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## CLUB MEMO'S BY GARY GROTH

Welcome once again to the thresholds of the Fantastic Fanzine. Before I start apologizing for the lateness of this issue, I'd like to explain, right away, why this issues editorial (or rather the start of this issues editorial) is placed smack dab in the middle of the Contents page. The explanation is really quite simple; Dave Cockrum's beautiful centerspread breaks this magazine into two nice, even parts (25 pages to each section); I didn't want to break up the continuous "rythm" of our STERANKO INTERVIEW by splitting it up (probably at a very interesting part) by the centerspread. I wanted to keep the interview and portfolio on one side of the book, and I, of course couldn't do that if I printed a 3 page Club Memo's section on pages 3, 4 & 5. (In fact, I originally was planning on saving the first 20 pages of this ish just for STERANKO, his interview, portfolio, and the critiques analyzing his artwork, but the interview was so long that I was forced to place the four page GRAPHIC CRITIQUE on the four pages following Daves THUNDER Agents spread. Oh well, I tried...)

Club Memo's continued on page 32....

## STAFF:

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Pro contributions this issue: Jim Steranko, Jim Steranko, Jim Steranko and Jim Steranko!

## INDENTIA:

Fantastic Fanzine # 11: 75¢ @. Next issue due out June 20th. IOCC Membership: \$1.50 for the year of '70. Subscriptions to FF: \$3.00 for 5 issues; \$6.00 for 10 issues. Please specify which issues yours is to start on. Headquarters: 7263 Evanston Road, Springfield, Va. 22150. Back issues available: 6\*7, 8\*9, 10 all 60¢ each; FF Special: \$1.00. No other back issues available! All the contents of this fan magazine is the copyrighted property of Gary G. Groth and no part of this publication may be reprinted without the written permission from the editor! All drawings in this issue are the copyrighted property of their publisher (National, Marvel).



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# A PORTFOLIO OF HIS WORK---

## JIM STERANKO

Noted as a fastidious person, not many fans are in favor or overly enthusiastic over too many of the artists which dwell in comicdom at present. But one artist totally overwhelmed Fandom with his portrayals of trite super heroes, vivid imagination and new fascinating layouts, and that artist is -- JIM STERANKO! Possibly THE BEST illustrator one can find in comics today! But surprising enough, STERANKO hasn't always been the virtuoso of the graphic form that he is today. STERANKO commenced his stint in comics with the Harvey Comics Group some years ago, giving fandom, at best, a relatively poor rendition of some strips Harvey had been unsuccessfully experimenting with. Needless to say, these unmemorable attempts at Stardom soon faded, and STERANKO did too for a time. Then, as every fan remembers, STERANKO took over the S.H.I.E.L.D. strip at Marvel, converting it from a trite graphic form to a pseudo-scientific, extensively imaginative comic strip which instantly became one of Marvel's TOP strips. After pencilling, inking and writing over 20 S.H.I.E.L.D. strips, he left the book, and next we found him embellishing Captain America. Although STERANKO wrote and drew only three Captain America strips, we could all see him changing it; shaping it into another STERANKO - stylized masterpiece.

Not to stagnate, STERANKO is taking a breather from comic books, and has turned his attention toward painting paperback book covers. But for those of us who have enjoyed STERANKO's work in the comic strip, DON'T DESPAIR! STERANKO has not only started his own publishing company, "SUPER GRAPHICS", but he is publishing his own Professional Comic Magazine! Using his own Sword & Sorcery hero, TALON THE TIMELESS, STERANKO offers this fantastic, uncoded collector - item visual novel ONLY to Fandom! His fans clamored for it, and STERANKO is delivering! DON'T LET HIM DOWN! Each Talon Magazine will cost \$5.00. YOU can reserve your copy NOW by sending a pledge of the number of copies you wish to purchase and an S.A.S.E. to: TALON c/o Rich Hauser 4519 No. Richmond, Chicago, Illinois \* 60625.

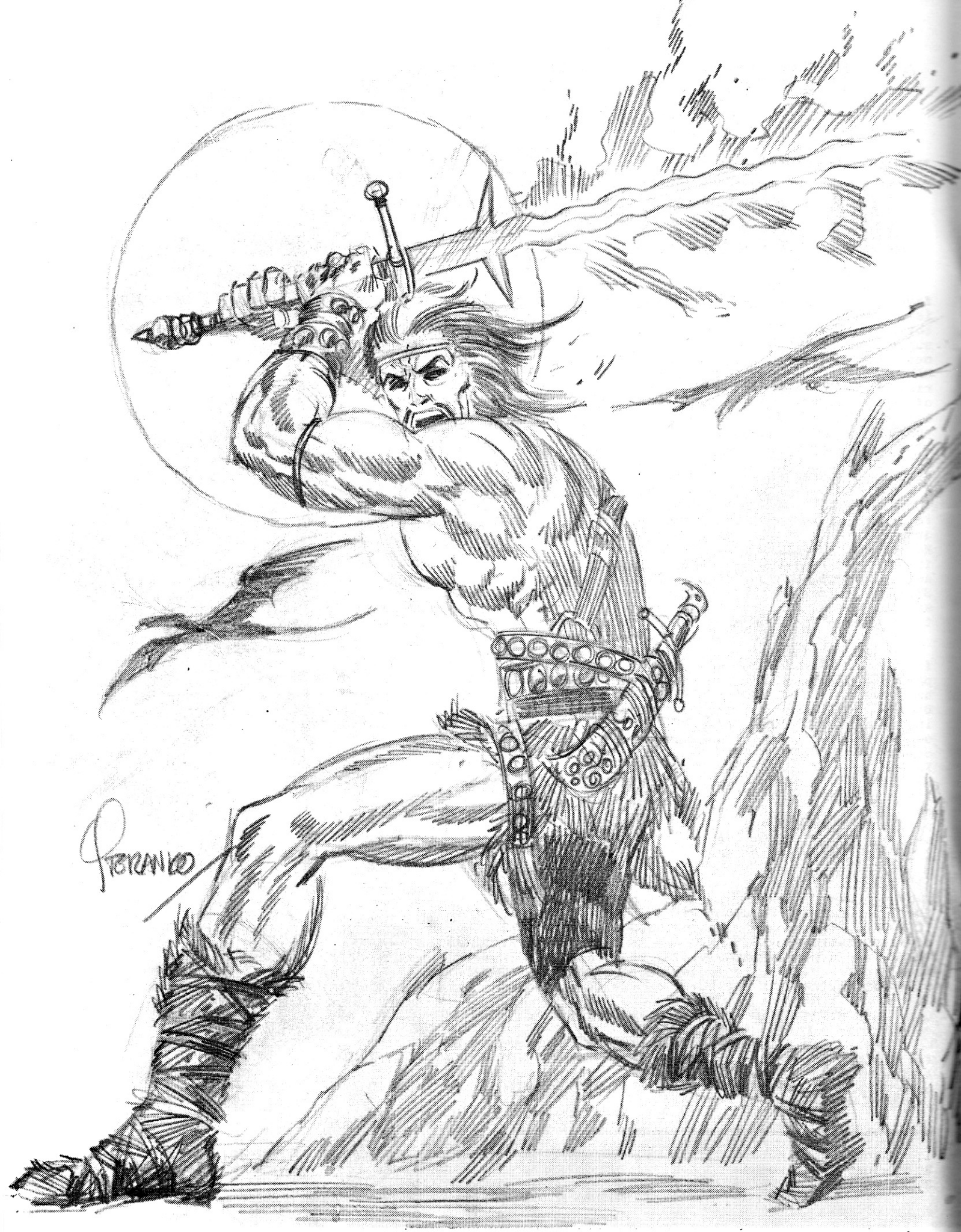
And, of course, as everybody who is reading this page can see, STERANKO is undertaking the enormous project of writing a book entitled "THE HISTORY OF THE COMIC BOOK". This book (NOT magazine) will include hundreds of illustrations by STERANKO and is WELL WORTH TWICE THE PRICE -- a measly \$1.98!!! Buy these items and support them; more are sure to follow. MORE magazines that will start a new trend in the world of the comic strip!

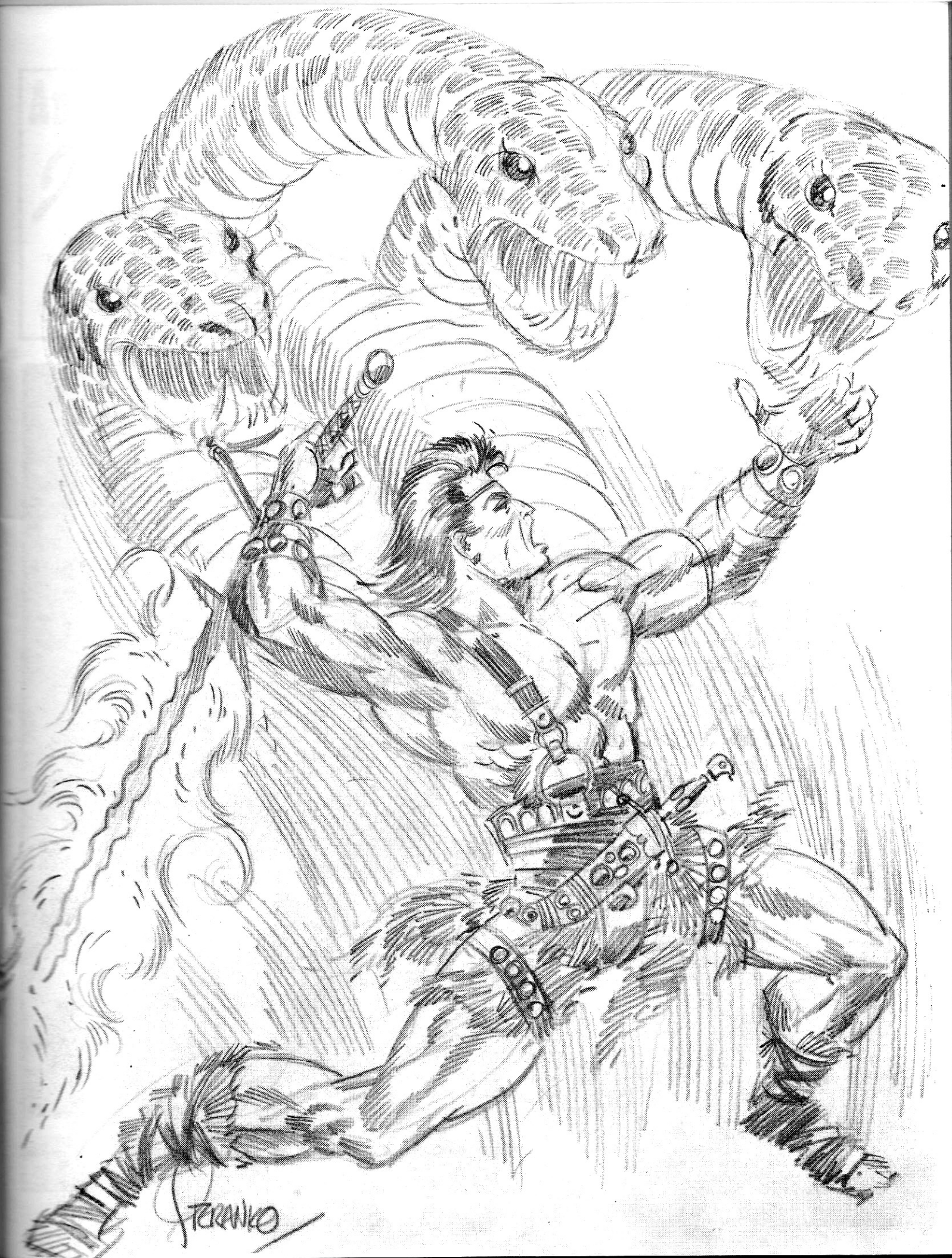
And STERANKO is leading us into it!

But for right now, you're going to have to settle for a short prelude of STERANKO's work; so all you STERANKO gourmet's, prepare yourself for the un-veiling of our "STERANKO PORTFOLIO", which begins just as soon as you turn the page!



1. Talon, The Timeless
2. Talon, The Timeless
3. Nick Fury







NICK  
FURY  
AGENT  
OF  
S.H.I.E.L.D.  
TERANNO

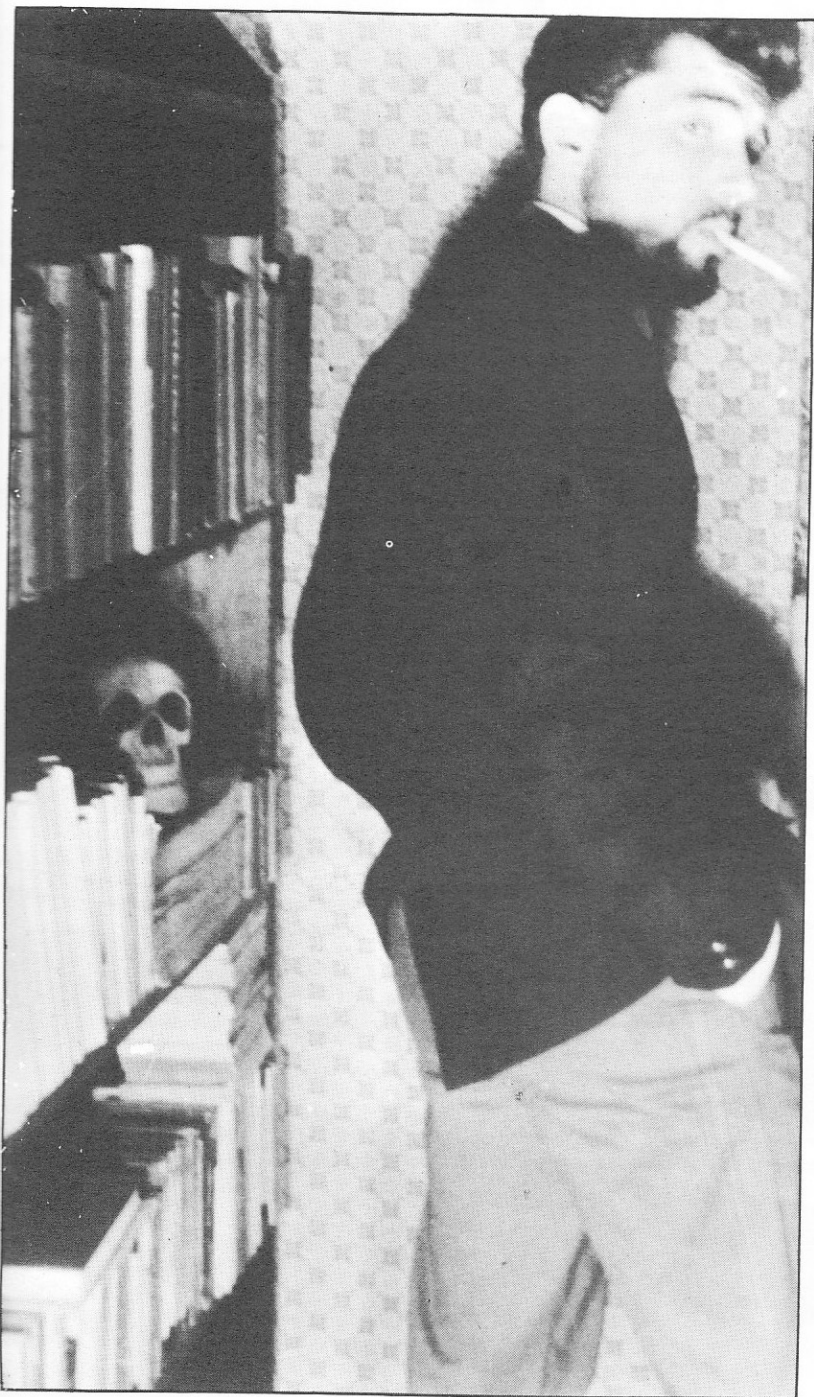


# An Interview With THE Artist...

# JIM STERANKO

**"...Local boy makes good."**

**-JIM STERANKO**



The very first time I met Jim Steranko was about noon - time, at the 1969 Comic Art Convention, when I asked him to autograph his Christmas Card I reprinted in FF 6\*7. I wish I could say that Jim was as overjoyed to see his Christmas Card reprinted in FF, as I was to meet him; I can't and he wasn't. That's another story, though, but that was the fateful hour and place that this friendship originated from.

After the convention, I mailed him some photo's I took of his exhibit (at the New York Con), asking his permission to print them. He gave it to me, and I started writing him about other various things. Two weeks later, I finally got up enough courage to ask him for an exclusive interview! He consented, and November 14th was set up as the interview date. There was only one (but one rather big) problem; how was I going to get up there? At the time I didn't have my drivers license. It was either take a taxi or ask my dad. I did the latter, and on November 14th, we started our journey north to Steranko Country.

On the way, I was day - dreaming, about how Steranko's butler would greet me at the door of his Pen Top Sweet, and how we would be sitting on his marble sofa with beautiful maidens fanning us, as I conducted the interview.

In the middle of my relaxing day-dream, we pulled up to a secluded red brick building. I cautiously walked up two creaking flights of stairs, wondering whether or not THE Steranko lived here. There was no doubt in my mind when I finally reached the door, and started to knock. Scrawled in flowing letters on a business card in the name plate of his door was the name, STERANKO. I knocked. It opened. There he was. He ushered me in. My nervousness faded, as we started talking about comics, fandom and related things. We sat down and I showed him some of FF's art and what I had done on the Special. He was pretty impressed and we just shot the bull for awhile. Finally, he asked where the interview questionnaire was - to look it over, while I was plugging the tape player in. I asked him the standard question when looking around for a plug to plug my tape recorder in; "Do



R. Kline '70

'ya have a plug here?" He quickly answered, "NO!" I turned around frantically, looking around the room, back to Jim, and then around the room again, stammering Wha...Wha...Wha... all the time. He let me suffer for a few minutes, and then calmly said, "Of course I have a plug. It's right over there". A couple sighs of relief later the interview began.

The entire interview took no more than 3 hours. I was shooting Jim questions as fast as he could answer them. All throughout the interview, the tape recorder sputtered and wheezed. The cause became quite clear when the tape started clogging up and squeezing out of the cartridge. The caricature to the left, by Robert Kline is only a slight exaggeration of the plights Jim and I encountered during this interview.

Finally the cartridge wouldn't turn, it was so bogged up with tape, and we turned it off. I vainly tried to pop the cartridge out, which only made matters worse in the long run, so Jim told me to forget the recorder for a while, and invited me back into his studio for a look-see. It was a large room in the back of his apartment, made to look smaller with the wealth of books, magazines, comics, pulps, and other related material (including swords, guns and original Wally Wood artwork) stowed within its book shelves.

On his drafting table was the almost finished painting, printed as the cover for Lancer's new book, INFINITY ONE!

After a long talk with Jim in his studio we returned to the (ugh) tape recorder. I finally got it working again, put in a new tape, and we were off again! After finishing the whole thing, we both let loose with a sigh of relief (Jim probably more so than myself).

It was about 6:30 (p.m.) by now, and we had a long way to go, before we reached home. I bid him farewell, warning him that I'd see him again one day.

\* \* \* \* \*

Although I injected humor into this introduction, I'd like to make perfectly clear that that day was one of the most exciting in my life. It was a great thrill for me to meet STERANKO, whose art I admired in comics - ever since Strange Takes 151. And I can't thank Jim enough for all the help he's been with this issue. Would you believe it? Jim edited his interview from start to finish, and certainly did a better job than I could have ever done. I'm sure that this deep appreciation doesn't come just from me, but from all your many fans who have admired you and your work in the past and who are going to read your interview now. So, start reading, and enter the world of JIM STERANKO:

---

## INTERVIEW: JIM STERANKO CONDUCTED BY GARY GROTH

GARY: Well, Jim to start the interview off, could you give us a brief run down of your career as an artist?

JIM: I wasn't aware I had a run down career. But to answer your question, I've done just about every art job, commercial art job that is available. I've been drawing ever since I was a kid. The first drawings I remember were Flying Tigers, which were what? "P. 38'S" or something like that? And ever since then, I've only made my living at art, one way or another.

GARY: What did you do before you went to Marvel to earn a living?

JIM: Let's see. Before I worked for Marvel, I was an Art Director at an ad agency for a few years. I worked as a sign painter. I worked as an illustrator. I worked as a free lance artist, a printer. As a designer. And that's about it.

GARY: What about your boyhood background?

JIM: What about it?

GARY: Well, for starters, when and where were you born?

JIM: I was born thirty years ago, right in this town, in Reading. Being an old timer now, I mean, I've lived here all my life... Local boy makes good." And so, I've traveled around the country. I haven't done anything really exceptional

when I was a kid, I wouldn't say.

GARY: Have you always lived in Pennsylvania?

JIM: I think I just answered that question, didn't I? Yeah, I always lived in Pennsylvania. This is my town.

