listened to Poison, and was way too into the Rocky movies. Not the type of guy you'd expect to be the senior VP of marketing, yeah—but the guy who was absolutely brilliant at it. Even Michael Douglas would admit that.

You wouldn't forget Mike if you met him. Dude was a big, happy-go-lucky sort, like a Great Dane brought into human form. And yet he was as positive as they come, as good as they come. Mike wouldn't give you the shirt off his back. He'd find out your size and go buy you another one because he'd be afraid his shirt wouldn't fit you. Hey, it's why I often crashed with Mike in those early years at SDCC. He'd give you his shirt and his room. How could you beat that?

People often complain about SDCC—it's too big, too hectic, it's not about comics anymore, blah, blah, blah. But me and Mike never really did. We always took it for what it was. And knew we'd miss all the craziness when we wouldn't be able to go anymore. Miss the spectacle of it all. Miss the late nights. The meetings, the lunches, the running around. The parties we got into. The parties we didn't. The traditional Marvel dinners at Lou and Mickey's the last night of the show. (And the baked cheese Mike loved that we always had to call ahead for because the place always run out.) The traditional breakfasts at McCormick and Schmick's the next day. The people we wanted to see. The people we didn't. The stories I can tell. The stories I can't.

We knew we'd miss it all. And now, unfortunately for me and for anyone who knew him, we miss Mike. As much as anyone can be missed.

Last year was my first SDCC without the big goof. It was good to be back after everything with COVID, but still, it just wasn't the same. It'll never be the same. And as I write this, almost exactly a year to the day since we lost him, as I prepare to go back into the fray of another SDCC once again, back to the craziness, I know Mike's friends and I will raise a Miller Lite to Puke—as we called him—and be all too aware that SDCC will forever be a little less special.

Don't worry, Mike—we've already called ahead for the baked cheese. Love ya, brother.

**Frank Tieri is a comic book writer whose Marvel credits include *Wolverine*, *Iron Man*, *New Excalibur*, and *Weapon X*.**

**LILY RENÉE PHILLIPS** (1921–2022)

**For the United States of America, World War II was, to paraphrase Dickens, the best of times and the worst of times.** Everyone did their bit for the war effort: Boys and girls saved paper and scrap metal and bought war bonds. Young men were drafted or enlisted into the military and went overseas to fight, leaving their jobs to be filled by women. And 19 million women found themselves doing what they had never done before: drive trucks, buses,

and taxis; manufacture bombs, ships, and planes; and even fly those planes. About 400,000 women joined some branch of the armed forces, and over 460 of them were killed in service.

And they drew comics. Women had been producing comic strips for newspapers since the birth of comics, but the comic book world had specialized in action comics for young boys, mainly drawn by young men, who now went off to war. Desperate for artists, the

comic book publishers hired women, and suddenly more women were drawing comics than ever before.

Of all the comic book publishers, Fiction House comics hired the most women: writers like Ruth Roche and artists like Ruth Atkinson, Marcia Snyder, and Fran Hopper. And the queen of them all was Lily Renée, the only one of the women who drew covers, and whose story could have come from one of the comics she drew.

Lily had been a talented Jewish teenager living in Vienna when the Nazis marched in, in 1938; but she escaped the Nazis in 1939 via Kindertransport, an arrangement England made with Germany to take Jewish children to England if their families could find a sponsor. Lily landed in Leeds, living with her British pen pal's family. Unfortunately, Lily soon discovered that her pen pal's mother expected her to be an unpaid servant, and she left, finding work first as a nanny and then as a nurse's assistant at Leeds Maternity Hospital.

Lily had been corresponding with her parents, but on June 3, 1939, when England declared war on Germany, she lost touch with them. Meanwhile, Lily's parents had escaped to America and had been searching for her. They finally located her, and she sailed to New York in a ship that took a zigzag route to escape torpedoes.

Lily's family had been well off, but of course the Nazis took everything, and they were living in a tenement with other refugees, doing whatever work they could find, when one day Lily's mother saw an ad in the paper: Fiction House comics was looking for artists. Lily didn't read comics, but she went to the newsstand and bought a couple of comic books. She studied them and drew some sample panels, and she got the job.

At first Lily was put to work erasing pencil lines and making correction on other artists' drawings, but she soon graduated to drawing her own stories. Her first assignment was to take on the supernatural series *Werewolf Hunters*, which nobody else wanted

to draw because it entailed drawing lots of wolves. Lily changed that, turning the series into supernatural stories that usually involved beautiful but deadly women, such as the cats that become women in order to steal and kill, in "The Cats of Senor Shaitan." From there she graduated to *Jane Martin*, a Nazi-fighting flying nurse, and *The Lost World*, which starred Hunt Bowman and the fetchingly ragged Princess Lyssa against a backdrop of a ravaged Earth, fighting the suspiciously Nazi-looking Voltamen, aliens from the planet Volta.

