



# The Kirby Effect

The Journal of the Jack Kirby Museum & Research Center

## Key Late Career Moments

by [John Morrow](#)

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*This timeline was first published in [TwoMorrows Publishing's Spring 2014 The Jack Kirby Collector 63](#). Many thanks to John Morrow for allowing us to publish it here. Suggestions or corrections are welcome, please use the comments section below. –  
Rand*

Continuing our look at key moments in Jack's life and career from TJKC #60 ([which covered Marvel in the 1960s](#)) and #62 ([which covered 1970-1975](#)), we present this timeline of key moments that affected Kirby's tenure after he left DC Comics in 1975. Of invaluable help were Richard Kolkman (who sent me an extensive list to begin work from), Eric Nolen-Weathington, Ray Wyman, Tom Kraft, Glen Gold, and Rand Hoppe, as well as Mark Evanier's book KIRBY: King of Comics and Sean Howe's Marvel Comics: The Untold Story.

This isn't a complete list of every important date in Kirby's later career history, but should hit most of the main ones. Please send us additions and corrections. Next issue, I'll work on pivotal moments in Jack's 1940s-1950s career with Joe Simon.

My rule of thumb: Cover dates were generally two-three months later than the date

the book appeared on the stands, and six months ahead of when Kirby was working on the stories, so I've assembled the timeline according to those adjusted dates—not the cover dates—to set it as close as possible to real-time.

## Early 1970s

- **May 30, 1972:** Kirby signs an agreement with Marvel, effectively relinquishing any claim he might have to the copyright on Captain America. This document is used against Joe Simon's efforts to secure the copyright on Captain America Comics #1-10.
- **Late 1972:** Rocket's Blast Comic Collector #94 features an erroneous newsflash titled "Kirby Leaves DC," which speculates what might happen if Kirby returned to Marvel. The article creates quite a stir in fandom.
- **Summer 1974:** Neal Kirby asks Roy Thomas to meet the Kirbys for coffee at the San Diego Comic-Con, to determine Marvel's possible interest in having Jack return. Roy tells Jack he and Stan would be glad to have him back.

## 1975

- **Early 1975:** It is presumed that Kirby talks with Stan Lee regarding the possibility of Kirby returning to Marvel.
- **February 20:** Longtime Marvel letterer Arthur "Artie" Simek dies.
- **March 18:** Kirby visits the Marvel offices for the first time since his departure in 1970. The visit takes place on the Monday before the 1975 Mighty Marvel Con (March 22–24). Marie Severin spots Kirby going into Stan's office, and yells down the Marvel halls, "Kirby's back!"
- **March 24:** Kirby signs a three-year contract with Marvel (valid through April 30, 1978), and appears at the Mighty Marvel Con held at the Hotel Commodore in New York City. Kirby stuns MMC attendees with the announcement of his return, and in regards to what he will be doing for Marvel, Kirby says, "It'll electrocute you in the mind!"
- **May:** Barry Alfonso's fanzine Mysticogryfil #2 features an interview with Kirby.
- **May 25:** Wings' album Venus and Mars featuring the song "Magneto and Titanium Man," is released (the cover of the 45 rpm single is shown above, which featured re-purposed non-Kirby art from Marvel).
- **June 2:** Menomonee Falls Gazette V4, #181 features an interview with Kirby.

- **July:** Mediascene #15 features a preview article entitled "The King Returns."
- **August (October cover date):** The Marvel Comics Bullpen page announces, "The King is Back! 'Nuff said!" and lists his future projects as 2001, Captain America, and a giant Silver Surfer book.
- **September (November cover date):** New Kirby covers hit the stands: Fantastic Four #164, Invaders #3, Iron Man #80, Ka-Zar #12, Marvel Premiere #26 (featuring Hercules), Marvel Super-Heroes #54 (featuring Hulk), Marvel Two-in-One #12 (guest-starring Iron Man), and Thor #241.
- **September:** Captain America #192 features a next issue promo with art by Kirby and Frank Giacoia (next page, top).
- **September:** FOOM #11 features a preview of 2001: A Space Odyssey, cover art for Captain America #193 and #194, and "Kirby Speaks," an interview with Kirby.
- **September:** Kirby ignores editorial pleas to integrate the rest of the Marvel Universe into his Captain America series.
- **November (January 1976 cover date):** Captain America #193 is published, beginning the "Madbomb" storyline, which is timed to end on America's bicentennial.
- **November 15:** Jack completes the first draft of his Silver Star screenplay.
- **December:** FOOM #12 features preview art for an "Ikaris the Eternal" series, later to be renamed The Eternals.

## 1976

- **January (March cover date):** The Bullpen Bulletins page features the blurb, "Who Is He?" with an image of Ikaris.
- **February (April cover date):** Kamandi #40, featuring the last of Kirby's 1970s art for DC, is published.
- **February:** The Comic Reader #127 announces a new Marvel series Return of the Gods (ie. The Eternals) along with Kirby's cover art for the first issue.
- **May (July cover date):** Bullpen Bulletins page announces The Prisoner. According to Mediascene (Nov.–Dec. 1977), Marvel's Prisoner series began as a proposal by editor Marv Wolfman, followed by a Steve Englehart and Gil Kane effort which Stan Lee rejected. Lee then gave the series to Kirby to write and pencil. Kirby penciled one 17-page issue, which was partially inked by Mike Royer, before Lee cancelled the project altogether.
- **May (July cover date):** Eternals #1 published.

- **June (August cover date):** Captain America #200 is published.
- **June 8:** The treasury sized Captain America's Bicentennial Battles is published.
- **June 22:** Kirby and his family meet Paul and Linda McCartney backstage at a Wings concert at the L.A. Forum via Gary Sherman. Kirby gives McCartney a drawing of Magneto (referencing McCartney's song) to commemorate the occasion.
- **July (September cover date):** Bullpen Bulletin page announces that Roy Thomas is to join "Marvel West" along with Kirby and Mike Royer.
- **July:** The Marvel Treasury Special 2001: A Space Odyssey movie adaptation is released.
- **August (October cover date):** Hulk Annual #5 is published. The story features a bevy of Jack's Atlas-era monsters, such as Groot, Titan, and Goom, with a new cover by Kirby.
- **September (November cover date):** Fantastic Four #176 is published featuring a Kirby/Joe Sinnott cover with Impossible Man. Kirby, along with the Marvel Bullpen, appears as a character in the George Pérez-drawn story inside.
- **October (December cover date):** 2001: A Space Odyssey #1 (a new ongoing series) is published.
- **Late October-Early November:** Kirby visits Lucca, Italy as Guest of Honor at the Lucca Comic Art Festival, his first international comics convention appearance.
- **November (January 1977 cover date):** Black Panther #1 is published. As with his Captain America stories, Kirby isolates the title from the rest of the Marvel Universe.
- **December:** FOOM #16 features a preview of the Marvel 1977 Calendar, featuring artwork by Kirby.

## 1977

- **January:** "Stan's Soapbox" announces the Silver Surfer graphic novel is to be written by Lee and drawn by Kirby.
- **February 1:** Kirby submits his art for The Prisoner.
- **March (May cover date):** Marvel Two-in-One #27 is released, featuring a Kirby/Sinnott cover with Deathlok.
- **March 14:** Kirby hands in concept art and plot concept for the Silver Surfer graphic novel to "Stanley" Lee, and Lee begins scripting.

- **May (July cover date):** 2001 #8 is published, introducing Mister Machine. Ideal Toys, having rights to the name, convinces Marvel to rename the character, 75 and Kirby re-dubs him "Machine Man" in the first issue of his solo series.
- **May (July cover date):** "Bullpen Bulletins" announces an adaptation of the forthcoming Star Wars movie, which would open to general audiences on May 17. Though not known at the time, Star Wars would feature themes and characters remarkably similar to Kirby's Fourth World series.
- **May 12:** The Star Wars movie premieres.
- **May 20:** Kirby works on concept art for Devil Dinosaur under the working title Devil Dinosaur of the Phantom Planet. An earlier working title was Reptar, King of the Dinosaurs.
- **June (August cover date):** Eternals #14 is published, featuring a cosmic-powered Hulk, in a feeble nod to tying the series to the Marvel Universe.
- **July (September cover date):** 2001 #10 is published, announcing Machine Man will receive his own title.
- **August (October cover date):** Captain America #214 is published, marking the final issue of Kirby's run.
- **October:** Pizzazz #1 features a page of Kirby artwork for "2001 Compute-a-Code". It is the only published artwork Larry Lieber would ink over Kirby pencils.
- **November (January 1978 cover date):** Eternals #19, the final issue of the series, is published.
- **November 19:** Longtime Marvel production staffer and occasional Kirby inker "Jumbo" John Verpoorten dies at age 37.

## 1978

- **February (April cover date):** Machine Man #1 and Devil Dinosaur #1 are published.
- **Early 1978:** DePatie-Freleng begins development of a Fantastic Four half-hour cartoon to air in 1979, with Kirby drawing storyboards.
- **Spring:** FOOM #21 introduces H.E.R.B.I.E. (earlier named Charlie and Z-Z-1-2-3), a robot member of the Fantastic Four team designed by Kirby for the DePatie-Freleng FF cartoon. The rights to Human Torch were tied up with another production company, so DePatie-Freleng used H.E.R.B.I.E. as a stand-in.
- **March:** Ballantine Books publishes Sorcerers: A Collection of Fantasy Art,

featuring an essay by Kirby, showcasing several unpublished pieces of his personal art.

- **April:** The Comics Journal #39 features an article titled, "From Dinosaurs to Rockets: Kirby Strikes Out Again." The article—along with letters printed in the Marvel letters' pages and petty cruelty from members of the Marvel Bullpen staff—adds to Kirby's growing discontent.
- **April 30:** Kirby's contract with Marvel expires and he decides not to renew it, and instead focuses on his animation career.
- **Late Spring:** Kirby begins development on Captain Victory and His Galactic Rangers, including concept art and co-writing a screenplay with Steve Sherman.
- **July:** Kirby begins working on concept art for The Lord of Light movie and theme park (based on Roger Zelazny's novel of the same name). This artwork would later be used as part of a real-life CIA operation to rescue kidnapped diplomats, as depicted in the 2012 film Argo.
- **August (October cover date):** What If? #11 is published. Written and penciled by Kirby, the story, titled "What if the Fantastic Four Were the Original Marvel Bullpen?" features Kirby, Stan Lee, Sol Brodsky, and Flo Steinberg as the FF.
- **August:** The Comics Journal #41 features an article titled, "Kirby Quits Comics."
- **September (November cover date):** Fantastic Four #200 is published, the cover of which being Kirby's final work on the FF in comics.
- **October (December cover date):** Machine Man #9 and Devil Dinosaur #9 are published—Kirby's last ongoing series work for Marvel.
- **Fall:** The Silver Surfer graphic novel is published by Simon & Schuster. Kirby and Lee share the copyright.
- **Late 1978:** Development begins on the unrealized "Jack Kirby Comics" line of titles: Bruce Lee; Captain Victory and His Galactic Rangers; Reptar, King of the Dinosaurs; Satan's Six; Silver Star (based on the existing screenplay co-written with Steve Sherman); and Thunder Foot.

## 1979

- Kirby produces an unfinished 224-page version of his novel The Horde, which is edited by Janet Berliner.
- The Jack Kirby Masterworks portfolio is published by Privateer Press.
- **January:** The Marvel 1979 Calendar features a Kirby Hulk drawing inked by Joe Sinnott. It is Kirby's final published artwork for Marvel.

- **Early 1979:** Stan Lee options the Silver Surfer graphic novel movie rights to producer Lee Kramer. The film is set to have a \$25 million budget, with Olivia Newton-John attached to play the role of Ardina (as related in *Marvel Comics: The Untold Story*, pg. 215).
- Kirby appears in a cameo role on the *Incredible Hulk* TV series as a police sketch artist.
- **June (August cover date):** *Fantastic Four* #209 is published, introducing the Kirby-designed H.E.R.B.I.E. to comics.
- **September 2 (through January 13, 1980):** Kirby's adaptation of Walt Disney's film *The Black Hole* appears in Sunday newspapers across America, and is later translated for foreign publications as well.

## 1980

- Kirby continues working as a storyboard and concept artist in the animation industry, particularly for Ruby-Spears Productions on *Thundarr The Barbarian* (example shown below). Kirby receives some of the best pay of his career, and for the first time, health insurance benefits.
- **October 11:** The first episode of *Thundarr The Barbarian* airs, starting a highly successful syndication run for the series.

## 1981

- **September (November cover date):** *Captain Victory and His Galactic Rangers* #1 is published through Pacific Comics.
- **September (November cover date):** *Fantastic Four* #236—the 20th anniversary issue—is published. Kirby demands the removal of his name from the cover, citing unauthorized use of his *Fantastic Four* storyboards inside for nefarious “celebratory purposes.”
- Kirby works with Steve Gerber on the unused *Roxie's Raiders* newspaper strip, comic book, and animated series for Ruby-Spears.

## 1982

- *Battle For A 3-D World* is published, with Kirby pencils, Mike Thibodeaux inks, and

3-D conversion by Ray Zone. The 3-D glasses that come with the comic state "Kirby: King of the Comics," which is later misconstrued by Johnny Carson when he uses a pair as a prop on The Tonight Show, and inadvertently insults Jack on the air. He publicly apologizes to Jack on-air two weeks later.

- **January (March cover date):** Destroyer Duck #1, featuring Kirby pencils, is published in an effort to raise money for Steve Gerber's lawsuit against Marvel for the rights to Howard the Duck. Kirby also donates the cover art for the F.O.O.G. (Friends of Old Gerber) benefit portfolio.
- **January (March cover date):** Kirby's unpublished 1975 story for DC's Sandman #7 is finally published in Best of DC Digest #22. It had previously only appeared, for copyright purposes, in DC's Summer 1978 in-house ashcan inventory book Cancelled Comics Cavalcade, of which only 35 copies were produced by photocopying.
- **October 28:** Kirby is interviewed on the TV show Entertainment Tonight by Catherine Mann.
- **December (February 1983 cover date):** Silver Star #1 is published by Pacific Comics, based on Jack's 1975 concept.

## 1983

- Kirby is commissioned by Richard Kyle to draw the autobiographical story "Street Code".
- **February:** Will Eisner's "Shop Talk" interview with Kirby is published in Spirit magazine #39, featuring controversial comments by Kirby.
- **October (December cover date):** Destroyer Duck #5 (Kirby's final issue) is published. Pacific Comics would publish one additional issue, without Kirby art.
- **November (January 1984 cover date):** Captain Victory #13 and Silver Star #6 (the final issues) are published.

## 1984

- **April (June cover date):** New Gods reprint #1 is published, beginning a full reprinting of the 11 original New Gods issues.
- **May (July cover date):** Super Powers #1 (first series) is published by DC Comics, featuring a Kirby cover, and Jack's plotting (Kirby plots and draws only covers for #1-4). Jack agrees to tackle this series, in appreciation for DC



retroactively making him eligible for royalties on the creation of the New Gods characters that appear in the Super Powers toy line.

- **August:** Kirby receives a 4-page legal document from Marvel Comics, drafted especially for him, that contains numerous excessive stipulations around the possible return of his 1960s artwork—including denying him the ability to sell the artwork, and with no guarantee of how many pages he would receive if he did sign the document. Kirby refuses to sign, and attempts to negotiate behind-the-scenes with Marvel, with no success.
- **September (November cover date):** New Gods reprint #6 is published, containing the new story “Even Gods Must Die” which attempts to bridge the narrative between the original New Gods #11, and Jack’s upcoming Hunger Dogs graphic novel.
- **September (November cover date):** Super Powers #5 is published, the final issue of the first series, featuring Kirby plot, cover, and full pencils.

## 1985

- The Hunger Dogs graphic novel is published, giving Kirby a chance to put a pseudo-ending to his New Gods saga.
- **February (April cover date):** Who’s Who #2 is published by DC Comics—the first of numerous issues to feature single-page illustrations by Kirby, of his DC characters.
- **March 6:** A Cannon Films ad in Variety magazine erroneously credits Stan Lee as the creator of Captain America. The Kirbys’ attorney contacts Marvel Comics about the error.
- **June (August cover date):** DC Comics Presents #84 is published, featuring a Kirby-drawn story teaming Superman and the Challengers of the Unknown.
- **July (September cover date):** Super Powers (series two) #1 is published, with pencils only by Kirby.
- **July:** The Kirbys’ legal dispute with Marvel over the ownership of original artwork plays out publicly, in the first of several issues of The Comics Journal to bring public awareness to the issue. Issue #105 (February 1986) is pivotal in its coverage of the situation.
- **August 2:** Kirby appears on a panel at the San Diego Comic-Con with Jim Starlin, Greg Theakston, and Gary Groth, to discuss the situation of Marvel Comics not returning his original artwork.

- **December (February 1986 cover date):** Super Powers (series two) #6 is published, featuring Kirby's final penciled story in comics.

## 1986

- New World Entertainment acquires Marvel Comics.
- Heroes Against Hunger is published by DC Comics to benefit famine relief, featuring a 2-page sequence donated by Jack.
- **August:** The Comics Journal #110 includes a petition signed by numerous industry professionals, appealing to Marvel Comics to give Kirby back his original art.
- **August 3:** Kirby appears on a panel at the San Diego Comic-Con with Frank Miller, Alan Moore, Marv Wolfman, and Gary Groth, to discuss the situation with Marvel Comics and the return of his original artwork. Marvel editor-in-chief Jim Shooter was in the audience, and spoke briefly from the floor to clarify Marvel's position.
- **September:** Marvel Age Annual #2 is published, reprinting a ½-page text piece by Kirby titled, "Jack Kirby by Jack Kirby," reprinted from the Merry Marvel Messenger newsletter of 1966.

## 1987

- Kirby appears on Ken Viola's Masters of Comic Book Art documentary, offering many fans their first chance to actually hear and see Kirby speak about comics.
- **January (March cover date):** Last of the Viking Heroes #1 is published by Genesis West, featuring a Kirby cover.
- Pure Imagination publishes Jack Kirby's Heroes & Villains, reprinting the Valentine's Day pencil sketchbook Jack drew for his wife Roz in the late 1970s.
- **Summer:** Kirby is inducted into the Will Eisner Comic Book Hall of Fame.
- **Summer:** Under pressure from comics creators and the fan community, Marvel Comics sends Kirby the standard form other artists signed, and upon Jack signing it, finally returns approximately 2,100 of the estimated 13,000 pages Kirby drew for the company.
- **August (October cover date):** Kirby's half of a "jam" cover with Murphy Anderson for DC's Secret Origins #19 sees print.
- **November:** Marvel begins their hardcover Marvel Masterworks collection of

early Lee/Kirby stories.

## 1988

- **December (February 1989 cover date):** Action Comics Weekly #638 is published, featuring a Kirby Demon cover—his last new work for DC.

## 1989

- Monster Masterworks Vol. 1 is published, featuring “Monsters of the Shifty Fifties,” a text piece written by Kirby.
- Marvel publishes a collection of Simon & Kirby’s Fighting American, including a two-page introduction by Kirby.
- Glen Kolleda releases a pewter sculpture based on Kirby’s “Jacob And The Angel” drawing. It comes with a print of Jack’s illustration; a second sculpture and print (Beast Rider) was planned, but never produced.

## 1990

- **February:** The Comics Journal #134 (left) is published, featuring a controversial interview with Kirby, including derogatory comments about Stan Lee, and Jack’s own involvement in the creation of Spider-Man.
- **May:** Robin Snyder’s fanzine The Comics Vol. 1, #5 prints a 4-page essay/rebuttal by Steve Ditko entitled “Jack Kirby’s Spider-Man,” giving Ditko’s recollection of what Kirby’s involvement on Spider-Man was prior to Ditko taking over. It includes a Ditko sketch of what Kirby’s version looked like.
- **November:** Kirby’s 1983 “Street Code” story finally sees print in Richard Kyle’s Argosy magazine, Vol. 3, #2.
- **December:** Marvel Age #95 is published, featuring “Birth of a Legend,” an interview with Kirby (as well as a separate interview with Joe Simon) to commemorate Captain America’s 50th anniversary.

## 1992

- **January:** Marvel publishes a collection of Simon & Kirby’s Boys’ Ranch, including

a two-page introduction by Kirby.

- The Art of Jack Kirby is published. Jack and author Ray Wyman conduct a book tour from November 7-December 12, at five stores in California and Tucson, Arizona.

## 1993

- **January 22:** Kirby appears in a cameo as himself, on the shortlived Bob Newhart sitcom Bob (below).
- **February (April cover date):** Topps Comics begins publishing their “Kirbyverse” titles—Bombast, Captain Glory, Night Glider, and Jack Kirby’s Secret City Saga—based on unused Kirby concepts from the 1970s. They also publish Satan’s Six #1, which includes a previously unpublished 8-page Kirby sequence from the ’70s.
- **March 14:** Jack and Ray Wyman appear at Comics & Comix in Palo Alto, California to promote The Art of Jack Kirby. A lengthy fan video of Jack’s appearance exists.
- **September (December cover date):** Phantom Force #1 is published by Image Comics. The Image founders form a sort of solidarity around Kirby.
- **October (January cover date):** Monster Menace #2 is published, featuring a ½-page text piece by Kirby titled “Jack Kirby, Atlas Comics and Monsters”—Kirby’s final work of any kind for Marvel.

## 1994

- **January (April cover date):** Phantom Force #2 is published—Kirby’s final comic book work published during his lifetime.
- **February 6:** Kirby dies at his home in Thousand Oaks, California at age 77.
- **March 4:** Comics Buyer’s Guide #1059 begins coverage of Kirby’s passing, including the first part of a revealing personal recollection by Mark Evanier.
- Dr. Mark Miller starts an industry petition to persuade Marvel Comics to credit Kirby on his creations. His behind-the-scenes discussions with Marvel’s Terry Stewart would play a role in Marvel granting a pension to Jack’s wife Roz in September 1995, which lasted until her death on December 22, 1997.
- **June 18:** Sotheby’s Auction House auctions Kirby cover recreations produced prior to his death.

- **July:** A 9-page excerpt from Kirby's unfinished novel *The Horde* is published in *Galaxy Magazine* #4. To date, two others excerpts have been published: in David Copperfield's anthology *Tales of the Impossible* (1995), and the anthology book *Front Lines* (2008)
- **Summer:** Chrissie Harper publishes *Jack Kirby Quarterly* #1 in the United Kingdom.
- **September:** John Morrow publishes *The Jack Kirby Collector* #1.

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## Key 1970s DC Moments

by [John Morrow](#)

Posted [23 February 2015](#) in [General](#).