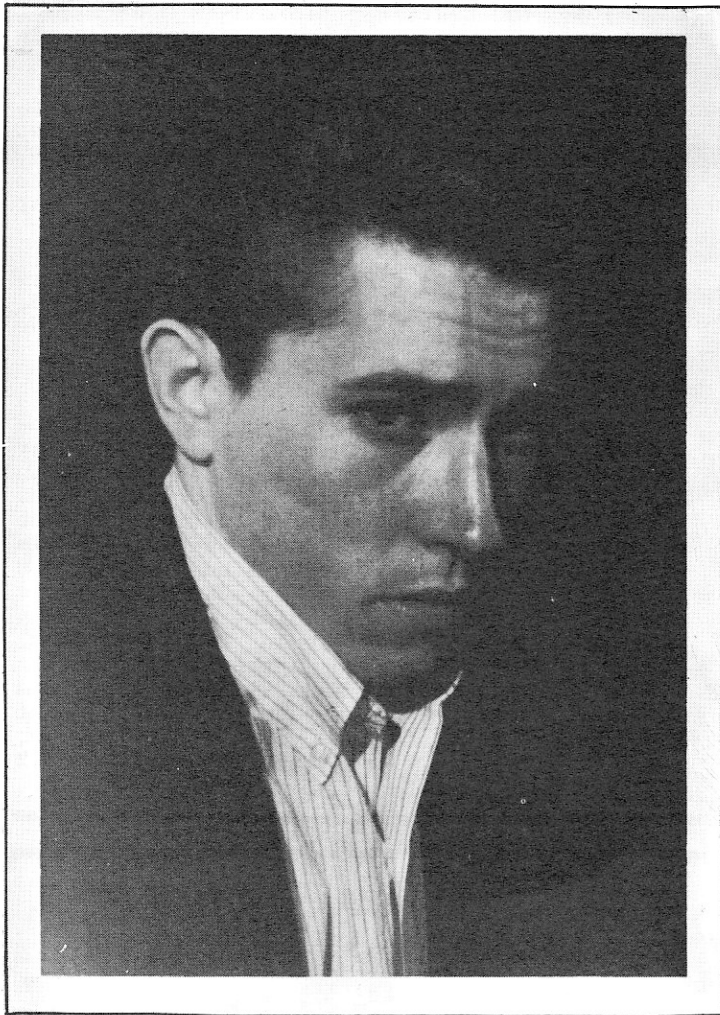
GARY: To put it bluntly, why have you left Marvel?

JIM: I'm working for Marvel. I just turned in a romance story for them.

GARY: Then, you haven't left them at all?!

JIM: No, I just finished a story for them. I intend to do some more things....God be willing. I'll be working there for a while because I like to tell stories. The reason I had a little altercation with them is because they edited some of my work. They changed certain things that I didn't feel should be changed.

And I insisted that we couldn't continue on that basis. Any work that I turned in, I insisted be left exactly the way it was. For example, my horror story, "At The Stroke of Midnight", had a line of dialogue added. The meek husband said "I'm nervous because it's closer to midnight" or something like that; simply a gratuitous line. It wasn't my title and I didn't have that line in it. And it had nothing to do with the story. Stan originally wanted that story to be called "Let Them Eat Cake", which I didn't



approve of. We had disagreements about the way I told stories. I simply insisted that they go in my way, or they wouldn't go in at all. I mean, I don't have to draw comics to make a living. I can do other things. So, I don't need the aggravation. If you're a publisher, and you want my work, you get it my way or you don't get it at all. It's as simple as that. Anyway, I have an agreement now, a working agreement with them, and everything's cool.

GARY: As you undoubtedly know, your artwork is very popular with the fans. Do you try to accomplish anything special or out of the ordinary with your art; I mean, could you tell us what you try to accomplish or tell with your art?

JIM: Well, I have a personal philosophy. I try to communicate with the people who read my books. I have something to say and I say it. I think most of the best men in the business have something to say. Neal Adams and Jack Kirby are examples. I think there are guys in the business who just don't care anymore—the hacks. They tell you how dull and boring life is for them. But men like Kirby and Neal are very hip. They're excited about things, about living, and about their work, about the stories they tell. And you can see it in their jobs, and in their proceedings.

GARY: Now what about your pencils? Are they very tight or is the detail put in with the inks?

JIM: No, all of my pencils are really tight. Every line is drawn in. I used to ink my own work, and I do occasionally. I'm not one of those people who can draw with a pen or a brush. To begin with, I NEVER ink with a pen; I never use a pen for anything. In fact, I ink my machinery with a brush. And, I need it all down right on the paper very tightly. I'll show you some pencils later of a story that was rejected by Marvel and you'll see that everything's there. You could photograph the pencils, that's how tight they are.

GARY: Do you prefer to ink your own artwork, rather than letting another inker do it?

JIM: It would depend on the job. For example, take this book, SHIELD # 1. Early in the series, I used to lay them out on pads - sketch pads, to get my panel arrangement right, whatever I was doing - to get my story-telling to come out to precisely 12 or 20 pages. But after writing it, laying it out, drawing, coloring and correcting it, I began to lose interest.

GARY: Could you explain a little of the technique you use in your pencils and inks?

JIM: Technique? I don't know if my technique varies from anybody else's. I just sit down and pencil away. What did you refer to precisely when you talk about technique?

GARY: Well, for example, John Buscema has a particular style to his work, that takes a particular technique to accomplish.

JIM: Like what?

GARY: Okay, let me put it to you in a different way: You can differentiate artists because of their different techniques.

JIM: That's style. Technique with a pencil; I'm still not quite sure what you mean by that. I sit down and pencil everything in as far as that goes. If you're talking about technique, simply the fact that I use a brush instead of a pen. Most artists, the inkers that I'm familiar with, use a brush and pen. Like Wally Wood for example: He does faces and hands with a pen and he'll fill in blacks, outlines, other detail with a brush. I have very tight control over my brush, very absolute control. I handle it all with a brush.

GARY: Was there any special reason that you were assigned to the SHIELD book, and stuck with it so long?

JIM: Well, let's see. First of all it was one of my favorite books, before I came into the comic book business, when it first came out and Kirby did it. I was very enamored with Nick Fury and SHIELD. I took some samples up to show Stan, he looked at the stuff, and said, "We don't

have anything for you, but you're too good to get away", so he had me ink a page for him, then he took Kirby off the book, off SHIELD, and gave it to me. I think we talked about it. He asked me what I'd like to do, and I said I'd like to do SHIELD because it was a good book. I thought I could do something with it. It seemed to be something that was a natural for me, something I could project my personality into. A character that I couldn't handle, that I wouldn't like to do, would be Daredevil. Doc Strange, Nick Fury, that's my kind of thing, and I've had it ever since, and enjoyed doing it. I had set up many interesting premises to continue on and whoever took over, disregarded them all. They went back to the old Marvel way, unshaven Nick Fury with a cigar butt. We had many arguments, a lot of dissention when it came to story lines, Fury's philosophy and the way the strip should go. My stuff came out looking not like a Marvel book, not in the Marvel formula, but in my own way. When Springer and the other guys took it over, it lost some of its personal appeal. Of course, I'm prejudice. How do you expect me to feel?

closer to the way I wanted to see Captain America. I would have enjoyed doing more issues of Cap, but, again, they broke up, I think, my run. They threw in one Kirby story in between and the same thing happened. I simply didn't want my issues broken up with others. I thought it lessened the impact -- of the month after month, continuous story line. I had some good ideas coming up for them, though. Another thing, now that I'm thinking about it, Stan wanted Rick Jones to be worked into the strip. Now they've dropped him. I had to work in the background and think of things for him to do. It slowed up the ideas that I wanted to do for Captain America, myself. It was a gratuitous story to get this

GARY: Why, then did you stop doing the strip?

JIM: I was always very tight on my deadlines; very tight, and I made everybody nervous. I'd be working up to the very minute the deadline was due. In order to prevent a deadline from being missed, Stan had Springer do a story. It was the Origin Story that ran in SHIELD # 4. When I heard that somebody else did a story and that they planned to use it, right in the middle of the Steranko Series, I said, "That's it! Use that story, and there will be no more books by me".

I didn't want to see a break in the flow of stories I did, and after that, I lost interest, and said, "No, I will not do that strip anymore". I continued doing covers for them as a favor, but that was the end.

GARY: Did you have any say as to what titles you could draw?

JIM: Any what?

GARY: Any say.

JIM: What do you mean?

GARY: Well, if you wanted to draw...say Captain America, would they let you handle that mag?

JIM: Oh! You mean after that?...What I wanted to do after that? Yeah, I had been after Captain America for awhile. He wanted to give me something and that was it. I had wanted to do Captain America a whole lifetime, because I grew up with comics in the forties. I remember the original Captain America. It was a lifetime ambition of mine to do that strip. I enjoyed doing it. I don't think I ever got it precisely right, the way I saw it in my head, but each issue was getting



kid working as Cap's pal again, took up too much story line, although I was pleased to accept the challenge of it. But, he's out of it now, anyway, isn't he?

GARY: Yeah.

JIM: So, it's all gone to waste!

GARY: It seems that way to me, too. It's too bad that the only issues of Cap you did were slowed down by Rick Jones; even so, there was still more-than-enough action and good plots. I noticed that all throughout your stay at Marvel, you did only one comic a month at one given time. Why did you do only one strip a month? Why not two, or even three?

JIM: I felt that that was all I could handle. You see, I do other work. I'm still doing commercial art. I worked for Paramount Pictures for a year and a half, while I worked at Marvel. I was playing in a band, during the week. I had so many things going, I couldn't do another strip. Nor do I know if I really wanted to do another one. I don't think I want to spread my interest out, fragment my attention on two or three different strips. I wanted to think about one, and really get it right, work on it, and make it a masterpiece. Every strip I did was the very best thing I could do at the time, under the circumstances -- the deadline, the money involved, the editorial policies that I had to work under.

GARY: Who do you feel inked your work the best on your strips for Marvel?

JIM: Who did I feel...?

GARY: Inked your work the best.

JIM: I think the two best guys on my things were Joe Sinnott and Giacoia, of course. I think Joe inked more like I did. His inking looks a lot like mine. He's very slick and very tight. Frank Giacoia has a nice loose and bold feel about it. He gave it a nice feeling. It's difficult to say who's work I liked the most, but those are the two guys I picked to ink my work.

GARY: On a couple of your early SHIELD books, the covers were signed KIRBY/ STERANKO. Did this mean that you inked Jack's pencils, or that Jack inked your pencils?

JIM: No, the first cover was pencilled by Jack and I inked it in. I pencilled in some changes that fit the story, but basically it was his pencils, and I inked over them. Yeah, it was just on one -- what was it? 131 or 151 or something like that. It was the first one, right? That was because Jack had already done the cover when I took over the book. And, of course, he was still doing layouts inside for the first three issues, until I got the feel of it.

GARY: I was looking through an old X-Men mag a

couple days ago and was pretty surprised to hear that you designed the new logo used on all the recent X-Men mags. I think I read about it in a letters column or somewhere, but anyway, could you give us the story behind this?

JIM: I didn't like the one they had, and I asked if I could do it. As a matter of fact, there was a plan going on for re-designing the whole line. As a matter of fact, I designed the SHIELD title. The old one was always a head-ache. And I think we changed the Strange Tales, Dr. Strange/SHIELD logo, which was, I think over my pencils. I had originally pencilled in that change, and then I worked on this one.

GARY: While we're talking about the X-Men, how did you feel about your work on the X-Men issues you did?

JIM: I did that work as a favor to Sol Brodsky, who said, "We need a story, and we need it fast", and I did a couple of them for him. But, the work was deplorable. As a matter of fact, I didn't even sign my name to it. I told them to leave my name off; I told them to put somebody else's name, a fictitious name in, but I think they used my name anyway, somehow. I'm not very proud of the work. It was done very fast, and I had no interest in that strip. It was simply as a favor to Marvel that I did those stories.

GARY: Do you prefer to do any specific type of story? That is, if you had a choice, what kind of story would you do?

JIM: I'm not interested in doing any particular kind of story. I would, conversely, like to do almost every kind of story. I'd like very much to do a western. I talked to Stan about doing one. One western, --- one STERANKO WESTERN. I'd like to do one private eye story; I'd like to do one sea story; I'd like to do one Great White Hunter story; I'd like to do one airplane story; I'd like to do one of everything, to focus my thoughts upon every dramatic situation. I'd like to do one boxer story, one prison story. I'd like to get my thoughts down on each of those things. Little by little, I think I'll be doing it. That's why, for example in the SHIELD books, I tried to make every one of them different. The first one was sort of adventure, double-agent kind of thing. The next one, I re-wrote The Hound of The Baskervilles, Nick Fury style. I re-wrote the Bible in the third issue, "The Evolution Island". Every one of the SHIELD books was gonna take on a different problem, completely different than the other ones.

GARY: And who are your favorite artists?

JIM: Ohhh, my favorite artists are your favorite artists. I like many of the guys in the business. Of course, at the top of the list, Kirby's gotta be number one. He's the grand-daddy of the comic book; literally the backbone of the industry. Every artist has learned from

Jack, including myself. He has been, for years, since 1939 or '40 the foremost comic strip artist. He's influenced everyone in the business! I think every Marvel book bears the stamp of Kirby's genius, and many of the DC books too, maybe all of them. I have been influenced I would say, in the beginning, by Frank Robbins, Joe Maneely, Wally Wood, Jack Kirby....! I like Al Williamson... There's probably too many I could name. I wouldn't sit down and pin-point a few of them because I have so many friends in the business. I would say, as far as comic men go, Kirby is about my favorite! Of course, currently, Neal Adams is doing work that is probably unsurpassable. Frankly, I'm not sure what I like more; Neal personally or his work, but I'm a great admirer of all of his proceedings. I think, Neal's the most talented of the newcomers in the business. Neal did the Ben Casey strip for years and years, so he's got three times as much more drawing time in than I do, but as a comic book artist, he's very exciting, doing a lot of imaginative things.

GARY: What do you think of today's comics, compared to, say those of the Golden Age?

JIM: The Golden Age books were crude compared to the slickness of today's. As a matter of fact, the primitive quality of some of the Golden Age books had a lot to do with their appeal, perhaps had everything to do with their appeal. I grew up reading those books in the Golden Age, and I think it shaped my future; certainly things I am doing now in comic books. I think, with the exception of the DC books, today's comic books have the best comic art, and probably the best writing too.

GARY: As I understand it, the artist gets paid by the page.

JIM: That's true.

GARY: In that the same way as the writer gets paid?

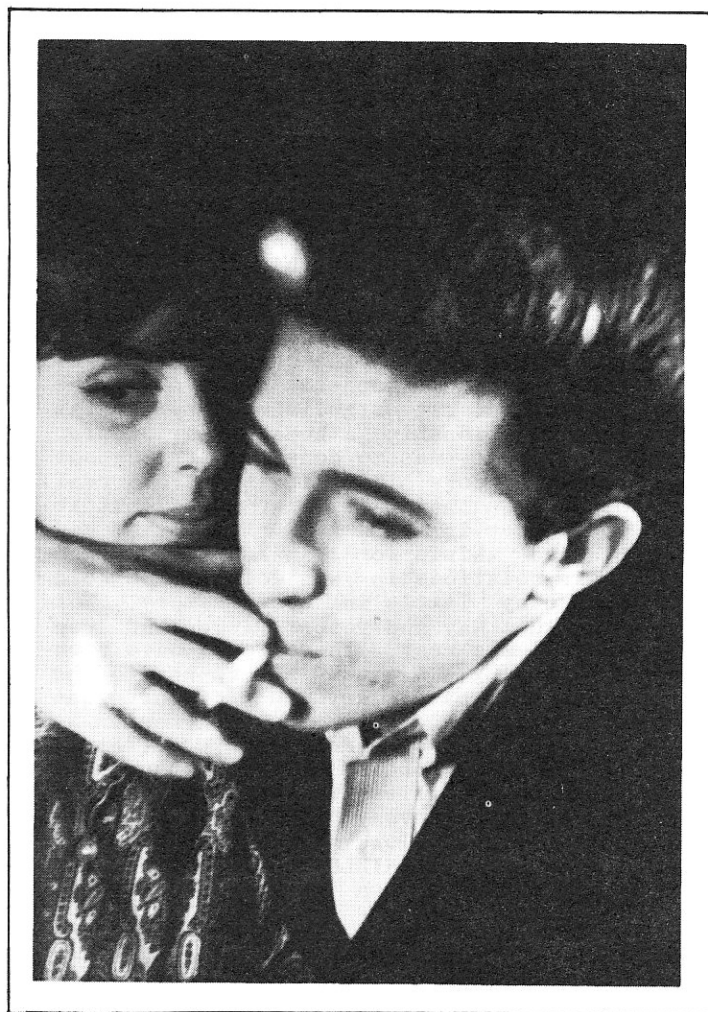
JIM: Yes, a writer gets paid per page. Right.

GARY: Could you tell us what the average pay ranges from for an average comic artist?

JIM: I don't have a very comprehensive idea, I think some companies pay as low as thirteen dollars a page for artwork, pencils and inks, and I'm sure that in the case of Bob Kane, for example, he may have made a hundred dollars a page, which is a high page rate. I imagine it varies somewhere in there, fifteen dollars to a hundred dollars a page.

GARY: And could you tell us what the average writer gets paid?

JIM: About 10 dollars per page. I would say from 3 to 15 dollars. Companies like Charlton of course, have to pay less, but National and Marvel are around the 10 dollar bracket.



GARY: In your own opinion, what titles at Marvel, right now, could use a great deal of improvement.

JIM: I think the whole Marvel line could stand some improvement. And that goes for the DC line, too. I've had a lot of idea's for both of them, but nobody hired me as an advisor to change the books. It is simply a matter of getting enough talent and time to work on the books. It's very tough to do. I think certainly the Marvel books are not perfect, they could stand some improvement. Every book could stand some improvement. It is just a matter of guess work, though Gary, how can you be sure? And they don't want to change. They just want to go along the way they are; selling the way they do. It's as simple as that!

GARY: To change the subject a little, about your writing -- does Stan edit your material much, or is the finished product almost exactly like the original?

JIM: As the duration of the stories that I wrote lengthened, less and less changes were made. Most of the changes were made not by Stan, but by Roy or Gary Friedrich or somebody else who was editing the job. There were really some fantastically bad editing in my early SHIELD stories. The SHIELD books, the twenty pagers, were almost all Steranko writing. They were literally intact.

GARY: Somethings been bothering me a long time about your SHIELD # 2, where you threw in that Fury/Val sequence seemingly without any reason. I don't understand why you did that...

JIM: Don't you think there was a reason for it?

GARY: Well, it didn't follow any sort of pre-determined plot or anything.

JIM: It didn't enhance the story. What it did, was pointed up what was missing in the SHIELD books. The characterization, the human development between all the characters. It established Fury and Val in a relationship, a human relationship. I felt that was to continue throughout all the books. It didn't have a real bearing on that particular story, but it would have in the next 10 issues. I had planned things for Van and Fury, and their relationship was going to be told little by little in every story. Not like Aunt May and Peter Parker and Gwen and all the rest...there would have been a beginning, a middle and an end to the thing they had. They wouldn't have gone on forever and ever; nothing does. No two people go on forever and ever. Since the SHIELD book is killed, though, it would be pointless to tell you what I had in mind. Anyway, it would have had a bearing in the long run. You could have looked back at SHIELD 3, 5, 8, 10, and you could have seen another story following through.

GARY: I've heard a lot of talk, and some rumors in fandom to the effect that John Romita had to redraw a few panels on the aforementioned page, but nothong specific. Is that true?

JIM: That is true.

GARY: How did you feel about that?

JIM: We didn't have the choice; the comics code made us change them. Let me tell you first of all, what was changed: the telephone was put back on the hook, I had the phone off the hook. There's nothing wrong with a telephone being off the hook. The last panel that appeared was simply a stat of what happened in the first panel. It was a shot of the chair with the holster slung over it, the pistol in the holster, which really had an erotic symbolism involved. It was by accident. They didn't realize what they had done. until after the book had been printed. I originally pencilled a long shot of Fury and Val embracing in the last panel. But the code thought it was too hot, so they changed it!

GARY: What do you think of the comics code?

JIM: I'd love to see responsible people, responsible editors and publishers censor their own work, and keep it within the realm of good taste. I don't think we should really have a comics code, although I think the horror stories of the fifties eventually required it. They

were just not adhering to the realm of good taste or responsibility. Their responsibility went hay-wire. They needed a code to keep comic books within their own framework, an entertainment medium, a light entertainment medium. That's all. I'd like to see Marvel get rid of the comics code. And Stan has already thought about breaking loose of the code. But of course, there would be distribution problems, and I don't think people like Marty Goodman would ever go along with it. But, we have discussed it already.

GARY: What about Agent X? I heard all sorts of rumors about it; first it was going to appear on TV, then it was gonna' be a comic strip, and then is just faded away and nothing was ever heard of it.