But the series for which Lily is best known is *Senorita Rio*, a beautiful Brazilian nightclub entertainer who is actually a spy for the Secret Service, rooting out Nazis, even after the war, in fictitious Latin American countries. Rio, who favored Carmen Miranda-style off-the-shoulder peasant blouses, closely resembled Lily herself, and indeed Lily said of her, "It's sort of like a fantasy. Senorita Rio gets clothes that I couldn't have. You know, she had a leopard coat and she wore these high-end shoes and all of this and had adventures and was very daring and beautiful and sexy and glamorous..."

When the war ended, Lily and the other women were let go. For a while they still drew romance comics and comics about cute teenagers, but the beautiful daring action heroines disappeared from the comic book pages. Lily designed jewelry and textile designs, and wrote plays and children's books.

Brought out of obscurity in the early 2000s, she was a Special Guest at Comic-Con in 2007 and received an Inkpot Award. She was inducted into the Will Eisner Comic Industry Awards Hall of Fame in 2021.

On August 4, 2022, Lily Renée Wilhelm Peters Phillips passed away peacefully in her sleep at the age of 101.

**Trina Robbins is a cartoonist and author of several books about pioneering women in comics.**



**RACHEL POLLACK** (1945–2023)

**Rachel Pollack knew three things: herself, the ancient stories of magical trial and transformation, and the way to weave the two together.** Well, okay, Rachel knew a lot more than three things. She knew the more esoteric portions of the Torah and commentary, in the original Hebrew. She knew the Greek myths, and the story of Tiresias the blind prophet who knew life as a woman as well as a man. She knew how shamanic traditions often blurred the boundaries between genders as well as worlds. She knew all about misfit

superheroes and how they, like the Major Arcana, could straddle the line between archetypal symbol and deeply quirky individual.

Rachel could hold her own with Neil Gaiman, himself no slouch in the study of myth and story. As she worked through the unwieldy business of dying, she would sit with Neil (and with me, a bit more of a slouch, perhaps, but able to field a conversational ball when it was lobbed in my direction) and talk about comics and myths and literature.



Rachel Pollack with Alisa Kwitney.

Once, when Neil couldn't make it, Rachel asked me, "Did you know a famous playwright worked as James Joyce's child minder for a while? God, what was his name?" "If Neil were here, he'd know," I said. "If I were here," replied Rachel, laughing, "I would know."

She kept her sense of humor until close to the very end, when she

stopped speaking. Before then, she and Neil and I traded Borscht Belt jokes and cackled with delight. To misquote Fleetwood Mac, she made dying fun. Others will probably talk about Rachel's contribution to comics and Tarot, but my connection with Rachel only began

## TED RICHARDS (1946–2023)

**Ted Richards was a member of the infamous Air Pirates**—the comics collective that faced a protracted legal struggle with Walt Disney Productions for placing their copyrighted characters in scandalous, non-Disney behavior.

Richards was best known for his Dopin' Dan character, a sort of stoner update of Beetle Bailey or Sad Sack for the Vietnam War era. Dopin' Dan's misadventures in the Army were said to be loosely based on Richards' stint in the Air Force, and unlike its often generic comic book military predecessors, Richards strove for his *Dopin' Dan* comic to be a more realistic and sympathetic portrayal of the struggles faced by the American soldiers of the time.

Ted was born in Fort Bragg, North Carolina, in 1946. By the time he met up with the group that would form the Air Pirates in 1970, he was a "strapping, six-foot-two, 180-pound, 24-year-old," the author Bob Levin wrote in *The Pirates and the Mouse*, a history of the Air Pirates legal struggle. "Richards had been 'seeing' cartoons since he was five. His favorite strips were *Pogo*, *Peanuts*, and Jimmy Hatlo's *They'll do It Every Time*. His favorite comic books were *Superboy*, *Uncle Scrooge*, and *Walt Disney's Comics and Stories*. He had always been 'class artist,' but on the army bases of the South where he grew up, art was a seasonal activity, usually limited to turning out turkeys for Thanksgiving and Santa Claus for Christmas.



with comics, when she wrote *Doom Patrol* for Tom Peyer, who shared an office with me at DC. For me, she was a writing buddy, part of a small writing group that saw me through a rough patch in my career, and a frequent Passover seder guest, the kind who felt like family, but who added depth and insight to the ritual meal.