*This timeline was first published in [TwoMorrows Publishing's Winter 2013 The Jack Kirby Collector 62](#). Many thanks to John Morrow for allowing us to publish it here. Be sure to read the [Key 1960s Moments](#) timeline, as well. Suggestions or corrections are welcome, please use the comments section below. – Rand*

Continuing our look at key moments in Jack's life and career from TJKC #59 (which covered Marvel in the 1960s), we present this timeline of key moments that affected Kirby's tenure at DC Comics in the 1970s. Of invaluable help were Rand Hoppe, past research by Mark Evanier and Steve Sherman, and of course, the "X" list of Jack's DC production numbers (an updated version is shown elsewhere in this issue).

This isn't a complete list of every important date in Kirby's DC 1970s history, but should hit most of the main ones. Please send us additions and corrections. Next issue, I'll work on pivotal moments in Jack's return to Marvel in the 1970s and beyond.

My rule of thumb: Cover dates were generally two-three months later than the date the book appeared on the stands, and six months ahead of when Kirby was working on the stories, so I've assembled the timeline according to those adjusted dates—not the cover dates—to set it as close as possible to real-time.

## 1967

- Kinney National Company buys DC Comics, and Carmine Infantino is appointed Art Director. He initiates the era of “artist as editor,” bringing new talent and ideas in. Also, editor Jack Schiff retires from DC Comics, opening the door for Kirby to possibly return.

## 1969

- **January:** The Kirby family moves to California, taking a loan from Martin Goodman.
- Mark Evanier and Steve Sherman become acquainted with Kirby through working on Marvelmania projects, and Mike Royer inks his first Kirby piece.
- Kirby meets with Carmine Infantino at a Los Angeles hotel to discuss the possibility of joining DC Comics, and Mort Weisinger retires from DC Comics, removing the last obstacle for Kirby returning.

## 1970

- **January:** Kirby receives a “onerous” contract from Perfect Film to continue working at Marvel Comics, telling him “take it or leave it.”
- **February:** Carmine Infantino signs Kirby to a DC contract.
- **Early March:** Kirby turns in Fantastic Four #102, his final story for Marvel, and resigns. On March 12, Don and Maggie Thompson publish an “Extra” edition of their fanzine Newfangles announcing Kirby is leaving Marvel. That Spring, Mark Evanier and Steve Sherman become Jack's official assistants.
- **May-June:** “The Great One Is Coming!” ad appears in various DC comics, trumpeting “The Boom Tube,” but does not mention Kirby by name.
- **July (September cover date):** The “Stan's Soapbox” in Marvel's comics tells of Jack's resignation from Marvel, and Jimmy Olsen #132's letter column announces

Kirby will start in the following issue.

- **Summer:** “Kirby is coming” blurb appears in various DC comics. Also, Kirby’s three new core books are mentioned (with bullet art) in the 1970 San Diego Comic-Con program book.
- **August (October cover date):** Jimmy Olsen #133 published with Kirby’s first work for DC Comics.
- **October (December cover date):** “The Magic of Kirby” house ads appear in DC comics, heralding the first issues of Forever People, New Gods, and Mister Miracle.
- **November (January 1971 cover date):** Kirby stories in Amazing Adventures #4 and Tower of Shadows #4 published by Marvel, the same month as Jimmy Olsen #135 at DC Comics.
- **December (February 1971 cover date):** Forever People #1 and New Gods #1 published at DC Comics.

## 1971

- **January (March cover date):** Marvel’s Fantastic Four #108 published from Jack’s original rejected FF #102 story, the same month that DC Comics publishes Mister Miracle #1 and Jimmy Olsen #136.
- **January 31:** Kirby and Infantino are interviewed for Comics & Crypt fanzine in the DC offices, during Jack’s trip back to New York City. Around this time, Carmine Infantino is promoted to publisher of DC Comics.
- **May (July cover date):** Lois Lane #111 is published, with a non-Kirby story that used his Fourth World concepts. Also, while drawing the end of Mister Miracle #5, Kirby conceives the idea of Stan Lee as “Funky Flashman” for #6.
- **Mid 1971:** After discovering inker Vince Colletta has been showing Fourth World pages around Marvel’s offices before publication, and being shown how Colletta omits details in the inking, Kirby insists on Mike Royer as inker. Mike starts with New Gods #5, Mister Miracle #5, and Forever People #6.
- **June (August cover date):** DC publishes Super DC Giant S-25, with 1950s reprints of Kirby’s Challengers of the Unknown, and a new cover and text feature by Kirby. Also, Carmine Infantino raises cover prices to 25¢ and includes Golden Age Simon & Kirby reprints in the back of Kirby’s Fourth World issues. One month after matching the increase, Marvel undercuts DC by dropping their cover prices to 20¢.

- **June 15 and July 15:** In The Days of the Mob #1 and Spirit World #1 published, but receive nebulous ads (left) and spotty distribution. Months later, ads for both books would appear in DC comics, offering unsold copies to readers by mail.
- **October:** Kirby draws his final issue of Jimmy Olsen (#148). Around this time, Kirby conjures up the idea for The Demon to replace Jimmy Olsen on his schedule.
- **November (January cover date):** Mister Miracle #6 published, with unflattering caricatures of Stan Lee as “Funky Flashman” and Roy Thomas as “Houseroy,” burning bridges at Marvel.
- **December (February cover date):** New Gods #7 is published, with the pivotal Fourth World story “The Pact.”
- **December:** Carmine Infantino instructs Kirby to add Deadman to Forever People #9-10, in an attempt to boost sales. The covers of Forever People #9 and New Gods #9 downplay the lead characters, in what seems to be an attempt to make the covers look more like mystery titles, which were selling well.

## 1972

- **January (March cover date):** DC runs ads for the Kirby Unleashed portfolio in its comics.
- **February (April cover date):** Jimmy Olsen #148, Kirby’s final issue, is published.
- **March:** Kirby is told by Carmine Infantino that due to under-performing sales, DC will be canceling New Gods and Forever People, and that he must move Mister Miracle away from its Fourth World ties. Kirby hurriedly switches gears and swaps his planned stories for Mister Miracle #9 (“The Mister Miracle To Be”) and #10, so he gets his “Himon” story into print. It’s too late to alter the “next issue” blurb in #8’s letter column (right) to reflect the change.
- **April:** Kirby draws his final issues of New Gods and Forever People.
- **April (June cover date):** Jimmy Olsen #150 is published, with a non-Kirby Newsboy Legion back-up story featuring Angry Charlie.
- **May-June (July-August cover dates):** DC finally gives in to sales pressure, and drops its cover prices to 20¢ to match Marvel Comics.
- **May (July cover date):** Mister Miracle #9 published, with the story “Himon”. Also, Kirby stories planned for the unpublished Spirit World #2 begin appearing in Weird Mystery Tales and Forbidden Tales of Dark Mansion.
- **June:** After Martin Goodman calls in Jack’s 1969 loan, Kirby “under duress” signs



a copyright agreement with Marvel. Also, Demon #1 is published.

- **July (September cover date):** Jimmy Olsen #152 is published, with a non-Kirby wrap-up to the Morgan Edge clone saga, and a guest appearance by Darkseid and other Kirby Olsen characters. Also, Mister Miracle #10 is published, in an abrupt departure from the Fourth World. Jack keeps the title "The Mister Miracle To Be", but the story has nothing to do with Scott Free's early days.
- **August (October cover date):** New Gods #11 and Forever People #11 (the final issues) and Kamandi #1 are published.

## 1973

- **July (September cover date):** Boy Commandos #1 is published, reprinting Golden Age stories.
- **August:** After being notified that Mister Miracle will be cancelled, Kirby draws a final issue that brings back Fourth World characters.
- **September:** Kirby considers returning to Marvel, but can't get out of his DC contract.
- **September (November cover date):** DC begins publishing reprints of Simon & Kirby's Black Magic comics of the 1950s, working with Joe Simon as editor.
- **Fall:** Kirby begins work on OMAC #1 (it wouldn't be published till almost a year later), and Sandman #1, briefly reuniting with Joe Simon.
- **December (February cover date):** Mister Miracle #18, the final issue, is published.

## 1974

- **April:** Kirby starts work on the Losers story in Our Fighting Forces #151, the first of a dozen war stories he would chronicle for that title.
- **May (July cover date):** One story ("Murder Inc.") from the unpublished In The Days Of The Mob #2 appears in Amazing World of DC Comics #1.
- **May 7:** Kirby creates Atlas, who would debut in First Issue Special #1 several months

later.

- **July (September cover date):** OMAC #1 published.
- **September:** Origins of Marvel Comics by Stan Lee is published, featuring Stan's account of the creation of the Fantastic Four, the Hulk, Spider-Man, Thor, and Doctor Strange.

## 1975

- **February (April cover date):** First Issue Special #1 is published, featuring Kirby's Atlas.
- **March 24:** Kirby signs a contract to return to Marvel Comics, but must continue working for DC to finish out his contract with the company.
- **April:** Knowing Jack is leaving, DC brings in Gerry Conway as editor on Kamandi #34 to indoctrinate him to the series, eventually making him full writer/editor on Kamandi #38-40, Jack's last three issues. DC would no longer commission covers by Kirby for any further titles he drew from this point on, undoubtedly to lessen readers' association of Kirby with DC on newsstands.
- **May (July cover date):** Justice Inc. #2 is published, with Kirby art and Denny O'Neil script.
- **June (August cover date):** Richard Dragon, Kung Fu Fighter #3 is published, with Kirby art and Denny O'Neil script. Also, First Issue Special #5 is published, with Kirby's revamped Manhunter, but DC created a cover from Kirby's flopped splash page, rather than commission a new one.
- **July 1975:** First Issue Special #6 is published, featuring the Dingbats of Danger Street #1 story, a year-and-a-half after Kirby drew it. His completed stories for Dingbats #2 and #3 remain unpublished to this day.
- **September (November cover date):** OMAC #8, the final issue, is published, with a reworked last panel bringing the series to an abrupt end, instead of Kirby's planned conclusion to the OMAC #7-8 continued story.
- **October:** Son of Origins of Marvel Comics by Stan Lee is published, giving Stan's accounts of the creation of the X-Men, Iron Man, The Avengers, Daredevil, Nick Fury, the Watcher, and the Silver Surfer.
- **November (January cover date):** Captain America #193 is published, marking

Kirby's return to Marvel.

- **December (February cover date):** Kobra #1 is published by DC, heavily altered, and with an Ernie Chua cover.

## 1976

- **February (April cover date):** First Issue Special #13 (right) is published, a non-Kirby "Return of the New Gods" tryout. No mention of Kirby is made in the New Gods history article. This issue was published concurrently with Kamandi #40, Kirby's final issue and last work for DC in the 1970s. Carmine Infantino is fired as publisher of DC Comics in early 1976, and Jenette Kahn is made publisher. Plans are made to include Kirby's unpublished Sandman #7 story in Kamandi #60, but that title gets cancelled in the "DC Implosion", and Sandman #7 is finally published in The Best of DC #22 (1982).

## 1977

- **April (July cover date):** New Gods #12 published after a review of sales reports by DC's new management of the Kirby issues and First Issue Special #13 showed it was a title worth reviving. The cover is drawn by Al Milgrom in a very Kirbyesque style.

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## Jack Kirby at San Diego Comic-Con 1971

by [Rand Hoppe](#)

Posted [12 January 2015](#) in [General](#).

In 1971, the San Diego Comic-Con was held at Muir College, University of California at

San Diego, in La Jolla, CA. Wikipedia notes there were 800 attendees, and Alex Jay was one of them. Alex took some Kodak Instamatic photos of Jack Kirby's chalk talk, and kindly allowed us to share them.

Here are some close ups and filtered glimpses of the drawings from these photos:



Thanks, Alex! Be sure to check out Alex's blog [Tenth letter of the Alphabet](#)



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Spider-man: The Case For Kirby – by Stan Taylor, 2003

by [Rand Hoppe](#)

Posted [30 December 2014](#) in [General](#).

Yesterday, I [posted on the Museum's home page](#) the sad news that Stan Taylor had passed away on the 18th of December. I thought I'd pay him a little tribute by posting his Spider-man essay here, with thanks to his widow, Annabelle. – Rand

Who created Spider-Man? One of the great comic book fanboy debate topics — utterly fascinating because of the three distinct and passionate personalities involved, each having rabid fans ready to lay waste to any who would deny that their favorite was the true creative genius behind this pivotal character. Ultimately, of course, it's a futile exercise of mental masturbation because we are powerless to do anything about it, even if we could prove it one way or the other. However, not being averse to masturbation, I am going to weigh in with my opinion.

## A LITTLE HISTORY

Jack Kirby has stated clearly time and again that he created Spider-Man, most adamantly in an interview conducted by Will Eisner, and printed in issue #39 of *Will Eisner's Spirit Magazine*. (Kitchen Sink Pub. Feb.1982). Kirby maintained his claim even when close friends and assistants advised him not to pursue it. Can he be believed? Well, his memory was spotty, and he has made other claims that have clearly been shown to be wrong. So as a witness, he leaves room for doubt.

Stan Lee says "all the concepts were mine" (*Village Voice*, Vol.32 #49, Dec. 1987). It is his contention that he singly produced a script, offered it to Jack Kirby, and when he didn't like the look of Kirby's rendition, he then offered it to Steve Ditko. Can he be believed? Not really. Stan would go so far (or stoop so low!) as to claim that a minor character named The Living Eraser from *Tales to Astonish* #49 was his creation. This character, had the dubious distinction of being able to wave people out of existence with a swipe of his hand. "I got a big kick out of it when I dreamed up that idea," Lee is quoted as saying (*Marvel: Five Fabulous Decades of the World's Greatest Comics*, pg. 97). He then further embellishes this tale by stating how hard it was to come up with an explanation for this power. The fact is, this ignoble power and explanation, first appear in a Jack Kirby story from *Black Cat Mystic* #59 (Harvey Publications, Sept. 1957). If Lee will take credit for an obvious minor Kirby creation such as The Living Eraser, which nobody cares about, then he certainly would take credit for another's creation that has become the company's cash cow.

The third person involved with the Spider-Man origin is Steve Ditko, and unfortunately, the little he has said about the creation of Spider-Man doesn't help. His earliest mention simply states "Stan Lee thought the name up. I did costume, web gimmick on wrist & spider signal." (*Steve Ditko-A Portrait Of The Master Comic Fan #2 1965*) 25 years later, when Ditko finally expanded on his role, he made it clear that he had no knowledge of who did what prior to his getting the script from Stan Lee, and then he offered up a weird scenario where in Stan Lee's script, there was a teenager with a magic ring, which transformed him into an adult hero, (*Robin Snyder's History of Comics*) and it was Ditko who noticed the resemblance to Joe Simon's, *The Fly*, and so it was changed into the now familiar spider bite origin.

A small point of interest concerning Ditko's claim that it was he, who recognized a resemblance between the Stan's first script, and *The Fly*. Steve specifically mentioned that he recalled *The Fly* as a product of Joe Simon, but did not connect Jack Kirby with *The Fly*, thus failing to also connect Kirby to Spider-Man. Yet nowhere in *The Fly* is Joe Simon's name ever credited, but the art is easily identifiable as Jack Kirby's. It seems very odd that a man who broke into the industry with the Simon and Kirby studio (even inking over Kirby on *Capt. 3D*) and who had been inking over Jack Kirby the last 2 years, could remember the work of an unlisted editor, but not that of an artist whose work he was most familiar with.

Three stories, with three variations that don't quite connect. Kirby says it was all his, Lee claims it was all his, and Ditko, he says Stan gave him a script based on a Kirby character, that was then changed. Oh what a tangled web we weave. (sorry, couldn't resist)

Another point of interest that may account for some of why the story changes, has to do with how the copyright laws changed in 1976. As a result, all the artists working for Marvel in the 1960s were classified as freelancers, and since they were freelancers, they could possibly make future claims for termination of copyrights for any characters they created. (this is the same law that has allowed the Siegel family to claim partial rights to Superman, and Joe Simon to make a claim for Captain America) One way the companies might protect their claim is by showing that the characters and concepts were created by employees, and supplied to the artists. Since Stan Lee was technically the only employee of the three men involved, suddenly all characters in Marveldom were "his" sole creation, and the artists merely illustrated his tales.

But Spider-Man provided a unique problem, because Stan, in a speech at Vanderbilt College in 1972, related how Kirby had first provided a proposal for Spider-Man. Stan stated that after he looked it over, he had a different idea for the **“look”** of Spidey, and decided that he would offer it to Steve Ditko to draw. He didn't mention any problem with Kirby's concepts and plot. It is in later tellings – post copyright law change- that he would stress that Kirby's proposal, though rejected, were still based his (Stan's) original ideas.

Which brings us to the heart of the debate: Just what did Kirby propose, what was used or rejected, and where did these ideas come from. That first proposal has never surfaced, though Jim Shooter has mentioned seeing it at Marvel in the late '70s. So what we are left with is the personal recollections of two men whose memories are hopeless, one of whom is now dead, and a third who won't talk. The problem here is not that we don't have eyewitness testimony, it's that we have conflicting eyewitness testimony. The people involved disagree.

If we can't rely on first-person testimony, what can we do? I think The Confessor, in Kurt Busiek's **Astro City** said it best, “Look at the facts, look at the patterns, and look for what doesn't fit. Base your deductions on that.”

Criminal detectives have other words for this: evidence, and modus operandi. We can do what historians, detectives, and scientists have always done: ignore the hearsay, mythology, and personal claims and look at the actual physical evidence, in this case, the original comic books, and contemporaneous documentary evidence from unbiased sources. Human behavior is repetitive, we all have our m.o, — our method of operation. It is this human trait that detectives use to narrow down the lists of suspects in any mystery.

It has been said, “an artist is someone who pounds the same nail over and over again.” All artists, graphic or literary, have patterns. They repeat aspects, concepts, a style of punctuation, a brush stroke, lines of musculature, anything that separates their style from the hundreds of others. When trying to identify an unknown artist, one can compare the piece in question with other contemporaneous works to match up these patterns. This method has been used to research everything from Shakespeare's writings to the works of the Great Masters.

Can this be used on comic books? Yes, it can, and has. Martin O’Hearn is a noted comics historian who specializes in the identification of uncredited comic writers. He matches up subject, syntax, punctuation, themes and other identifiable patterns, and has had remarkable success in matching writers to their non-credited stories.

Likewise, Dr. Michael Vassallo, in his never-ending quest to index all Atlas/Timely Publications, spends endless hours comparing drawing and inking styles to identify unaccredited works of comic art. His goal of identifying the unlisted inker on *Fantastic Four* #1 & 2 has led him to amass a veritable mountain of inking examples to compare to the actual comic art. What he doesn’t do is blindly accept personal recollections or corporate identifications at face value. If he did, Dick Ayers or Artie Simek would be incorrectly credited with this work.

So this is how I approached the Spider-Man quandary. Rather than focusing on unprovable statements — by men with obvious agendas — made long after the creation of Spider-Man, I would examine their actual concurrent works to see if I could find a pattern of creation that matched up with the concepts, characters, and plot elements found in *Amazing Fantasy* #15, plus any physical evidence, and testimony from witnesses independent of the three men.

The eyewitness accounts are important, but only if it can be corroborated by the evidence, so where I do refer to a specific quote from Jack, Stan or Steve, it is not as a statement of fact, but rather as a clue that might lead me to some tangible bit of evidence that might lend credence to a claim.

I guess here is as good a time to explain the parameters of my debate. This debate is about which of the three men was most responsible for supplying the character, concepts and the plotting, for the creation known as Spider-Man, as presented in *Amazing Fantasy* #15. All credits for comic book creation derive solely from the first appearance of the character. Events and graphics in issues 2, 3, or 4 on may be important in the evolution of the character, but they have no bearing on creative rights. We are not debating who in history was the first to come up with a concept such as wall crawling, what we are talking about is who most likely supplied that concept for the title Spider-Man. And we are not debating who fleshed out the characters in later issues; we all acknowledge that Lee and Ditko went on to make Spider-Man uniquely identifiable. We also are not debating who drew the first issue,



this was Steve Ditko, and that credit is not in doubt. The debate is who supplied the initial concepts to Marvel for the title and character that became known as Spider-Man.

After tracking down as many Kirby, Ditko, and Lee stories from the previous five years (I didn't want to go too far back; if there was a pattern, it should manifest itself within a short period), I then broke down the characters and plot elements, to see if there were any that matched up with Spider-Man's origin.

These are my findings. In all instances, as to the character and plotting, I was quickly able to find amazing similarities with the work of only one of the three men, Jack Kirby. And in the case of the character, not only did I find amazing pattern matches, I also found what I believe was a written template for Spider-Man that predates *Amazing Fantasy* #15, and leads directly to Jack Kirby. My research also has led me to come to the conclusion that Kirby's connection to Spider-Man extended beyond that first issue.

## THE CHARACTER

The basic concept of Spider-Man is simple, a hero, with the inherent physical powers of a spider- he can crawl up walls, and across ceilings, he has the proportional strength and agility of an arachnid. He has an extra sense that warns him of danger. He manufactures a web shooter that can be used for catching prey, and used as a means of mobility.

I could find no earlier character from either Lee or Ditko that had any resemblance to Spider-Man, none.

As to Jack Kirby, it didn't take long to track down a pattern match for the physical aspects of Spider-Man, the surprising factor is just how similar the two characters are.

The very last costumed super-hero book that Kirby produced, prior to Marvel, featured an insect hero able to climb walls and ceilings; had super strength, the agility of a bug, and, amazingly, an extra sense that warned him of danger. In *The Adventures of the Fly*, (Archie Publications 1959,) Simon and Kirby introduced The Fly, a hero with the exact same insect derived powers that show up in Spidey. In fact, the **only** physical difference is that the Fly can fly. The most interesting aspect for me is

the match-up of a “sixth sense” to warn of danger. While the other powers (wall climbing, etc.) might be considered generic to any insect, this warning sense is, as far as I know, something totally unique and beyond the norm of the natural attributes of insects. The addition of this unnatural extra sense showing up in both creations is just too coincidental.

It's been said that the Devil's in the details, and it's these repeated small details that in my opinion, make the strongest case for Kirby being the concept man.

Does the physical similarity between The Fly and Spider-Man correspond and bolster any specific claims made by the three men?

Jack Kirby, in the interview published in *Spirit Magazine* #39 states that the basis for Spider-Man started with a character called the Silver Spider, an idea first suggested for Simon and Kirby's own publishing house Mainline.