JIM: Who is this rumor that keeps telling you these things? (Laughter) Agent X...well, I had worked for Joe Simon years ago. I created a half-a-dozen characters for Joe Simon on order. He bought three of them; three original characters. I wrote the stories, never drew them, and after





I saw what had been done with them, I was very disappointed with them and said, "I could do better than this". I created Agent X. I took it around to all the companies, Tower thought they wanted the character. They asked me to do a book; 60 pages a month, or bi-monthly or whatever schedule they wanted to work out for the book. I ran into editorial policies again. One of the things was this: They said, "Steranko, we don't like this girl's straight nose. We want her to have a turned - up nose", and I said, "But, this girl isn't a drug store teeny bopper. She's a lady scientist, and her nose is gonna' stay straight." And they said, "Well, if her nose stays straight, you don't work here", and I said, "That's cool." It's as simple as that. There were other things, little story lines - trouble we got into. The anatomy I drew. The Kirby looking anatomy that I used to do in the beginning; the long legs, the wild action. They picked about really unimportant, trivial things, and I wasn't about to take any back - talk, any of the frustration for any length of time. So, I told them they could go to hell as far as I was concerned. I took the stories around to other companies; they wouldn't meet the price that I put on the stories. I have to work at a particular figure. I won't want to sell my work cheap. National wanted me to write for them first of all. They saw my stuff; they saw Agent X, and they said, "Forget about drawing for the time being. We want you to work for us as a writer." I still thought Agent X would be good, went to Marvel and Stan looked at the stuff, and said, "Well, we don't want this, but we'll put you to work on SHIELD", which pleased me very much, and that's how I got started. The TV series happened during the time I worked at Paramount. It was one of the presentations I gave them for a series, and it was going to be a TV series, but the Paramount cartoon studios folded up right at the critical point, and Agent X was just killed, along with many other projects that I had there. I had a number of shows like Johnny and the Genii. Oh, I don't know, there were many.

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GARY: ((My next question directed toward Jim was, "...And what about Talon? Could you tell us the story behind it?" Jim started answering the question, and two minutes later the tape recorder finally bit the dust. I was using a Cassett Tape Player, and somehow or other the tape started shooting out of the spindle. I didn't notice it, and Jim was too busy answering the questions to notice it. What finally happened is that I replaced the unwound cartridge with a new one, and Jim started answering the Talon question from where he left off. However, in the transcribing the tape broke about 501\* times, and the first part of Jim's answer to my question concerning

his new TALON creation was totally decimated! (in other words lost)! So, we'll have to start this question in the middle of Jim's answer. (???) Jim did not lose his composure or wit during this whole disheartening moment, and proved it by making the all-too-true statement: "This is a helluva way to run an interview". Helluva way to run an interview or not...we continued...))

GARY: And what's the story behind TALON, THE TIMELESS?

JIM: I'm publishing my own TALON strip. I was saying that the comics code --- no strip could be produced under the comics code and still have the force of the original. There's got to be enough sex and blood in every Sword & Sorcery story to carry the formula through. Like the Tarzan stories were really terrible. They were juvenile stories; they were adolescent material. And in order to keep any interest, you've gotta' have enough blood and sex in the stories. The comics code would never let us do it. TALON was originally slated for Marvel publication, but they couldn't take it. I'm publishing it myself now --- with Rich Hauser. Do you know Hauser?

GARY: I've never corresponded with him, or anything like that. I've seen some of his work, and read his 'zine, though.

JIM: Well, I've talked with him this morning as a matter of fact. TALON will come out in a 30 to 40 page book; the size of Life Magazine, in comic book format - full color, wrap-around cover painting, and it will sell for five dollars. If it's successful, there will be others. Check your local fanzine for time and place. It will be announced...soon. Next question.

GARY: What company do you consider to be the best all-around company?

JIM: For what?

GARY: Art, stories, writing...

JIM: Oh! For comics?

GARY: Yeah.

JIM: Oh, I think Marvel's had the edge over DC for five years already. We've got all the talent over here. Especially now that we have Neal. All we need now is Joe Kubert and that would be it.

GARY: What, in your opinion was the best all-time strip ever published?

JIM: For the comic book?

GARY: Well, I don't want to strictly limit you to comics; newspapers, comics or any other books that printed a comic strip.

JIM: I think the best COMIC strip there ever was in art was certainly Foster's Prince

\* That's symbolic.

Valiant. It endured longer at high quality than any other strip. I personally would, -- if I had one title to pick, it would be the Fantastic Four. It's had the most imaginative artwork and writing.

GARY: How do you feel about your old work, as compared to your work today?

JIM: It was.....primitive Steranko. What I'm doing today is going to be primitive Steranko in three years. Well, some of it had a few redeeming panels here and there. There was some good thought put into it. Some of it I liked, most of it was pretty bad stuff.

GARY: When did you really become interested in comics?

JIM: I had comics -- before I could read. I was looking at pictures, studying comics. It was during the war. I grew up with Captain America, The Human Torch, and The Sub-Mariner, Superman. I've spent a lifetime reading comic books, --- a childhood, anyway. Fulfilled one of my ambitions by drawing comics again, especially that Captain America strip.

GARY: How, then did you become interested in painting paperback book covers?

JIM: I have never painted or worked in color in my life. I have only ever worked in black and white. But when I quit my job as a comic book artist, I had to do something or starve to death. So, my taylor, my landlord, and my girl friend all said, "Get to work", I decided "I'll be a painter for awhile". And that was it. I began painting the day I quit comics. Had that big argument at Marvel, went out and sold and that's it.

GARY: Why did you go to Lancer instead of another paperback book company?

JIM: I went to several companies, and Lancer gave me my first couple of assignments and I HAVE been to several other companies that are publishing my work now. I have a lot of covers that are coming out, Sword & Sorcery, Adventure, Fiction, Fantasy. So, they were interested in my work. I'm not good enough at the present time to work for Ballantine and Bantam, but ask me next month.

GARY: Will do. (no laugh at all....) At what age did you really discover your talent for art?

JIM: I can't remember back that far. I think everybody in my family has always been artistic in one way or another. I have always drawn pictures. I really don't consider myself an artist. Or did I tell you that before? I don't consider myself an artist. The real artists in the business are Neal Adams, Reed Crandall, Williamson. Those guys are really artists. I'm just a story-teller, that's all.

GARY: What do you think of today's comics? Are they in an upswing, or heading downhill

or what?

JIM: Today's comic art is the best around. As for the comic books themselves, the crest of the wave is over. The Super-hero trend is THROUGH! Only titles are hanging on now. It's over. We're ready to go into something else now.

GARY: Like what?

JIM: Mystery, Horror again, Love titles will be coming back. Super Heroes will not emerge again for eight years. They'll be back the beginning of the next wave, the next trend will be eight years. Which will be 1977 or something like that. You won't be interested in them anymore.

GARY: Well, why did you choose this profession to go into?

JIM: You mean comics?

GARY: Yeah.

JIM: It happened to be a whim at the time; just like painting is a whim. I wrote some stories; I didn't like the way they were drawn. I felt I could do it better myself. So I went out and did it better myself. It's as simple as that. I never made less money than in comic books. It's just hard work at very little pay. No financial reward. It's all work on the board. I made more money when I was art director at that agency I was telling you about. There's a lot of money to be made there. Comics? Only publishers make money. Not the artists or the writers, none of the people who are exploited. I've never heard of a rich comic artist; there will never be one.....! .....That's why I'm getting out of the business. (laughter) Made money for other people all my life; hopefully I'm gonna' start making some myself.

GARY: Could you give any aspiring artists any pointers about drawing?

JIM: Any aspiring artists....tips?

GARY: Well, yeah, I guess that's what I meant.

JIM: Use ban. ....And be sure. Practice man. Aspiring - heh! Okay, they've got to practice, that's all. Practice, pick out the men that they like to emulate. If you want to do Wally Wood, if you want to do Williamson, Steranko, Kirby, whoever it is. Study the styles of those men, look at every picture you can, and practice a hell of a lot. That's all there is to it. If you have the talent, it will show through for you. You have to have a little luck, too, I suppose.

GARY: I think this next question has arisen on everybody's mind at one time or another: Do you enjoy painting paperback book covers more so than your work at Marvel?

JIM: I do right now. For the simple reason that I'm learning how to paint. Every time I put my brush down on that canvas I learn something new. I'm excited about learning. As far as comic books go, I

have learned what there is to learn. I don't mean to say that I know it all, but I know almost all of it. And I'm just repeating the same faces, and the same bodies and the same weapons, and the same shots over and over again. I'm really not interested in drawing at all. I never draw for pleasure; I only draw for profit; only ever. I am interested in telling a story, but not in actual drawing. Not in moving that pencil around on a page. It's a very dull and very lonely job. You can't do it when somebody else is there. You have to do it by yourself. It's very lonely. Very unrewarding.

GARY: What about hobbies? Don't you have any of those?

JIM: I have no hobbies. I have a coupla' girl friends you might be interested in. But we wouldn't call them hobbies. It would not be fair to call any young ladies hobbies.

GARY: And what can we expect from you in the future?

JIM: Yes, in the future I will be doing my very best work; better than any other work I've ever done before!

GARY: Well, then, I guess this is an appropriate time to ask you if there is anything you'd like to say to your fans?

JIM: Not particularly.

GARY: I just knew you were gonna' say that!

JIM: Didja?

GARY: Yeah, I sure did.

JIM: Nothing that I haven't already said. I was a fan, and I probably still am a fan. I'm a fan of the work of other men I enjoy in the comic book business. I'll probably always be a fan because, like Al Capp I think also some of the greatest artwork produced in the country today is in comic books. I think we're all underpaid. And it seemed that with the advent of Pop Art we're starting to get a little of the recognition that we deserve. I hate to see great men become hacks, but eventually they do. I don't think it would be fair for me to mention names right now, without those men being here to defend themselves, but guys who were good 10 years ago are hacks now. They're just working away. They're just a machine turning out work, faces, arms, legs, hands, balloons, bursts, whatever it is. Just turning it out. They don't have the enthusiasm, the drive that they used to. They're beaten down by publishers, editors. They're nothing any more. I hope to see this situation rectified sometime. I'm doing everything I can to change it. Maybe by this publishing venture that I'm telling you about right now, will lead to something better for the good men. We'll have to see. Maybe they deserve it. I don't know. We'll have to wait and see what's in the future.

GARY: The problem with today's comics, or maybe all the comics of all the different era's is that they reach such a limited audience; the kids that don't understand intelligent, thought provoking stories make up most of their audience and because of that, comics can't, at least right now, attain the quality that I and many other fans would like to see.

JIM: I had a number of new ideas. I wish I had that page right in front of me. I had an idea for a strip called "O'rryann's Odyssey". I did the first page and had the story written. I showed Stan the first page, and he couldn't believe it! He said, "This doesn't look like a comic book page. This could never be used." And he had paid me for it already. But I felt the idea was so good, I bought it back from him. I think it'll sell to Grove Press. Maybe I'll publish it myself!

GARY: Well, they don't want change.

JIM: No. That frightens them.

GARY: What they're saying is, "Don't mess with success."

JIM: Well, you're talking about the publisher's money, and the publisher play's God. If it was my money, I'd probably do the same.

GARY: Well, you can afford to gamble and experiment with the field.

JIM: Publishers.... I have a lot of trouble with editors and publishers. I'm very adamant in my attitude. I don't bend easily when my mind is made up. I have walked out on jobs, jobs with considerable money involved. I just won't bend, that's all. Like they say, "C'mon Steranko, you can't do it and that's all," and I say, "Well, if you want my work, if you want the prestige, if you want the mail that comes in from my work, you're gonna' have to do it my way or else". It was because of me that Marvels formula changed. Remember the title banners in every splash? Like the Fantastic Four. There used to be headlines and banners across the top, boxes that framed the title. Well, I broke away from that, I said, "We've done it like a thousand times already, there are other things we can do." And it took me months to convince those guys, Stan and the other powers that be, that other, new, exciting techniques could be used. Now everyone does them, but that's because I had to go in there, fight about it raise hell, and create a lot of trouble.

GARY: Well, I believe in change, especially in the comic industry. I don't think anything should stay the same for too long. And the comic industry might find that they would do a better business if they change the whole format of their mags.

JIM: Well, they've adopted ideas, personal ideas of mine, which pleases me very much. They've tapped certain ideas I used for my covers. Stan said, "There's

something about your covers", and I told him it had to do with the coloring. There's always a considerable amount of gray on Marvel's covers and in their books. That gray tone absorbs other colors. The thing to do is to use less gray and more color. You see there's too many incompetent people up there. They don't know their jobs. They just, like, come out of school, the production men aren't really trained for their work. It's irritated the hell out of me. If they were professionals they'd be working at astronomical salaries, instead of what comic book companies are paying. There might be three quarters of a million of these books printed, if I told you the margin of profit on every one, you'd think I was a liar.

GARY: No, I wouldn't. Just operating a fanzine like FF, I can start to comprehend all the expenses that these types of books cost to publish. I mean, I don't even make a profit. I lose money on every single issue! Y'now, the thing that really kills me, and probably quite a few other 'zine eds is postage. I have no mailing rates of any kind. ((Note : This interview was conducted before I purchased FF's new Bulk Rate Mailing permit - Ed))

JIM: You can get a bulk rate can't you?

GARY: I don't have enough volume yet.

JIM: I may be working for you someday, you know that!?! When you are a publisher.

GARY: Probably the other way around? What is the margin of profit?

JIM: Less than a thousand dollars. On a three quarter of a million print run, less than a thousand dollars profit.

GARY: That's some astronomical fraction of a cent per copy.

JIM: That's right. Makes you wonder why go through all this trouble? But when you have 20 titles a month on the stand that's twenty thousand dollars a month. You see you've gotta be a wily publisher to comprehend all these economics. Little by little I'm understanding it.

GARY: Is it a corporation?

JIM: It is now. Marvel's been bought out by Perfect Films, which is Curtis Publishing.

GARY: But, when the artists salaries, and writers salaries are taken out of that 1000 dollars, that doesn't leave much...

JIM: No! What I'm saying is that when you pay the printers, when you pay me, the distributor, the newstands dealers, everybody who's involved in this thing, there's less than a thousand dollars left for the publisher to take home.

GARY: Are the salaries for you and the other artists at Marvel taken out of that 1000 dollars...?



ILLUSTRATION by John Adkins Richardson

JIM: That's expenses, that's not salary. It's not that kind of a deal. That's just raw expenses. I'm very pleased that ---- I think I must be one of the top three money earners in the business, considering that I've been in comic books for less than three years now, is that how long its been? Two or three years whatever it is. And I was always the most careless financial personality that I have known. I am a real dummy when it comes to money. At least I was -- for a while. (Laughter). All my life I've been exploited. I mean, I've always done artwork for money. Only ever made my living by doing artwork in one form or another. Then I started to get hip about tax things. Now I have things going for me. You see, my situation is unusual. I have no expenses, no independents. I deliver a service of artwork. I have no machines to buy. I have no tax write-offs I can use. I have to use other devices and ploys in order to keep my money. They

really take a huge bite out of me. I spent years giving away all the money I earned to the government. Now, I'm getting some savvy. I spend time now with accountants, and lawyers in Reading, and two in New York; two attorney's working on things like this copyright deal; this thing I was telling you about publishing. I've established a page rate for this work, this venture that I'm going into now that must be the highest in history. It amounts to me capitalizing on my own name. What the hell, I knock myself out on that drawing board to do those drawings I mean everything has to be exactly right. I work on it, I mean every panel has to work. I really cook. Tell me, why should Martin Goodman or Jim Warren or somebody else get paid for that? I should have that money. Right?

GARY: This is our basic capitalistic system. You're like the farmer. He does all the work, and the middle man is the one who really makes the profit.

JIM: Well, I intend to open my own drugstore.

GARY: And stock your own drugstore with your own drugs.

JIM: That's it. Well, I think it will be to the benefit of the people who enjoy my work because they'll see it uncut, untouched by any other hands. It will be all Steranko. It will all be written by me, drawn by me. No other fingers will be in the soup. When I talked to Stan about this Talon Project, he said, "I'd like to get a piece of that action." I said, "Sorry baby, you didn't give me a piece of yours."

GARY: You said that you didn't consider yourself as an artist. What do you consider yourself as?

JIM: No. The most I can consider myself as in the comic book world, is a story teller.

GARY: Yeah, but you do the artwork for it. You draw the story.

JIM: Yeah I drew and wrote it. Well, what I'm saying is this, there are artists in the business. Like Reed Crandall...who else did I say?

GARY: Williamson...

JIM: Foster, Williamson, Frazetta. Guys who are really artists. Neal Adams. These guys really know how to draw. I'm just telling you like what you think a motorcycle looks like. I don't draw motorcycles. I don't draw people. I draw what people think people look like. The drawings are really far away from how people actually look. For example, take comics now; there are black lines running around everything, everybody. There is no black line around me. It's really a form of abstract art. It is very stylized. I mean, I'm just faking it out. I have had someone ask me, "Aren't you pleased that you have this gift of drawing?" That is not, in fact, a gift. The thing I do best of all, it's tough to define, it's very fragmentary and nebulous, I have a way

of being successful with any proceedings that I happen to do. Like I had an argument with Stan Lee on the telephone. It was a violent argument. I never heard him talk that way before. He screamed over the telephone at me. And that was it. We were all through. And I said to myself, look man, you have to do something to pay your taylor, your landlord, to keep going. What's it going to be? I have never painted a single thing in my life, never worked in color at all. I said become a painter, and that's it. I began to paint. I think I could have said, I'm going to become a heart surgeon, an Atomic scientist. A sculptor or anything that pleases me. That's been my philosophy all through my life. I played guitar for ten years. I was in every group in town and on the road. I taught myself how to play the guitar, and I made a living that way for awhile. I have done many other things besides this comic book thing. See I'm a little guy, I'm not made to lay railroad ties. I mean physical things don't interest me. I'm just too small to carry bricks around or something. If I could I might, but I'm able to sit down and persue intelligent horizons.

GARY: Well, you must have some sort of gift. I could sit down and try to play that guitar but would not be able to teach myself.

JIM: I have an attitude about these things. I think I have, a professional attitude. Like this Atlantic Record Company thing. I was contacted, I went to recording sessions, we were doing the things and we came down to money. The guy said, "I can't meet your price, you got to take a hundred dollars less", and I said, "Listen pal, I would not work for a nickle less than I told you, a dime, nothing, I've got to get that price and I will not back down. Now, if you want me you'll pay that price." It is an attitude, a professional attitude you have to develop. People always are trying to knock you down on price and ideas and everything else they can con you out of.

GARY: Some business men always have to knock down the price even if there is nothing really involved.

JIM: Just for the principle, you mean?

GARY: Well, if you give in to this hundred dollars less, you place yourself in a tougher bargaining position. They'll say, "Well, this guy will back down and we have our foot in the door."

JIM: I found that out in the advertising business. You can never go up. You can start high and come down but you can never ask for more. Once you've asked for ten dollars, you can never ask for fifteen. You'll get a lot of flack and it will be almost impossible to do. Right now I'm in a position, I've been painting for four or five months and I've just picked up a commission. I really haven't figured out how much it is but it must be a commission to do two series of 70 books. That's G-8 and the

Spider. Remember the Spider pulps back in the 30's? Well, the Spider and the G-8 and his Battle Aces are two series that are coming up. The A.D. said, "Both of these are yours", that amounts to two thirty thousand dollar commissions. I don't have to worry about a single thing in the next year and like when Atlantic Records says, "We'll give it to you for less", I'm saying, "I don't have to. You give me exactly what I want or I don't take this garbage account. I get very independent, you know, after I get these big accounts.

GARY: Sometimes the most important thing to do when you are in that position is to take advantage of it, and then you don't have to put up with anything at Marvel, like editorial changes and the like.

JIM: They are really a bunch of jackasses. Christ, their production man makes me hit the roof. I said, "Look, we can get this effect. It won't cost anything. You just have to tell the printer how to do it." And he's saying, "That can't be done," and I'm saying, "Look man, I ran a press I know it can be done. Don't tell me." So they didn't let me do it. And four months later, they did the effect in another book. I made a call that day to Stan Lee, the boss. I raised hell, he got an ulcer, he called the production man in raised hell with him. Y'know, the whole place was in an uproar.

GARY: Well, why did he condescend to someone else, and not to you?

JIM: Well, I don't get along well with him. I give him a lot of trouble with my work. That's Sol Brodsky. If you wanna' print it, print it. I mean, I still have to do business with the guy, and he tolerates me, and I tolerate him, but I swear to God, if I ever get any power in there, he'll be the first to go. And he knows it, I know it. It's certainly not any secret. Anyway, I think we were talking about an attitude. I think you have to go in there, talk business with the guys. If they want you, they'll pay your price. These guys have a lot of money.

Atlantic Records can afford a hundred dollars more. They're not going to go broke. And if they want me, they're going to have to pay it. And comic book companies, if they want you, and they need talent, they'll pay your price. I think everybody will. Here's my secret; if you bring in a good job you can get the price. But if you bring in an apologetic job at a high price, you're gonna start to sweat, because they're going to get you in front of the president's desk, and he's gonna say, "This job is no good. We're paying you good money, etc."

GARY: It depends on your approach to them, is what you're saying. If you come in apologetically you're going to get that kind of treatment.

JIM: No! Your work has to back it up. You can get by bluffing so long. I think if you put in some good solid effort, you can come up with some imaginative work. Do you know what an avitar is? Did you ever hear that word?

GARY: No.

JIM: It's an imitator. I'm really amused. I started signing my name up the side of the book, on the spine. Now a half-a-dozen people are signing their name up the spine of a book. I mean, like what's that?? I'm not doing that anymore. I'm putting my name in type. Now I'm waiting for everybody to do type.

GARY: Well, the style or rashion in which you sign your name is legible. Now, John Fantucchio's signature is illegible. Did you ever see his signature?

JIM: Yes, it's incomprehensible.