The year before she died, I got to interview her about the release of her run on *Doom Patrol* as a collected omnibus edition. If you were one of the few who knew how good the book was back in the '90s, go buy one for a young person who needs it. If you missed it because you were a fetus or not yet extant back when Karen Berger's Vertigo was in its heyday, go and meet Rachel Pollack in the pages of a comic. She's waiting for you to discover her—and a bit of yourself—in her stories.

**Alisa Kwitney is the Eisner-nominated author of numerous graphic novels, a former DC Comics staff editor with the Vertigo imprint, and a New York Times notable author. Her latest book is *G.I.L.T.*, a graphic novel, from AHOY Comics.**

by John F. Kelly

The rest of the year, he played baseball, football, and worked on self-designed science projects, like building model airplanes that flew. Drawn to 'application,' not homework, he quit school in 1965 to play electric bass in a Beatles-Stones cover band. Then, with the draft closing in, he enlisted in the Air Force."

Richards steadily produced great work during and after the Air Pirates saga. In addition to the *Dopin' Dan* comic book series, published by Last Gasp, he wrote and drew syndicated strips—*E.Z. Wolf's Astral Outhouse* and *The Forty Year Old Hippie*—that ran in college papers and alternative weeklies throughout the country via Rip Off Syndicate, a division of Rip Off Press. Richards also created what may have been the first ever skateboarding-themed comic strip with his Mellow Cat series, which began running in *SkateBoarder* magazine in 1978. His work regularly appeared in the *Rip Off Comix* and *Quack!* anthologies, was in all five issues of *Kitchen Sink's* notorious collaboration with Marvel Comics, *Comix Book*, and was a key contribution to *Give Me Liberty!*, Rip Off Press's bicentennial look at the American Revolution.

By the early 1980s, Richards began transitioning away from comics and into the technology industry in Silicon Valley. Richards' family summarized his later work in tech, which occupied much of the sec-

ond half of his life: "In 1987, he founded AdWare, providing software products and design services for computer clients, including Apple and Microsoft. Among his innovations was the first 'shopping cart' for an e-commerce site. From the 1990s, he became a web site developer, offering enterprise-level development services, consulting, web design and information architecture. In the 2010s he was a principal designer for Deep North, Inc."

## BOB SELF (1966–2022)

**I suppose the best way to describe Bob Self might be that he was sort of a mixture of the Wizard of Oz and Orson Welles,** with a dollop of P.T. Barnum tossed in for good measure. Coming from a distinguished film and TV family, it might be said that he was born to be an entertainer—however, it wasn't the spotlight that he sought for himself, but rather for the artists and performers he encouraged and believed in.

Before becoming a book publisher, Bob worked backstage with a number of magicians, comedians, dancers, and illusionists, and those experiences inspired him to explore a wide variety of avenues to express his own creativity. In 2003 he and his wife Rani—a professional costume designer for many popular television shows—formed Baby Tattoo, Inc., a company that produced absolutely gorgeous, high-quality books devoted to contemporary artists including Ragnar, Gris Grimly, and Brian Kesinger among many others.

Bob was naturally attracted to the excitement and energy of Comic-Con, and for many years Baby Tattoo was an exhibitor and sponsored the Will Eisner Spirit of Comics Retailer Award. He was wildly popular for hosting a "Breakfast for Dinner" party at the Hilton Gaslamp after the Exhibit Hall floor closed, where virtually every mover-and-shaker in the art world would relax, meet, and often become friends. Illustrators, animators, sculptors, and comics creators all drank and mingled with pin-up artists, gallery painters, Lowbrow Artists, Highbrow Artists, and Artists With No Brows At All.

Bob and Rani oversaw the Dr. Sketchy's life-drawing gatherings in Los Angeles and eventually organized very exclusive and intimate events to connect creators and entertainers with fans and patrons at the historic Mission Inn; Baby Tattooville was, as far as I know,

Ted died on April 21 at Kaiser Santa Teresa hospital in San Jose, CA. The cause of death was lung cancer, according to Richards' daughter, the singer and musician Miranda Lee Richards. He was 76.

**John F. Kelly has been writing for *The Comics Journal* since the early 1990s.**

by Arnie Fenner

the very first strictly artist-focused convention and was followed by the magic-themed Beyond Brookledge. But that was hardly all.

Under a banner proclaiming a Carnival of Astounding Art Bob curated multiple exhibitions at the Riverside Art Museum and the Oceanside Museum of Art, including shows devoted to the work of pin-up queen Olivia De Berardinis and film SFX sculptor Jordu Schell—*Beauties Beasts* in 2016—along with a major career retrospective of renowned illustrator Michael Whelan, *Beyond Science Fiction*, in 2017. *Baby Tattoo* naturally published beautiful books commemorating both events.