Yet Mainline never published a title called the Silver Spider, and Kirby stating this doesn't make it true. Thanks to Greg Theakston's tenacious research, and the publication of *Pure Images* #1, (Pure Imagination 1990) we finally got a chance to see and compare the original 1954 proposal of Joe Simon's Silver Spider. The interesting thing about Silver Spider is that except for the name Spider in the title, there is absolutely no resemblance between Silver Spider, and Spider-Man. The Silver Spider does not have the inherent powers of a spider- he does not climb walls and ceilings, nor does he have an extra sense that can warn him of danger. (at least not in the original Oleck script, and drawn proposal by C.C. Beck) He did not have a web of any sort.

So at first glance, despite Kirby's claim, there would seem to be no conceptual connection between the Silver Spider, and Spider-Man.

It was Joe Simon who provided the linkage between his Silver Spider, the Fly, and Spider-Man, and just what role Jack Kirby played.

When Archie Publications asked Joe Simon to produce some books for them in 1959, Joe called in Jack Kirby to help out. Joe suggested that they rework his earlier Silver Spider proposal into a character called The Fly. He handed over a file containing the

initial Silver Spider proposal to Jack. The file also contained a rejected working logo, and an editorial memo, by Harvey Publications, rejecting the initial proposal — a memo that would inspire Kirby, and would play a compelling role, when later, Stan Lee would ask Jack for a new character; more on this memo shortly.

According to Joe, in *The Comic Book Makers* (Crestwood Publications, 1990) when Kirby asked him about specific powers for The Fly, Joe told him “Hey, let him walk up buildings, and let him fly if he wants to, it’s a free country. Take it home and pencil it in your immortal style.” Kirby did just this, and the result was The Fly.

Again, Joe saying The Fly evolved out of the Silver Spider proposal doesn’t make it true. It is when we compare the two stories that we see that the Fly’s origin gimmick is consistent with the Silver Spider’s. In both stories, the young protagonist (both named Tommy Troy) is a beleaguered orphan who gains his powers via a mystical ring that transforms him into an adult super hero. Yet the super hero character is different. Where the Silver Spider has no apparent powers except enhanced strength, and a great leaping ability, The Fly has been granted very specific powers; inherent insect abilities, (wall clinging, exceptional agility, a sixth sense and a stinger gun- none of which was in the initial Silver Spider proposal. It is this character evolution, supplied by Jack Kirby, that is the borrowed ingredient that later show up in Spider-Man.

So there is a pattern match that is consistent with Spider-Man and Kirby’s The Fly, and a paper trail that lends credence to Jack Kirby’s claims concerning the Silver Spider connection.

As an aside, Simon had rejected a working title “Spiderman” for his Silver Spider project, and showed a logo to Kirby, leaving little doubt as to which of the three people involved with Spider-Man would have been the one to supply that name

Yet nowhere in either the Fly, or the Silver Spider work up can be found a template for the concept of a web being used as a means of mobility, or as a way of capturing prey. Which brings me to a part of this history that has been overlooked, and in this area lies what I believe to be the only existing contemporaneous written evidence that shows undeniably where the concepts came from, and who brought the basic concept of Spider-Man to Marvel. This is what I consider to be the smoking gun, much like catching the crooks with the blueprint to the bank, and the vault combination.

After Joe Simon submitted his proposal for the Silver Spider to Harvey Publications for acceptance, Leon Harvey handed it over to a young editor by the name of Sid Jacobson for critiquing and approval. In two memos from 1954, addressed to Leon, Sid made it apparent that he was not happy with the proposal. "Strictly old hat" he says, stating that the concept is too generic, with nothing special to set it apart. In the second memo, Sid Jacobson takes the extra step of suggesting just what changes could be done to make this concept more interesting. These memos were in Joe Simon's, Silver Spider file, they were unearthed, and originally published in Greg Theakston's *Pure Images #1 (Pure Imagination, 1990)* Here is the pertinent section of memorandum #2.

## EDITORIAL MEMORANDUM #2

**TO: LEON HARVEY February 23, 1954**

**FROM: SID JACOBSON**

**RE: SILVER SPIDER**

### Conclusions on character:

Physical appearance- The Silver Spider should be thought of as a human spider. All conclusions on his appearance should stem from the attributes of the spider. My first thought of the appearance of a human spider is a tall thin wiry person with long legs and arms. He should have a long bony face, being more sinister than handsome. The face of the Submariner comes to mind.

**Powers: The powers of the human spider should pretty much correspond to the power of a spider.** He therefore wouldn't have the power of flight (*author's note: something hinted at in Simon's proposal*) **but could accomplish great acrobatical tricks, an almost flight, by use of silken ropes that would enable him to swing ala Tarzan, or a Batman. The silken threads that the spider would use might come from a special liquid, from some part of his costume that would become silken threads in much the same way as the spider insect. These threads would also be used in making of a web, which could also be used as a net.** The human spider might also have a "poison" to be used as a paralyzing agent.

Nemesis—His main nemesis should be a natural enemy of a spider—either **The Fly,**

or Mr. D.D.T.....

-end of memo-

**There is no ambiguity, vagueness, or doubt; Sid Jacobson suggested that for the Silver Spider to work, it would have to become what we recognize as Spider-Man!**

It appears as if Jack took some of Jacobson's suggestion to heart when he cobbled together the character of The Fly, for he added the detail of inherent insect attributes, but his first specific use of the Spider motif shows up with the creation of The Fly's arch nemesis. In an interesting reversal of Jacobson's suggestion of "natural enemies", Spider Spry, from *Adventures Of The Fly #1* would have those long bony arms and legs, though Kirby gave him a bulbous head and torso. (more spider like) He easily walked up thin silken lines, and traps the Fly in a web-like net, and wears a colorful costume complete with a spider icon. More on this character later

Move forward three years, when Goodman decided to go the super-hero route; Kirby is asked to come up with another character, and now the parallels between the Spider-Man creation and the Jacobson memo become undeniable.

Spider-Man would have the natural instincts and powers of a spider; he could walk up walls, and ceilings. He would have the proportional strength, and agility of an arachnid. And more importantly, he could emit a silken thread that he could walk across, or use as a swing. His webbing, a synthesized liquid, which emanated from his costume, was also adaptable as a net in which to ensnare villains, all of this totally identical with the Jacobson memo.

The addition of the extra sense that warns of impending danger, first seen in the Fly, seems to have been an original Kirby item, since it was not present in either the Silver Spider proposal, or mentioned in the Jacobson memo

Evidence, and m.o.; a series of continuing pattern matches, plus a paper trail that leads directly to only Jack Kirby. What are the odds that Stan Lee, working alone, or in collaboration with Ditko, would come up with exactly the same title, the same set of powers and the same weapon?

Some may imply that if all Kirby did was rework a Simon project, shouldn't Simon get the credit? To some extent I agree, but as I have shown, every facet of Spider-Man's character, that matches up with The Fly, is an element that Kirby worked on or added to the Fly—nothing was taken from the Silver Spider except the original title, and that had been rejected by Simon. Simon, on his own, had never used the logo, or acted on Jacobson's suggestions. Simon and Kirby was a partnership, when they broke up, all unused concepts were free game. But in any history of Spider-Man's creation, in my opinion, both Joe Simon and Sid Jacobson certainly deserve a large footnote.

Try as I might, I couldn't find any prior Lee or Ditko tales that might have been a template for the character of Spider-Man. None. Lee's oft quoted statement that he had a long fascination with the pulp hero The Spider, may be true, but there are absolutely no resemblance in either origin, weapons, or powers between the two characters.

Ditko, for his part has acknowledged that the original concept was similar to The Fly, yet he says it was rejected, and changed because it was **too** identical to the Fly. So I tried to see where they might have changed the character. Try as I might, I could find nothing significantly different between the Fly and Spider-Man. Every unique power that Spidey possesses first shows up in the Fly. Why, if they recognized the similarity between the Fly and Spider-Man, didn't Stan and Steve make some changes?

There are some specific detail differences, however, in these similar powers: The Fly's super strength is never explained, it's just a given. Spider-Man's is specifically described as the "proportional strength" of a spider — a rather unique concept, (and surprisingly never used by any other insect inspired hero, i.e. Blue Beetle, Green Hornet, Tarantula ) and specific enough for me to try to track down to see if this might be an addition attributable to Lee or Ditko. But again, the only example I could find of any one of these three men giving a character the proportional strength of a bug prior to the creation of Spider-Man is found in a Kirby story. In ***Black Cat Mystic*** #60 (Harvey Publications, 1957), in a story entitled "The Ant Extract," a meek scientist discovers a serum that gives him the proportional strength of an ant. Because of his new power, the scientist is feared and ostracized by authorities. (sounds vaguely familiar) Another small, but novel detail, that shows the evolution of the concept, and is traceable to Jack Kirby.

The mechanical weapon as first created by Kirby has been described by Steve Ditko as a web-shooting gun, and later modified by Ditko into a wrist-mounted web shooter. Again, not taking this quote as fact, my research found that the only pattern match to a costume emanated webbing, is found in the Jacobson memo that Kirby had.

There is another questionable aspect to Steve's memory concerning the "web gun". In Steve's article "An Insider's Part of Comic History" from *Robin Snyder's History of Comics* (Vol. 1 #5 1990) he states, "Kirby's Spider-Man had a web gun, never seen in use." Steve then goes on to describe what he remembers of the 5 page Kirby proposal. He says that the splash page was a "typical Kirby hero/action shot", and the other four pages are an intro, involving a teenager and a mysterious scientist neighbor. Nowhere in the five pages are Spidey's, powers and weapons ever shown or described, in fact, according to Ditko, there was no transformation into the hero at all. If this is true, then how does Steve know that he had a "web gun", by his own words it was never shown or used?

Perhaps Kirby provided some design sketches or spot illos, but that would be in dispute with Ditko's previous statement that the 5 pages were all he received of Kirby's, Spidey proposal. Either way, the wrist shooter is a wonderful modification and a stroke of genius, but it is still just a modification—the actual idea of a mechanical web shooter, even by Ditko's account, was Kirby's.

In review: every unique physical aspect of the character we know as Spider-Man can be traced back to only one of the three men involved, Jack Kirby. Not only amazingly exact pattern matches, but also a written blueprint that only Kirby had seen. Evidence, and modus operandi. If the concept of Spider-Man was all that Kirby supplied, he deserves co-creator credits, but it doesn't end there.

The next character is Peter Parker, and while he is Spider-Man, the role of the alter-ego is to present a sometimes opposing character to the heroes. It is this dichotomy that helps create tension and oftentimes humor. It is this aspect that keeps the hero and the story grounded in some semblance of reality.

Peter's character is portrayed as a nerdy, wallflower science whiz. Taunted by his peers for his lack of athletic prowess and social skills. He is rejected by the opposite

sex.

Again after comparing the recent works of the three men, I was able to find a pattern match with only one of them, Jack Kirby.

In the late '50s, Kirby was looking for work, his comic book work had dwindled and he thought of getting into the syndicated strips. One of the strips he proposed was titled **CHIP HARDY**. Chip was a college freshman on a science scholarship. A regular 'boy wonder' taunted the other kids. Moose Mulligan, the campus jock, teased young Chip about why he didn't try out for football, instead of "hiding behind a mess of test tubes". Other students followed suit and mocked the youngster, labeling all science majors as "squares". Eventually, this taunting escalated into a physical confrontation between Moose and Hardy, with young Chip getting the better of it, mimicking exactly the character template and early relationship between Peter Parker, Flash Thompson, and the other school mates. While this strip was never published, Greg Theakston has published a few panels in the back of **The Complete Sky Masters of the Space Force**. (Pure Imagination, 2000)

Another amazing pattern match is to be found in **Tales To Astonish #22**, (Marvel Pub. Aug. 1961) in a tale titled "I Dared to Battle the Crawling Monster", one of the many Kirby/Ayers monster stories, possibly dialogued by Larry Lieber. (unsigned by Lee)

The hero is a high school student, a dorky, bookwormish sort, laughed at by the jocks for his lack of athletic ability, and taunted by the girls. Typically, by the end of the story, it is the bookworm, not the jock who saves the world. Even the visuals of the lead character strongly resemble the Peter Parker character as shown in AF#15.

As to Stan Lee and Steve Ditko, I could not find any earlier templates for the harassed, teen-age, academic style hero. None, and this, frankly surprised me.

There is one aspect of Peter Parker that was consistent to Stan Lee, and that is Peter's personality. Besides being a science geek, (complete with pocket protector) Peter is shown to be somewhat angst-ridden; doubting of his own worth and unable to fit easily into society. His uneasiness with his new- found powers is atypical of Kirby's heroes. This inner conflict, and sometimes, outer rage is pure Lee, it is this deeper



human psychological aspect that Lee imbued into all of Marvel's heroes. It is the difference between Ben Grimm of the Fantastic Four, and Rocky Davis of the Challengers of the Unknown.

The villain of AF#15 is a colorless petty crook who has assaulted Spider-Man's guardian-his uncle. His sole purpose is to create the crisis, which forces the hero into action. This match up is also found in the Fly's origin. The Fly's first use of his powers is to bring to justice, a petty crook who had assaulted Tommy's guardian. This was both characters' sole appearance.

As to the characters, are my findings beyond the norm at Marvel at the time? I don't think so. That Kirby constantly evolved and morphed characters and concepts is not an astounding statement. His whole history at Marvel is filled with his taking prior concepts and reworking them to meet current needs.

***Fantastic Four*** was just an evolution of Kirby's team concept first shown in the *Challengers of the Unknown*, then transformed into a slightly different version for *Sky Masters of the Space Force*, and further refined in *Three Rocketeers*.

The Hulk is just another retelling of the radiation mutated beast story, first done by Jack in Blue Bolt in 1940, with the added in element about saving a young kid from a test blast taken directly from a Sky Masters story.

And Thor is nothing more than an updated version of the "god comes to Earth in times of need" theme, first done by Kirby in Hurricane. (Red Raven #1, Timely 1940) Added to a character, and plot gimmick from a recent Kirby drawn story, "The Magic Hammer". (Tales of the Unexpected#16, DC Pub. Aug. 1957)

That Stan Lee would take these stock Kirby characters and give them distinct personalities, foibles, and conflicts, soap opera style melodramatic continuities, and hip dialogue is also not really in doubt.

That the character of Spider-Man as originally created was a Kirby concept is to me irrefutable, even without the Jacobson memos the patterns are obvious, with the letters it's undeniable. There is also strong evidence that, the templates for Peter Parker's maligned science whiz character, and some of the supporting cast was

supplied by Jack Kirby.

The coincidences needed for Stan Lee or Steve Ditko to have come up with these exact elements, absent Jack Kirby, are astronomical. If this was all that Kirby provided to Stan Lee, he would deserve credit, but there is more to creating a character: One must also come up with a story line that showcases the new character, and it is here that the coincidences become positively mind boggling.

## THE PLOT

The plot of *Amazing Fantasy #15* is simple, yet unique: An orphaned teenage boy receives super-powers during a scientific experiment. After gaining his powers, a loved one is killed due to his inaction. This remorse leads him to vow to never let it happen again, thus becoming a hero.

Again, after cross checking stories by these three men, it became obvious that in structure and theme, the basic plot for Spidey's origin came from one of the three persons involved: Jack Kirby.

The first plot element has to do with an orphaned, older teenager, who gets super powers via a scientific experiment, and this is intriguing. Even though I tried to approach this in an entirely objective manner, I still had some preconceived notions of both Kirby's and Ditko's proclivities. Many of these were shattered by my actual findings. One of these was that it was Ditko's nature to use older troubled teenagers for his heroes, while it was Kirby's nature to use younger kids.

So strong is Ditko's aura surrounding Spider-Man that I just assumed that it was a Ditko trait, but I was not able to track down a single use of older orphaned teenagers, troubled or not, by Steve prior to Spidey.

What shocked me was how easy it was to find the template for the orphaned older teenaged hero, and a title that would provide key elements in piecing together the puzzle. Surprisingly, it was in a title by Jack Kirby.

In *The Double Life of Private Strong* (Archie Publications 1959) (not coincidentally the companion title to *The Fly*) the hero, Lancelot Strong, aka The Shield, is an orphaned

high school senior, and like Spider-Man, his surrogate parents were gentle, compassionate, and supportive. His powers were the result of a scientific experiment.

Around this same time, Kirby was also working on the proposed newspaper strip, Chip Hardy, with a teen-aged science whiz hero. In fact, from about 1959 on, just about all of Kirby's youthful heroes would be older teenagers, and most orphaned. Johnny Storm, Rick Jones (both predating Peter Parker) and the X-Men all fit into this mold.

I could find nothing that matched in Ditko's, or Lee's, (sans Kirby) recent past.

The next element is very important: After gaining his powers, the hero loses a loved one due to his inaction, thus providing the impetus for becoming a hero. This may be the critical element that separates Spider-Man from almost all other heroes- and it's right there in *The Double Life of Private Strong*. While rushing off to test his newfound powers against a rampaging alien monster, The Shield, (Lancelot Strong), in his teen exuberance, ignores and leaves his best friend Spud in harms way. After defeating the brute, the Shield returns to celebrate his triumph only to learn that the monster has killed Spud. The distraught Shield blames himself, and vows that it will never happen again. Similarly, Spider-man, in a moment of conceit and arrogance, ignores a thief, only to learn that that same thief would go on to kill his Uncle, which in turn, spurs him into action. He then vows that it will never happen again

So in one book, done less than three years before Spider-Man, Kirby used most of the critical plot elements that would show up a few years later in Spider-Man. Certainly Spider-Man's is more melodramatic as one would expect from Stan's dialogue, but the basic plot mirrors Private Strong. The panels where the boys mourn the loss of their loved ones are almost eerie in their similarities.

So going by pattern matches, it appears we have the hero and villain from the Fly combined with the origin outline of the Shield.

This cross-pollination of a character from one story, and a plot from another is classic Kirby. He had touches of genius, but during the late 1950's to mid-sixties, his characters and plots were interchangeable. His storytelling was very formulaic. He had archetypal heroes, a small list of stock villains, and, a set selection of plots. He mixed and matched these regardless of genres. His approach to comics was sort of a

Chinese take-out menu, one from column A and one from column B. Nothing became more apparent during my research. In legal lingo, Kirby was a chronic repeat offender. Kirby's touches are repetitive and easily identifiable. This realization led to one of the more unexpected findings. It appears that Kirby did not cross match the Fly and the Shield one time; he did it twice, and both simultaneously. This pattern can also be found on the Mighty Thor

For Spider-Man, Kirby took the basic character traits (insect), and the villain (petty crook) from the Fly, and the origin gimmick (scientific, older teen), and the dramatic ending (mourning a lost friend) from the Shield.

For Thor, Kirby reversed himself, taking the origin element, (finding of a mystical artifact) and ending, (transformation back to hapless human) from the Fly, and the villain (rampaging aliens) from the Shield, plus adding in a hero from an earlier DC fantasy story. (Tales of the Unexpected #16)

Thor, and Spider-Man appeared on the stands simultaneously. Thor had the earlier story number.

Facts, and patterns says the Confessor, plus look for what doesn't fit.

Stan Lee and Steve Ditko say they rejected the original plot because of its similarity to The Fly, and created their own. The idea that they would reject one Kirby plot and then replace it with another Kirby plot makes no sense, it simply doesn't fit. These two men had their own influences and patterns, and if they were to sit down and come up with an original origin, it would not have mirrored a recent Kirby plot, especially if they were specifically looking to **avoid** the appearance of a Kirby plot. It appears that Stan and Steve took Kirby's plot, added in Peter's personality, some of the supporting cast, and maybe the details involving the wrestler and show business, but the basic plot was all Kirby.

Is this use of a Kirby plot, in a book not drawn by Kirby, unusual for Marvel at the time? No! Iron Man's origin, from *Tales Of Suspense* #39, uses a Kirby plot, first seen in a Green Arrow story from 1959. ("The War That Never Ended", Adventure Comics 255) In both stories the hero is captured by an oriental army, and because of his specialty in weaponry, is forced to manufacture a weapon. The hero tricks his captors and creates

a weapon that backfires on the enemy and foils their plans.) Yet Don Heck provided the artwork for Iron Man's first adventure.

Similarly, the origin of Dr. Strange is a reworking of the origin of Dr. Droom from *Amazing Adventures #1*. (Atlas Pub. June 1961). In both stories an American medical doctor goes to Tibet, and after a series of tests, receives mystical powers from an ancient mage.

The idea that Kirby would plot the origin of a new character is the rule at Marvel in the early '60s. It would actually be an anomaly if Kirby **"hadn't"** provided the origin.

Again, I can't remember another instance where comic historians have denied credit to the person who supplied the origin sequence.

But it doesn't stop there, for while I was cross-referencing the plots to see if any matched up with *AF #15*, I noticed another striking coincidence, and this staggered me! Not only does it appear that Kirby provided the plot for *AF #15*, it appears that he also assisted in plotting some of the following Spidey stories. The second and third Spider-Man stories have plot elements taken directly from the second and third *Private Strong* stories. That's correct; the first three Spidey stories mirror the first three Shield stories.

The second Shield story involves the hero tracking down a Communist spy attempting to steal scientific secrets; the villain tries to escape in a submarine that the hero has to put out of action. This is also the plot of the Chameleon story, in *Amazing Spider-Man #1*

The villain as a master of disguise was used by Jack Kirby in the first, second, or third story of just about every series he did between 1956 and 1963. (I mentioned he was predictable) It is found in his first Green Arrow story, (*Green Arrows of the World*, *Adventure Comics #250*, DC Pub. 1958) the second Yellow Claw story, (*The Mystery of Cabin 361*, *Yellow Claw #2*, Marvel 1958) the third Dr. Droom tale,

(*Doctor Droom Meets Zemu*, *Amazing Adventures #2*, Marvel 1961), the second *Fantastic Four* story, the second *Ant-Man* story, and the third *Thor* story, all preceding *AS#1*. The specific element of a villain impersonating a hero in order to infiltrate,

and/or incriminate him in a crime is one that Kirby used often. Prior to *Amazing Spider-Man #1*, it can be found in *Fighting American*, (Three Coins in the Pushcart, *Fighting American #7*, Prize Comics, 1954) *Green Arrow*, (*Adventure Comics #250*) and most recently in *Fantastic Four #2*. This theme would also be used in the test appearance of Captain America in *Strange Tales #114*.