GARY: Of course, I'd term it more of a trademark. You have to know the name to recognize the signature. And I can't see how he can sign that same signature on all the pieces of work always the same, the way he does. And if you watch him do it, he can sign his name in just a few seconds. It's unbelievable!

JIM: I'm sure somebody's going to say to John some day, "Well John, at least keep your name slightly smaller than the title of the book". Of course, I always sign my name on big...!

GARY: Well, I have an artist that's working for FF, Jay Mike, that doesn't put his name on his work. I think he will in the future, but right now he doesn't have his name on any of the work he's done. I think he should; I think any artist should especially a good one. ((And showing Jim some of Jay's work...))

JIM: You're right. This guy has a nice style. He's nice and clean, and shows a lot of promise. There are guys that write me -- well to begin with, I'm NOT a correspondent. I don't like to write letters, and I'm not a good letter writer. I'm a phone caller; it's an expensive hobby.

GARY: I know. Wanna' see my phone bill?

JIM: You wanna' see mine?

GARY: NO! (laughter)

JIM: The thing is, fans write me all the time. I get a couple dozen letters every week. Actually I'm inclined to believe that there are more fanzines than there are fans. I mean, every letter is the same thing: "Mr. Steranko, We like your work..." and the pitch is always in the last sentence, "...And please send five 8" x 10", rendered up in full drawings". Which, of course, I can't do. I don't draw for fun, so it would be impossible for me to give to fans. I'd love to contribute to every person who writes me, but it's just impossible.

GARY: Well a great many fans really look for original artwork by pro's, and I think that yours is selling at one of the highest rates.

JIM: I prefer to keep my work off the market. Like those things you bought, they'll multiply in price immediately. You'll be able to get much more from them a year

from now. It's just an investment. Like a diamond. Remember I told you at the convention that I almost sued you for printing my Christmas Card without notifying me. When I saw that I was really hot. Here's what happened: I get an unusual amount of mail requesting art. The letters are sincere and so am I about my work. I have lost thousands of dollars because of my stubborn integrity. I could've taken the easy way out. Anyway, I said, "Okay, save every letter and send a Christmas Card to everyone." So, I did a special piece of artwork, I had it printed, bought the envelopes, the postage, took the time for the addressing, the little notes I put on each one, and sent them out. The original artwork. What do I do with it? I'll give it to somebody that I owe a favor. There are a few fans that are personal friends, that do a lot of things for me. Frequently, I call them up and say, "Look, I need this right away" and they go through a lot of trouble to do that for me. So, I said, "Well, I'm going to give the artwork to this guy." Where did you get it, Gary?

GARY: I bought it from the editor of the old Yancy Street Gazette for \$5.00!!! And then I found out that I could've bought it for 50¢ at the convention. (Laughter -- from Jim!)

JIM: All you had to do is write me and I'd have sent you a card. You'll learn. It was an expensive lesson. That was a piece of artwork I did, and if it's printed in any book, I should be paid for it, right? Unless I say, "Okay, it's yours to do with what you want." When I got that thing I was really hot.

GARY: The first time you saw it was at the convention, wasn't it?

JIM: No! You sent it to me in the mail! What audacity! I was going to fly down to Virginia, with my lawyers and put that fanzine out of business.

GARY: I'm sorta' suprised, that with your determination that you didn't!

JIM: Well, a coupla' things happened at the same time. Kids would come up to me at conventions and say, "Do me a sketch." I spent a whole convention, not this last one, but the one before, doing sketches for people, which I was pleased to do. It ruined my whole convention, I didn't have time to see dealers, friends, do anything, see the pro's, my contemporaries. I spent the whole time messing around with fans doing artwork. That artwork, which would take me, like a minute and a half to do was not my best work and should never be published. Much of it was published. It was merely something to take home and say, "I got a piece of the guy's artwork and I'll treasure it. Y'know, I'll keep it." Instead, guy's are selling it for a buck, five dollars or whatever they can get. I should get a piece of that. This is my new philosophy.

GARY: Well, at the time, I was a real neo, and

was so excited about publishing a Christmas Card from Steranko, and putting out a good publication, it just never struck me to write you, or ask you or anything.

JIM: Well, I trust you learned a lesson. You should never publish any piece of artwork that you're not sure should be printed. Because somebody, sooner or later, will do that to you. Either that, or you'll make a lot of enemies. Fortunately, I was in a generous mood and I said, "Forget the whole thing."

GARY: Well, y'know what happened to me? I was really taken to the cleaners. Are you familiar with Dave Cockrum's work?

JIM: I've seen his work; talked to his wife.

GARY: Well, I paid 70 dollars for a bunch of Dave's artwork from a fanzine editor, Steve Ziegler -- the same guy I bought the Christmas Card from. Now, Dave gave all this artwork to Ziegler, free to print in this guy's fanzine, and when this 'zine folded, and Ziegler had all this art left over, he sold most of it to me. And at the time, I needed good artwork just to get started -- just to publish a good 'zine, so Ziegler had me over a barrel, so to speak. And when Dave heard about it, he was pretty angry.

JIM: Well, I found that fans are very much that way. For example, they would come up to National; they'd get a stack of artwork for free; they'd begin selling it. Now National throws it away. They destroy it instead of giving it away because they don't want it to be sold and re-sold.

GARY: That seems horrible. Couldn't they give it away with some restrictions on it, that it couldn't be sold?

JIM: How are they gonna' do that? Have you sign a contract that you'll never sell it? It's not worth the trouble.

GARY: But for the fans who really want it; to frame it and hang it up -- it seems an awful shame.

JIM: They'll have to suffer with the rest. It's all part of your people; all of the fans. You've destroyed yourself. I think it's a terrible thing, a perverse thing to destroy that artwork. Now, Stan Lee saves all of his; most of it, anyway. To put in a museum someday; maybe 50, a hundred, a thousand years from now. But all of those pages are going to be worth a lot of money. They're worth money now, but later on, they'll really be worth something. It's Americana. Comic Books are Americana. I think I said it at a speech or lecture once. Comics are trash. I'll tell you what else is trash, though: Books like the Power of Positive Thinking, Forever Amber, Peyton Place, most TV is trash. I mean, we're a part of that trash culture. There are very few really redeeming, fulfilling, sub-

stantial art forms around. We are Americana. Over in Europe comic artists are like Gods. Comic art is highly regarded.

GARY: Well, I don't think comic art is considered a culture. Like, the average person wouldn't frame a piece of comic art, and hang it in their living room. It has a different kind of culture than, say for instance paintings, and it seems nobody can recognize this fact.

JIM: Well, it's a throw-away culture. However, this stuff is important. You can see now, the time and trouble people put into producing these books. All the artists, the writers, the editors, everybody really works on these things.

People seem to just pick up the funny papers and never think about it. A lot of work goes into it. I've been asking Stan, and the people I am close friends with, like Neal Adams, Roger Brand, Adkins..!

I had so many phone calls this morning, I couldn't believe it. I got a call from Chicago, from one of my friends and talked to him for an hour. Quarter after two, I thought you were calling, Adkins calls me from Ohio. He wanted to talk for awhile.

GARY: Well, I was trying to get you for about a half hour. and the line was tied up for quite a while.

JIM: Yeah, I mean I was getting so many calls! Anyway, I'm saying this: We have a power and responsibility. The hacks don't realize it, but... I know, when I was a kid, comics helped to shape my future. It presented an imaginative and dynamic outlook on life, which I still have. It has a lot to do with my personality today. Kids are coming up and reading these books now, they're learning things. You asked me a question about my philosophy, what I'm trying to communicate. I have many, many ideas that I communicate in my stories. Even if the title of the story is "What Ever Happened To Scorpio?", there are things in that story that bear my own philosophies out. I said to Stan, "I want to start to write stories about animal conservation. That sounds pretty dull, like a school text book. But in a way, I want to reach a million kids in a shot, and say, "Look, we're wiping animals off the face of the earth, and ourselves too. This is a crime, a perverse thing. We cannot do it. It's a crime against nature and the universe. STOP HUNTING. And I'm gonna do some stories about it. Now, if just one kid, or a hundred or a thousand kids go out and say, "Hey, y'know that was a poignant story, a lesson, a parallel that Steranko told us about. Of course, he's right." It's gonna shape the kids attitude. That purpose will be fulfilled. Maybe he will teach 5 other people. We've got a responsibility to bear out. I don't think many of the other guys, the old guys do. There is a little wedge, a spearhead of artists and writers now that are encroaching on all of this old blood.



ILLUSTRATION by Doug Rice

GARY: World War II is over.

JIM: It sure is. Yeah, it sure is. I mean, they're writing the same stuff that's been going on for years and years already. And there are new things to be said. The times are changing, man. I must be as anti-establishment as anybody who's ever lived, except that I'm inside chipping away. I mean, I'm not out on the streets. That's the bad way. There is no change that way. You have to get in a position of power and begin the change that way. You have to get in a position of power and begin the change from the inside out. And if I have anything to do with it, that's the way it's gonna be.

GARY: Well, I can't see how the kids on the outside are going to change anything by their picketing and all.

JIM: Yeah, that's the long way; it can never happen that way. The trouble with that is those people aren't productive people; they're destructive people. You've got to be productive to make a point. Whatever it is; one story, one piece of work, one thing whatever it is. I like productive people. I admire those people most of all. Recently, I've been about, well EVERYBODY is, thinking about the problem of food, population.... They say that by 1980 we'll have to do something about it.

GARY: Yeah. I was listening to Charlton Heston on TV, and he was interested in these problems. He was asked, "What do you think is the foremost problem the world has to face today? And he answered "Overpopulation". He never even hesitated with that answer.

JIM: I think he's right. He's one of those few people who have insight, vision to



look ahead. I don't think the world will realize it until it's too late.

GARY: One of our problems in this country is that we still have too much.

JIM: Yeah, you're right.

GARY: Driving up here from Washington - corn fields as far as the eye could see. And this was nothing compared to Kansas, Nebraska and on out to the middle west.

JIM: That's why we've got to get people into places of power, government and do something about it. You see, everybody's thinking, "Well, that's the way it is right now, and we'll just wait and see what happens." They don't understand the problem. They're not able to comprehend the situation at all.

GARY: Another world problem, is, of course, this Viet Nam war. I really disapprove of this war. We're not going to win it, unless we use the military might that we spent billions of dollars to build, and since it doesn't seem that we're gonna use it, I think we should just pull out, and forget the whole thing.

JIM: Well, I know really, very little about what makes that war tick. I mean, I'm not politically minded. I'm concerned most of all with the things that touch me, and the people that I communicate with. It has very little to do with that war.

GARY: That war might be touching me real soon.

JIM: Just tell 'em you're a comic fan. 4F. That'll do it. You know.

GARY: You mean a mental-dropout.

JIM: Yeah. He's a fan. Get 'em outta' here. We don't want him. (laughter)

GARY: Yeah, but that's not really true. A lot of people think that - I'd like to think that, but it's just not true.

JIM: Well, I have a philosophy. It'll do you good to remember this: If you can use the people that want to use you, you'll be successful. Like the people who buy my work. They want to use me. The trick is to use them also, to get what it is that you want. Tap them for things that they have. There are many guys that just come up and say, "Here's my art. I'll work for nothing, here it is." Those guys drag the rest of us down. You can't do that. You've got to develop the talent of using the people that want to use you. That's why, for example, I will work for Jim Warren; because he has some connections that I don't have. So, if he wants me at a cheap price, he'll have to do other things for me. So far he hasn't done them, and I haven't done anything for him...

GARY: Didn't you...?

JIM: Yeah, I have a cover coming out. I got a

proof of it the other day. You'd be amused to hear the two of us get together. He is one of those few people, like confidential magazine type of guys. His greatest talent is exploiting other people. He doesn't have a real talent. He's got an esoteric gift and that is exploiting other people. He's a hustler. Is this on tape?

GARY: It sure is!

JIM: Good, you can send this to him. Jim and I had a terrific fight not too long ago. I insulted him really to the core. I called him a HUMAN BEING! And it upset him the whole day. He wants me, very badly, to work for his magazine. It has to do with sales, prestige, and everything. But, I come at such a high price that he's got to give me other things. He's got to make connections for me. He might get a movie poster for me to paint. Well, that would be, like groovy for me, man. That's a milestone. That's what I'm talking about. Too many guys come in and say, "Here's my stuff and, gee, I'm so glad to be in the business." I started out that way, but I got tired of making money for other people. I don't want to do that anymore, I refuse to do it. Rather than continuously make money for other people, and not have any myself, I'd rather be a bum. I could live on relief. I wouldn't have to work at all and get some sort of a check, right? Couldn't I do that? I can make a living anyone of a half-a-dozen ways. I'm getting to be sort of an old-timer now. I hate to say it. When you call me 'mister' I flinch. I'm not a kid anymore but, I still have revolutionary ideas. I'm not interested in security. I don't like to take on any more responsibilities than I have to. I'm not married. My work is very demanding right now --- I want to be a success. I was a poor kid. We lived on relief, man. I'm telling you, like my mother used to have a victory garden.

GARY: How many children in your family?

JIM: Three. I have two other brothers. Got me off the track. Yeah, I want to be a success. This is one of the motivating things in my life.

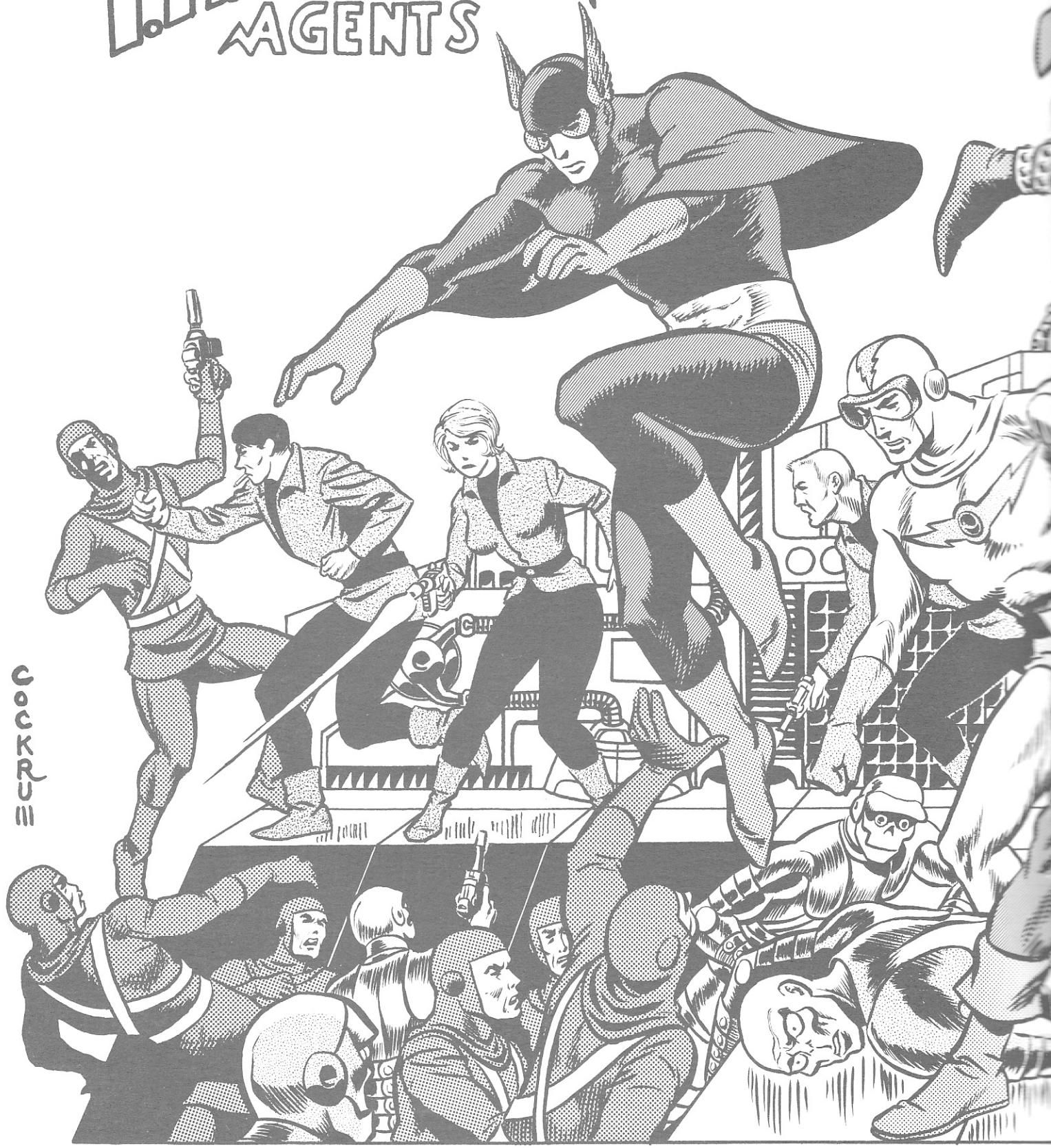
GARY: How are you measuring your success? Are you measuring it by your work as an illustrator or your bank account, or what?

JIM: In every way. I'm really a very stern critic. Y'know, I have never been able to manage money, although I have made a helluva lot of money in my life. I think eventually, well as a matter of fact, if some of the deals go through...!

Well, right now I'm writing a TV Special. Turn the tape off and I'll tell you all about it...

# The End

# THUNDER AGENTS



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LEGHEAD



## "THE STERANKO DIMENSION"

by Gordon Matthews

I never thought I'd be doing this. Writing an article on a Marvel Comics Person for a Marvel Comics fanzine, that it. The idea has previously seemed somewhat revolting to me, and still does. However, one might say that Jim Steranko is not a Marvel person or anyone else's person. Jim Steranko is his own man.

The reason I am doing this -- writing an article dealing with Jim Steranko --- is directly because Gary requested such an article. Indirectly, it seems to be complimenting some sort of special Steranko issue, what with a Steranko interview, Steranko portfolio, and Jay Mike. Ooops. That last bit should not have slipped out. Please delete those last three words.

And so here I am, in the FANTASTIC FANZINE, a Marvelzine, talking about Jim Steranko. So, what is one to say about Jim Steranko?

Perhaps tell when he started drawing and other biographical data, or maybe list all the Alley Awards he's won? Or maybe just talk about what a great artist he is?

Jim Steranko can hardly be called the greatest artist in the world. For one thing, I think he must, like Jack Kirby, his former teacher, invent about three quarters of the muscular structure with which he endows his characters. For another, his own inking over his pencils looks raw and slightly crude. Jim Steranko does not have the artistic preciseness of Wally Wood, the classic style of Reed Crandall, the prestige of Frank Frazetta or the demand of Jack Davis. So, why is Jim Steranko so damned popular?

Jim Steranko has style.

What's more, he has a unique style.

Style is something that does not come about through artistic preciseness or a sense of the classical. Style is a strange thing. It does not require the ability to reproduce art that look like photographs (after all, a camera can do that for infinitely less money and

effort). Nor does it require realism. It does not even require credibility (although Steranko's works are occasionally credible). Style is more difficult to achieve than all of these things.

Style takes imagination and guts. It's a lot easier and a lot safer to simply imitate others. It's a lot easier to plod along in the old form of graphic-story-telling than to try to adapt motion-picture square-box panels instead of creating your own sizes, shapes and arrangements. And it's all a lot safer. Comics are doing fine in the sales department the way they are. So why should a publisher or editor take a chance on something different?

So that's Jim Steranko's secret; imagination and guts. Mostly guts!

Jim Steranko's imagination and guts has added a whole new dimension to the graphic media. He is the first person in that field who has dared to really innovate since Stan Lee first started trying to make comic people at least semi-human. But, whereas Lee's innovation was in the area of personality-building Steranko's dimension adds new depth in the region of sequence and style of presentation, in the area of technique.

Steranko did not create a new character type in his portrayal of Nick Fury. Fury was no different than any obviously - fabricated character you might find in a slightly sub-average movie or book. There is nothing at all distinctive about him. A blah-type, there was nothing new in the character of Nick Fury.

Nor were the plots in the SHIELD stories particularly dynamic. They were about par for comics, perhaps slightly above average. The level of a reasonable decent mystery novel, but hardly spectacular.

The enjoyment lay in the style of presentation. Steranko adapted the movie-method of presenting the viewer/reader with a series of sequences, not one big lumpy story. This was rather difficult to do in the graphic media, because whereas motion - picture writers have an hour and a half or two hours into which they can fit their sequences, a graphic artist has only twenty pages, and he mustn't make his panels too small or they look cramped and any effect he is trying to build up is ruined. A good sequence can take as many as three or four pages, which leaves us with only sixteen or seventeen pages in which to tell the story, less if we wish to insert more than one sequence. The result of this in the past has been too - tight stories, which are told in stumpy straight - forward narrative form, and which come out looking more like plot outlines than finished stories.

But Steranko overcame the page - number problem, at least fairly well (though I'm sure he would have liked to have had five or six more pages to tell the same stories in)! He accomplished this by throwing out the standard panel method. In the years B.S. (Before Steranko, not Bull Shit), panels were drawn as squares, with an occasional rectangle, which was avoided as much as possible. There were four, five or six per page, and, if possible,

all the same size. Well, Steranko came along and saw that this tradition was a lot of B.S. (Bull Shit, not Before Steranko) and that it hindered the artists style. So, he said to hell with it, and thirty years of tradition were flushed down the toilet. Steranko decided to make panels in the size and shape that best suited the situation. So he did, Steranko decided to incorporate sequences into his stories, and he incorporated sequences. Steranko decided to toss in odd - angle shots, psychedelic effects, and two and four page panoramic spreads, and he did all of these things.