Of course, he had a long list of future plans, a dozen projects he was excitedly mapping out and talking about. Unfortunately, all those ideas were cut short on August 3, 2022, when he died a day before his birthday, the result of a kayak accident at Mono Lake, California.

It's safe to say that whatever happens going forward with *Baby Tattoo's* publishing or events businesses, nothing will be the same without him. Because Bob Self was, without the slightest exaggeration, bigger than life, a huge personality, both inimitable and ultimately unforgettable. His intensity and energy could be a bit overwhelming, even intimidating for some (I know I often felt woefully inadequate when he was passionately describing his latest scheme), but he delighted in all manner of art and artists and he was an enthusiastic cheerleader for the entire creative community. It seemed that he either knew everyone or everyone knew him, and nothing made him happier than to make introductions.

Designer, writer, curator, art director, promoter, entrepreneur: Bob Self could easily be described in any number of ways with an entire panoply of titles, but I think the most accurate term for Bob



would be “ringmaster.” He kept things moving, he kept things lively, and he most definitely made things interesting.

Bob was always looking to the future; he was always searching for the *next* excuse to put creators, publishers, collectors, patrons, and fans together. He was one of the unpretentious yet incredibly important people who stepped up and made things happen; someone who lifted others up and created opportunities for them, not out of ego or avarice, but out of love.

## LEO SULLIVAN (1940–2022)

**Who could forget his toothy grin and infectious laugh?** Leo D. Sullivan not only loved cartoon characters, he could easily be mistaken for one. Leo’s expansive personality filled the room and, much like his old mentor, Bob Clampett, Leo was the ultimate animation cartoonist. The absurdity of life provided endless gag opportunities, and Leo was always there to deliver a punchline.

Animation director Ken Mundie gave Leo a cheeky nickname while working on the *Fat Albert* television special. Ken called Leo “Kingfish” after the lovable scoundrel on the old *Amos and Andy* TV show. Was Leo serious, or was he simply pulling your leg? You weren’t always sure. Working with Leo meant hard work, but it also meant you’d be having the time of your life. Leo D. Sullivan was a reminder of the good old days when cartoon making was more about fun than making money.

Like most young artists just out of school, Leo sought employment at Disney. Back then, the Disney studio had a clumsy but well-intentioned policy of making minorities feel comfortable by introducing them to other people of color.

The audacious, outspoken Sullivan quickly saw through this nonsense and replied, “I didn’t come here to meet a black guy. I’m looking for a job.” There would be no job at Disney, but Leo soon found work as a cel cleaner at the Clampett Studio in Hollywood. In time, Leo would be promoted to animation by none other than Bob Clampett himself.

Leo was just a kid, but ambitious nonetheless. His first cartoon short, a spin on the Christopher Columbus story, was animated to completion in full color and even had a fully mixed soundtrack. Unable afford an editing machine, Leo jerry-rigged a 16mm movie projector that allowed him to run picture and sound in perfect sync. Cartoon making was fun, but Leo had bigger ideas. He had developed his filmmaking chops by making his own movies. Why not take this a step further and create his own movie company? Considering the time period and the color of his skin, this was a totally ridiculous idea. Not surprisingly, he was laughed out of every bank in the Los Angeles area. However, Leo D. Sullivan was not a person who took no for an answer. In 1965, Vignette Films,



From the day I met him—strictly by chance at an American Booksellers Association convention—Bob was my friend. He was different; he was totally unique; he was, above all else, a good person with a huge heart who had a positive impact on all who knew him. We will not see his like again.

**Arnie Fenner is an artist, editor, and art director and the co-founder of Spectrum: The Best in Contemporary Fantastic Art.**

by Floyd Norman

Inc. became a California corporation and Leo never looked back.

Besides his skill as an animator, Leo was also a very effective studio manager. I always knew my colleague was a gifted producer, though it was doubtful any Hollywood studio would seek his talents. However, the pressures of production can often make radical change possible. When the demand for animated content soared, various studios needed the skills of a producer like Leo. In time, this led to assignments in China and the Philippines as Leo took over management of their animation facilities. When it comes to getting the job done, the color of the manager’s skin doesn’t matter all that much.

Returning to the states, Leo took over management of The Spungbuggy Works and produced dozens of television commercials. The demands of TV production made producers aware they needed a knowledgeable person at the helm. Leo had the production knowledge that enabled him to work efficiently. With that rare blend of talent, skill, and just plain fun, doing the impossible became Leo’s stock in trade. There were times when he animated,

inked, and painted cels and photographed everything overnight. Clients were flabbergasted when Leo delivered the completed content the very next day.