In the third *Shield*, and *Spider-Man* stories, we are introduced to the recurring pain-in-the-ass authority figure/ nemesis – the one who always gets hoisted on his own petard. A Kirby icon, dating back to *Captain America*. In both stories the adult child of that authority figure gets into a jam and needs the costumed hero to save him or her. In the *Shield*'s case, it's the daughter of the general in charge of the base he is assigned to after being drafted. After she gets trapped in a runaway tank, the *Shield* must save her. In *Spider-Man*'s story, it's the son of the editor of the newspaper who hires Peter Parker, and he is trapped in a runaway space capsule that *Spider-Man* must rescue. Even after saving their offspring, neither of the authoritarian figures considers the hero a particularly positive force, and both think the alter ego character is a bumbling idiot. In between the *Shield*, and *Spider-Man*, Kirby also used this gimmick in the *Hulk*.

What are the odds, if Kirby didn't assist on the plots, that the first three *Spider-Man* stories would mirror the first three *Shield* stories? Wouldn't one think that Stan Lee, and Steve Ditko would have their own plotting patterns? Astoundingly, the second issue of *Amazing Spider-Man* continues in this same vein.

The *Vulture* story from *AS#2* is interesting because not only does it have plot elements from an earlier Kirby story, the bad guy is an exact duplicate of the villain from that same Kirby story. In the first *Manhunter* story, (*Adventure Comics #73*, DC Pub. 1942) Kirby introduced *The Buzzard*, who, in an uncanny parallel to the *Vulture*, is a skinny, stoop shouldered, hump-backed, beak nosed maniac, dressed in a green body suit with a feathered collar that encircles the neck. Both men have the power of flight, the *Buzzard* by flapping his cape, and the *Vulture* via mechanical wings, and a magnetic unit.

Both men's schtick is to openly challenge the authorities and the media by boasting of their evil plans before they commit them. The *Buzzard* goes so far as to actually kill a reporter to deliver his message; the *Vulture* (in post code times) simply throws a rock

through J. Jonah's window.

The Tinkerer story in AS#2, has a very interesting hook, a plot element where a radio is doctored and infiltrated into scientists and government officials' houses in order to spy and/or control them. This is not some generic scheme, but a very detailed and specific plot element used by Jack Kirby several times. The earliest use is in *Captain America #7*, (Marvel Pub. Oct. 1941) in a story titled "Horror Plays the Scales". Kirby again used this element in a crime story from *Headline Comics#24*, (Prize Pub. May 1947) titled "Murder on a Wavelength".

The alien aspect of this Spidey story appears adapted from a Kirby, Dr. Droom story. In his third story, (Doctor Droom Meets Zemu, *Amazing Adventures #3*, Marvel 1961) Droom is following a suspicious character and overhears a plan by aliens in which one will infiltrate humanity and lay the groundwork for an alien invasion. Spider-Man's capture and escape method seem to be lifted from a *Challengers of the Unknown* story. (The Human Pets, *Challengers of the Unknown #3*, DC Pub. 1958)

I could find no matching plots from Lee or Ditko. All of these stories are structured in typical Kirby style, with little characterization, all out action endings, devoid of any of the subtlety, pathos, or irony usually associated with Lee/Ditko offerings.

And it goes on this way for a few more stories. This similar plotting sequence is a lot like DNA testing, one or two match-ups doesn't mean a thing, but the odds increase exponentially with each added matched item.

It's a good time for me to mention something I call "Kirby's silly science." As identifiable as fingerprints, we all recognize it: scientific plot elements so ridiculous in their implausibility, yet so exciting visually, and conceptually, that it's immediately acceptable. Mr. Fantastic, reaching up and catching a nuclear tipped Hunter missile in full flight, and throwing it miles away into the bay. The Submariner; in the freezing void of space, leapfrogging, from meteorite to meteorite, only to land on Dr. Doom's spaceship, unstable molecules, and such.

The early Spider-Man stories were full of this pseudo-scientific stuff. In the story involving J. Jonah Jameson's son trapped in the space capsule, we first see NASA trying to snare the disabled capsule in a net suspended from a parachute, when this fails,

Spider-Man, straddling a jet, snares the space capsule with his web and rides it like a bucking bronco, completely overlooking the fact that space capsules orbit far above the range of a jet, and the extreme heat generated during re-entry would fry a human being, even one with Spider powers.

This feels like Kirby's silly science to me; in fact, it is reminiscent of a scene in *Sky Masters* where they try to rescue an errant space capsule with a hook attached to a jet, combined with a satellite repair story, also found in *Sky Masters*.

Another facet of Kirby's silly science, and plotting pattern, is the anti-climactic ending, where the scientist hero, in one panel, whips up some bit of gadgetry that defeats a villain who has been beating his brains out for the previous 15 pages.

*Challengers of the Unknown's* Professor Haley was good at these instant cures, and the FF's Reed Richards was the master, but early on, Peter Parker stood toe to toe with them. In the first Vulture story, from *Amazing Spider-Man #2*, after getting his hat handed to him, Peter Parker, based on nothing but a hunch, theorizes that the Vulture's powers must be magnetic and whips up, in one panel, an anti-magnetic device with his handy dandy screwdriver. How Kirbyish can you get? Similar elements occur in the first Doc Ock, (a super acid) and the first Lizard story. (an antidote) This kid was good!

Compare this to the atmospheric, cerebral, and quietly ironic solutions and climaxes that Lee and Ditko specialized in on their sci-fi/horror tales of this period. This *deus ex machina* style ending is not part of their repertoire, it simply doesn't fit.

To Kirby, scientists were scientists; he made no real distinction between the disciplines. In one story the hero was a physicist, the next a chemist, perhaps a biologist or a metallurgist, whatever was needed for the story. Hank Pym, aka Ant-Man, was equal part entomologist, chemist, cybernetician, and machinist. Reed Richards was master of all sciences, and Peter Parker, though a high school student, was equally as versatile. After receiving the spider powers, this kid went home and with his Mr. Wizard Home Chemistry Lab created a formula for a web, and the means to propel it. Then in the Vulture story he suddenly becomes a physics master, and invents an anti-magnetic device. In the Tinkerer tale, he is assisting an electronics genius, and up against the Lizard, Peter's become an expert in serums and antidotes.



This boy was truly amazing! It's a shame he gave all that scientific ability up to become a news photographer. Kirby's handiwork is all over the early stories.

Thankfully, these pseudo-science elements soon ended, and I'm thinking it happened when Jack stopped assisting Stan on Spider-Man plots, and Ditko took over.

So it seems clear that Kirby's participation with Spider-Man extended further than just a rejected proposal. It appears that he not only created the character, he also assisted greatly in the origin and early story lines and added many early plot elements.

Again, is this out of character? No. Kirby helped Stan with the plotting of several characters even when not specifically drawing them. The plot to the origin of Iron Man, several of the early Thor stories, and some of the Torch stories from Strange Tales, not drawn by Kirby, have unmistakable Kirby supplied villains, plots, and dramatic elements. Daredevil showed some early Kirby involvement. Why wouldn't Kirby assist Stan on Spider-Man? The early Marvel titles and characters were never considered private domains. Stan certainly had no compunction about Kirby doing the first 2 covers, or a back up story.

This brings me to a facet of Spider-Man I hadn't mention before.

## **THE COSTUME**

In all my debates concerning Ditko and Kirby, I had always assumed that when Kirby claimed he designed the costume, he was in error; in fact, this was always a sticking point with me. Recently, though, I have had reasons to wonder about that claim.

This particular debate point does not emanate from Kirby's period of dissatisfaction with Marvel or Stan Lee. In that speech at Vanderbilt in 1972, Stan relates how during the late '60s, when asked, he could never remember who designed Spidey's costume. He wasn't sure if it was Jack or Steve. It was common for Kirby to design costumes for other artists' characters, such as Iron Man for Don Heck. Heck is on record as saying that Kirby also designed many of the villains that appeared in Heck drawn books.

Then, there is this little quote from *Foom Magazine* #11, 1975. In the middle of an article about Kirby's return to Marvel after his brief layover at DC, the author states, "It's

not generally known that it was Jack Kirby who designed Spider-Man's costume." This isn't in a fanzine, it's not a quote from an interview with Kirby, and it's not in a reference book, it's right there in an in-house publication of Marvel's.

As with all quotes, I can't guarantee it's accuracy, but it seems that at least at that time (1975) the feeling at Marvel was that Kirby had designed the costume, and as mentioned earlier, Jim Shooter says the Kirby proposal was still around at that time.

Unlike the match between the Vulture, and the Buzzard, there is no direct similarity between Spider-Man's costume, and any drawn previously by Ditko or Kirby. Yet there are some design patterns that do match up with earlier design work. If one places a drawing of Fighting American, (a Kirby hero) next to one of Spidey, and erases all of the small decorative details, leaving only the outline of the costume, a curious pattern emerges. Both characters have a dark color top, dissected in the front by a brighter colored midsection that begins narrow at the waist, and expands upward to the shoulders, where it then turns and runs down the arms, slicing the sleeves into two separate sections that ends at the gloves. On the back of the costumes, this two-color pattern continues back up the sleeves, and cuts across the shoulder blades. The facemasks both show a bold design around the eyes that sweep up and back.

Another small but aggravating item: Spider-Man has always been drawn with a strange looking spider icon on his back. Fact is, it doesn't look like a spider so much as a tick or other small single-bodied insect. The spider drawn on the front of Spidey's costume is much more accurate, showing a double sectioned body with the legs coming out of the torso section. Why would Ditko use such a different and inaccurate icon for the back of the costume? I can't answer that question, but the spider on the back of the costume is remarkably similar to the spider icon that appears on the Kirby designed character Spider Spry from the Fly series. (yes, him again) What are the chances that two separate, and unique artists would choose such a similar, yet inaccurate depiction of a spider for a costume decoration?

For those that think I might be purposely ignoring elements that point to Ditko let me say that there **ARE** several design aspects that shout out Ditko.

First, the circular design with the webs radiating out from the center as seen in Spidey's mask and the spider signal can be traced back to a cover sidebar used on

the Charlton, horror/fantasy titles in 1958. While I have no proof that Ditko designed that sidebar, he certainly would have been familiar with it.

Secondly, and most convincing is something that was pointed out by the ever observant Simon Russell, from the kirby-l e-list. He observed that Steve Ditko rarely ever gave his characters visible belts and trunks, while Kirby always did. Is this born out by comparison? Very definitely!!

Most of Ditko's early characters especially showed this trait. Captain Atom, Spider-Man, Vulture, Mysterio, and Kraven all have one-piece leggings unbroken by any hint of separate shorts. Kirby, on the other hand almost always gave his characters belts and shorts.

None of this is very convincing, so I looked to see if Kirby's and Ditko's words offered a clue, and if their memories stand up to actual research.

In his 1990 article, Steve Ditko says that he gave Spider-Man a full, facemask in order to hide Peter Parker's boyish face, and to add mystery. This sounds quite logical, and it's hard to prove or disprove, but, based on comparison, the idea of a full facemask is not in itself an identifiable pattern.

Kirby's first hero, The Lone Rider, had a full, facemask, as did Manhunter from 1942. Iron Man, Black Panther, and Mister Miracle, etc. would follow. Many of Kirby's villains had full, facemasks, the Red Skull and Dr. Doom chief among these.

On the other hand, Ditko's Captain Atom, Dr. Strange, the Blue Beetle, all had half masks, or none at all. In fact, on Ditko's other young super-heroes like the Hawk and Dove, he does not give them full facemasks, so the idea of a full covering mask is not a telltale pattern with either man.

Also from Ditko's 1990 article, he states when he was designing the costume, he had to match the costume to the powers. "For example; a clinging power, so he wouldn't have hard soles or boots..."

In the Pure Images #1 article, he expands "... and since the character crawled walls, no soles were added to his feet." Later Greg Theakston adds, "Ditko felt that hard soles

on the boots wouldn't be appropriate to a wall walking hero, and Kirby always draws the hard soles."

These are interesting looks into how individual artists approach a creation, but in this specific case they are wrong factually, and conceptually.

Just 2 years earlier, Kirby had created a spidery character that was extremely agile, and could easily walk up silken lines. Spider Spry, of Fly fame, had "soft soled" booties that facilitated climbing. Looking at the actual record, it appears that Kirby almost always gave his nimble, agile type characters flexible footwear that would facilitate climbing and gripping. Besides Spider Spry; Toad, Cobra, and the Beast all had either soft soled shoes, or bare feet. Which brings me to my next observation.

Besides being wrong about Kirby's tendencies, Ditko is wrong even as to his own design choices, for in the first 3 Spider-Man stories, Spidey **IS** shown with hard soles on his feet, in fact rippled style hard soles similar to those found on the Fly..

It may well be that sometime after the first 3 stories were done, Ditko decided that a crawling hero didn't need hard soles, and so he changed them, but why claim that it was done specifically to differentiate between his and Kirby's design choices? Unless the first 3 issues were somewhat based on Kirby's designs.

So the few details that Ditko has provided don't really help, in fact, they raise more questions since some are contradicted by actual comparison.

What about Kirby's recollections?

Kirby has never, in my research, listed any specific details when he talked about "creating" the costume, but, thanks to Mike Gartland, (a frequent Kirby chronicler) I was able to track down an early unwitting mention.

In Excelsior #1, a fanzine from 1968, Kirby is being interviewed.

The writer asks, "Did you draw the Vision? If you did, do you remember the powers that he possessed, and could you tell us of these powers?"

Kirby responds, "I created the Vision as a feature of Marvel (Timely) comics. He was the forerunner of the *SPIDER-MAN* and Silver Surfer Eye. (Eds. Note: The huge pupil-less eyeballs both heroes possess.) If I remember correctly, his powers were of a mystic nature."

So once again, we have Kirby, in this case unexpectedly, supplying a small detail concerning Spider-Man that is backed up by comparison, for the Vision, a mysterious hero from another plane did have white blank eyes.

He certainly wasn't saying that Steve Ditko used the opaque eyes based upon Kirby's earlier use of them with the Vision. This was in 1968, long before the debates about Spider-Man began. Why would Kirby offer up such an unsolicited tidbit while responding to a question about a totally different character if it wasn't true?

Ditko, to my knowledge has never mentioned where the idea for the opaque eyes came from.

This Kirby quote; on its own, doesn't prove anything, but it does add to the strange conflicting nature of the debate.

Lastly, it's been mentioned that Kirby could never draw the Spider-Man costume correctly, which would be strange if he created it. This sounds plausible, but the fact is that Kirby did not draw Spider-Man all that much, and Kirby could never keep the details of any of his costumes straight. His inkers would spend hours making corrections on the costumes. Kirby was a penciller by nature, and little details such as the curl of a spider web was a detail that wasn't important in the pencilling stage, it was simply hinted at. He had the same problem with Fighting American's stripes and wing chest pattern, never getting it the same way twice. Look at the early issues of Thor, and note the costume differences.

By the way, Ditko had the same problem, he could never decide if the webbing detail on the costume curled up, or down. He sometimes had them going both directions on the same drawing, and, check out how different the spider icons on the costume front appear even in the same story.

All of these are fairly circumstantial, and if I was a betting man, I would guess that

Spidey's costume is a hybrid, mostly Ditko, with some Kirby bits taken from Kirby's original proposal.

## CONCLUSIONS

So much for my actual research, now let me speculate a little further. Here is how I think it went down.

In mid-1961, Martin Goodman noticed that the sales of the Atlas monster books were slowing down, and while looking for a replacement genre, he realized that DC seemed to be having some success with super-heroes. He decided that Marvel should take a hesitant step in that direction, and either he or Stan Lee talked to Jack Kirby, who had a 20-year history of creating super-heroes. They decided on a team concept with a twist, the characters would not always get along. Kirby went home and cobbled together a story using parts of his last 2 team series, the *Challengers of the Unknown*, and his recent syndicated strip *Sky Masters of the Space Force*, and he presented it to Stan Lee. Stan added in the personalities, the background details, the speech patterns, and Fantastic Four was born.

Seeing that the FF was selling but still a little wary of jumping full bore into the super-hero market, Stan next talked with Jack about using an Atlas-style monster as a hero. So Kirby went home, matched together an Atlas monster with a *Sky Masters* plot element dealing with a scientist saving a kid from a rocket blast, threw in his radiation-caused mutation concept he had used since Blue Bolt days, and you have the Hulk. Again Stan added in the soap opera, the personalities, the linear continuity, and the human aspects he specialized in.

Martin, seeing that both series were selling, decided to go balls to the wall into the super-hero genre, complete with costumes, secret identities, and all the trappings. Stan again went to Jack and asked him if he had any other concepts lying around. Kirby, doing just as he had with the FF – went back to the last two pure super-hero series he had worked on, took the character aspects from the Fly, plus elements suggested by Jacobson, mixed it in with the plot from the Shield, used the original title from the unused Simon proposal, et voila! Spider-Man!

It is possible, in fact probable, that when Kirby presented this proposal to Lee, Stan

had some reservations because his vision of the character was a little different. It didn't matter because Kirby wasn't scheduled to draw this feature anyway—Stan, and the new artist could make the changes. They could flesh out, and add their own take on the characters—Kirby was too busy: He was drawing the FF and the Hulk full time, and besides Spider-Man, he had simultaneously worked up Thor. (using the same source material)

All this fits in with the very first account of how Spider-Man came to be. Remember, Stan said that Kirby was too busy and he (Lee) chose Steve Ditko to draw the feature after the concepts were done, and it fits in with Ditko's first recollections. But does this fit in with what we know about how Marvel worked in the early 1960s?

I think it does. Marvel had a *modus operandi* also. Evidence shows that Kirby helped out on just about every new project, even the ones he didn't draw. (origin plot, and costume design for Iron Man, splash page, cover and plot elements for Daredevil, etc.)

Why wouldn't Jack be involved similarly in any Ditko projects? There were no separate fiefdoms at Marvel at this time. Kirby certainly helped out with the first two covers, he provided an advertising blurb in the first issue, he did a back-up story in #8. Jack did cover retouches and corrections. He also did a Spider-Man crossover story in *Fantastic Four Annual #1* in the summer of 1963, and in *Strange Tales Annual #2*, Fall 1963, both of which appeared before *AS#6*. The *Fantastic Four* was intertwined with *Spider-Man* like no other Marvel series.

In the early days of Marvel, there was no sense of separate books; everyone contributed to every series. It's amazing, but I don't think coincidental, that every member of the bullpen was multifaceted: Lee would edit, write, and script; Leiber would pencil, ink, and write; Kirby would pencil, create, and plot; Ditko could pencil, ink, and plot, etc. There seems to have been a true all-for-one atmosphere early on in the bullpen. I actually think this is why these men were the ones picked when Stan Lee regrouped Atlas in 1959. It was this flexibility, and multi-talented nature that allowed Stan to create the Marvel method of storytelling.

So, to wrap up, we have the title of the series, which was likely contributed by Kirby. We have the main character of the series surely created by Kirby, with an assist to Sid Jacobson. And we have the origin, and first couple of stories, most likely plot assisted

by Kirby. We may even have the costume based somewhat on a Kirby design. How much more does it take to deserve co-creative status?

Never the less, I am not on any campaign to get Kirby an official credit on Spider-Man. Ditko/Lee works just fine for me. Yet for historical purposes, I do believe that his contributions should be recognized.

So does this mean that Stan Lee, and Steve Ditko are lying? I don't think so. I think this is an example where each one is telling the truth from their own perspective. Jack Kirby was a conceptualist, an idea man, he felt that creation was the coming up of new ideas. Stan Lee is a writer, he's a word man, he naturally feels the act of creation starts with the fleshing out of the personality and giving voice to the character. And Steve is an artist, his idea of creation is the giving of form, and texture, and atmosphere to a shapeless thought. To thine own self be true, and I think they are.

In my opinion, Spider-Man is the classic example of a true collaboration, omit any one of the three men involved and you end up with a weaker, or non-existent creation.

If just Kirby and Lee had worked on the title, we would have invariably seen it head into the all-out adventure, or cosmic/mythic realms of Kirby's other titles, thereby losing out on the gritty, earthiness Ditko added. If Lee and Ditko had created it from scratch, we would have had a hero more like the cerebral Dr. Strange, lacking the action/adventure facet that Kirby added. The combination helped eliminate the individual excesses, while keeping the best of each.

Just because Kirby's participation ended quickly doesn't detract from his role in the creation, without his character concepts, and strong action based foundation, Spider-Man might never have found that perfect mix of the psychological and physical aspects. Left to his own devices, Ditko's characters and stories usually lack the testosterone based fun fantasies, that pure physicality, that the super hero genre demands. His characters thought too much, and acted too little.

And without Stan Lee, in my opinion, we would have been without the single most vital ingredient that made Spider-Man the most unique character in comics. Human frailty!!!

More than any other character he worked on, Stan identified with Peter Parker. His



vision of the everyman as hero made Spidey the most conflicted, the most human, and the most unique hero ever created. His blueprint was the perfect recipe for a super hero in the post war era. It was an age when the common man, no longer felt in control of his own destiny. Spider-Man was not just fighting bad guys; he was fighting our doubts, our rages, and our feeling of helplessness. He, like most people, (especially the teens reading his books) was looking for his role in society, and was turned away at every stop. Stan Lee made Spider-Man one of us. This is why Spidey not only continued, he thrived, long after both Kirby and Ditko, no longer had any input.

Together we got the perfect blend of Kirby's solid histrionics, Ditko's philosophic atmospherics, and Lee's melodramatic human voice.

It just don't get any better folks.

Who created Spider-Man? There's room for all three.

Stan Taylor

*This article was very time and labor intensive, and I need to thank some people. First and foremost, Pat Hilger and M.I. for their unselfish access to their books. Greg Theakston for leading the way. Blake Bell for inspiring me and keeping me jazzed. And the Kirby-l and Ditko-l for their prodding and doubting natures.*

— Stan Taylor

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[A note from Jack Kirby](#)

by [Rand Hoppe](#)

Posted [16 December 2014](#) in [General](#).

*What follows is a transcription of the undated note written by Jack Kirby that was used as evidence in the — thankfully now settled — legal action between Disney/Marvel and the Kirby heirs. Mark Evanier says the note was prepared in the early 1980s at the request of the Kirbys' legal team, with Jack speaking and Roz writing (Thanks, Pat). Scans below! – Rand*

## **Captain America**

Formulated in 1939 by myself + Joe Simon in Joe's apartment \_ submitted to "Atlas"

Published in 1941

## **Fantastic Four – Hulk – Spiderman – Thor – Sgt. Fury**

When I arrived at Marvel in 1959, it was closing shop that very afternoon, according to what was related to me by "Stan Lee".

The comic book dept. was another victim of the Dr. Wertham negative cycle + definitely was following in the wake of EC Comics, "The Gaines Publishing House".

In order to keep working I suggested to Stan Lee that to initiate a new line of Super Heroes, he submit my ideas to Martin Goodman the publisher of Marvel.