Steranko said, Let there be light, and there was light.



## "STERANKO ——— GRAPHIC EXCITEMENT"

by Bill Cantey

One of the most rewarding experiences for comic fans, is to witness the beginning and ultimate success of a talented illustrator or writer. And when the discovery is both author and artist, the excitement is doubled. I was too late to build a complete collection of the new Marvels, so for me the excitement began with Strange Tales # 151. If Steranko was around before that, I'll have to plead ignorance. Watching the Steranko talent improve was, for me, more intriguing than the graphic story itself. By issue # 157, I was wondering why Nick Fury hadn't exploded across every Sunday Page in the country. When Steranko wrapped up the lengthy yarn in Strange Tales # 167, he threw in a four-page panel and gave this fan a double surprise. I had actually gotten caught up in a comic book story for the first time in over ten years, and I'd never seen a four page action spread before.

Then, impossibly, he improved. The Ster-

anko covers (and inside) of his SHIELD issues must represent some of the finest comic art and action ever. The results of that particular effort are exceptionally astounding since it was produced under Code Authority. X-Men # 49 heralded a new era for a Marvel Magazine that I'd heretofore found mildly mediocre. Now X-Men # 50 remains as my all-time favorite, Steranko cover. Ny now, I was rapidly becoming a Steranko fan first and a Marvel fan second. His work on Captain America was only faulted by its briefness. But great comic art is always too brief. My self-imposed rule for reading and/or collecting the sudden flashes of brilliance is simple: WHEN YOU SPY IT; BUY IT! IF YOU CRAVE IT; SAVE IT! It won't last; it never does. In one of the few fan letters I wrote directly to a Marvel artist, I accused Mr. Steranko of one glaring fault in his work. He's too good. He won't stay in comics unless the medium expands to encompass his ultimate efforts. The really great talents, the comic artists and writers, who believe in the medium and chafe at its restrictions, may well be our only hope. As of this writing, Steranko is spearheading the attack against the censorship barrier with his new creation, TALON. The result should be a completely new concept of comics, and one Hell of a collectors' item.

Steranko, unhindered by the Comics Code Authority would be a comic fans dream come true. Because, in spite of the Code, Steranko has managed to create an air of adventure in comics. His heroes dodge the pitfalls of censorship as easily as Captain America sidesteps a badly aimed laser - beam. His artwork rivals the best; Kirby, Kubert, Foster, Wrightson Ditko, Buscema, David, Eisner, and whoever your favorite might be. Steranko's work moves; it leaps from panel to panel, flows from page to page, and explodes on the newstands with pulsating color. Color, Steranko's secret weapon. Some comic buffs applaud the elimination of color to intensify the precious concept of line drawing. Not so with Steranko. He holds and juggles all the components; story, drawing, layouts, action, color, and depth. Then captures everything, passes it on to us, and surpasses it with his next effort.

Yeah, he draws pretty good. But it's more than that. Steranko just doesn't translate a story into comic form; he creates. He conceives and relates graphically. Just as imagination is better than life, some men have a better imagination than others. And Steranko's work is the finest example of tangible imagination that this fan has ever seen. If your favorite artist-writer differs from mine, then go ahead and praise him. I can't be swayed or offended. Nor am I making an "expert" proclamation. These are just impressions for the consideration of my fellow fans. At least, that is my hoped - for attitude. If enthusiasm and dissension remains the two outstanding characteristics of comic fandom, then comics will always be doomed to a small following. But break that dissension, turn it into communication, and the enthusiasm naturally becomes contagious. If that ever happens, it will be comicdom's finest hour. And to top it off, Steranko just might be the man of the hour. His work, presented in a no-nonsense manner could have the appeal to break down the age old prejudices against illustrated magazines. Soon comic books will at least be a fond memory from everyone's youth. Even as Tarzan, Conan, and Doc Savage are currently enjoying a

new, broad appeal. Comics can be communication for the generations; and even the nations. The breakthrough is at hand; a new beginning starts with this new decade. Great comic artists have always moved upward, graduating from comic magazines. This latest "find" may take the medium with him. I hope he makes it. And I hope Marvel makes it with him.



## "THE ARTIST STERANKO"

by Richard Howe

Like most comic readers, I first became acquainted with Jim Steranko's artwork in the pages of the late Strange Tales. I can still remember some of my original thoughts on this early Steranko. I was impressed by the minute detailing in his backgrounds, and by the thin, fragile human figures balanced so precariously amid them. I was impressed, yes, but I was also confused by them. I wondered why a professional artist would want to draw like this. I had previously discovered that many an amateur artist would put too much detail in his pictures, wrongly believing that that made

them look professional. I preferred art in which the human figures dominated the scene and in which backgrounds were kept simple and uncluttered, in the manner of Carmine Infantino's work on the Flash. However, I soon realized that while simplicity might be aesthetically pleasing in most cases, I was going to have to concoct a special set of standards before I could attempt to understand this man, Steranko. For the time being, it was enough merely to acknowledge that his was the best art yet to grace the SHIELD strip!

Two years later, Jim Steranko was the most talked about artist in Fandom. SHIELD had become a twenty page monthly magazine, written and drawn by Steranko. It wasn't until some time after that, that the excitement he generated began to subside, and fandom began to ask itself if he really had accomplished anything so out of the ordinary after all. Perhaps only now can an objective evaluation of his work be made.

It is interesting to note that Steranko writes just like he draws. In both his art and his writing, he has a tendency to stray from the subject a little. It's as if minor details catch his attention, and he moves in to get a closer look, sometimes neglecting his appointed task of advancing a story plot.

Look at SHIELD three, for example. At the outset, Steranko appears to be more interested in the mysterious Rachel than in pitting hero against villain. Then at the end, when he realizes his plot has not advanced much from the beginning he is forced to wrap the tale up in a single full page flashback scene (page 19). In only one panel, he introduces the real villain, follows him through 25 years of his life, reveals his most recent diabolical machinations, and destroys him. Another writer might have devoted less space to the Hellbound mystery, since it is, after all, only a very small part of the villains threat to Fury and the world.

Or take SHIELD one, where the tragedy of Flip Mason almost supplants the clash between Fury and Scorpio as the thing that the story is about.

I'm not saying it's wrong, this tendency of Steranko's to concentrate on one small aspect of a story or a picture. But it certainly is exasperating to someone who was brought up on conventional comics with stories in which there was a plot and one or more sub-plots, each of which knew its proper importance relative to the main plot. But perhaps the most significant contribution Jim Steranko can make is to demonstrate that in the realm of art, there is no such thing as right and wrong.



## "HE COULDN'T WAIT"

by Dwight Decker

Steranko has left comics for good, they say. Paperbacks and pulp magazines are his new playground.

One may not care for Steranko as a person. The personality he displays in his interviews has been too flipant, too casual ... almost callous -- that of a hedonistic swinger who takes his talents and abilities too much for granted, not realizing quite what it is that flows through his fingers.

Yet, in the field of creative endeavor, the Sunday School Platinudes are over-turned. It means nothing what a man is. It is only what he can do that matters. And Steranko can do.

It is tragic that a talent such as his is leaving the comic book, because in only two short years he left an influence that will be there in comics for some years to come. If he had only remained, and had been given freer reign, he would have force-fed the field with a new life and vitality.

Well, he's gone now. Comic books are still generally the same warmed-over, Code-sanitized cliches, tiredly ground out by disinterested hack writers and hack artists, published by frightened, unambitious little men scared to take any chances or make any experiments, content with each years slowly diminishing income and circulations.

Steranko wasn't afraid. He innovated, he devised, and he dreamed --- only to see what the editors did to it. Only to see how little he was paid for it.

So he left.

Ditko faced the same frustrations, and where is he now...? At Charlton, drawing tired repetitious jungle, western and war pointlessness. Perhaps he is staying with the comic book in hopes that some day he will be allowed to create freely.

But Steranko is young, and he can't wait.

# EXCLUSIVE

## Steranko Checklist:

COMPILED by Gary Groth  
(With information obtained from...  
JIM STERANKO)

A checklist of STERANKO's work seems to fit quite nicely into a magazine containing so much of STERANKO's work -- and STERANKO himself. Therefore, we present you with a complete checklist of STERANKO's work; past present and future.

### MAGIC BOOKS

1. Steranko On Cards
2. Stacked Deck
3. Steranko's World Of Escapes
4. The Ultimate Move (written but unpublished)

### BOOK COVER PAINTINGS

#### LANCER BOOKS:

The Mighty Barbarians  
Master Of The Dark Eight  
Prisoners Of The Sky  
Ice World

#### BERKELEY MADALLION BOOKS:

The Purple Aces  
Ace Of The White Death

#### PUTNAM:

Wrap-a-round painting on hard cover book written by Sprague de Camp: Warlocks And Wizards (Out as a Paperback book afterward).

A Stranger Named O'Shea (The first in a series of Wildcat O'Shea books)

\* The Witches Tree (cover of EERIE # 26)  
Kelwin The Broom  
Infinity One  
Return To The Stars

The Bat Staffel  
Why Isn't A Nice Girl Like You Married?

### COMIC BOOKS

**KEY:** Drawn by Steranko: \* Drawn & written by Steranko: @ Drawn, written & inked by Steranko: +  
Cover by Steranko: / Inked by Steranko: () Drawn & inked by Steranko: (\*) Cover inked  
by Steranko: ≠

#### NICK FURY, AGENT OF S.H.I.E.L.D.

Strange Tales # 151: (\*), /  
Strange Tales # 152: (\*)  
Strange Tales # 153: (\*), /  
Strange Tales # 154: (\*)  
Strange Tales # 155: +, /  
Strange Tales # 156: +  
Strange Tales # 157: +, /  
Strange Tales # 158: +  
Strange Tales # 159: +, /  
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Strange Tales # 168: @

S.H.I.E.L.D. # 1: @, /  
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S.H.I.E.L.D. # 3: @, /  
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S.H.I.E.L.D. # 5: @, /  
S.H.I.E.L.D. # 6: /  
S.H.I.E.L.D. # 7: /

Captain America # 110: @, /  
Captain America # 111: @, /  
Captain America # 113: @, /

The X-Men # 49: /  
The X-Men # 50: \*, /  
The X-Men # 51: \*, /

Daredevil # 44: /

Captain America # 104, page 11: All FURY poses on that page-inked by STERANKO.

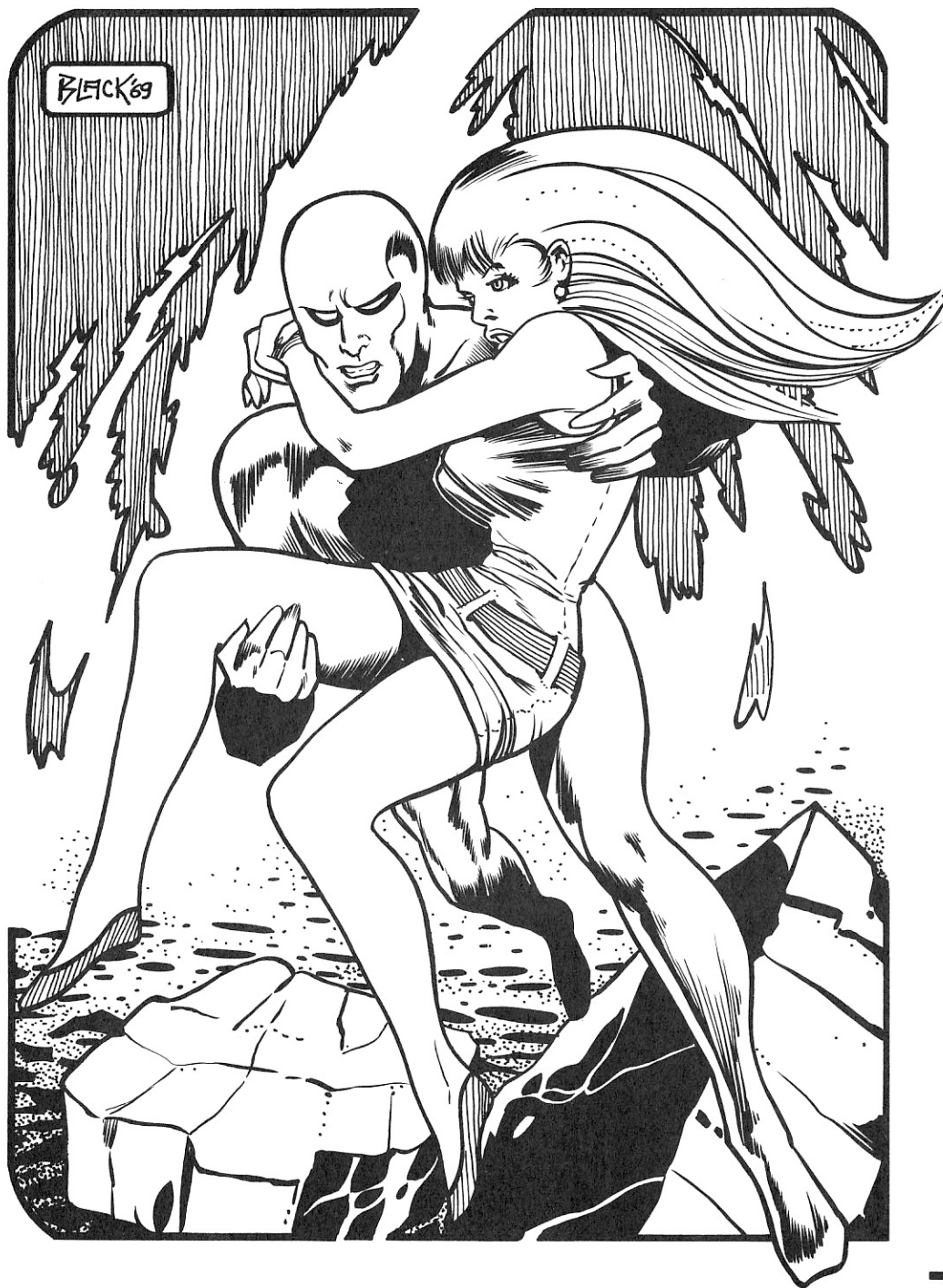
Tower of Shadows # 1: "At The Stroke of Midnight": +;7 pages in length.

Our Love Story # 5: "My Heart Broke in Hollywood": +;7 pages in length.

#### AND COMING OUT SOON...

"The History of Comics" written and illustrated by STERANKO. 150,000 words. \$1.98 a book.

THE TALON VISUAL NOVEL written, drawn, inked and lettered by STERANKO! Wrap-a-round painting by STERANKO. Page size: 11" x 14"; Life Magazine size. \$5.00 a book.



# CLUB MEMO'S

by GARY G. GROTH

Contrary to popular demand all your frantic letters, FF is still alive and well!

Well, not quite. I published this issue by adding quite a bit of my own money to FF's tiny til', and still left a large bill charged to me at my printer. I hate to start off the editorial on such a sour note, but FF is in a real financial crisis, and I'm asking for everybody's help to pull us out of this.

This issue we really went overboard to give you the most for the least (meaning the most material for the least amount of money). This ish, as you can see, has a three color cover - and would have had for written material, with more pages, but that would, of course mean I would have had to charge a dollar or even \$1.50 for this ish, instead of the 75¢ price tag I slapped on it. And I refuse to raise the price of FF to over \$1.00. A 'zine costing over a dollar is out of a lot of fan's range, and I'd like as many fans to read and enjoy Fantastic Fanzine as possible.

The one big "thing" we're hoping will pull us out of this depression is our ad in all the current Marvel's; so far, we've gotten over 125 orders both for the Special and the Prevue, and we're hoping for hundreds more. We'll need at least a thousand to lose just \$43.00. Start praying.

But between prayers, you could send in for the next ish (now only 75¢) and a set of FANTASTIC FF POSTERS. That's right - FF has printed five of the most raved-about full - pagers ever printed in FF! Three of them are printed on the next page, but a complete listing is:

1. BARBARIAN PRINCESS painting by Dave Cockrum
2. MR. FANTASTIC by John G. Fantucchio (from pg. 3 of thish)
3. SILVER SURFER (future cover for FF) by Barry Smith
4. ANT-MAN by Dave Cockrum (back cover of FF # 10)
5. THE PURPLE PALADIN (The Knight illo from pg. 4 of FF # 10)

Each poster is printed photo offset, on heavy cardstock post-board. Each is 11" x 14" in size, and sell for only 50¢ each or all five for only \$2.25! (Hmmm, if you send in for all of FF's Fantastic Posters, and the next ish, it comes out to the nice round figure of \$3.00! What a chance this is for you!) The Barbarian Princess by Dave Cockrum is a beautiful painting that Dave thinks is the best work he's ever done!!



I have to agree with him. It's a beautiful screened reproduction, and is one of the most professional printing jobs I've ever seen. We couldn't reproduce the painting with the others below because the screened dots are so fine, they wouldn't reduce down this small. All posters are mailed flat, in a protective plastic bag between two pieces of sturdy cardboard.

## ABOUT THE ISSUE...

To get off the dreary note of the last page, and the above paragraph - what did you think of our long STERANKO INTERVIEW? Steranko not only did the cover illustration especially for "his" issue of FF but also edited his entire interview, and did a much better job of it than I could have ever done!

## THE FF PEOPLE

This issue we welcome two new staff artists: John Adkins Richardson and Douglas E. Rice. John has a beautiful Iron Man illustration printed on page 20 of the Steranko Interview, while Doug has a Red Skull illo on page 24. Much more work by both of them next ish.

College and doing artwork for the Fantastic Fanzine just doesn't seem to mix well, as Al Grinage, way up north in Bowdoin College in Maine hasn't sent any new artwork in almost 6 months; and Jay Mike, now attending Ohio State U (located oddly enough in Ohio) had a hassle with the back cover to meet our deadline. He did it, though and that's the important thing.

Steve Fritz, who won many places on last issues Poll Sheet in the "BEST FAN ARTIST" category has just recently told me that he'll do some work for FF 12 or 13. So, we can all be looking forward to seeing what Steve can do in the future!

Bill Cantey has not only come up with another

fan fiction masterpiece, but has created a new column to appear in every issue of FF. The first installment can be read starting on page 35 of this very issue. We'll need contributions for this column, so after you read Bill's introduction and explanation of The Captain America controversy, send in your explanations to Marvel's dilemmas to:

GREY SPACES c/o Gary Groth  
7263 Evanston Rd.  
Springfield, Va. 22150

## BACK ISSUES

Issues 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5 are completely sold out, and I don't know where you could get them. FF 6\*7, 8\*9, & 10 are still available for 60¢ each (or all for \$1.50!) The Special is available in great quantity (about 300 left) for \$1.25. Send away to FF HQ.

## PAYMENT

The money exchange from Canadian Money to American Moolah is so low than I'm just going to have to raise the price of FF to Canadians. Subscriptions to FF are: 75¢ each in the USA and 90¢ each in Canada. I really hate to do this, but FF isn't in the best financial position right now and I can't afford to keep exchanging 60¢ in Canadian currency for 48¢ in American currency.

And while I'm on the subject of payment, I'd like to make very clear that I definitely cannot accept stamps in payment for FF. I can't pay the printer, the stationary store, or even the Post Office now that we have this new Bulk Rate Permit in stamps.