Leo was his own man and he soon grew tired of taking orders from clueless studio executives. He moved back into his home studio where he could conduct business without interference. Along with his wife, Lyn, Leo established his own enterprise made up of young animation hopefuls looking for a start in the business. On occasion, I would pitch in on his passion project, *AfroKids*. Yet, funding continued to be a challenge. Always optimistic, Leo pushed on. However, his health was now failing.

Glib, irreverent and brutally honest, Leo D. Sullivan lived life on his own terms. As the end approached, he found humor in every situation and continued to laugh it away. Bob Clampett would have been proud.

**Floyd E. Norman is an American animator, writer, and cartoonist.**

## MELCHIOR THOMPSON (1949–2023)

by David Scroggy

**In my days directing Comic Book Expo, a trade show for the comics industry associated with San Diego Comic-Con, Mel Thompson and I were frequent and close collaborators.**

He was introduced to me, and the entire comics specialty industry, by agent Mike Friedrich. Mel brought a lot to the table: He was an astute assessor of the comic shop retail arena and identified a number of areas where he could improve the marketplace. He rolled up his sleeves and dove in.

He introduced more sophisticated store siting and interior design. He began to survey and soon after provided comics publishers with their first quantifiable consumer demographics information. He improved store point-of-sale hardware, and, perhaps most significantly, developed and introduced proprietary inventory control and advance ordering software for comic book retailers. This was a turning point for many shops, bringing into focus the bewildering array of monthly titles and how they performed in each specific retailer venue. It took the rudimentary cycle sheet system that most shops used and



dragged it into a more enlightened sphere of efficiency. It saved a lot of bacon in shops, cutting waste and directing resources more profitably.

Mel was a frequent speaker at Comic Book Expo. His lectures were a seminar that he could have charged for. The value to Mel, of course, was it advertised his services to potential clients. I am sure he picked up quite a few. It was a true win-win most of the time; his firm grew and so did his customer’s bottom line.

I was able to connect Mel with my artist client Rick Geary. Rick drew the graphic posted here, a caricature of Mel that he used as his logo.

He had a great sense of humor, as I was able to discover behind the scenes. I learned a lot from Mel, but so did everyone else. I once told him that we shared a vision for the industry. He didn’t disagree. RIP to a visionary.

**David Scroggy is a retired comics professional and former director of Comic Book Expo.**

## Remembering Members of the Comic-Con Family We’ve Lost

## CHERYLL SANGRIA FERNANDEZ (1985–2022)

**Cheryll attended Comic-Con starting in 1998.** She had volunteered with TOKYOPOP, having her picture with her cousins Arlyn/Trish and Ysa published in *TOKYOPOP* magazine. Later, Cheryll became a staff volunteer with the Anime and Hospitality departments of Comic-Con. She was the art director for Pacific PonyCon and had

created the mascot for San Diego Wikimedians User Group. Known as Lil2Saturn, and CherBear, online, she had an extensive presence where she was active, including, but not limited to, Nexon/RedBana Audition, World of Warcraft, DeviantArt, and Facebook. Cheryll was a wife, manang, niece, caregiver, supporter, friend, gamer, and an artist.

## JACK PLUMMER (1961–2022)

**Jack Plummer, a local mortician, deacon, and Free Mason, started volunteering for Comic-Con in the 1980s.** He settled in the San Diego area when he served in the U.S. Navy, and retired as a lieutenant commander. At first he and his spouse Nico assembled bags for the attendees. Jack was then recruited to lead the Blood Drive volunteer division in the the late 1990s. Jack, Nico, and their

chihuahua Patsy were fixtures at the Robert A. Heineken Blood Drive volunteer table for decades. He retired from volunteering in Comic-Con in 2019.

Jack was an avid comic collector as well as a huge Star Trek fan. He is missed by his friends and fellow volunteers.



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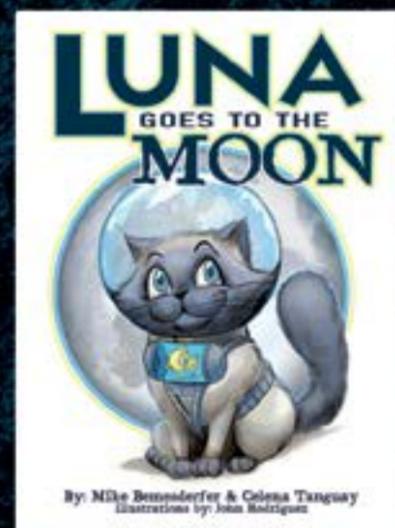
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