The line that I came up with was

"Fantastic Four" a team of Super Heroes

"The Hulk" – which was a spin off of a single story I did for Marvel

"Spiderman" grew from a different script called "The Silver Spider" which was written by Joe Simon's brother-in-law, Jack Oleck, who is now deceased.

Joe was out of the field at that time + I utilized the "Silver Spider" script to create a single new character. This was given for development to Steve Ditko after I drew the first cover with the original costume.

Thor quickly followed + was fleshed out with the character of the original legend.

Sgt. Fury a mixture of the "Dirty Dozen", James Bond + my own war experiences became another successful book.

I created many costumes for new "Super Heroes" such as Iron Man, Ant Man + created all related characters such as "Silver Surfer" Galactus – The Inhumans + many more which are included in the enclosed list.

To insure sales, I also did the writing which I not credited for as Stan Lee wrote the credits for all of the books which I did not contest because of his relationship with the publisher Martin Goodman.

This was later changed to "Produced by Stan Lee & Jack Kirby" in some of the books. Although I was not allowed to write the "balloon" dialogue, the stories, the characters + the additional planning for the scripts progress was strictly due to my own foresight + literary workmanship.

There were no scripts. I created the characters + wrote the stories in my own home + merely brought them into the office each month.

FF published 1961

The Hulk 1962

Thor 1962

Spider Man 1962

Sgt. Fury 1963

– Jack Kirby

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# Key 1960s Moments

by [John Morrow](#)

Posted [12 September 2013](#) in [General](#).

*This timeline was first published in [TwoMorrows Publishing's Winter 2013 The Jack Kirby Collector 60](#). Many thanks to John Morrow for allowing us to publish it here. Suggestions or corrections are welcome, please use the comments section below. –  
Rand*

There were many key moments at Marvel in the 1960s, but the first one that really sent shockwaves through fandom (and Marvel) was the 1966 departure of Steve Ditko from the company. Don't you suppose that got Stan to thinking, "Gee, what if I lose Jack Kirby, too?" Shortly thereafter, in an odd twist, Stan began occasionally letting Jack script a few stories here and there in the latter 1960s. Was that an effort on Stan's part to keep him happy at the company?

To clarify the chronology of events in my mind, I decided to prepare this timeline of key moments that affected Marvel, and Lee and Kirby's relationship in the 1960s. Of invaluable help were Rand Hoppe, past research by Mark Evanier and Pat Ford online, as well as online excerpts from Sean Howe's *Marvel Comics: The Untold Story* (I plan to read the full book soon).

This isn't a complete list of every important date in Marvel's 1960s history, but hopefully hits most of the key ones. I'm sure I've left some out, and more will come to light in the future, so please send us additions and corrections. I plan to update it, and continue the timeline into the 1970s and beyond.

My rule of thumb: Cover dates were generally two-three months later than the date the book appeared on the stands, and six months ahead of when Kirby was working on the stories, so I've assembled the timeline according to those adjusted dates—not the cover dates—to set it more closely to real-time.

## 1961

- **This year:** Marvel sells 18,700,000 copies of its comics.
- **February 25:** Final *Sky Masters* daily strip sees print.
- **April-May:** *Fantastic Four* #1 conceived by Lee and Kirby, and drawn by Kirby.
- **August 8 (November cover date):** *FF* #1 goes on sale.

## 1962

- **This year:** Marvel sells 19,740,000 copies of its comics. 1158 Kirby pages are published (most in a single year).
- **June (August cover date):** *Amazing Fantasy* #15 published, featuring Ditko's Spider-Man, after Kirby's original version was rejected.
- **November (January 1963 cover date):** *FF* #10 features the first appearance of Lee and Kirby in a comic. On the letters page, Stan tells readers to drop the formal "Dear Editor" salutation in letters, and to instead address them to "Dear Stan and Jack."

## 1963

- **This year:** Marvel sells 22,530,000 copies of its comics.

## 1964

- **This year:** Marvel sells 27,709,000 copies of its comics, with an expectation of 32,000,000 for 1965, showing a nearly 50% increase in 3 years. 102 Kirby covers are published (most in a single year).
- **Also this year:** Martin Goodman becomes worried about Stan's popularity and the control he has over the Marvel line, and pressures him to have other writers handle some of the stories. Stan develops "writer's test" using four Kirby pages from *FF Annual* #2, with the balloons whited-out.
- **May (July/Summer cover dates):** *FF Annual* #2, *FF* #28, and *Avengers* #6 are published. Original art for these issues are the earliest pages to show Kirby's handwriting in the margin notes, but all these issues also feature Chic Stone as the inker for the first time, so it's unclear if Kirby included notes prior to these, and other inkers simply erased Jack's notes when they erased the pencil art after inking.

- **September:** *Addams Family* and *Munsters* television series debut (influences Kirby's creation of the Inhumans later).
- **October (December cover date):** Stan hypes Wallace Wood on the cover of *Daredevil* #5.
- **December (February cover date):** *FF* #35 published, with first ad for MMMS fan club, using Kirby art to sell \$1 memberships and, later, promotional products. Flo Steinberg has said, "Nobody expected the fan-club to be so big. There were thousands of letters and dollar bills flying around all over the place. We were throwing them at each other."

## 1965

- **Early this year:** Marvel's reacts to news of an impending *Batman* TV series, and of new publishers jumping on the super-hero bandwagon due to their success, as Martin Goodman tells Stan to add more books, to keep Marvel from getting crowded off newsstands. Soon thereafter, Lee and Kirby develop the Inhumans and Black Panther (originally named Coal Tiger)—both of which feature a character visually similar to Batman—but DC controlled Marvel's distribution, and wouldn't allow the new books to be added to Marvel's output (they were eventually included in the *FF*).
- **January (March cover date):** *Tales of Suspense* #63 published, the first of several reworks of 1940s S&K Cap stories (with no mention of Simon).
- **This year and next:** Kirby assigned to do layouts for Hulk series in *Tales to Astonish*, Captain America in *Tales of Suspense*, Nick Fury in *Strange Tales*, for Don Heck on *Avengers*, and for Werner Roth on *X-Men*. He came to view this as doing the majority of the storytelling, for only a fraction of the pay.
- **March (May cover date):** Charlton's *Mysteries of Unexplored Worlds* #46 published, featuring Son of Vulcan (influenced by Marvel's *Thor*).
- **April (June cover date):** Charlton begins reprinting Captain Atom adventures in *Strange Suspense Stories* #75, and renames the title *Captain Atom* with #78 in October (December 1965 cover date), the first of its Action Hero line.
- **June (August cover date):** Spider-Man T-shirt first offered for sale in *Spider-Man* #27.
- **Summer:** *FF Annual* #3 published, with Stan and Jack appearing in the story together at Reed and Sue's wedding.
- **July (September cover date):** Stan hypes Wallace Wood's inking of "Don's

drawings" on the cover of *Avengers* #20.

- **August (October cover date):** *Daredevil* #10 is published, wherein Wallace Wood fought for and received the writing credit from Stan Lee.
- **September (November cover date):** Jack introduces the Inhumans in *FF* #44.
- **September (November cover date):** Tower Comics' *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents* #1 (featuring art by Wallace Wood), and Archie's *Mighty Crusaders* #1, are published. Wallace Wood had just left Marvel over creative differences with Stan Lee. Kirby and Wood were contemporaries who were known to speak to each other fairly regularly.
- **October (December cover date):** *Modeling with Millie* #44 is published, featuring Roy Thomas' first Marvel writing work.
- **November (January 1966 cover date):** *Daredevil* #12 published, with Kirby assigned to do layouts for John Romita, and to design the villain The Plunderer.
- **December 1965:** Interview with Nat Freedland for *New York Herald Tribune* article takes place, where Stan is giving art direction to Sol Brodsky about a page from *FF* #50, page 8, which was apparently in production at that time.

## 1966

- **This year:** Joe Simon sues Marvel in state court, and then in 1967 in federal court, claiming that Captain America was his creation and that he was entitled to the renewal on the copyright registration. Carl Burgos does likewise over his creation The Human Torch.
- **January 9:** *NY Herald Tribune* article appears, which greatly offends Kirby, and possibly Ditko. In it, Stan also says,

*"I don't plot Spider-Man any more. Steve Ditko, the artist, has been doing the stories. I guess I'll leave him alone until sales start to slip. Since Spidey got so popular, Ditko thinks he's the genius of the world. We were arguing so much over plot lines I told him to start making up his own stories. He won't let anybody else ink his drawings either. He just drops off the finished pages with notes at the margins and I fill in the dialogue. I never know what he'll come up with next, but it's interesting to work that way."*

*FF* #48 (March cover date) goes on sale the same month, with first appearance of Galactus and the Silver Surfer (a character Stan has said he knew nothing about until Kirby turned in the pages with him on them).

- **January 12:** *Batman* TV series debuts as a mid-season replacement.
- **January to February:** After months of not directly communicating with Stan, Ditko turns in *Spider-man* #38 and resigns. He asks Kirby to join him on a walkout to pressure Marvel into better terms, and Kirby initially agrees, but backs out due to concerns over supporting his family. (This comes [per Robert Beerbohm's conversations with Jack](#))
- **February (April cover date):** Myron Fass' *Captain Marvel* #1 is published (the character who splits apart into pieces) and co-opts both the famous 1940s character's name, and the name of Martin Goodman's company in an attempt to cause market confusion. It's drawn by Carl Burgos, creator of the Human Torch for Goodman in the 1940s.
- **April (June cover date):** *Fantasy Masterpieces* #3 published, featuring the first of a series of Simon & Kirby 1940s *Captain America Comics* reprints, with Joe Simon's credit line removed.
- **May (July cover date):** *Tales to Astonish* #81 published, featuring Kirby's documented design for the villain Boomerang. Also, *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents* #6 is published by Tower Comics, featuring art by both Wallace Wood and Steve Ditko.
- **May (July cover date):** *FF* #52 published, with the Black Panther's debut, and includes an announcement that Ditko is leaving Marvel. The real-life Black Panther organization wouldn't officially be formed until October 1966, but shortly before this issue went into production, news article were published (as early as January) about a Black Panther logo being used by an organization in Alabama.
- **This year:** Kirby stops doing most layouts for other artists. This is the point his work begins to reach its 1960s peak, as he has more time to devote to his own stories. Also, Kirby draws the first of his Fourth World concept drawings, but doesn't show them to Marvel.
- **Mid-1966:** Lancer paperbacks are released, reprinting Kirby *Fantastic Four*, *Thor*, and *Hulk* stories. (The *Fantastic Four* book quotes the 1966 *New York Herald-Tribune* article.) Also, Donruss' *Marvel Super-Heroes* set of 66 trading cards released, using Kirby art (both presumably unpaid).
- **June:** Stan takes a train trip to Florida on his first-ever vacation, and lets Jack



script the S.H.I.E.L.D. story in *Strange Tales* #148 (September 1966) after plotting the story together. Stan noted in an interview, "I [did] a little editing later, but it was [Jack's] story." Stan also assigned Roy Thomas to script the *Tales To Astonish* #82 (August 1966) Iron Man/Sub-Mariner fight, but Roy gives Jack all the credit for the plot.

- **Summer:** *Fantastic Four Special* #4 is released, featuring the original Human Torch battling the FF's Torch. Carl Burgos' daughter sees her father destroy all his old Timely Comics, as a reaction to the *FF Special* story, and/or losing his bid to reclaim the copyright on the Human Torch.
- **July 12:** Goodman convinces Kirby to sign a deposition against Joe Simon in the Captain America copyright case, siding with Marvel, with the promise of receiving whatever Simon gets in any settlement.
- **July:** Martin Goodman offers Myron Fass \$6000 for the copyright on his Captain Marvel; Fass refuses.
- **August (October cover date):** Joe Simon releases *Fighting American* #1 and *The Spirit* #1 at Harvey Comics, featuring reprints and new material. Simon also oversees the first of the Harvey Thriller line of new super-hero comics for Harvey.
- **August (October cover date):** *Thor* #133 published, which at Jack's insistence, is the first to include the joint credit "A Stan Lee—Jack Kirby Production" (in the "Tales of Asgard" story) instead of separate credits for Stan as "Writer" and Jack as "Artist." Future *Thor* issues would continue this. This issue also features the debut of a balding, bearded "Ego, the Living Planet"; perhaps a subtle shot at Stan? *FF* #55 is also published with Marvel t-shirt and poster ads, using Kirby art to sell merchandise (presumably unpaid).
- **September 1:** *Marvel Super-Heroes* cartoon debuts, with no payment to Kirby for reuse of art. Robert Lawrence of Gantray-Lawrence accompanies Stan Lee on a wildly popular college lecture circuit tour to promote it. A September *Esquire* article mentions Stan speaking at Princeton, Bard and NYU, and that Marvel had sold 50,000 t-shirts and 30,000 sweat-shirts.
- **September (November cover date):** *FF* #56 published, with "Produced by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby" credit instead of separate listings for Writer and Artist.
- **October (December cover date):** *FF* #57 published, with back cover ad for the Marvel Aurora model kits, featuring Kirby art of Hulk and Captain America (presumably unpaid).

- **December (February 1967 cover date):** *Strange Tales* #153 published, with Kirby's final layouts for another artist (in this case, Steranko).

## 1967

- **February (April cover date):** *Strange Tales* #155 is published, with Steranko's first writing credit.
- **July (September cover date):** *Thor* #144 published, without its original Kirby cover, which was rejected by Stan. This issue's "Tales of Asgard" back-up is entitled "The Beginning of the End". Stan has often said that Kirby was mostly responsible for these stories, as he knew the Norse legends better than Stan.
- **August (October cover date):** *FF* #67 published, with last part of "Him" story, and heavy characterization changes to Kirby's characters by Stan. (This was the last issue drawn on large-size art.) Also, the final "Tales of Asgard" back-up in *Thor* #145 is published, titled "The End," possibly alluding to discontent on Jack's part.
- **September 9:** First of 20 *Fantastic Four* cartoons airs, using Lee/Kirby *FF* issues as the basis for each story (presumably unpaid). Also, *America's Best TV Comics* is published in conjunction with ABC-TV, with Kirby story reprint (presumably unpaid).
- **September (November cover date):** Stan includes the note "Jack, you're still the greatest" on a pin-up in *FF Special* #5 pin-up, which was published shortly after the "Him" story in *FF* #66-67 that upset Jack. Stan apparently tosses Jack a bone by letting him write the 3-page "This is a plot?" throwaway story in the issue, and had Jack draw a solo Silver Surfer/Quasimodo story as well—perhaps as a peace offering, since Jack wasn't happy with the way the Surfer was being handled. Inhumans backups also begin in *Thor* #146, likely made from previously created Inhumans stories that weren't published.
- **October (December cover date):** *Marvel Super-Heroes* #12 is published, with the debut of Marvel's Captain Marvel (Mar-vell). Kirby felt this idea came from an offhand conversation he'd had in the offices, for which he wasn't credited.
- **This year:** New ads were printed that announced a "Nifty New Membership Kit" for the MMMS, including new merchandise for sale with Kirby artwork.

## 1968

- **Early this year:** Kirby begins, unsuccessfully, trying to negotiate better terms with Martin Goodman.
- **March-June (May-August cover dates):** *FF* #74-77 published, with Jack leading to a climax and jumping-off point on the Silver Surfer storyline, possibly preparing to work on his own *Silver Surfer* book.
- **April (June cover date):** *Beware the Creeper* #1 by Steve Ditko is published by DC Comics.
- **May 22:** Kirby takes a \$2000 loan from Martin Goodman to finance his family's upcoming move to California, to live in a better climate for his daughter's asthma. Around this time, Bill Everett also takes a "loan" from Goodman, which was an off the record agreement that Everett wouldn't sue over Sub-Mariner copyrights, so as not to hurt the sale of Marvel to Perfect Film.
- **June (August cover date):** *Silver Surfer* #1 published the same month as *FF* #77: John Buscema is assigned to draw the solo title, apparently without Jack's knowledge. Kirby feels his character has been taken away from him.
- **July:** Sale of Marvel Comics to Perfect Film is finalized. Perfect Film is "over running the company" by September 1968, even though Martin Goodman is retained as publisher.
- **August 31:** Kirby repays half of the loan from Goodman.
- **This year:** Stan Lee interview is published in *Castle of Frankenstein* #12, wherein Stan says of Jack, "Some artists, such as Jack Kirby, need no plot at all. I mean I'll just say to Jack, 'Let's let the next villain be Dr. Doom'... or I may not even say that. He may tell me. And then he goes home and does it. He's so good at plots, I'm sure he's a thousand times better than I. He just about makes up the plots for these stories. All I do is a little editing... I may tell him that he's gone too far in one direction or another. Of course, occasionally I'll give him a plot, but we're practically both the writers on the things."

## 1969

- **January:** Kirby family moves from New York to California, further distancing Jack from the Marvel offices.
- **This year:** Marvelmania fan club established, selling merchandise with Kirby artwork on it. However, Kirby was paid to produce new material, although he reportedly didn't receive full payment for it before Marvelmania went bankrupt.
- **This year:** Joe Simon signs a Settlement Agreement with Marvel over Captain

America for a payment of \$3750. Less than \$1000 was paid directly to Simon, with the rest secretly being funneled to him through his attorney, per Marvel's wishes. Marvel does this so they can pay Kirby only the smaller amount that Simon got directly.

- **March (May cover date):** Stan apologizes in his Soapbox that the *Inhumans* title he said was coming out, isn't.
- **July-September (September-November cover date):** *Thor* #168-170 published, with altered Galactus origin story and other editorial changes. Issue #169, released in August, has an inordinate amount of unused pages, suggesting almost an entire issue was rejected by Stan.
- **This year:** Kirby withholds full-page splashes from *Thor*, replacing them with supposedly lesser pages, presumably at wife Roz's urging ("They're too good for them...").
- **November (January 1970 cover date):** Kirby withholds original design of Agatha Harkness for *FF* #94, as too good for them, as well.
- **December:** Jack goes to New York to try to negotiate a new deal with Marvel/Perfect Film, unsuccessfully. He agrees to write and draw two full-length *Inhumans* issues, and to draw the first issue of a new *Ka-Zar* book, and goes home and completes them.
- **Late 1969-early 1970:** Kirby meets with Carmine Infantino to show *New Gods* presentation pieces, and discuss the possibility of coming to DC Comics.

## 1970

- **This year:** Kirby's Hulk and Spider-Man posters for Marvelmania are replaced with versions by Herb Trimpe and John Romita, respectively, so all the Marvelmania materials won't be dependent on Kirby's signature style.
- **January:** Kirby receives an "onerous" contract from Perfect Film to continue working at Marvel, telling him "take it or leave it."
- **Late January:** Kirby is told to split his two *Inhumans* and one *Ka-Zar* story into 10-pagers, which are eventually used in *Amazing Adventures* and *Astonishing Tales* split-books.
- **February:** Kirby draws *Silver Surfer* #18, in an attempt to save the book from cancellation with a new direction. Kirby also draws the "Janus" story intended for *FF* #102, but Stan rejects the entire story—it was eventually published in *FF* #108, after Jack had moved to DC Comics. Also this month, *Chamber of Darkness*

#4 is published, with "The Monster" scripted by Kirby. It originally features Kirby and Lee in cameos, but Stan makes major editorial changes that require extensive redrawing by Kirby.

- **Early March:** Kirby draws the published version of *FF* #102, his final story for Marvel. After mailing in the pages, he phones Stan and resigns.
- **March 12:** Don and Maggie Thompson publish an unprecedented "Extra" edition of their fanzine *Newfangles* announcing Kirby is leaving Marvel.
- **April (June cover date):** *Chamber of Darkness* #5 published, with the story "And Fear Shall Follow" scripted by Kirby.
- **June (August cover date):** *Amazing Adventures* #1 is published from Jack's split apart solo books, with Kirby drawing and scripting The Inhumans, and featuring Black Bolt out of character with a thought balloon for one panel. Also, *Astonishing Tales* #1 is published from Kirby's split apart solo book, featuring Ka-Zar, with script by Stan Lee and art by Kirby. It also features a second Dr. Doom solo story, by Wallace Wood, returning to Marvel Comics.
- **July (September cover date):** *Silver Surfer* #18 is published, with Inhumans guest-starring. With Kirby gone, Marvel cancels the book after this issue. Also, *FF* #102 is published, Jack's last issue.
- **July (September cover date):** *Amazing Adventures* #2 published, with Kirby drawing and scripting The Inhumans, includes "Stan's Soapbox" announcing Jack's resignation from Marvel.
- **August (October cover date):** *Jimmy Olsen* #133 published with Kirby's first work for DC Comics.
- **August (October cover date):** *Astonishing Tales* #2 published, featuring Ka-Zar, script by Roy Thomas (other than Iron Man/Subby battle in *Tales To Astonish* #82, this may be the first non-Stan Marvel scripting for Kirby). Includes some major non-Kirby redraws on Ka-Zar figures.
- **September (November cover date):** *Amazing Adventures* #3 published, with Kirby's Inhumans.
- **November (January 1971 cover date):** Kirby stories in *Amazing Adventures* #4 and *Tower of Shadows* #4 published by Marvel, the same month as *Jimmy Olsen* #135 at DC Comics.
- **December (February 1971 cover date):** *Forever People* #1 and *New Gods* #1 published at DC Comics.

- **January (March cover date):** *FF* #108 published from Jack's original rejected *FF* #102 story, the same month that DC Comics publishes *Mister Miracle* #1 and *Jimmy Olsen* #136.

## 1972

- **June:** After Martin Goodman calls in the rest of his loan, Kirby "under duress" signs a copyright agreement with Marvel.

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## The Deceptions of Argo

by [James Romberger](#)

Posted [9 September 2013](#) in [General](#) and tagged [Argo](#), [Barry Ira Geller](#), [Ben Affleck](#), [CIA](#), [Edward Said](#), [Jack Kirby](#), [James Romberger](#), [Lord of Light](#), [Tony Mendez](#)

**For the 2013 Best Picture Oscar-winner *Argo*, Jack Kirby's *Lord of Light* artwork was omitted and his crucial role in the CIA's rescue plot was downplayed and distorted, but that is only a part of the problem with the film.**

*...History cannot be swept clean like a blackboard, clean so that "we" might inscribe our own future there and impose our own form of life for these lesser people to follow.*

—Edward Said



*“ARGO – The Rescue of the Canadian Six” (artist unattributed)—CIA’s Intelligence Art Gallery*

Ben Affleck’s film *Argo* embodies the racism that Western governments display towards the peoples and governments of the East that Edward Said described in his groundbreaking study, *Orientalism*. *Argo* re-envisioned for dramatic effect a covert escapade that occurred at the same time as the Iran Hostage Crisis in 1979: a joint USA/Canadian operation in which CIA operatives disguised six American diplomats as a movie crew to rescue them from where they were hiding in Iran in the homes of Canadian diplomats. For this successful mission, the CIA implemented an elaborate deception that appropriated a proposed film adaptation of Roger Zelazny’s Hugo award-winning novel *Lord of Light*, which featured a spectacular series of set designs drawn by famed comic book artist Jack Kirby and inked by that artist’s most faithful and accomplished finisher, Michael Royer.