## FANS OF FANTUCCHIO

It's always exciting to see a fan, whose work you've seen and admired so many times in many

**FF Posters • 50¢ each • Or the SET for ONLY \$2.25!**



# "RUNNING FAN FICTION

# MATE"

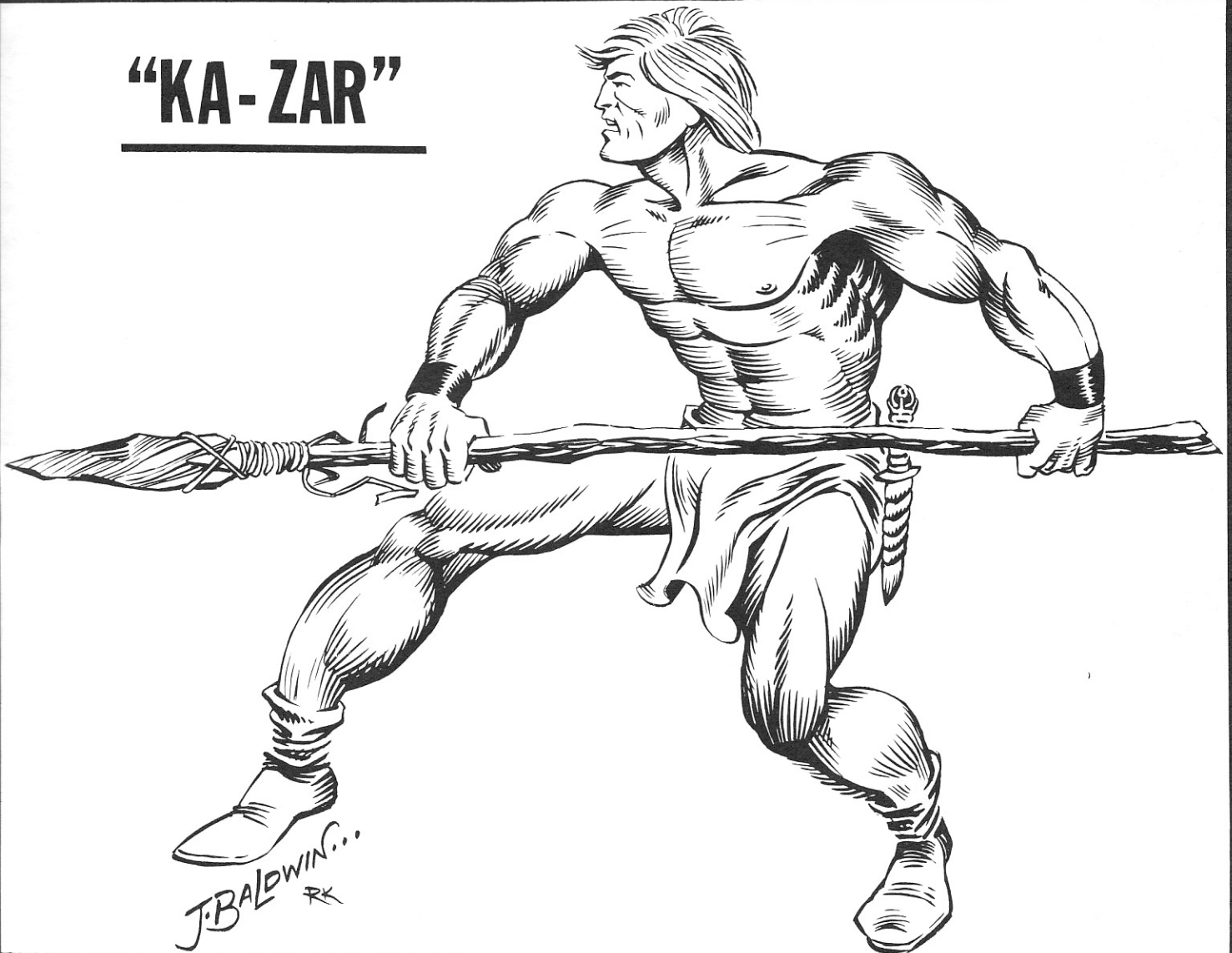
by BILL CANTEY

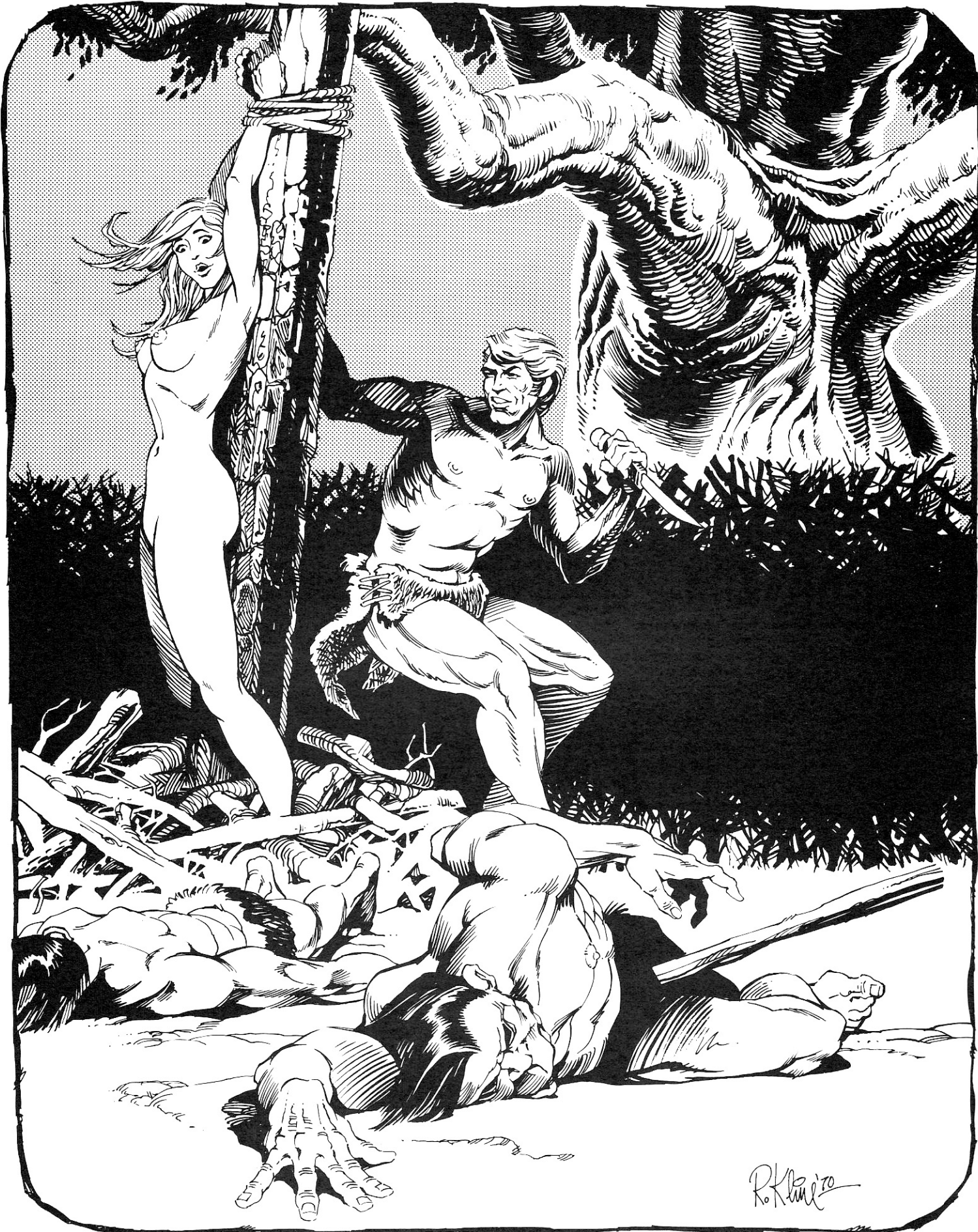
It was typical of the stupid swamp demons to build an elaborate thorn boma close to a huge tree with overhanging branches. And from that tree, a pair of blue - green eyes closely observed every activity that took place within the crude enclosure..! Lying prone on a thick limb, the bronzed giant's skin blended with the light brown bark of the tree! His long mane of blonde hair was effectively concealed within a crown of green foliage. The Apache Indians could have learned stealth and patience from this singular warrior, who carefully planned his attack of an encampment containing over twenty swamp-demons. Although the creatures in the camp below used crude tools and weapons, they could hardly be called humans. Sub - Humans, they were; squat and beast-like in general appearance. With low foreheads, small beady eyes, and possessing ape - type fangs, complete with powerful jaws. Seldom did these slouching beast - men leave their marsh surrounding

islands to visit the veldt; and never did they venture into the dense jungle for fear of the "forest god" who even now, watched and waited. If only his fearless, feline ally had been with him, he'd have already attacked. But they'd split up earlier, in a hunting expedition to run down an elken\*. Then, the jungle lord had discovered signs of the swamp demons activities in the ravished ruins of a medallion family's home. Medallions, they were called because each adult wore a metal of hammered gold about his or her neck. Quiet people they were; peaceful by nature, farmers by choice, and murdered by demons. The bodies had been torn apart. Hearts, brains, and private parts had been devoured to gain courage, wisdom, and virility. The attack had been sudden, and the retreat hasty. For the demons' fear of the forest god extended even into this fringe area

\* elken - A large, deer-like animal. Similar to our elk; very tasty.

## "KA-ZAR"







JEFF  
RINEHART

of jungle and veldt. And the god's eyes narrowed as he read among the signs of the marauders shuffling spoor, the footprints of a female captive. No time to bury bodies, no time to wait for his hunting companion, the saber toothed liger\*\*. He took the trail with a single hunting spear against an unknown number of adversaries and his pounding heart yearned for the encounter.

But the small band reached the main party before he could overtake them; and now he lay, chafing for action, close enough to spit on the nearest beast-man. The liger would circle and pick up his trail when the jungle lord failed to make the usual hunting rendezvous. But, could he wait? Already the hapless victim had been stripped and tied, hands over head and ankles near the base of a stout post. Dry wood had been gathered to roast her alive, and even now a grinning beast-man was annointing her voluptuous nakedness with a swab drenched in heated animal fat and blood. The blonde giant emitted a low growl as the depraved cannibal took particular delight in basting her prominent breasts, then prodding her buttocks and lower abdomen with the greasy swab. Still she did not cry out. It was true that Medallions never spoke among themselves, conversing telepathically. But the men spoke when bargaining outside the tribe, and there was no reason to believe that the jealously guarded females were otherwise, incapable of speech. Her courage then, made her well worth saving.

Across the compound, a large group of swamp-demons watched with interest as a lengthy game of chance reached a climax. All the beast-men had joined in, and gradually been eliminated from a contest of "stone guessing", wherein their leader secreted a small stone in his hand and the tribe members attempted to guess which hand held the stone. At first the jungle lord thought they were gambling for future portions of the girls roasted body. But when the winner drew his knife and immediately advanced toward the still living firl, he suddenly remembered. Swamp-demons wore medicine bags on rawhide thongs about their short, almost nonexistent, necks. Primitive charms in a soft leather pouch. A pouch made from the skin of a human

breast! The strutting primival seized an oilshiny breast and grinned as he playfully released his hold, allowing the large gland to quickly regain its shape and position. He died grinning. A heavy, hunting spear passed completely through his body, then wounded the swab-wielding demon in the groin. Almost as fast into the camp was the blonde giant himself. One swing took him to the swooning girl's side. His keen knife cut her wrists bonds with one stroke, then bending to free her ankles, he caught her fainting body across his broad shoulder. Recovering his spear on the run, he rushed the single guard at the boma's entrance before the other slow-witted primivals could react. The forest god swung his ironwood shaft like a club; the guard tried to ward off the blow with his own spear-shaft, but only broke an instant before his skull did.

Even with the girl's weight, the jungle lord ran swiftly; the bandy-legged swamp-demons could not match his long, easy strides. But with his feline ally at his side, he'd have not run. The huge cat would've wrecked havoc among the rear ranks of the bestial charge while his steel shod, ironwood spear and long knife dealt sudden death to anyone within reach. Still, flight was the better part of valor now. Once within his beloved jungle, he could safely stash his female charge, regain his liger ally, and take the offensive. A string of rotting corpses would mark the swamp-demon's retreat back into their marshy domain. Then disaster struck; a second band of two dozen demons rose from the veldt, cutting him off from the forest. Their perfect dispersal was pure chance, but no less effective. With the others pressing close behind, he took the only alternate route. Into the swamps. Breaking from the veldt, he crossed the barren strip of land that marked the perimeter of the swamp, and reached the edge of the high ribbon grass well ahead of their pursuers. He deposited his charge on the soft swath. She was shaken, but conscious. She looked up at him with large, clear eyes. The blonde giant appraised her frankly as he thrust the butt of his spear into the soft earth and drew a braided leather sling from his waist pouch. The Medallion people were noted for their beautiful women, and she was no exception. Perfect women they were called, beautiful and silent. She had not spoken, but he felt her mind reaching his, thanking him. Perhaps she

\*\* liger - A cross-breed between a saber toothed tiger and a modern lion; lacking stripes and mane.

could not speak, after all. He directed thoughts of encouragement to her, explaining by concentration and sign language, that their only chance for survival was to put enough distance between them and their pursuers to turn and circle back out of the swamp. A remote possibility, but there only chance. How easily he slipped into this new form of communication. The first of the swamp demons lunged into view as the young giant fitted a heavy yellow stone into his sling's pouch. He whirled it twice and released a lead-heavy, golden missile. The primival spun and fell, blood gushing from an empty eye socket. The second demon, seeing his comrade's fate, turned and fled back toward the veldt. But a small, golden sphere struck near the base of his skull and he dropped like a stone. They would advance more cautiously now; he'd bought valuable time. Turning, he caught the girl's hand and plunged into the swamp. She followed without a word, and soon the ground was mushy beneath their feet. The liger would never find his trail now; any spoor left would be obliterated by the rank odor of the pursuing beast-men. And the great cat would never trail them, their flesh was bitter. He would attack swamp-demons only in self-defense or when ordered by his two legged cohort. The greasy coating which now covered the jungle lord, as well as the girl, proved a blessing. The wide leaves of the ribbon grass slid easily from their bodies, inflicting only minor scratches as they raced along. They had not traveled near far enough when he felt her falter; felt the pain of her fatigue as surely as he felt her soft palm against his. Stamping out a clearing, he called a rest; producing from his pouch, a small supply of dried beef and a flask of juniper water. The untiring forest god remained standing, guarding the backtrail. He strained his nostrils to catch the enemies scent, but the prevailing wind was from the swamp, blowing steadily toward the veldt. He had to shift his feet constantly to avoid sinking in the mire just below the thin covering of dead leaves. This flooring was almost pleasant to walk on at first, but it brought into play little used muscles that soon tired. The accursed swamp-demons had no such problem; their wide, webbed, three-toed feet were perfect for this carpet of softness. He felt the girl beckon. She was standing, ready to continue their desperate flight. She tried to return the half empty flask, but he encouraged her to drain it. Then, tossing the useless vessel aside, they plunged deeper into the thickening swamp. She ran more easily now, perhaps they could still gain enough ground to -- -- NO!

Like a quivering mountain, the monster stood, blocking their advance. Rare, these creatures were, even in this macabre world.

Rare and deadly. Pushing the girl down, he mentally admonished her to lie still. Then he darted to the right, drawing the creature's attack. Like a huge balloon, half filled with water, it rolled toward him; snapping the thick stalks of the ribbon grass like twigs.

Slug-giants, the swamp-demons called them, but the jungle lord knew it for what it was, a freakishly gigantic amoeba. Ten feet tall it was, and covering an area of over thirty square feet. It would pursue and envelop him in its jelly-like body; then absorb him in a sea of protoplasm. It gained rapidly. He turned, swinging his spear like a broadsword. A huge rent was torn in the monster's transparent side. It would heal almost immediately with no real discomfort to the amoeba. But the blonde giant did not retreat further. Instead, he dropped his spear and dove headlong into the rent, disappearing into a sea of sluggish liquid! Suicide was not his intention; his only chance was to enter the creature, still living, and attack the nucleus. With his long knife gripped between his snarling teeth, he swam toward the dull grey sphere suspended in its murky atmosphere. The amoeba tried to eject him, but the momentum of his dive en-



abled him to reach his goal. An electric-like shock stung his body as he clove the nerve nucleus with one stroke. He concentrated on holding the knife; he'd need it to cut his way out. The monsters' death throes impeded his progress, his lungs ached, his head buzzed. Already the protoplasm was beginning to jell so that he swam in slow-motion. Finally, he touched the outer wall, but he had no strength left to cut an opening. The air rushed from his lungs and the choking mucus filled his nostrils. Suddenly, a rift appeared; two slender arms reached in, and drew him back to the world of the living. It was very much like being born again to breathe the air in great gulps and feel soft hands wiping away the dead creatures' slime.

With full consciousness, came complete memory and the knowledge that they must not linger. Valuable time had been lost; escape was now impossible. Retrieving his spear and knife, he climbed the hill-like carcass which was now completely solidified. The wind was still from the wrong direction, but the distant movement of the ribbon grass disclosed the proximity of their pursuers. The swamp-demons were less than a mile away, spread in a semicircle with their quarry near the center. There was no hope of turning now. A half-mile away, in the opposite direction, a plot of dark vegetation indicated an islet of high ground. Sliding from the grim watch tower, he quickly conveyed the final plan to his running mate. They would make for the high ground, and from that slight vantage point, sell their lives as dearly as possible. She did not despair as his thoughts of hopelessness and death struck her mind, and did not regret his earlier, brash action. He led the way, breaking trail. The deadly race was almost over.

The island was small, too small to support even one family of swamp-demons; and was uninhabited. However, a fairer campsite never existed. A spring fed a large, overflowing pond; a natural swimming pool with banks of clean, white sand. A variety of untouched fruit trees stood laden with food. A smaller, juniper spring bubbled nearby. Even at this anxious time, the jungle lord's hunting eye picked out signs of elken near the water hole. There were wide leafed leather-plants for clothing, and even soap-weed was available to scrub away the grease and grime that covered them both. They had everything but time. Working hastily, the jungle lord made tough vests and skirts as partial protection from the beast-men's spears. He wished, he'd had time to stretch one of the thicker leather-leaves on a framework as a shield. Then he fashioned a makeshift spear from a bamboo pole and his small skinning knife. As he passed the light spear to his raven-haired companion, he read the determination in her eyes and mind. She would not be taken alive again. They drank from the juniper spring and sought the best defensive position. Near the base of the islet was a platform of solid rock; above that an overhanging ledge would protect them from dropped stones. Now they simply waited.

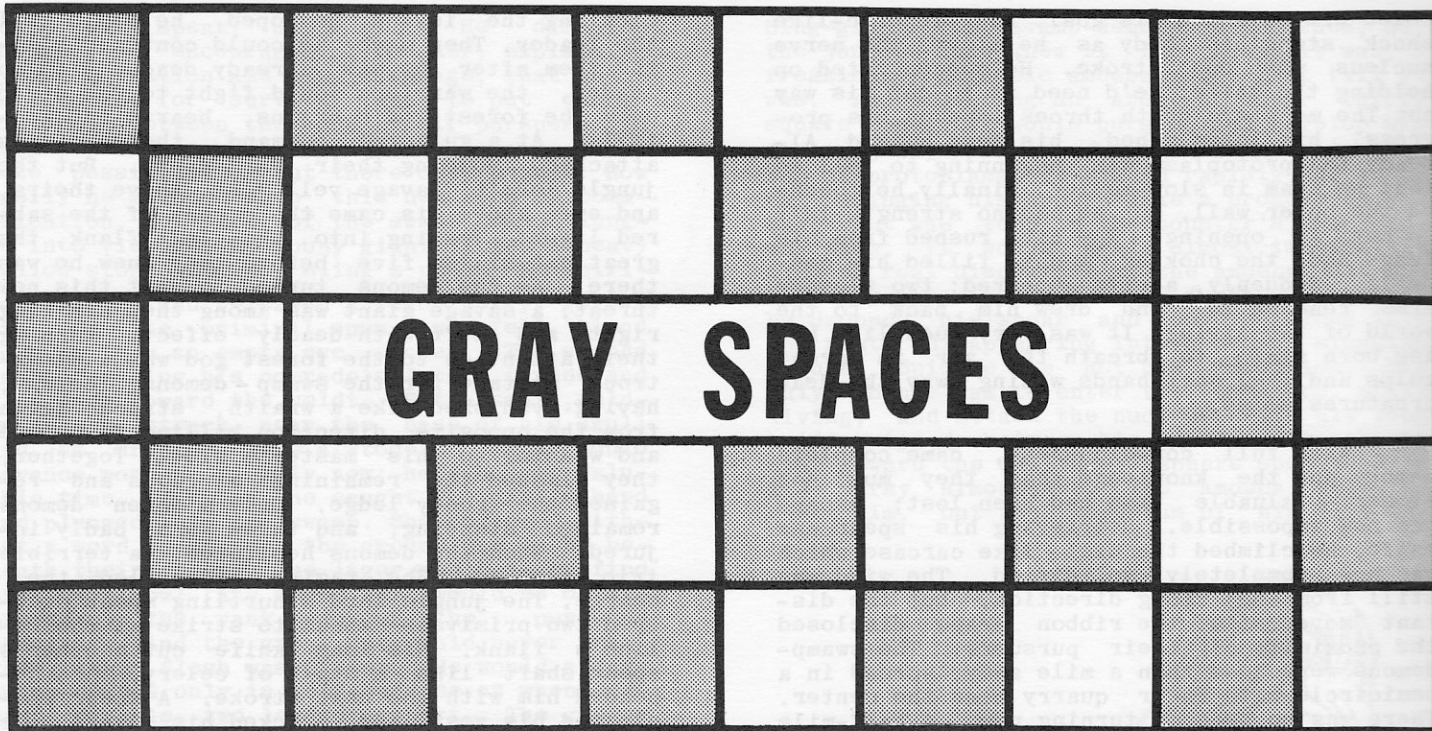
He'd estimated forty swamperes in all. Ten, he would have killed; twenty he might have killed. But four times ten would kill him. Movement in the high grass betrayed their presence, as the demons crept closer. He could count only thirty, but the others might be

circling the island. He hoped, he could kill the leader. Then maybe he could continue killing them after he was already dead. With no leader, the warriors would fight to the death over the forest god's brains, hearts and genitals. At a guttural command, the primivals attacked, voicing their war cries. But the jungle lord's savage yell rose above theirs, and even above his came the scream of the sabred liger! Tearing into the left flank, the great cat killed five before they knew he was there. As the demons turned to meet this new threat, a savage giant was among them striking right and left with deadly effect. Turning their attention to the forest god was a disastrous mistake for the swamp-demons. The cat, having vanished like a wraith, struck again from the opposite direction killing four more and winning to his master's side. Together, they slashed the remaining warriors and regained the rocky ledge. Only a dozen demons remained standing, and three were badly injured. When the demons hesitated, a terrible trio attacked. The raging liger led the charge. The jungle lord's hurtling spear skewered two primivals about to strike at the feline's flank. His long knife cut another's spear shaft like a stalk of celery, then beheaded him with the next stroke. A spear penetrated his vest and pricked his back. He whirled, but his attacker was already down; a makeshift bamboo spear in his heart. He looked for another adversary, but the last living savage had been seized by the liger. The great cat shook the unfortunate primival like a rat, and it was over.

With the death of the last swamp-demon, the liger's rage subsided. Walking to his master's side, he sniffed, then licked at the traces of animal fat and blood. Then the more heavily greased girl received the same attention. She removed the leather-leaf armor and allowed him to carefully lick the thick gravy from her body. Apparently, the mind communication of the Medallions worked to some extent with animals; the liger was usually very wary of strangers.

As they re-entered the small eden-island, the jungle lord smiled. He should have guessed. Although the cat couldn't have picked up their trail at the swamp's edge; he could not miss or resist, the grease smears left on the high ribbon grass. Then, when he'd gotten closer, he caught his master's scent on the wind along with the pursuing swamp-demons. This was a game, he'd played before! While the jungle lord led the enemy a merry chase, he brought up the rear, pulling down stragglers. Finally, his two-legged comrade turned at bay, inviting attack; and he charged in from the rear. Great sport! He wondered though why his two-legged leader had delayed the finale so long. But one could never account for the behavior of uprights. At this very moment, they were splashing about in that pond like two silly otters. Extremely strange conduct, indeed. Still, an upright partner meant gracious living, good hunting and the greatest games in the world.

-THE END-



CONCEPT CREATED by BILL CANTEY

-INTRODUCTION-

This is the first of a (hoped for) series of articles, designed to fill in the gaps or smooth over the rough spots in Marvel's prolific history. It is basically a "gab feature" for the entertainment and communication of fandom. All idea's should be presented as suggestions for the persual of Marvel and Marvel fans; without presuming that a united effort should be made to cram any of our wonderful theories down Stan Lee's throat.

## THE CONTROVERSIAL CAPTAIN AMERICA

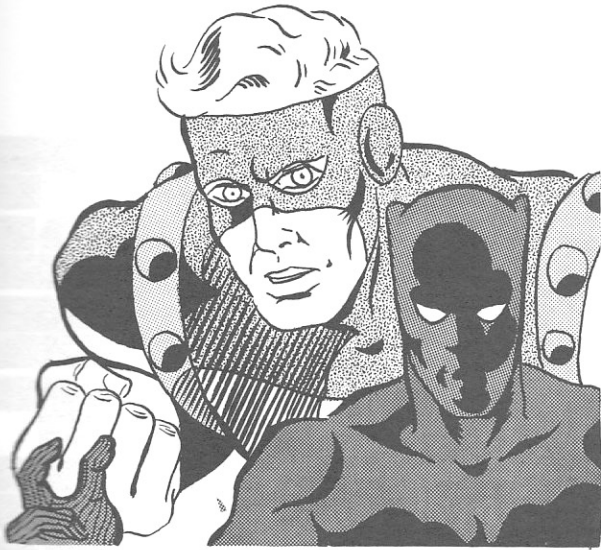
One of the oldest characters in Marvel's colorful line - up might also be the most contradictory. The riddle of the 1960's Captain America will have fans submitting suggestions to "Let's Rap with Cap" for the next ten years. More about that later. Equally baffling is his shield, which changed shape shortly after Cap's original debut. The first shield was shaped like a long, lazy triangle. Later, as now, the shield became a concaved disk. Although the shield was destroyed by laser beams in Avengers # 35, it has more recently gained the reputation of being indestructible. AIM's experts captured the shield in Tales of Suspense # 93, and were unable to even dent it. Somewhere between those two issues, Cap managed to lay his red gauntlets on an indestructible shield. So, it seems that the star-spangled Avenger's ability to provide food for thought is not lacking.

Gordon Matthews showed a great deal of imagination when he suggested, in the letters section of Captain America # 109, that Cap's shields are made by SHIELD; and constructed of vibranium. Unfortunately, Marvel wasn't answering letters at that time, or the shield business might have been settled then. AIM's conclusion that the shield was of an extraterrestrial metal, inspired me to send in a theory that the shield was a gift from the Gods of Asgard, presented in Captain America # 117, but turned "thumbs down" on the idea. Rats!

And as far as I know, the shield remains a tantalizing mystery.

A substitute, or pseudo, Captain America seems to be the most popular solution to the question, "How could there be a Captain America in the 50's; if he was frozen in the '40's, and wasn't revived until the '60's?" Alan Brennert's letter in Captain America # 119, thoughtfully suggested that the "other" Captain America was Steve Rogers' brother, Alan. Now that's not bad thinking, since there have been counterfeit Caps in Marvel's graphic history. Marvel Tales # 17 featured a re - print of a 1963 phony that preceded the real Captain America's amazing return in Avengers # 4. Later, Tales of Suspense #'s 87 and 96 presented Caps, who weren't. So, "another" Captain America is a fairly sound theory. Marvel itself playfully related how Bucky Barnes survived, and replaced the original Cap in Not Brand Echh # 3. Now, that could've been a blockbuster of an explanation of the 1950's Captain America. Joe Trainor suggested in Captain America # 110, that the 1950's Cap was produced by fiction writers as a contribution to the Captain America legend. Not bad.

Although time - travel confuses me, it might offer a conclusive explanation. The present day Captain America might have decided to take a trip into the past, (via Dr. Doom's time machine) to investigate the rumors of a



1950's version of himself. But time-travel is tricky business, and Cap arrived in the 50's without recollections of his later life. The partial amnesia bothered him at first, but he contributed his condition to the occupational hazard of being knocked out so often. Besides, no one tries to remember the future. Taking a position as a professor at Lee School, Steve Rogers soon found another Bucky and was back in business. Marvel recently re-printed this phase of Cap's career in Marvel Super Heroes # 20, just to keep the pot boiling. Anyway, this new start was cut short when the pre-set time machine snapped the confused Cap back to the present, only minutes (of our time) after he'd departed. And time-travel, being the devilish thing that it is, played a curious trick with Cap's shield. It was out of "time focus"; either a thousandth of a second behind, or ahead, of the absolute present. The shield was as imperceptible vibration as it bounces in and out of context; occupying impenetrable space in this time period, but never stable long enough to be harmed. Admittedly, a far-fetched theory, but not so bad when you consider the comic media.

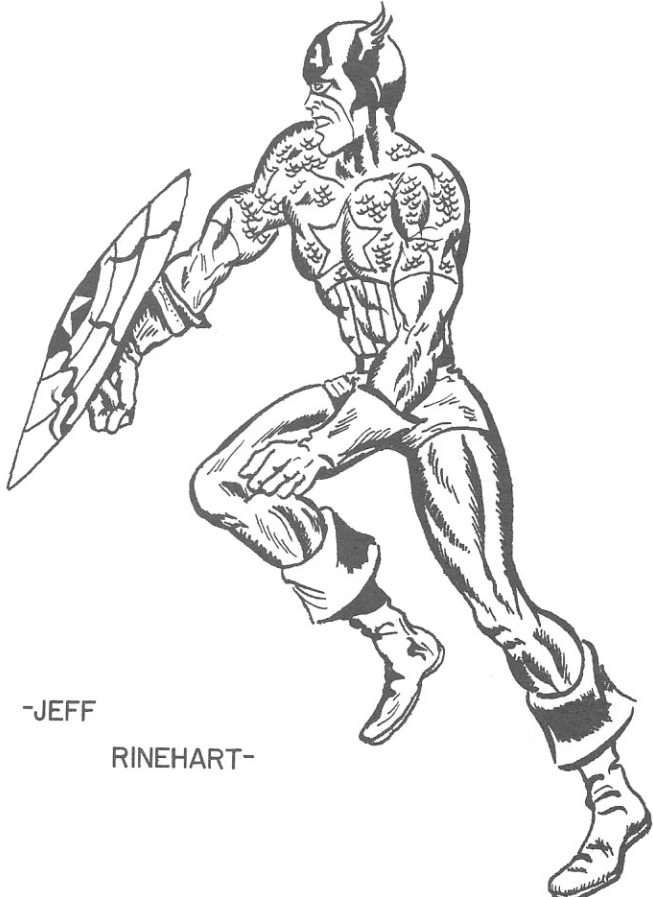
Generally speaking, there must be as many theories on Cap and his shield as there are Marvel fans. Personally, I prefer Joe Trainor's idea of a "fiction-life"/"fiction-legend" situation; and wish that I'd thought of it first. It fits well with this older fan's overall conception of Captain America's career(s).

Often, when a fictional character becomes very popular, he runs into a common problem. Overexposure. Cap suffered his overexposure in several ways. He was changed drastically in the movie serial of the '40's; losing his head wings, shield and Bucky. Even his secret identity was changed, from Steve Rogers to Grant Gardner, a district attorney. (Maybe Mr. Gardner did some work in the 50's?) Still, I remember it as one of the better serials from the 40's; which isn't saying a heck-of-a-lot. A good article on the serial Cap is contained in Screen Thrills Illustrated # 7, and may still be available from Warren Publications. Of course, the most commonly known "rough spot" in Cap's career is his appearance in the 50's strips, which clashed alarmingly with his dramatic return in the 60's. And finally, he was very slightly "bent" in Ted

White's fine novel, "The Great Gold Steal". But the incongruities of Captain America are actually indications of extreme popularity. Many real life heroes reach the "life and legend" status. Occasionally a fictional character gains more than one identity by being presented in different mediums. (Novels, movies, comics, radio etc.) Tarzan, The Shadow, and James Bond are good examples of the multi-identity syndrome. And the problem, if it is a problem, places Captain America in the best of company.

You may have noticed that all of this has not solved or settled the Captain America enigmas. It was not my intention to rob you of that pleasure. Isn't the super-hero comic magazine illustrated, heroic-fantasy? And doesn't heroic-fantasy exercise the imagination, as well as providing the best of escape reading? If this attitude is correct, then the current Captain America is one of Marvel's most successful efforts, and a powerful argument against the opponents of graphic entertainment. The anti-comic book fanatic claims that profuse illustrating destroys the ability to imagine. That assumption is worse than a lie; it is a prejudice. The most cursory examination of the current crop of comic magazines and fanzines is enough to throw that lie back between their teeth and drown them in the poison of their own prejudice.

A second confrontation between pro-comic and anti-comic factions is inevitable. The old arguments against comics will not hold up against the tide of letters and articles written since the crushing defeat of the '50's resulted in the formation of the comics code authority. Next time, fandom will be heard and the only restrictions remaining on comic magazines will be the limitations of the creators' imaginations; and ours.





# FANTASTIC FANLETTERS

SEND ALL LETTERS TO- GARY GROTH · EDITOR · 7263 EVANSTON RD. · SPRINGFIELD, VA. · 22150

DOUG MARTIN  
3636 - 35 Avenue Ct.  
Rock Island, Ill. 61201

Dear Gary:

FF never stops amazing me. As you know, the first FF I bought was # 8\*9, and the strides you have taken since then are incredible. The overall layout and production were, as usual, excellent, and as good as any I've seen anywhere else. It's always nice to read a 'zine that doesn't strain your eyes.

Art-wise, your staff is as good as they come. I enjoyed the Jay Mike Portfolio, but I agree that he does imitate STERANKO a little too much. Still, his drawings are good, and he ought to go far. Speaking of artists who have gone far, it's hard to believe that the Dave Russell on your staff is the same one that used to draw for Marvel Mirror. All in all, The Special had the best art I've ever seen in any issue of FF, and most of the other fanzines published in fandom right now.

Article-wise: I enjoyed the Al Grinage interview I am in favor of more fan interviews, since less is usually known about fans than pros. Also, fans seem to be more willing to answer questions directly and then elaborate on their answers which often makes fan interviews more interesting.

"Resolved: Revise the Code?" was better than last issues "code" piece, and I find myself agreeing with Tom, but only on the premise that we must have some sort of a code. I think the trouble with the code is that the wording is too subjective. For instance, take provision 7: Obviously what I consider to be violence and cruelty necessary to establish a villains character is considered excessive by the men who censor the comics, since I never see anything resembling it.

"The Godfather" was Cantey at his best, which is saying quite a bit.

The three interviews were too short to interest me. I can't help comparing them to the BUSCEMA interview and think about how far you've come.





For the most part, this issue made pretty interesting reading. I don't want to particularly tear anybody apart, but generally speaking, the 'zine is carried by the art. It's terrific, and I hope you can hold onto Cockrum, Grinage, and Jay Mike. The articles were enjoyable. But, I have one gripe. As a matter of fact, this comment really applies to most fanzines in general; where they fall down is almost invariably in their fiction! The short fiction isn't too bad, but this is due mainly to the fact that it is short. The longer, and continued pieces are hardly ever worth the trouble to read. Sad to say, the pages of The Fantastic Fanzine contain no exceptions, and I have to say that The Search remains the low point of the publication.

If FF # 10 was great, The Special was, well, Fantastic! First and foremost I've got to mention the Jay Mike Portfolio! Beautiful! (By the way, I think you meant "Beowulf" in your caption, not "Bay Wolf"). And all those photographs. Perfect! Dwight Decker's article on writing for fanzines has now got me all keyed to do something!

It seems to me that, if nowhere else, a fanzine is the place to discuss the shortcomings as well as the successes of the 'zines raison d'etre, so Pat Janson's article (Dissecting the Heart of Marvel) was singularly appropriate. But the main reason I mention it is because it gives me an opening to air my own current gripes about the way things are going with your and my favorite comic group.

I note with pain the passing of Dr. Strange and S.H.I.E.L.D. I guess there isn't much that can be either said or done at this late date, but a note in memorium seemed necessary. I think Gene Colan's magnificent artwork in Dr. Strange will be particularly missed. Mainly, though, it seems that Marvel has broken faith with us in not at least concluding the stories in progress. Sure, Dr. Strange was sent off forever to battle the Undying Ones in a Sub-Mariner issue; but what of Clea? What about Gene Colan?

Gordon Matthews "Penmen" installment was better than the last because the material wasn't as familiar to me. Speaking of Gordon, I must come to his defense about Negro villains in Marvel Comics. While Manfred Griffenstein says that there have been many black villains, but what he seems to forget is that just because someone fights a hero, he is not necessarily evil, which a true villain must be. Centurius was not evil, he was deranged, and the son of Joe Robertson was not evil, since he was portrayed as being a confused kid. The black members of criminal gangs are just nonentities without personalities.

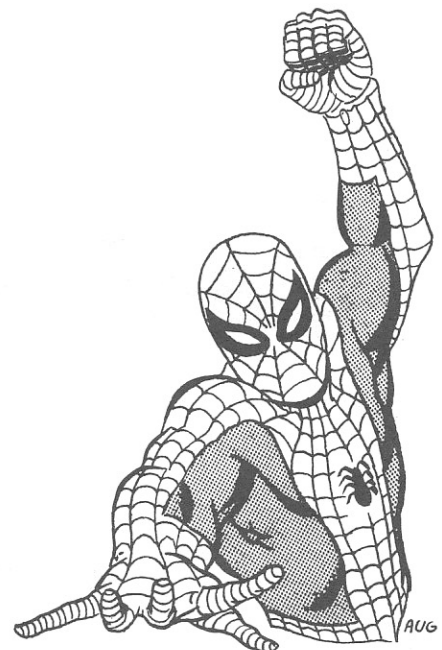
Well, I guess that's it for now. See you next issue.

NEAL CHRISTENSEN  
Colonial Gardens K-24  
Poughkeepsie, N.Y. 12601

Dear Gary:

Received FF 10 a few months ago and was completely snowed. Probably due to the magnificent STERANKO cover. Now, however, that I see the FF Special, the previous issue doesn't even compare. (Well, that's not exactly true, but I was completely overwhelmed by the Special!) The only way you could improve is to add color!

Well, now that I've got the plaudits out of the way, we'll get down to business. First, ish # 10:



What about Jim Steranko? Will he return from the limbo of My Love and illustrate Captain America, or even the Hulk?

One good thing: Let's celebrate the arrival of NEAL ADAMS whose work on the X-Men has turned that mag from a complete loser into something of a winner.

Okay. Back to the Fantastic Fanzine.

Who did the two illustrations on page 38 of the Special and page 20 of FF 10? He's got a beautiful signature (and does beautiful S&S illos too), but it's unreadable. And since we're talking about S&S, I dig Robert Kline's work in the Special too. I want to mention that I've seen STERANKO's cover on Lancer's "Mighty Barbarians". It wraps around the entire book and is terrific! Worth the price of the book itself.

That's all for now. Gary. Take care.

((As you can see this issue, The Search has been discontinued. Yes, I did mean "Beowulf". The illustrations you inquired about were rendered by John G. Fantucchio. Hmmmmm, I thought everybody could read John's signature. Does anybody else have trouble reading it? If you want to see how John handles a pro strip, pick up a copy of either Vampirella or Creepy. If you want to see more Paperback Paintings by Steranko, write Lancer! - Ed.))

JIM WILSON  
P.O. Box 15  
Alpharetta, Ga. 30201

Dear Gary:

It was a lousy day outside. I ducked into the post office, barely avoiding a fresh downpour, and went to check my mail. I fumbled with my box for a minute, trying to get the blasted thing open, and then pulled out a thick, heavy brown envelope. Ripping it open,

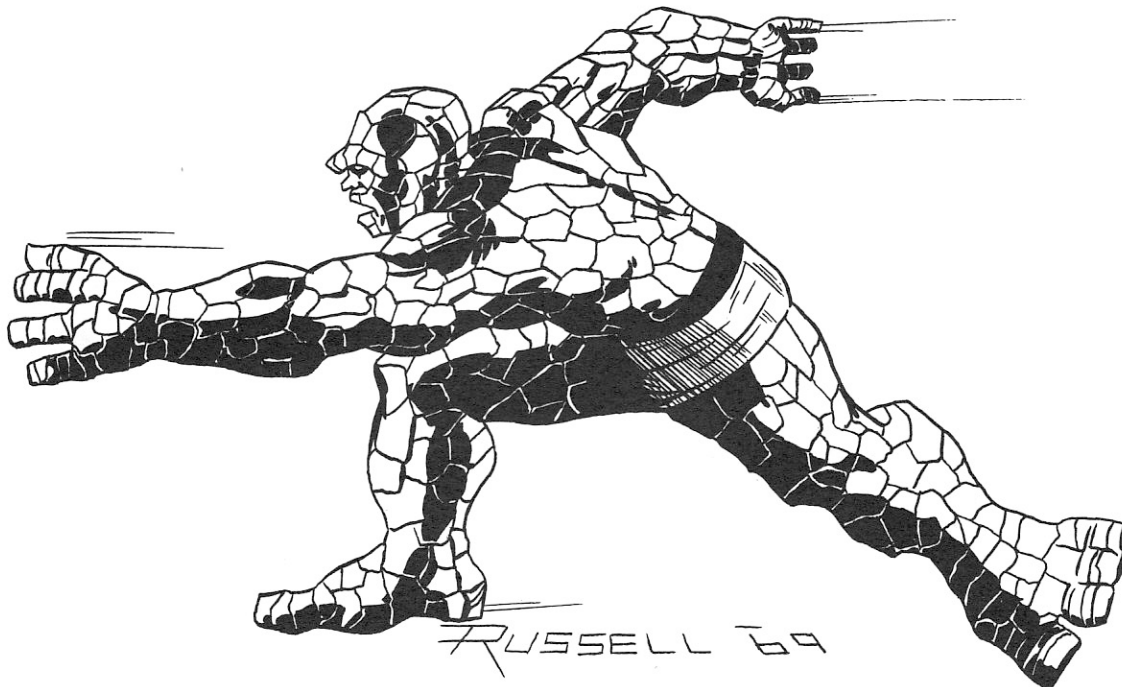
I pulled out FF 10 and the Special!

After scanning through them for the first time, I came to a conclusion: the FF has finally reached its potential; in short, it's one hell of a 'zine. With a STERANKO cover to head you off, how can you go wrong? And this, backed up by such fannish figure's as Dwight Decker, Tony Isabella, Dave Cockrum, Jay Mike ETC.! The FF has proven itself worthy enough to be ranked along with YSG, Comic Crusader, Superzine, Marvel Mirror, et al. But there is something else present in the FF of today; an electric spark, an aura of enthusiasm, a feeling of, "Hang around people -- the best is yet to come!"

I'll just single out the things that caught me particular interest; and I don't know quite where to begin!

Perhaps with the STERANKO cover on # 10, but no, it speaks for itself. "The Accursed Code", or rather the system envisioned by Cantey, is desirable, but quite improbable, at least the way things are now. The greatest single feature depressing quality in comics today is how many readers per dollar will determine what stays in print and what gets dropped. We are all prisoners of a commerce-dominated system. Comics are (in this sense) getting worse and worse and worse, and I think its got to get even worse before it gets better. But to get on to a more pleasant topic, "The Windmills of My Mind" was just right, in length as well as content. A veritable potpourri of goodies. A'course, Tony Isabella always was one of my favorite fan writers. Tony, how's about an article on the comic "ragnorak" of the super hero, and what could possibly be done to stave it off for a while?

The ads on pages 18 and 19 ((FF 10) caught my eye, but only because of their sloppiness. Gary, couldn't you possibly make some kind of a policy regarding ads and that type of thing?