Due to the inherently covert nature of the operations of the Central Intelligence Agency, the events surrounding the rescue are still enmeshed in a web of misinformation, apart from what the agency released in 1997 when it declassified the mission. The film *Argo* furthers confusion through the imposition of familiar devices of suspenseful storytelling. *Argo* is constructed as an entertaining adventure narrative, but the production condescends to depict a generic Middle Eastern world. The film achieves a degree of tension, but along the way, it alters many details and adds major narrative elements in order to amplify the drama, most of which also either demonize, infantilize or otherwise provide a derogatory impression of the Iranian people. It

valorizes an American ideology, minimizes the crucial Canadian contribution to the saving of American lives and changes key points about the original film proposal for “Lord of Light.”

Dissemination is celebrated throughout *Argo*. The covert deceptions of the CIA are presented as appropriately linked to the fictions of Hollywood. The second half resembles an “Indiana Jones” epic as it deviates from actual events to show how the clever, resourceful and decent Westerners outwit the primitive and gullible heathen Easterners. Even the depiction of the hero is a predictable example of Hollywood racism: the film’s Caucasian director, Ben Affleck, dyes his hair and wears a beard to portray Antonio Mendez, the ingenious Hispanic CIA agent who accomplished the operation.

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Oddly, *Argo* begins well. The faux-documentary introduction gives an accurate if abbreviated account of the suffering of the Iranian people under the corrupt excesses of Shah Mohammad Rezā Pahlavī. In 1953, England’s MI6 and the CIA deposed Mohammad Mosaddegh, the democratically elected Prime Minister of Iran, who had nationalized the country’s oil, removing it from British control. Subsequently the Shah of Iran was placed in power and became known for his conspicuously extravagant lifestyle, while his people starved. The violent methods of control of his regime, including the torture and murder of his opponents, resulted in his overthrow in January of 1979 by Islamic fundamentalists, led by the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. When the Shah travelled to America to seek cancer treatment, Iranians demanded his extradition. On November 4 1979, Iranian students seized the U.S. Embassy in Tehran and took 66 Americans as hostages, a violation of international diplomatic law. The students accused the embassy staff of being CIA operatives and justifiably so: Mendez confirmed that at least one of the hostages held in the US embassy was a CIA agent <sup>1</sup>.

However, in the film the straightforward account of the reasons behind the Islamic Revolution is directly followed by clichéd views of mobs of enraged and insensible rioters, images that align with the Orientalist view of Eastern society which Said details, that is “...always shown in large numbers,” and represents “...mass rage and misery, or irrational (hence hopelessly eccentric) gestures. Lurking behind all of these images is



the menace of jihad” (287).

There are many scenes throughout the film that depict crowds, in the airport and on the street, as masses of alien “others,” either suspicious, fearful or enraged. The images of roiling crowds imply threats to America that are presented as an illogical, irrational mob. The depictions suggest that any and all members of Middle Eastern culture will react with a surfeit of emotion. The threat to the West is therefore amplified because it does not operate within systems of American logic. It is counter to the rational aims of governing Christian principles.

The violations of diplomatic immunity in the Iran Hostage Crisis were labeled by the United States as “terrorism” and used to justify whatever actions Western powers subsequently took against Iran, including the imposition of crippling sanctions. “Diplomatic immunity” refers to reciprocal policies that are customarily held between governments, to ensure that at all times, including times of conflict, diplomatic personnel can be free of prosecution under the host country’s laws and that they may travel freely between countries in their pursuit of diplomacy.

Subsequently to the embassy takeover, thirteen of the African American and/or female hostages were released, but the remaining 52 hostages were held for 444 days. Not included in the film, but certainly part of the political climate at the time were several failed attempts at resolving the protracted crisis, including the disastrous “Operation Eagle Claw,” in which eight servicemen and several aircraft were lost, that were believed to have caused President Jimmy Carter’s loss of the 1980 election to Ronald Reagan. It is also documented that Republicans prolonged the hostage negotiations in order to affect the outcome of the election, a subterfuge called the “October Surprise.” The hostages were finally released through an accord brokered by Algeria on January 20 1981, the day after Reagan was sworn into office.

On the same day that the hostages were seized, November 4 1979, six diplomats escaped from the U.S. embassy through the back door and were hidden in the residences of two Canadians, ambassador Ken Taylor and diplomat John Sheardown. Over the following months, Canadian and American officials considered various means of delivering the six “houseguests” safely from danger. Finally, on January 28 1980, the six fugitives were spirited out of Iran in the guise of a film crew visiting the country scouting for locations, accompanied by CIA operative Mendez and his

colleague "Julio." The film *Argo* supposedly dramatizes this basic narrative.

The movie proposal that the CIA appropriated to be the subject of their bogus production was *Lord of Light*, an ambitious project that allegedly fell into stasis after it hit some legal snags. Mendez has stated that the *Lord of Light* was a "defunct production" when John Chambers gave the CIA the script, but actually its problems began at the same time that the CIA made their use of the materials. The promotion for *Lord of Light* appeared in the trade papers *The Hollywood Reporter* and *Variety* in November of 1979, as the Iran Hostage Crisis began. A month later in December of 1979, the same Hollywood periodicals showed ads and articles about the CIA's proposed production, renamed "Argo," and their front company "Studio Six." After the CIA's mission began, *Lord of Light* foundered.

According to producer Barry Geller, he began work on the *Lord of Light* project in 1977 to capitalize on Hollywood's new-found interest in science fiction epics, due to the recent success of *Star Wars*. On his website, the self-described "time traveler" says that his purpose was "to bring attention to our extraordinary mental powers just as *Star Wars* brought recognition of life in the galaxy." Geller wrote the screenplay as an adaptation of Roger Zelazny's Hugo award-winning novel and he hired comic book innovator Jack Kirby to do conceptual drawings for the film's set, the structures of which would also perform double duty as a science fiction-themed amusement park. Geller claims he gathered a brain trust for the massive and complex undertaking that included architects R. Buckminster Fuller and Paolo Soleri, video game pioneer Gary Gygax, author Ray Bradbury and Oscar-winning film makeup artist John Chambers. It is known that Chambers occasionally used his skills to aid the CIA.

In a scene that was widely shown and celebrated in the promotional push for Affleck's movie, Geller is portrayed as a sleazy Hollywood huckster, Max Klein (played by Richard Kind) who is coldly swindled out of the rights to his manuscript by the slick and condescending producer Lester Siegel (played by Alan Arkin), under the auspices of Mendez and the CIA. In contrast to the depiction, Geller says there was no interchange between himself and anyone connected with the CIA, other than Chambers, and that at the time, he was unaware of the makeup artist's intelligence connections. Geller says that Chambers simply provided his script and graphics to the CIA for their purposes, without permission.

Geller's project has problems with credibility, too. It seems unlikely that a film production could afford the resources to build any sets to the safety specifications and requirements necessary for a family theme park. Movie sets are typically built to be facades, properly viewed only from the vantage of the camera and meant to last for only as long as needed for the film production. For this reason the amusement park is implausible. Geller claims it would have featured not only user-friendly versions of the huge and elaborate buildings and vehicles designed by Kirby, but also massive revolving holographic projections (technology that scarcely existed at the time [II](#)) and a floating half-mile-high geodesic dome.

A scene in *Argo* that deviates significantly from actual events is the one that depicts a promotional press event in Hollywood arranged by the CIA where actors in costume do a reading of the script for "Argo." a scene dramatically cross-cut with shots of the hostages taken in the U.S. embassy tortured by being forced to face a bogus firing squad. This misrepresents the actual press event that was held by Geller in Aurora, Colorado in November 1979 announcing a funding drive for the "Science Fiction Land" amusement park, with football player/actor Rosey Grier, Geller's second in command Jerry Schafer, Chambers and Kirby in attendance. The land deals for the site of the park in Colorado and the legal proceedings that accompanied them landed Schafer and some Colorado politicians in prison. Some journalists who reported on the Science Fiction Land debacle for the local Colorado press continue to depict Schafer and Geller both equally as con-men [III](#). But by literally every other account, Geller was cleared of charges and he denies knowledge of the CIA's use of his proposal before he heard of the declassified mission when a PBS television show *First Person* aired a segment about Mendez in 2001.

Geller's explanation for the failure of his initial proposal for *Lord of Light* and the theme park raises some flags:

*We got to the point where someone put down the first \$10 million, which was in the bank, and I'd optioned 1,000 acres of land in Colorado for the park. That's when the government stopped everything. I was in the process of talking to directors and scientists, and the money was there. It was something that....it had the attention of many, many people and it was just unfortunate (Morrow, 25).*

It would seem that “the government” had ample reasons to derail Geller’s plans. Whatever the feasibility of his proposal, the enmeshing of his project in a legal morass cleared the way for the CIA’s usage of his promotional materials. The idea that *Lord of Light* was undermined by a deliberate subterfuge on the part of the intelligence agency is supported by the documented involvement of John Chambers in both of the concurrent uses of the materials by Geller and the CIA and by the proximity of the promotional timeframes.

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The importance of the artwork in the planning and execution of the CIA’s rescue mission cannot be overstated. Kirby’s original drawings were so impressive that they gave the operatives and the escapees confidence that the plan was plausible. Everyone involved believed Kirby’s art would convince the Iranians of the project’s legitimacy and further, it was drawn within stringent Islamic cultural rules of what may be depicted according to religious law. All of these considerations were set aside when the needs of the *Argo* filmmakers to satisfy an American audience were at odds with the appearance of the actual drawings. Further, how much involvement and knowledge that Kirby actually had of the CIA’s plan, at the time or at any rate, before it was declassified, is unclear.

According to Geller, in 1978 he hired Kirby, a famous and prolific comic book artist noted for his incredibly inventive imagination as well as for his speed, to do a series of conceptual architecture drawings that would serve as the basis for both the film sets and the design of the theme park. In a career that spanned a half-century, Kirby created many comics characters that in recent years have been featured in films that have grossed more than \$7 billion. Although Kirby has often been credited as a creator of these properties in the films, his heirs receive no compensation. Corporations own the characters Kirby initiated as a freelancer. His Marvel heroes such as *The Avengers*, *X-Men*, *Fantastic Four*, *Captain America*, *Thor*, *SHIELD*, etc. are owned by Disney and his DC Comics *4th World/New Gods* are owned by Time/Warner, the parent corporation of Warner Brothers, the producers of *Argo*. For this reason, one would have thought that it was in Time/Warner’s interest to promote the brilliant WWII veteran Kirby as a significant contributor to this patriotic mission. But, no.

At first, Affleck’s *Argo* production *did* seek to use Kirby’s actual drawings in the film.

Randolph Hoppe, curator of the Jack Kirby Museum explains:

*The Kirby Museum was originally contacted late in June 2011 by Warner Brothers' Permissions & Clearances staff, who were urgently asking for permission for the Lord of Light images. I pointed them to Barry Geller's email address. A week and a half later, I was contacted by a producer of the movie who told me the Lord of Light images weren't going to be used as they "didn't read well on screen."*

Kirby's actual large signature images are not shown in Affleck's film. Instead, the film shows banal storyboards drawn by other artists. Kirby's drawings, though, have other factors that made them essential to the plot: they seem calculated to appeal to an Islamic sensibility. They are ornate and linear without modeling, the human figurative presence in the art is minimized and flattened and most of the drawings are done from the vantage point of an overhead "minaret view," in a manner remarkably similar to ancient Islamic tapestries [IV](#) ). According to Geller, he rejected only one of Kirby's pieces: a watercolor entitled "The Streets of Heaven," which depicts a majestically ascending Godlike figure, shown from a ground level vantage. Otherwise, Kirby's drawings are much more appropriate viewing for Muslims such as the Iranian airport security guards seen at the end of the film than the more figurative storyboards used in the movie, which are instead calculated to signify to American audiences who are familiar with *Star Wars*.

Kirby's images are indeed complex and appropriate for the Iranian audience, but since his art might have needed explanation of the nature of its intended impact on Islamic viewers, rather than tax the short attention spans of the American audience, the producers say they opted for simpler, more easily identifiable visuals. The drawings used on screen do not resemble Kirby's work in any way; rather they are spare, crudely rendered sketches. Still, the art figures so prominently in the film that its impact on the characters seems to be in inverse proportion to its quality. In Mendez's account and as depicted in the film, his idea of using a fake movie production crew to extract the hiding diplomats didn't seem feasible until the agents hit on the Lord of Light promotion package. Kirby's work is impressively well done and suits the purposes of the CIA exactly. It is clear that the artwork added greatly to the credibility of the film proposal, for Geller's purposes and for the CIA administrators who approved the

rescue mission, the personnel charged with accomplishing it and the diplomats who had to participate in their own rescue, whether or not the Iranians saw it.

It is not clear why Affleck's production completely diverges from the historical record to show the CIA hiring Kirby, and further, it shows the artist being coached by an operative to make the backgrounds of his drawings more exotic. It is alleged that footage was shot of "Kirby" adding minarets and domes to his "storyboards" so they would be more convincing to the Islamic security forces, a scene that was left on the cutting-room floor. Actor "Christian Christian" said that he was cast as a "hand double" for Michael Parks, the actor hired to play "Kirby" onscreen. Christian claims that wrinkles and age spots were applied to his hands several times and he was filmed drawing additions to the "storyboards" (Richards (in a comment below the online article)). Such scenes display ignorance of Kirby's working process, since he would not have amended his drawings in such a way, but would probably have had to re-pencil the relevant portions and then pass the amendments along to inker Mike Royer to complete and incorporate into the final images.

Hoppe says that he was again contacted by *Argo's* set decorating department in August 2011:

*...they said they'd arranged with the Kirby estate to use Kirby's name and work, and were looking for items to use on the set of the Kirby home. I showed them some work via the web and never heard from them again. Kirby's home was not used, the IMDB listing of the actress who'd been cast as Jack's wife Roz Kirby was changed to "Office Manager."*

These reversals may have come about because the rights to Kirby's drawings are owned by Barry Geller, rather than the Kirby family and an agreement with Geller was not made. The alteration in the circumstances of Kirby's employment may be a liberty on the part of Affleck's production; on the other hand, it might not. The multitalented Kirby worked for U.S. military intelligence in World War II; he functioned as a reconnaissance artist used to sketch out the positions of Axis forces on the front lines in France. Other cartoonists of Kirby's generation who were in the services, such as Alexander Toth and Will Eisner, kept contacts in military circles and later made their

talents available to the government when needed [V](#)). Kirby passed away in 1994 without clarifying his role in the *Lord of Light/Argo* events and evidence that he knew of Mendez's plan remains anecdotal. Kirby's friend and biographer Ray Wyman claimed to the author that several years before the death of Kirby's wife Rosalind in 1998, Geller told her about the CIA's plot. Wyman said, "John Chamber's name had been bandied about...How would Barry have known that the CIA was involved, since the thing wasn't revealed until 1997?" (Romberger & Van Cook, 17). Wyman also reported that he saw the "Argo" poster made by the CIA at the Kirby home in a closet, and said that Kirby told him of other incidents that indicated that he had fans in the CIA.

If Barry Geller's account is true, he was a hapless victim of circumstance, or even of a fraudulent persecution by the government so they could appropriate his proposal—but any which way, the closeness in time of the two usages of the materials is troubling. It might be considered that to date we must rely on only Geller's account of the initiation of the Lord of Light/Science Fiction Land projects and for the timeline of when the drawings were actually completed. It could be speculated that the art may have been done closer to the time of the Iran crisis—and that if, as the movie depicts, Kirby was actually hired by the CIA, or even by Geller acting as some sort of a CIA proxy, it could have been because of not only the quality of his imagination, but also his speed. Kirby certainly was able to produce drawings of such complexity to order very rapidly and his inker Mike Royer was likewise quick and prolific. As well, Kirby oddly worded his statement in the promotional package that Geller assembled to secure funding: "I believe that this film and the way we are conceiving it could contribute to saving the world" (Morrow, 27). This is a heady claim for a sci-fi film, connected theme park or not. But in the end, perhaps it is better for Kirby's reputation that his work was left out of *Argo*, because the movie is so tainted by racism.

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Some of the changes made to the account of the rescue by Affleck's production seem done for the purposes of storytelling expediency, such as that the fact that the "houseguests" were actually split into two groups that hid in several Canadian diplomats' residences was altered to being only one group hiding with Taylor. *Argo* also eliminates the second CIA operative, "Julio" and adds the contrived character of producer Lester Siegel, one supposes for reasons of streamlining, or to move the story along. However, other alterations are more disturbing.

Most of the representations of the events in Iran shown in the second half of the movie are fictitious. There is a long and extremely fraught sequence where officials from the Iranian department of film development call Mendez and demand that the fake production crew meet with them in a public marketplace for the purposes of witnessing their scouting for locations. What follows are is a tense series of scenes where Mendez's van filled with the six vulnerable masqueraders encounters a fundamentalist street demonstration. When he is unable to back up because there is another mob coalescing behind them, Mendez drives the van through the center of the angry group of shouting demonstrators, who shake the vehicle and hammer on the windows. They miraculously pass through, shaken but unharmed. They go on to meet with the Iranian officials and then they are shown to be terribly fearful as they walk through the marketplace. When one of the party, in trying to stay in character, inadvertently takes polaroids of an older man without his permission, the group are threatened with violence by a crowd. How they escape is not explained. However, the point is moot because these scenes are created for theatrical effect. The film's fictional status is frequently at odds with its pseudo-documentary staging. Both the advertising and the promotional materials surrounding the film give the strong implication of truth, of the unmediated narration of historical events and the valorization of American actions in the execution of the operation.

The climactic scenes of *Argo* are comprised of more tension-building sequences that have little or nothing to do with actual events. In fact, there was no reversal of the go-ahead to proceed with the mission at the 11th hour, which the stoic Mendez had to hide from the group; there was no incommunicado Presidential press secretary and no withholding of ticket authorization by the president until the last possible minute. According to Mendez's declassified report, other than that he overslept by a half an hour on the day they were to leave Iran, there was no holdup at all: reservations were secured and tickets had been purchased well in advance. Nor was the L.A. "Studio Six" office foolishly and prematurely closed by the CIA before the mission was accomplished. These incidents were invented to pile on dramatic suspense.

Further and importantly, the immigration officers did not check to make sure that the exiting "film crew" had matching white and yellow forms and the security forces did not pull the band of escapees into a side room to check their cover story. In Mendez's account on the CIA's website, he says that no one looked at Kirby's artwork: "the Iranian official at the checkpoint could not have cared less." No soldiers had to have



the narrative of the "Argo" proposal explained to them and nobody called the "Studio Six" offices to confirm Mendez's claims. Nor did Iranian soldiers attack Swedish Air hostesses or throw other female passerbys around the terminal, raid the airport traffic controller's tower or drive their jeeps and police cars at breakneck speed after the departing aircraft. These scenes, which depict frightening Iranian/Arab security forces and the abuse of women, are intended to alienate the American audience from the demonized enemy. Within the logic of the Hollywood movie there must be bad guys and good guys, there are no shades of grey. The characters must be easily identifiable. The problem with this theatrical logic when applied to the dramatization of historical events is that ideological positions become polarized into moral oppositions. These in turn seamlessly validate the audience desire to be on the side of the righteous.

The urban landscape of Iran is shown to be barbaric and forbidding, a land where vehicles burn on the streets and men are lynched from construction cranes in intersections. The film imbeds overt indicators of racism, as when Mendez says at the beginning, "If these people can read or add...pretty soon they will figure out they are six short of a full deck." Later, the official at the Iranian "office of communication" asks Mendez if he is seeking to represent "the exotic orient—snake charmers." As well, he responds amenably to Mendez's mistaken exit salutation of "salaam" which is the Eastern equivalent of "hello." Affleck plays the urbane Mendez as if he is sophisticated enough to be aware of local etiquette, but does not care enough to respect his adversary. He does not care to learn their language, despite his engagement with their culture. The movie Mendez views Iran (which prior to its Islamic Revolution was an ultramodern society) to be as Said describes the American view of the East: "backward, degenerate, uncivilized and retarded...analyzed not as citizens, or even people, but as problems to be solved or confined or—as colonial powers openly coveted their territory—taken over" (207). The cumulative effect of the repetition of negative stereotypes and representations of the citizenry as unruly mobs of less intelligent people seems to justify the need for them to be treated as "problems to be solved." In *Argo*, the real life drama can also be unraveled by the superior wits and courage of the American forces. For the audience who experience this onscreen conundrum, since the stakes are never any higher than the cinematic depiction of the past, the outcome confirms their self-belief in their intellectual superiority as members of the victorious team, as if by right.

According to Mendez's account, when he first met "the six," they had managed to keep their spirits high and were excited to be part of his scenario. He briefly mentions that one of them had some initial reservations, but hastens to say that any discomfort was rapidly dispelled by his manner and various means he had at his disposal to put them at their ease. In the film, the balker is revealed to be "houseguest" Joe Stafford, but his fearfulness is exaggerated so that he is shown to have protracted reservations throughout the process. He doubts Mendez's commitment and honesty; he holds back on learning his cover identity until the last minute; he refuses to join them on the outing to the market. To placate Stafford, Mendez reveals his real name and relates a few personal details, after which Stafford relents and climbs into the van. Thereafter, he is no longer negative about the plan, but in the end he violates the restrictions Mendez made on their cover story and endangers them all by speaking Farsi to the suspicious security forces at the airport, to enact the narrative of the storyboard to them. This action, however, ends up saving the day. And then finally, in the plane as they realize that they succeeded in escaping, Stafford comes to Mendez to offer a belated handshake—but, these scenes too are all fabricated.

It is these final, false scenes which comprise the most racist aspects of Affleck's film. The head of airport security is shown as stereotypically rude and chauvinistic Mid-Easterner; a swarthy, popeyed and aggressive man who makes a guttural interrogation of Mendez's band. This character, designated in the credits as "Azizi Checkpoint #3" and portrayed by Farshad Farahat, exemplifies the Orientalist view described by Said and seen in the media as:

*associated either with lechery or bloodthirsty dishonesty. He appears as an oversized degenerate, capable, it is true, of cleverly devious intrigues, but essentially sadistic, treacherous, low...The Arab leader...can often be seen snarling at the captured Western hero and the blond girl...."my men are going to kill you, but—they like to amuse themselves before." He leers suggestively as he speaks (286-287).*

Said's comments are made explicit in the way *Argo* depicts how "Azizi Checkpoint #3" inquires if the woman depicted in a skintight outfit in the painted "Argo" ad in the issue of *Variety* proffered by the group (no such painted ad ever was created) is escaping "houseguest" Cora Lijek. Even when told that she is not, he persists in a lewd

and suggestive manner.

By the demands of their cover story as Canadians, none of the escapees are supposed to be able to understand anything but English or French, but in order to placate the security officer, the multilingual Stafford uses pidgin Farsi to tell him a narrative for the proposed film in a patronizing manner. In reality, Kirby's artwork would not have sustained the narrative that Stafford describes, which was invented for this version of "Argo." However, in the film, Stafford pulls out the storyboards and boils the plot of the ostensible film down into simplistic terms that he thinks the security officer will understand, which the English-speaking viewer reads in subtitles:

*Alien villains have taken over the hero's planet. They fight for their families and take back the city. The villains know he is the chosen one, so they kidnap his son in the spice market. So he and his wife storm the castle...the people are inspired to join him. They are farmers but they learn to fight. And the king of the aliens is destroyed when the people find their courage.*

Stafford's ploy seems to be working and the enactment degenerates further as he gestures with his hands in swooping movements, while verbally making childlike sounds of swooshing rockets, zapping raygun beams and explosions that evoke the universally-recognized soundtrack of Star Wars. After this display, "Azizi Checkpoint #3" turns out to speak and understand English after all, but presumably because he and his fellows warm to the reference to "farmers," he allows the group to proceed. By hiding that he is multilingual, he reflects the "cleverly devious" image of the Easterner cited by Said. Then, Mendez gifts the younger members of the security detail with a few of the storyboards, who proceed to make childlike noises of a space battle, in imitation of Stafford's infantilizing but successful presentation. None too soon, the group boards the plane, but Affleck amps the suspense with a superfluous chase scene that is reminiscent of the climax of a cheap B-movie set in a banana republic.

Edward Said's assessment of the overall agenda of the American mission in the Middle Eastern world, as indicated in the quote used above as an epigraph, remains valid. The deceptions of *Argo* ensure that the American audience can relate to the film,

but they have a greater resonance than just that of a stimulating entertainment. Widely viewed and praised mainstream films such as *Argo* affect public opinion, they influence public acceptance of the foreign policy decisions of whatever U.S. administration is in charge at any given time. The awarding of high honors, an anointment at the Oscars that was introduced by no less of a personage than the First Lady, to a film that displays so many instances of misinformation about a culture that we do not appreciate or understand, does not contribute to the peaceful resolution of conflict. As *Argo* was made and released and as it won its Oscars, the United States was engaged in a dangerous exchange with Iran about its nuclear capabilities. Affleck's film, even though about a situation decades in the past, has been promoted, disseminated and honored in such a way that it has influenced the American public's perception of Iran and the rest of the Middle East and so, it has beyond a doubt continued to promote negative attitudes towards our current engagement with that region of the world.

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Thanks to Marguerite Van Cook and Professor Giancarlo Lombardi of CUNY Graduate Center.

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## Footnotes

I. Mendez wrote in his account of the escape on the CIA site: "The Iranians, moreover, had embarrassed the US by finding a pair of OTS-produced foreign passports in the US Embassy that had been issued to two CIA officers posted in Tehran. One of these officers was among the hostages being held in the Embassy."

II. The most advanced technology for displaying holograms at the time is described thus:

*In 1976 Victor Komar and his colleagues at the All-Union Cinema and Photographic Research Institute (NIFKI), U.S.S.R., developed a prototype for a projected holographic movie. Images were recorded with a pulsed holographic*

*camera at about 20 frames per second. The developed film was projected onto a holographic screen that focused the dimensional image out to several points in the audience. Two or three people could see a 47 second movie in full dimension without glasses. Kormar's plan to scale up the process for a 20 to 30 minute film for an audience of 200 – 300 people never materialized.*

—Source: <http://www.holophile.com/history.htm>

This does not account for a huge exterior display at the top of a building that would be visible from all points around it, such as the one above the “Brahma’s Supremacy” structure that Geller describes in the interview I conducted with him.

**III.** A 2012 article on *Denver Westword* entitled “Science Fiction Land could have been Aurora’s biggest tourist trap, if its backers weren’t crooks” by Melanie Asmar ignores the fact of Geller’s exoneration to claim that:

*Schafer and Geller’s lies soon caught up with them. On December 14, 1979, the Rocky reported that Schafer had been arrested for securities fraud. Local authorities claimed that he and Geller had “convinced an immigrant who speaks only broken English to give them his life savings — \$50,000 — to help finance the park,” the Rocky reported. An arrest warrant had been issued for Geller too, but he’d “left the country.”*

—Source:

<http://blogs.westword.com/latestword/2012/04/science-fiction-land-aurora.php>

**IV.** A good part of my limited understanding of the permissible imagery parameters of Islamic art is gleaned from Orhan Pamuk’s novel *My Name Is Red* (Trans. Erdag M. Goknar. New York: Vintage International, 1989), where he explains that in ancient Islamic illuminations, a linear quality and flattened perspective are used to satisfy a religiously ordained requirement of flatness, a two-dimensionality imposed so art would not presume to God’s view, seen as sacrilegious in the full-perspective and chiaroscuro realism of European art. This is further elaborated upon in *Aniconism and*

*The traditional Muslim theological objection to images, which may have been observed more in the breach than in ordinary life, was eventually codified in a quite rigid form and extended to the depiction of all animate beings. It is captured in the prediction that “on the Day of Judgement the punishment of hell will be meted out to the painter, and he will be called upon to breathe life into the forms that he has fashioned; but he cannot breathe life into anything.... In fashioning the form of a being that has life, the painter is usurping the creative function” of God.*

—Source: <http://www.sonic.net/~tallen/palmtree/fe2.htm>

Most of Kirby's *Lord of Light* drawings simulate the elevated “minaret view” that is standard in Islamic illuminations, described in the Wikipedia page on Islamic art as:

*...a birds-eye view where a very carefully depicted background of hilly landscape or palace buildings rises up to leave only a small area of sky. The figures are arranged in different planes on the background, with recession (distance from the viewer) indicated by placing more distant figures higher up in the space, but at essentially the same size.*

—Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic\\_art](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic_art)

V. For information about Toth's post-service work for the Armed Forces in the 1970s, see *Genius Illustrated: The Life and Art of Alex Toth*. Dean Mullaney and Bruce Canwell. San Diego: IDW Publishing, 2012, pages 192-196. Eisner's decades of work for the U.S. Army are documented in *PS Magazine: The Best of The Preventive Maintenance Monthly*. Will Eisner. New York: Abrams Comic Arts, 2011.

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# The Myth of the Jolly King

by [Steven Brower](#)

Posted [28 August 2013](#) in [General](#).

In a recent article in *TIME* magazine, author Graeme McMillan noted, "At his peak, Kirby created popular culture as we know it today. So many of the ideas and characters that fill today have been shaped in some basic, important way by Kirby's work... Decades earlier than they happened, Jack Kirby drew the 21st century." <sup>1</sup>

While articles such as this bring to light to the general audience the outstanding accomplishments of Jack Kirby, there continues to be a plethora of misinformation regarding his achievements. Here are a few of the myths that get repeated again and again.

## **1. Stan Lee made Jack Kirby famous by listing "Jolly Jack" in the credits in the 1960s.**

Like so many generations before and since, my own aging baby boomers believe the world begins and ends with them. The reality is Kirby was one half of the best-paid, best-known team in comic books beginning the 1940s. And they consistently received a splash page credit throughout the 40s and 50s. According to comic book historian Jon B. Cooke, "The "Simon & Kirby" brand was the most recognizable art credit amongst avid readers during the 1940s, perhaps second only to "Walt Disney," and certainly rivaled the Superman Stamp of "Siegel & Shuster." <sup>2</sup>

Fortunately for us, publishers such as Titan, Fantagraphics and Yoe Books are correcting this misconception by reprinting the earlier Simon and Kirby Studio work.

## **2. Kirby was primarily a penciller.**

In fact Kirby was a storyteller who wrote his own scripts from the beginning of his career. As noted by writer and cartoonist Michael Neno, "The proof is in the pudding. All anyone who's familiar with Jack's '70s work has to do is read a lot of the comics Jack drew in the '40s and '50s. Those attributes of his '70s writing were always a part of his writing, though a bit more latent. Just as Jack's stylistic artistic tics and methods became more pronounced as the decades went on, so with Jack's writing. He didn't



lose a writing ability, but his writing style did change over a long span of time. From his "Your Health Comes First" newspaper strip in 1938 (using home remedies and tips Jack had learned from his mother) to the potently emotional and hard-edged "Captain Victory" in 1981, Jack wrote, to one extent or another, most of what crossed his desk and much of the dialogue in his Simon and Kirby days is his dialogue."

Indeed, witnesses to those early days concur. Simon and Kirby writers Kim Aamodt and Walter Geier, in respective interviews with Jim Amash in *Alter Ego* both stated as much.

Aamodt: "I really sweated out plots, unlike Jack Kirby. Jack just ignited and came out with ideas, and Joe'd just kind of nod his head in agreement. Jack's face looked so energized when he was plotting that it seemed as if sparks were flying off him. Joe was on the ground, and Jack was on cloud nine. Jack was more of the artist type; he had great instincts."

Geier: "Jack Kirby was great about that; he always came up with the plots. Jack had a fertile mind. ...Jack was the idea man. Joe didn't talk much. He could come up with decent plots, but it was usually very sketchy stuff. A lot of times Joe would say, "Awww...you figure out the ending." Jack would give me the ending, because he was good at figuring out stories. It was not hard to work with Jack. They were Jack's plots. I just supplied the dialogue." <sup>3</sup>

Likewise Gil Kane so noted, in an interview with Gary Groth in *The Comics Journal*.

Kane: "Simon was business-like. He did all the handling, all the talking, he did all the standing. Jack was always sitting and working. Jack would take the scripts and he'd either write them or re-write them. Jack was simply a workhorse who never sweated. It just came to him. Simon was a nice guy who was much more realistically attuned to the world.

Joe was involved in the creative process and he was the one who made all the deals. He didn't write—it was Jack who wrote. Jack would either write a script or get one and adjust it as he saw." <sup>4</sup>

This tradition continued at Marvel in the 1960s. According to Archie artist and Marvel

colorist Stan Goldberg, “Jack would sit there at lunch, and tell us these great ideas about what he was going to do next. It was like the ideas were bursting from every pore of his body. It was very interesting because he was a fountain of ideas.” [5](#)

Kirby biographer and former assistant Mark Evanier further elaborates, “He didn’t care if people said “ooh, what neat pictures!” That held no joy for him. He wanted them to say “What a great story!” [6](#)

### **3. Lee and Kirby were the Lennon and McCartney of comics.**

While this analogy is used ad nauseam, nothing could be further from the truth. John Lennon and Paul McCartney were teenage friends and band mates who grew up together in Liverpool. Over the years they collaborated on hundreds of songs, sitting side by side, as is typical of songwriting teams.

Jack Kirby was a freelancer who worked at home during the Marvel years. The recent court ruling notwithstanding (which hopefully will be overturned), Kirby was an independent contractor. The myth of the Marvel Bullpen, propagated by Lee in his “Stan’s Soapbox” on the letters page, simply did not exist. In the late 1950s and early 1960s Lee worked on his own in the Marvel offices, and was later joined by Sol Brodsky as production manager. All other artists, writers, inkers, letterers worked freelance elsewhere, until later that decade. Kirby never joined them.

According to Kirby himself, “There were no scripts. I created the characters and wrote the stories in my own home and merely brought them into the office each month.” [7](#)

As evidenced by the research of comics historian Mike Gartland in his ongoing series “A Failure to Communicate” in *The Jack Kirby Collector* (Twomorrows Publishing) and here on the Kirby Museum site, the work Kirby and Lee did was often at odds with one another, a far cry from Lennon/McCartney.

### **4. Jack Kirby inked very little of his own work.**

For years the assumption was that Joe Simon inked Kirby in the 1940’s and 50’s at S&K. Through the rediscovery of that work a different story emerges. Kirby inked much of his own work over those decades, and continued to do so at DC in the mid-

50s. This changed in the 1960s due to the extremely high demand for Kirby to supply plots and pencils at Marvel.

In an interview with Amash, S&K artist Jack Katz describes the inking instruction he received from Kirby. “He showed me how to apply all of that to figures and objects. He said, “You have to make it three-dimensional. What you do is, make sure you have black areas behind a line, always a dark behind a line. It could be feathered. If you bring the light in on the right hand side, you have to make sure the opposite side is carefully outlined. If you want to show real drama, you have a light source from the top, so the eyes and mouth are in shadow, If you want to make a real ghou...and he turned the page over, and drew a face, he showed me how the light from underneath highlights the bone structure. He showed me how to vary textures, he’d say “curtains should look delicate.” He showed me how to do that with a brush.” [8](#)

*Special thanks to Patrick Ford, Michael Neno and Rand Hoppe.*

FOOTNOTES.

1. [\*Jack Kirby Is The Most Important Artist You Might Not Have Heard Of: The artist who created so many of Marvel's superheroes cast a big shadow on the world we live in today\*](#), By Graeme McMillan. *Time Magazine*, August 15, 2013.

2. [\*Comic Book Creator #1\*](#), spring 2013, *Kirby's Kingdom: The Commerce of Dreams* by Jon. B. Cooke.

3. [\*Alter Ego #30\*](#), November 2003, interviews by Jim Amash with Kim Aamodt and Walter Geier.

4. [\*The Comics Journal #38\*](#), February 1978, interview by Gary Groth.

5. [\*Alter Ego #18\*](#), October 2002, interview by Jim Amash.

6. Jack Kirby “The King”, DVD extra on “De Superman à Spider-man – L’Aventure des Super Héros” by Michel Viotte.

7. [\*Handwritten letter by Jack Kirby\*](#) entered into evidence in the Disney Vs. Kirby Heirs

court case, *Marvel Characters, Inc. v. Kirby*, 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, No. 11-3333.

8. [Alter Ego #92](#), March 2010, interview by Jim Amash.

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## a half hour with Jack Kirby – 14 March 1993

by [Rand Hoppe](#)

Posted [28 August 2013](#) in [Video](#).

Today would have been Jack Kirby's 96th birthday, and in addition to the [Kirby-Vision portrait gallery](#) that Jason Garrattley's posted, I'm offering this half hour video of Jack talking with fans at Comics & Comix, in Palo Alto, California in 1993.

Ray Wyman, Jr. says in the YouTube comments:

*This was one of four stops we made to promote "[The Art of Jack Kirby](#)." We rented a passenger van and hoofed it around the old fashioned way. The roadtrip crew also included Roz, myself, Catherine Hohlfeld, and Rob Crane. Thanks for the share. Really terrific memories.*

Jerry Boyd recounted the day in an article titled "An Afternoon With Jack", published in Twomorrows Publishing's Spring 2003 [The Jack Kirby Collector 38](#).

# Comics & Comix

Presents

## JACK KIRBY



CREATOR OF:  
FANTASTIC FOUR  
AND  
SILVER SURFER  
AND  
THE INCREDIBLE HULK  
AND  
CAPTAIN AMERICA  
AND  
RAY WYMAN, JR  
AUTHOR OF:  
THE ART OF  
JACK KIRBY

IN PERSON ON:  
SUNDAY  
MARCH 14

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# How Could He Not Know?

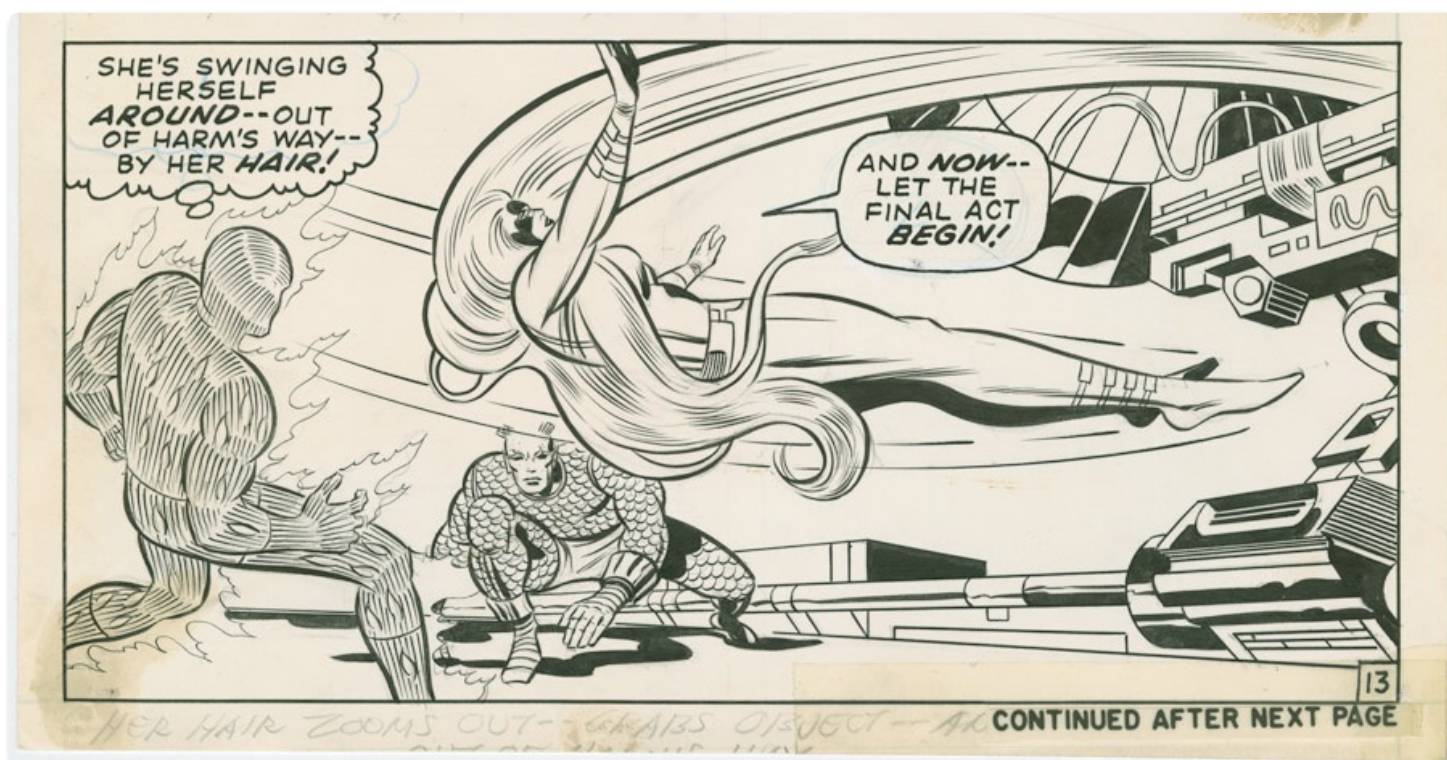
by [Mike Gartland](#)

Posted [16 August 2013](#) in [A Failure To Communicate](#).

## A Failure To Communicate – Part Seven

*Thanks to Mike Gartland and John Morrow, The Kirby Effect is offering Mike's "A Failure To Communicate" series from The Jack Kirby Collector. Captions on the illustrations are written by John Morrow. – Rand*

*Part Seven was first published in [TwoMorrows' Summer 2002 Jack Kirby Collector 36](#).*



*Detail from Fantastic Four #99 (June 1970), featuring the Inhumans (probably in an effort to reintroduce them to readers before they spun off into Amazing Adventures #1).*

“Kirby is leaving Marvel.” Stan Lee passed this information on to the Marvel readership in one of his Bullpen Bulletins editorials, and with his usual glib self-deprecating charm reassured the Marvelites that, although Jack would be seeking his fortunes elsewhere, the best was yet to come. Young readers had no reason to doubt Lee; sales were still going up along much of the Marvel line, and by 1970 the foundation of the “Marvel

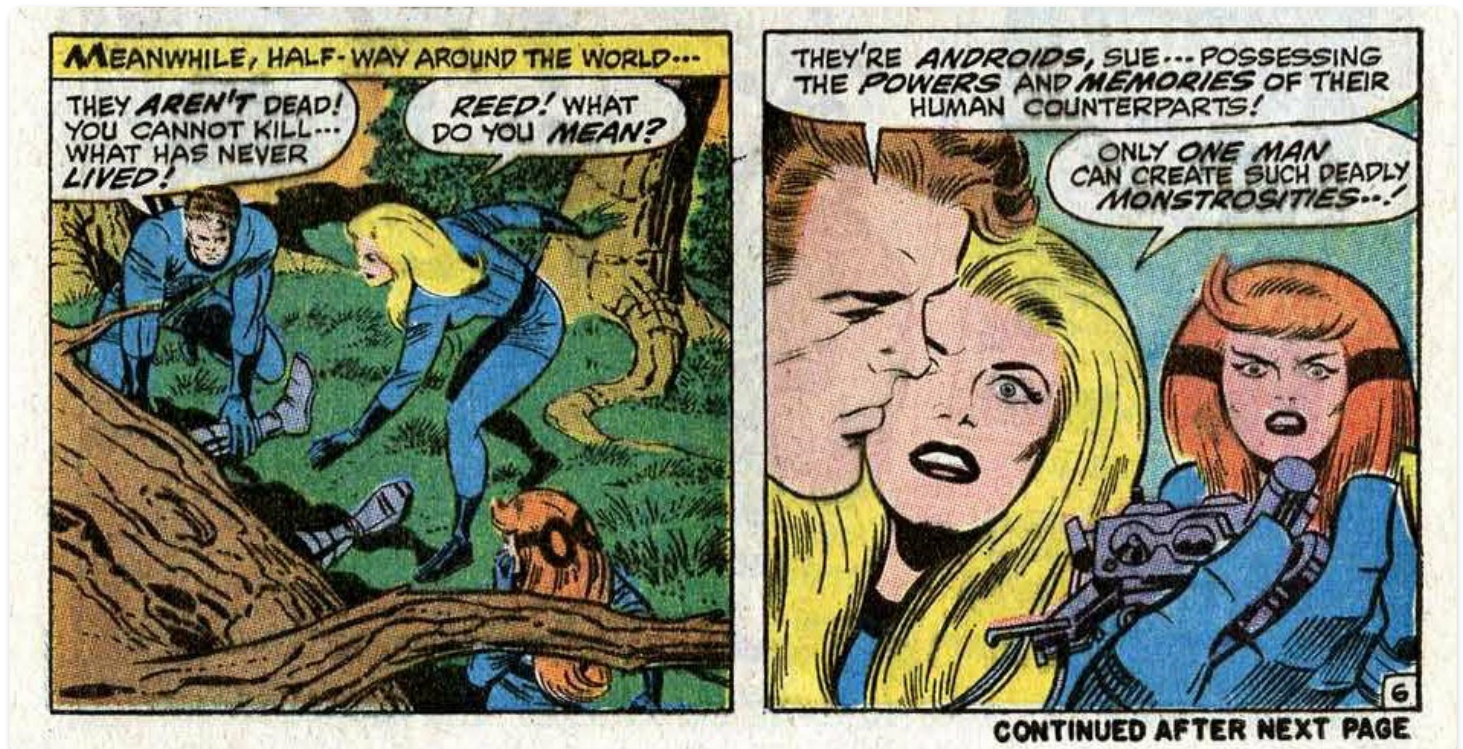
Zombie” had been laid, as many unsuspecting readers robotically swallowed Lee’s flip preachings. Besides, Lee was still there, and Lee was the man, the creator, the innovator; Lee was Marvel, right? Professionals, hardcore fandom, and industry insiders knew better; they knew that, although Stan was indispensable, this just wasn’t another artist leaving—this was the foundation to the “House of Ideas,” and with a foundation gone, can a “house” stand for long?

As we’ve read in previous articles, Jack had reached a point by 1967 where he was fed up with Marvel, particularly with Goodman and Lee. He had seen his concepts and creations exploited and taken credit for by individuals who promised him much but delivered little or nothing. Goodman was becoming even more wealthy on mass marketing and merchandising the Marvel creations; whereas Lee continued to take credit for characters and concepts he had virtually no input on save to dialogue after the lion’s share of the plot and story had been fleshed out and drawn by the artist. Steve Ditko allegedly left for these selfsame reasons a year before, suggesting to Jack to leave as well, but Jack was still under contract and was still being promised incentives. By the end of ‘67, however, Jack realized that outside of an increase in his page rate and contracts that were begun but never finished, he’d been shortchanged again by Goodman and Lee, his contract was coming to an end, and it was time to decide. Stay or go, but if he left, go where? As strange as it seemed, unbeknownst to Jack (or Stan for that matter), television would play an indirect pivotal role in Jack’s decision.

By the end of ‘67, due to the tremendous success of the Batman TV show, investors began looking to comic book companies as reasonably good investments. Both Marvel and DC had good sales and had been in the business under the same publishers for decades. DC went first, being purchased by Kinney National, then Marvel was sold to Perfect Film and Chemical. In both instances, publishers Goodman and Liebowitz remained temporarily (approximately four years) as publishers to see through a smooth transition and pave the way for their successors. Lee of course was first in line at Marvel, but at DC things were changing that would eventually help smooth the way for Lee to lose his most valuable asset. During the ‘67-’68 period many of the “old guard” of DC’s writers and editors were either retiring, looking elsewhere, or simply being let go. The end result would be that the new editorial structure at DC would be composed of their former artists, with one of their premier artists—Carmine Infantino— taking the helm as editorial director. Carmine knew about



Marvel what industry insiders knew for years: That it was creatively driven by its artists, and he wanted to bring that to DC. That wasn't all he wanted to bring to DC. He had heard that Jack wasn't happy with his present situation, and what better way to dent the competition than to get their main gun and fire it back at them?



*Panels from Fantastic Four #100 (July 1970). Reed erroneously states that only the Puppet Master is capable of making such androids, when he should've said it was the Thinker. Since they'd just done a Thinker story in FF #96, it's an even sloppier mistake.*

Meanwhile at Marvel, Jack had heard about the sale of the company (in late '68) and both welcomed and dreaded it. He'd hoped that this might give him someone other than Goodman to deal with, but these were corporate investors who knew nothing about the comic book industry and even less about Jack. Lee was nervous as well; he now had more than Goodman to please and might have to prove his worth all over again. By this time Jack's contract had expired and he was working page-rate, story to story. Despite his attempts to renegotiate for another contract, Jack was either rebuffed or put on hold (indefinitely); he knew he wasn't going to see any percentage of merchandising or creative control of his work or even proper credit for it, but despite all that, Jack still would've stayed with Marvel if they'd only given him the thing that had always been most important to him: A promise of financial security.

More than anything else in his life, Jack had the constant need to make sure he could support his family. Family was everything to him; during this very time, Jack began

taking steps to move out of New York where he'd lived all his life, and go to live in California (about as far removed from NY living as one could get), all for the sake of his family. Within the Marvel family however, Jack was becoming more and more isolated; Infantino had met with Jack during this time (while Jack was still in New York) and discussions began about Jack joining another kind of family.

While all of the aforementioned was going on, Stan was beginning to think of greener pastures. The success of the Marvel line had brought him the notoriety and recognition he so desperately sought during the years before the likes of a Jack Kirby or Steve Ditko came his way. Surprisingly, before his association with Jack and Steve which led to the Marvel successes, he languished for two decades pumping out average, topical, saleable plots and scripts for the Timely/Atlas books—but now by the mid-Sixties, he was being recognized by the general public as the creator of all these great characters and concepts. Contrary to what many may think about Lee hogging credit for himself, this may not have been all of Stan's doing as it most definitely was in the company's best interest to have one of their employees recognized as creator of the line, rather than a freelancer who might someday leave and try to take some of the creations with him. With the general—and some of the comic bookreading—public believing all of these great ideas came from Stan, offers began to come his way. Artists and Directors were asking to work with him. Colleges were approaching him to lecture to aspiring students on how to create. Newspapers and magazines were asking him for interviews and articles. Stan was finally reaching the point where he realized that his newfound status might be the ticket out of comics and into the big time. As Stan courted his celebrity, he began to slowly relinquish his scripting chores on various Marvel titles one by one.



YES - WE'VE BEEN EXPLAINING TO

YOU MUST KNOW THE CAVES

OKAY - I'LL

Jack's margin notes from FF #97 (April 1970) show he intended the Lagoon Creature—Jack named him



*“Eddie”—to speak, but Stan ignored it.*

Shortly before the Marvel purchase by Perfect Film, the title line was expanded; the characters showcased in the “split” books—Tales to Astonish, Tales of Suspense, and Strange Tales—were each given their own respective books, not to mention new titles being created like Captain Marvel, Captain Savage and Combat Kelly, and Not Brand Echh. Lee did the majority of the scripting (towards the end, some editing only) on the split books up until their transition, after which he left virtually all of them, handing the scripting reins over to guys like Roy Thomas, Gary Friedrich, Archie Goodwin, Arnold Drake, and others. He edited only, saving his scripting hand for Daredevil (which he left in March '69), Spider-Man, Fantastic Four, Thor, and Captain America. Lee also had plans to script the upcoming Spider-Man b-&-w magazine, a mentioned Inhumans book, and of course the Silver Surfer. Of the five titles Lee was still scripting, Kirby was drawing three of them: FF, Cap and Thor. One wonders why Lee never relinquished scripting the titles on which he “collaborated” with Kirby. Some speculated that, since Jack was doing the lion’s share of the work on those books with little or no input from Lee, and all Stan had to do was dialogue and edit an already fleshed-out story, it was less work for him than with less experienced artists—but the longer they seemed to be working together, Jack grew more and more frustrated with Lee; their collaborations began to become more like grudging co-operations, with each man trying to put their own plotting into stories that were meant to be agreed upon. The new Surfer book was a particularly stinging slap in Jack’s face; since many believe that Jack could’ve asked for and gotten any title in the Marvel line to work on, and this title was not mentioned or offered to him, it was pretty obvious to him that he wasn’t wanted on it (or his take on the character, at least). Jack had mentioned to Lee his wanting a writing or at least a plotting credit, but getting Lee to give a writing credit to any artist was a difficult task (shockingly, Steranko, a virtual nobody at that time, somehow got Lee to acquiesce after doing only two issues worth of work—another slap in Jack’s face). Jack was situated in California by 1969, even more isolated from Marvel than he had been in previous years, with Stan only talking to him if he had to. The stories Jack worked on that last year for Thor and Fantastic Four (he left Cap in early '69) were among the most mundane of his run—decent for any other artist, but downright common for Kirby. The lack of collaborating is pretty evident at this stage as there are myriad examples of Stan’s dialogue looking like it makes no sense whatsoever when coupled with Jack’s illustration. Fans thought he and Lee were

slipping, but it wasn't so much slipping on Jack's part as it was waiting.

During his last year on Thor, Jack seemed to be preoccupied with getting the origin of Galactus in print. He saw what Lee did to his Surfer and didn't want the same fate to befall his other great cosmic creation. In FF he seems to have his final fun doing a gangster homage in his last four-part storyline.

The rest of

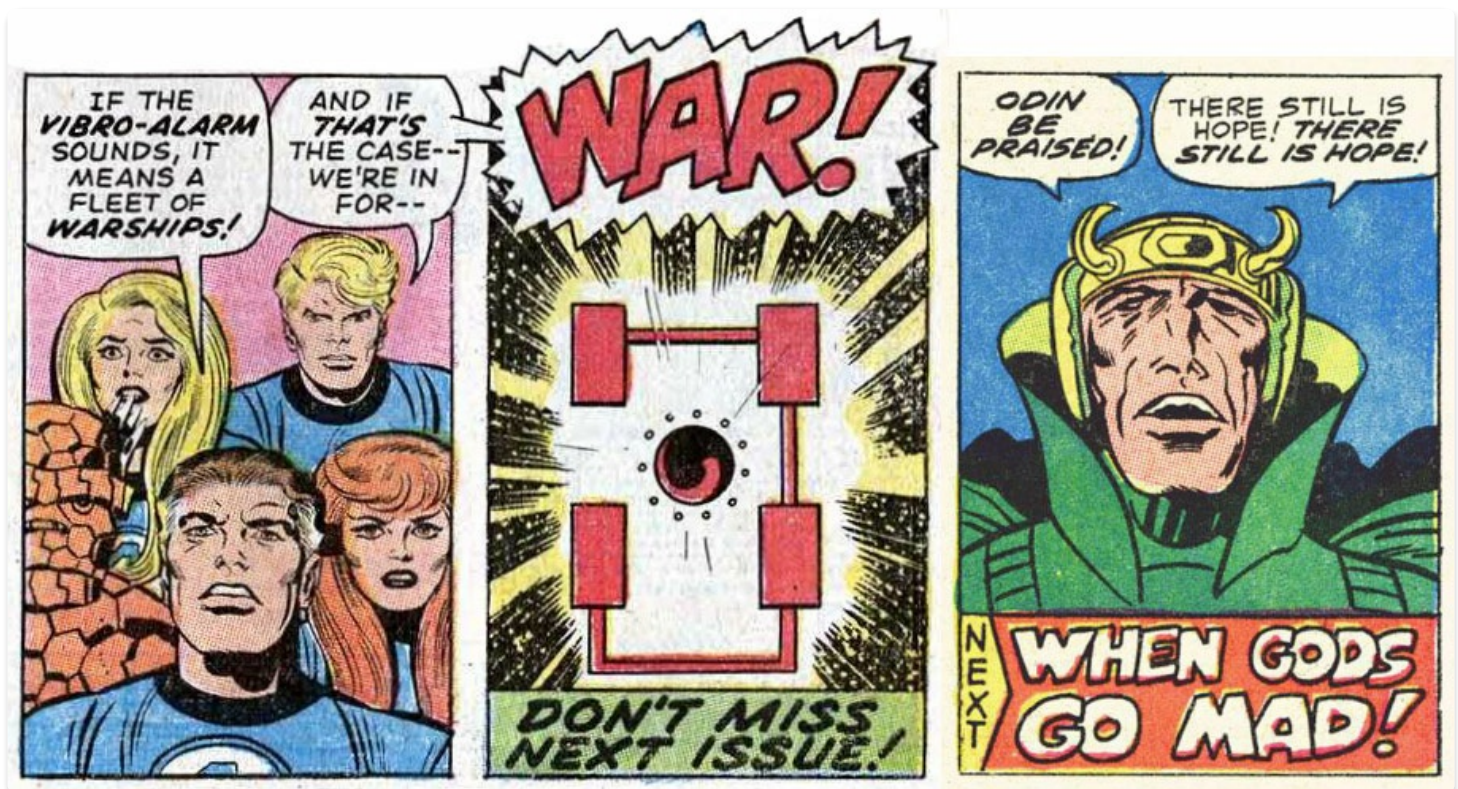
the year for the respective books feature retreads of old plots and old foes, and some new ones. Thor introduces Kronin Krask, the Crypto Man, and the Thermal Man; Fantastic Four came in with the Monacle and the Lagoon Creature. The fact that Goodman decreed that there be an end to continued stories for a while didn't help the situation, as suspense and action then had to be crammed in or reduced.



*Splash page from Astonishing Tales #1 (August 1970).*



Although it wasn't showing, Jack was arguably at his artistic height and these restrictions didn't become so apparent until he left (once he got to DC, it's almost like Jack's art exploded out of these confines). Some speculate that towards the end of their association, these last new characters were probably from the plots that Kirby got from Lee, because it was reported that Jack was asking Stan to come up with the plots by this time; but upon reviewing original art from these stories, there is nothing to indicate any difference in the way they had always worked, so it's entirely possible that Jack came up with them. Of the new characters introduced, only one—Agatha Harkness— would be utilized by Lee as a recurring character. By that time one would think that that was not Jack's intention, however. It would be the last example of Stan using his editorial savvy to get something marketable out of one of Jack's "throwaway" characters. Still working without a contract or any type of reassurance for job security, Jack was still doing work for Marvel, good work, but it wasn't his best work. Some thought Jack was burning out; quite the contrary, he was just burning.



*Final panels from Jack's last issues of Fantastic Four (#102, Sept. 1970) and Thor (#179, August 1970), showing messages of war and hope.*

While Marvel refused to talk to Jack, Carmine was ready to listen. He went to California to continue his quest to lure Kirby from the competition. The fact that Jack was on the West Coast meant little to either publisher, although it was unusual at that time for any comic book personnel to not work out of the New York area. Only an artist of

Jack's stature could get away with working clear across the country, working by phone and mail almost exclusively. Carmine asked Jack what would it take to get him for DC. Foremost in Jack's mind was a contract that would ensure continued financial security, but he wasn't about to leave out the "little things" that Marvel refused to give him: A writing credit (in fact to write his own books), editorial control (remembering what happened to the Surfer and Him—to name only two—Jack wasn't going to see his creations stolen from him or twisted into something different ever again), and a percentage of any merchandising from any characters he created. This was a hefty request for its day, but Carmine wanted Kirby at DC; it would be the coup of his editorial career, but he had to get the OK from the new bosses. Leibowitz was "old school" and requests like these were usually shot down, just as they were by his contemporary Goodman, but there was one difference: Goodman promised and reneged, and to Jack that was not very nice!

While negotiations continued, Jack got a few final surprises from Lee. Jack was asked to do the stories for the Inhumans in a new anthology (split) book, *Amazing Adventures*. The Inhumans was a book that originally Stan wanted Jack to put out years earlier, but it never made it to the schedule (some believe that the "Inhumans" back-up stories in *Thor* were the aforementioned book split-up, with other short "Inhumans" stories added until the back-ups were stopped completely). The surprise was that Jack would get a writing credit for the stories he did. Was this appeasement on Lee's part, or was this the only way Stan could get Jack to do these stories (in which case, the surprise was on Stan)? Probably the former, as Stan could've simply gotten another artist for the book, but unlike the Surfer, Stan wanted Jack's particular input on the characters he (Jack) created (in a 1968 fanzine, when asked directly, Jack states that he created the Inhumans). Jack also contributed "Ka-Zar" stories for *Astonishing Tales*, scripted by Roy Thomas, and did what would be the final story/issue for Lee's failed Surfer comic. Kirby must have looked upon this particular job with mixed emotions to say the least (the last page says it all). The *Fantastic Four's* one-hundredth issue, alleged to have been scheduled as a giant-sized story, was truncated to a miserable nineteen pages, a sad epitaph for one of Jack's greatest series. Reportedly Jack finally got those plots he asked Lee for, in the last couple of FF stories. Jack continued to grind 'em out but, with the return of Infantino, Jack would now, finally (with Marvel anyway), grind to a halt. Jack's requests were acceptable and it was time to sign. Up to the last minute, Jack waited, hoping he could come to some agreement with Goodman and the new owners at Marvel, but he was just another artist to them.





*Final page from Silver Surfer #18, a book that must've been particularly galling for Jack to draw. Kirby was initially snubbed for the art chores on the book, and the series floundered for seventeen issues. Then Stan Lee called in Kirby to try to course-correct the book for inker Herb Trimpe to take over with #19, but the series was cancelled with this issue.*

Stan knew his worth, but also knew he wasn't going to go to bat for him. He was worried enough about his own future with the company, and thought Jack was just disgruntled over the credits and some of the stories; he'd get over it. He was wrong!

The day Jack signed his contract with DC he called Stan and told him he had his last work for Marvel. Stan was indeed surprised for, although he knew Jack was unhappy, he never thought he'd leave. The last Thor and FF stories Jack worked on had themes of hope and war in the respective last panels; one can only wonder about the irony of it all.



MY POWERS ARE TOO MUCH FOR ME -- MY MIND-FORCE CAN PROTECT ME

WHERE IS SIF? IF YOU'VE HARMED HER --



**HARM ME??!**  
KNOWEST THOU THAT I BE THOR ... I BE THUNDER GOD IMMORTAL!!

NO MATTER! I AM HIM... NOT BORN OF MAN AND WOMAN!

I WAS CREATED TO BE INVINCIBLE!

AND THOSE WHO MADE ME ... MADE ME WELL!



THOU CANST WITHSTAND THE BLUDGEONING FORCE OF MJOLNIR!!

BUT STILL SHALL THOR DESTROY THEE!



WHY DO YOU SO HATE ME? I HAVE DONE NO HARM!

THERE NO MISHAP CAN BEFALL HER!

THE FEMALE IS SAFE IN AERO-SPACE, WHERE I HAVE PLACED HER!



WITHIN MY COCOON, I HAVE KNOWN GREAT LONELINESS... SO I HAVE TAKEN A COMPANION!

IS THAT NOT WHAT YOU WOULD DO?

**BELOVED SIF!!**  
HE TAUNTS ME WITH THE SIGHT OF THEE!



NOT EVEN MINE HAMMER SHALT STRIKE THEE NOW!

ONLY THE FEEL OF MY NAKED LIMBS

**WRETCHED ONE... DEFEND THY-SELF!**

BATTERING THEE INTO LIFELESSNESS CAN AVENGE THY MONSTROUS VILLAINY!

SHE IS SAFE IN AERO-SPHERE WHERE NO WEAPONS CAN TOUCH HER

THOR SAYS -- CANCEL YOUR MIND-POWER AND I'LL PUT AWAY YOUR LIFE



*Pencils from Thor #166 (July 1969), featuring "Him"; like the Silver Surfer, he was another character Jack felt was changed from the direction he had planned for the character.*

What happened after Jack left has been discussed by many. Kirby was gone but sales continued to rise; was it because the new creative teams produced better stories? Hardly! Sales continued to rise on Spider-Man after Ditko left in '66 also; sales continued to rise on almost all the Marvel books. Stories had little to do with it; it was impetus fueled by Marvel fanatics if anything.

Lee went on without Jack for approximately two years. He stopped scripting Thor one year after Jack's departure, and finally stopped scripting Spider-Man and Fantastic Four a year after that. Stan went on to become publisher, then president of Marvel, publishing book after book on the Marvel heroes based on his "crazy ideas." It's reported that the copies of these books that Jack had were edited by Kirby with a pair of scissors, cutting out falsities, thereby reducing many pages to Swiss cheese. Once at a convention, a fan asked Jack if he'd sign one of the Lee books. Seeing that Lee already signed it, Jack said to the fan that he'd sign his name in ratio to his contributions as opposed to Lee's; Jack's signature was five times larger.

To this day Lee credits his artists as the most creative people he ever worked with; what they created, however, you rarely hear from Stan. As recently as his new autobiography, Stan continues to relate how Marvel came about, always using the collective "we." He'll graciously acknowledge the likes of Kirby and Ditko as two of the best artists he ever worked with, but according to Stan, the "ideas" came from him; they only fleshed them out. (At this point I'd recommend subscribing to Robin Snyder's The Comics where Steve Ditko is giving his side to the Lee/Ditko "collaborations.") As far as any problems with Jack, in a recently released DVD with Kevin Smith, all Stan can relate is that Jack was unhappy about some form Marvel wanted him to sign to get his originals back (this happened with Jack in the mid-'80s). For some reason Stan believes Jack blamed him for this problem (Jack didn't), and that's all Stan would say about any problems with Kirby—no mention of why Jack left Marvel.

In a 1977 interview, when asked why he embellishes his answers to the point of not really giving the answer, Stan responded in so many words that the public wasn't interested in boring tales, even if they were the truth. Since he admired Shakespeare





JIM! JIM--  
GO BACK!  
RUN--WHILE  
YOU CAN!  
HE'S THE  
MOST  
DANGEROUS  
MAN ALIVE!

SHALL  
I  
SILENCE  
THE  
FEMALE,  
MISTER  
KRASK?

OF COURSE  
NOT,  
BRUNHILDA!  
THERE IS  
NO NEED!

IT IS NOW  
TOO LATE  
FOR ANYTHING  
TO ALTER THE  
MASTER PLAN  
OF KRONIN  
KRASK!

STEP  
FORWARD,  
DR. NORTH!  
WE HAVE  
MUCH TO  
DISCUSS!

Kronin Krask, one of the forgettable villains that populated Kirby's books his last year at Marvel. Was he



so, I think that the best line that suits Stan would be from Measure for Measure: "It oft falls out, To have what we would have, We speak not what we mean." So the greatest team in the Silver Age of comics was no more. Jack's heart left Marvel long before his person; a long last year that stretched out over several. In later years, Jack cited why he felt he had to leave, but just as with Ditko (and Wood for that matter), Stan will tell you how he doesn't know why Jack left. He knew Jack was unhappy, he knew Jack was working with no contract, he knew Goodman reneged on promises made; but he doesn't know why Jack left. It seemed any artist who contributed significantly to the creation of the Marvel super-heroes had a failure to communicate and eventual falling-out with Lee, but he doesn't know why!

How could he *not* know?





**NEXT** THE SEARCH FOR LOKI!



1970). After Kirby left, Neal Adams drew two issues, and then Buscema became the series' regular artist.

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