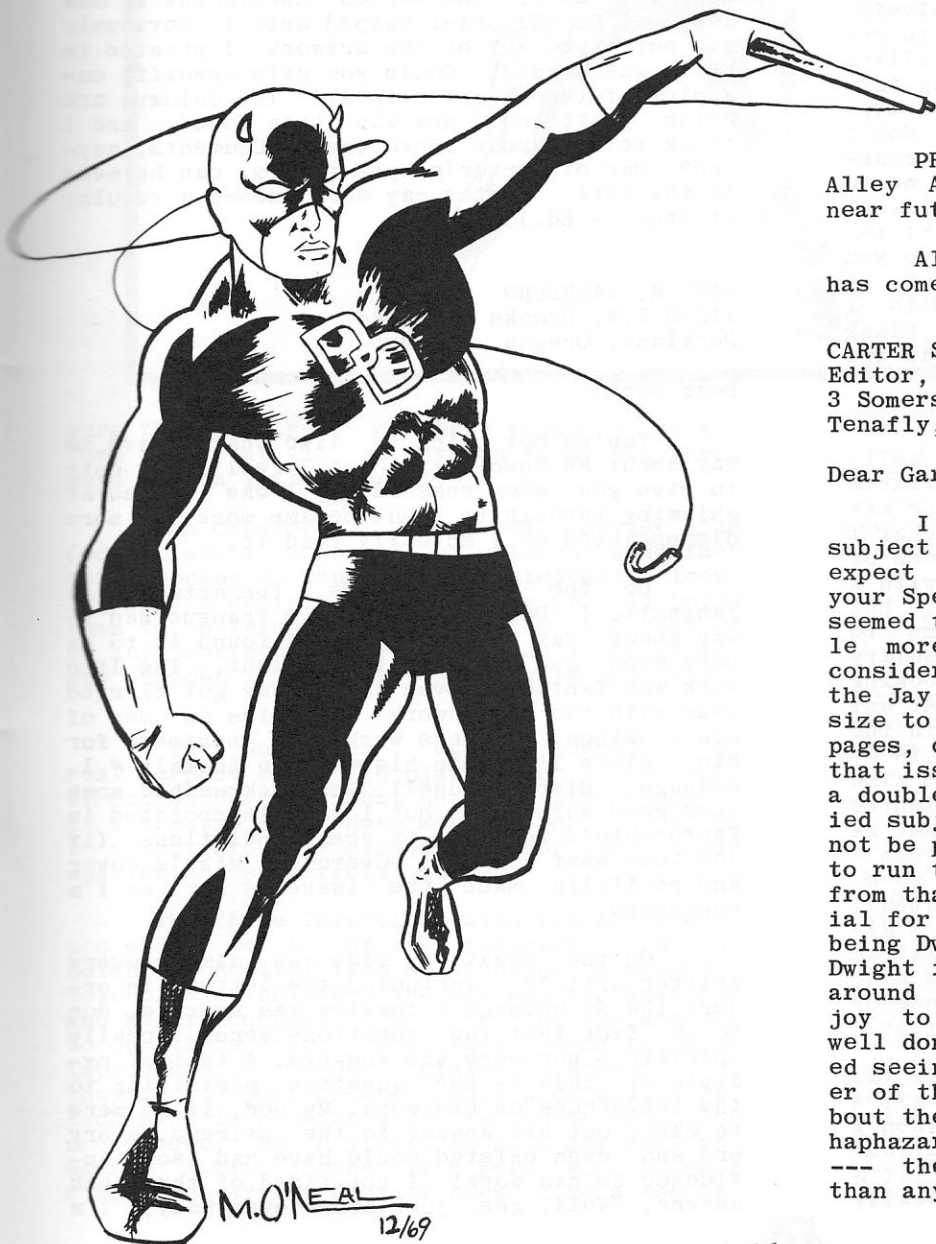
Suprisingly enough, Jay Mike's cover and centerspread weren't as good as his art portfolio; his unique and fascinating style is best complimented by contrast; areas of nice solid blacks intersperses with the light areas. The Cyclops pic on page 30 of the Special really turned me on!

The fan interviews are very comendable; after all, the fans are the very heart of fanzines! But I honestly disliked the reprinted interviews with Romita and Colan ---- if you have a complete FF collection, you already know what's in them, and also most of the information contained in them was horribly outdated. Oh well, you can't please everybody all of the time...!

Nobody writes fan fiction like Bill Can-  
tey. Absolutely nobody. And no one ever has. He is the absolute master of the short - short story in fandom. Keep 'em coming! The only thing I disliked about "The Godfather" was the mediocre illo that was included. Gary, this has been mentioned before, but PLEASE screen out the 'below par' illoes from FF, such as the Odin pic on page 47.



"An Apparation of an Angel" was beautifully written, congratulations are in order for Pat Janson. Getting on, the pix of the SCARP con were fascinating. EGAD! I'd sure like to meet the models STERANKO used for his first paintings you photographed!!



PROJECT REPAY is....well, it deserves an Alley Award. Expect my donation in the very near future.

All in all, congratulations, Gary -- FF has come a long way. Awaiting # 11...

CARTER SCHOLZ  
Editor, Phenomenon  
3 Somerset Road  
Tenafly, New Jersey 17670

Dear Gary:

I am notoriously hard to please on the subject of fanzines, so to start off, you may expect a harsh judgement of FF. First off, your Special was not. Special, that is. It seemed to be a double-sized FF featuring little more than the standard FF material with considerably more fillers. Of good calibre was the Jay Mike Portfolio, putting the increased size to good use; but why, goldirnit with 52 pages, didn't you complete the blamed thing in that issue? To my mind, the purpose of running a double sized issue is to allow more and varied subjects to see print, subjects that would not be printable in the standard size -- not to run twice as much of the usual stuff. Aside from that, the articles were fairly substantial for a Marvelzine, the best and most needed being Dwight Decker's Fan Article Article. Dwight is one of the very few perceptive fans around these days, and his work is always a joy to read. The report on the con was very well done, good use of the space, and I enjoyed seeing my art in the upper right hand corner of the photo on page 37!! My only gripe about the Special was that the page layout was haphazard and sometimes hard to follow. Ah yes --- the art. Being more concerned with that than anything else in a fanzine, I try to lim-



it my comments to rational, logical analysis. I cannot. Cockrum is superb. He appears to resemble me in his habits (that is, pencilling an outstanding piece, and then whipping thru his inks), but he none-the-less produces top-notch work. Grinage...ahh...personally I don't like his style. He does some good work occasionally, but not consistently enough for me to rank him good. Jay Mike has an unpleasant style, but it suits him. My main complaint is, why, with all the good art you publish, do you still stick in the little crud illo's by assorted artists? An editor, Gary, edits. I personally would prefer to have seen a blank space than some of the illo's you used in the Special.

Enough. On to FF 10. The cover...well, what can I say? My recent request illustrates how much I admired it. However, the inside art was a different story. I reiterate what I stated above....even more so, because much of this art was copied!! I sympathize with a learning artist copying for experience, but not when he prints it and signs his name to it. To quote Jim Warren, "Half of his salary should go to the original artist", overlooking the minor detail of non-paid fan work. At any rate, the art was generally better than in the Special (excepting the Portfolio). But, to my mind, the only worthwhile articles in the zine were the Cockrum Interview (a very talented guy who again proves he can write at least as well as he can draw), the Isabella column - of course, Isabella columns are always good. The other articles (Ghost Rider, Rebuttal, Immortals, Code) merely reviewed things I already knew, and were consequently of little use to me. Matthews' Penmen wasn't too bad, but, as always, he has an incurable tendency to overwrite which detracts from the content.

.....And Gary: When, oh when, will you get out a dictionary for use when retyping?? A few spelling errors I don't mind, but when I have to go back over lines three and four times just to figure out what is meant....it's too much. That and your (you are automatically

responsible for the ills of the world because you are an editor) habitual use of commas and exclamation points where none are required are very disconcerting. !!.,.,!.

I warned you to look out for a rough critique didn't I? Well, friend, I'm just telling it as I see it.....and isn't that all any of us can do?

((CARTER ALSO INCLUDED A "P.S." I THOUGHT MANY OF YOU WOULD BE INTERESTED IN...))

P.S. Don't worry, I'll still buy FF. Despite its myriad minor faults, it's still a damn fine 'zine!!

((Seems your idea and my idea of a "Special" differs. FF\*S was produced to (1) give the new fans responding to our ads in the Marvel Comics a good look at FF and (2) Just to provide you with a couple hours of entertainment and relaxation. The layouts in that issue were the one thing NO other fan complained about. Please read the Club Memo's page (my editorial) if you want to know my editorial policy(s) on the judging of fan artwork. I'm doing my very best to screen out those "below par" illo's, and I hope you can see the marked improvement in this issue. I DO NOT print swiped art! I, obviously did not know ANY of the artwork I printed in FF 10 was swiped. Could you cite specific examples of these art swipes?? The columns are being justified a new way this issue, and I think it's a great improvement! Comments, anyone? One of Carter's spot illo's can be seen to the left. Carter may soon become a regular staffer! - Ed.))

PAUL M. WASHBURN  
11313 S.W. Brooks Ferry Rd.  
Portland, Oregon 97219

Dear Gary:

You're not going to like what I have to say about FF Special 1, but I feel it my duty to give you some reasons why I was elated at skimming through it, but became more and more disappointed as I actually read it.

On the positive side, the artwork was fantastic!! Despite what Dave Transue had to say about Jay Mike's style, I found it to be very good and thought it excellent. The line work was fantastic even though Jay got carried away with the "patchwork" of veins in one of his drawings. Klīne's work was mediocre for him, since I've seen his work in Anomaly # 1. Grinage, Black, Rusell, and Cockrum had some very good work done, but I was disappointed in Fantucchio's work as it seemed pointless (if you know what I mean). Overall, Mike's cover and portfolio made the issue as far as I'm concerned.

On the negative side was almost every written article, including the letters. In order: the Al Grinage interview was average, due to the fact that the questions weren't really specific - nor were the answers. A typical example of this is the question pertaining to the influences on his work. My God, if we were to carry out his answer to the extreme, every pro who even existed would have had some influence on his work! I get tired of the stock answer, "Well, gee, just about everybody." I'm



sure this is true, or there wouldn't be any form of art at all, so why don't you pin these guys down a little more?!?

Tom Crawfords, "Resolved: Revise the Code?" was a mishmash of opinion and fact which seemed to wander around aimlessly, looking for a definite goal. Since it all boils down to opinion without offering the rest of us any worthwhile points, I can't really see his purpose in writing - Nothing is Resolved!

"The Godfather", again, served us no real purpose except to place Namor in the role of God on Earth. I must be dull witted because if there was some deep message for all of us to cling onto, I missed it. For me, it was shallow and superficial.

The three interviews with the pro's were too short to be of any interest. Then too, Colan and Romita, like Sal Buscema, played the role of ego-builders and yes men for Stan Lee and Martin Goodman. I get tired of the answers to questions like, "What title needs the most improvement, in your opinion?" Answer: "Oh, they're all just great!" What a buncha' shit! Each man is so afraid of his job or Stan Lee or someone, he is afraid to give any real answers. Asking whether it's hard work being a comic book artist doesn't seem like a too in-

telligent question either. How's a guy supposed to answer?: "Gosh, yes, I should say so; being an artist is so tough, I don't know what to do. Oh me, oh my."? For me, other than the sketchy biography of each, the interviews were wasted time and space.

"Dissecting the Heart of Marvel" missed by a long shot -- it should have been titled, "A Slight Scratch on the Surface of a Diamond". Pat Janson doesn't know how to delve into anything worthwhile except himself. His opinions are just that -- bias. Based on something not explained. Pat should have stopped after the first sentence of his article.

The only article, ironically, which was of any value was Dwight Decker's explanation of fan writing. He hit the nail right on the head, and if he could have seen the other articles, he could have used them as examples of what not to do.

"The Search" didn't turn me on. 'Nuff Said.' Janson's, "Apparation of an Angel" was more of a glimpse at nothing. For the first two paragraphs, I thought Pat was referring to Him, who was created in the Fantastic Four, and made a recent appearance in Thor. As things turned out, I wish the article would have been on Him. Him has qualities that make The Silver Surfer look like Little Orphan Ann-

ie. Him is real - the ultimate man in a child-like state. Him could be studied in great depth because he has so much potential. The Silver Surfer has been turned into a pious, self righteous, slobbering fool, the butt of all jokes, the pawn of all those more intelligent, though less feeling than himself. Have you ever noticed that the Silver Surfer thinks only of himself, even while making long diatribes against the evil in mankind? He is even more egotistical than Dr. Doom, Mr. Hyde, The Jester, The Red Skull and Odin all rolled into one. To refer to him as an angel is both ridiculous and inane --- despite what Stan Lee might say, because Stan, in not being purely Christian, can never portray a figure who is really Christlike - nor could anyone else! Pat Janson, then based his article on the most weak of all 'psychological' aspects - that of his own interpretation of Stan Lee's interpretation of Matthews, Mark, Luke and John's interpretation of Christ!

Doug Martin's article was very good, because he is right. I myself, along with other fans, have written to Marvel attacking their consistent use of robots, androids, etc. These villains have no tangible feelings of purpose in their evilness. An android does not present to the reader any of the emotions of real people. The closest Lee ever came was with the Super-Adaptoid. Villains must be totally negative aspects for the likes of Captain America, Spiderman, Daredevil etc. to exist. Without human counter-parts, our dearly beloved superheroes become bland and useless. That's why I loved the Jester's introduction in Daredevil; same, again with Starr Saxon. These villains I can believe in; Crypto Man, The Punisher, etc. bore me to tears. I would have liked to have seen Doug expand his article.

"The Penmen of Terror" didn't mean a whole lot unless one has seen the work of the artists Matthews' was referring to - I've seen Finlays work, but the rest are total strangers thereby leaving the article meaningless. Without the actual experiencing of a thing, one must remain in ignorance, no matter how vivid another may describe it.

Bill Cantey's explanation of the origin of Cap's shield positively stunk! It sounded like one of the 12 year olds at the local drugstores explanation. Take a look at the most recent Captain America for a much better, if not more plausible explanation.

Overall, the things which saved the Special were: all of the artwork (especially Mike's, Kline's, Grinage's, Russell's, Black's, and Cockrum's): Decker's and Martin's articles were the best of the written work -- and the only things worth reading. Then, too, your photographs of the con, though somewhat blurred at times, were damn good, as was some, but not all of your reporting of the con. After reading, and viewing your earlier FF's, especially # 10, I was disappointed, on the whole, with the Special. But the quality of production, the beautiful cover and the art, plus two articles saved your hide, and I hope you won't get burned, financially, with its production.

You have potential, Gary, and that's what I'm banking on, so don't give up. I, for one, am still behind you!

((Thanks --- both for your confidence in me, and for such a long, in-depth critique. Tom's Code article was considered so good by so many that we are going to use his article as a foundation for our campaign to revise the CCA! "The Godfather" wasn't supposed to express any deep message - it was just to give you a little enjoyment - NOT perplex you. Concerning the answers from the pro's to the question, "What title needs the most improvement, in your opinion?" I seriously doubt that Stan Lee, or Martin Goodman would fire somebody as talented as Gene Colan, Sal Buscema or John Romita just because one or all of them expressed negative

## EXCERPTS

Mr. Colan: I've never given it any thought. But, I would say in general, that a great effort goes into each book that Marvel turns out.

Mr. Buscema: Well, as I said before, in general, I really can't think of any three particular books that need improvement but as I mentioned, I think Marvel puts out the best books in the business. I really think they're superior -- they put out a really fine product, but I feel that no matter how good a product is, it can always be better and just generally speaking I think that all of the books can be improved and be made better than they already are.

feelings toward one or two of the magazines in Marvel's line-up. I simply can't believe that! Secondly, I probably shouldn't have put them in the position where they would have to express negative feelings toward some of the artists at Marvel. Gordon's Penmen series has become one of the most popular columns ever featured in FF! And the reason for that is because it is actually "teaching" many of our readers about these different artists. If you want to take part in the controversy of Cap's shield, or any other rough spots in Marvel's history, send them to FF Headquarters, in care of GREY SPACES. See the first Grey Spaces installment this issue. I'm anxious to hear what you have to say about this issue! Again, thanks for the lengthy LOC! - Ed.))



((The purpose of this feature is to print excerpts from some of the LOC's we receive. These LOC's are not printed in their entirety for a number of reasons; one of course being that they may be far too long to print in their entirety, and secondly is that some of the LOC's received bring up several very good points of interest, but the rest of their letter is only fair to midline. Thus, we present highlights of some of the more interesting letters we received - Ed.))

DAVE TRANSUE:

Quite frankly, Jay Mike has me veritably steaming! Here is a fellow who most obviously has tremendous talent and he virtually wastes all of it in doing extremely poor imitations of Steranko's illustrious style. If I want to see work like Steranko's, I look at Steranko's work rather than getting a very bad imitation from you, friend Jay! Really! Why don't you spend a little time in developing an individual style of your own, Mr. Mike, and let Jim Steranko use his own? As you can very well observe, nothing makes me more angry than seeing someone imitating rather than creating.

((And in taking the exact opposite point of view... - Ed.))

JOHN BALGE:

The Jay Mike Art Portfolio was beautiful! Same goes for the art. I was able to overlook the Steranko-imitation style for the fact that Jay does "Steranko" better than Steranko does "Steranko" (sometimes: the Cy-clops illo for example).

Also, in Fantastic Fanletters, Dave Transue attacked Jay Mike for poorly imitating Steranko; William Black for imitating John Buscema, and patted Dave Russell on the back for his terrific work. I'm sure that Dave Transue would agree that Jay or Bill are not tracing or copying or stealing or swiping the art of Steranko or Buscema. I suggest that Jay and Bill are not imitating art, they are imitating a style. And I'm sure that few people are about to attack Sal Buscema because he follows the style of his brother!

Now, what really irked me, was Mr. Transue's overlooking of the obvious resemblance between Dave Russell's art and the Jack Kirby style.

Let's hear it for Mimi Gold! She told it like it is and you know, she's right. If you want to read intelligent letters in Marvel's comics, you write them.

((I can see both points of view, but just voicing my own personal opinion - I think Jay is one of the most talented guy's around and I find it a privilege to publish his work in FF. On the other hand, I equally enjoy both Bill's work and Dave's work; they're ALL outstanding artists in my book - Ed.))

BILL CANTEY:

Now, the Special. And it was very special. Graphic Story Magazine better move over. The new method of laying out made the 'zine more readable, hope it will continue. Thank you for using my story and illo. Anyone would

be proud to have their work presented in the FF. Very neatly done. As usual, I like the interview best. Don Heck's that is. You might have left out the Colan interview, since he did draw Daredevil after he said that he hadn't. But since you presented it as a reprint, no real complaint. Good report on the con. Next time, take a spy camera and get some shots of Frazetta's work anyway. Dwight Decker's article was the best fan article I've read in the FF's history. Entertaining and informative. Which is very difficult to do. Jay Mike really came out of left field with his artwork. Any one of his drawings would've made a good cover. You're rapidly getting all the top fan contributors.

About the poll; the approach I used was to consider the best (that I'd seen) then make allowances. A fair artist or writer can surpass an excellent one by making regular, dependable contributions. The same goes for the fanzine itself. For example, the new Frazetta 'zine is great, but I'm still waiting for my copy. Comickazi may never show again. I would have listed Spa Fon as number one, but it's an annual. The Rocket's Blast is actually an adzine, but I listed it because it is dependable. I will vote for the Fantastic Fanzine in the Alley Awards Poll because it has the most important feature that a fanzine can strive for -- Progressive Improvement!

((Thanks for the vote, Bill. I'm still crossing my fingers. The results haven't been given out yet, but if we don't make it this year, we can always try for next years award. Dwight's "Fan Article Article" seemed to be the most widely enjoyed article in the issue. A topic that seemingly appealed to EVERYONE - Ed.))

TONY ISABELLA:

I've got a number of responses to my article in FF # 10. You have quite an active readership, a real blessing to a guy who was unable to conduct contests on two occasions in Mike Robertson's old Concussion, one of the truly great 'zines of the past. Mike has been giving some thought to a revival and if he does, expect me to slip in a plug for it in a future column. Cnc is where this Wandering Fan started out.

((Hear that FFer's? So don't let Tony (and me) down this ish - participate - send in LOC'S -- and support us! Tony, you, and the whole club may be interested to know that I received a grand total of 69 LOC's on last issue! I think that proves that FF is one of the most active group of fans anywhere in fandom! - Ed.))

AND REMEMBER...

FANTASTIC FANZINE 12

**ONLY 75¢!!**

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Springfield, Virginia \* 22150 \*



# C.C.A. CAMPAIGN REVISAL NEWS

PROGRESS REPORT no. 2

DUFFY VOHLAND

A while back, Gary asked me if I would do a progress report on our campaign to revise the Comics Code. That's what you're reading now. Each issue of the Fantastic Fanzine will contain a CCA Campaign Revisal Progress Report, and hopefully, we'll have enough news (preferably GOOD) to have a nice long report every ish!

From all the letters that have been received by the committee, the general concensus seems to be a want for a change, but not an abolishment. Most fans feel that if the CCA was abolished, the -fly-by-night blood and gore pushers would try to take over, and I'm sure no one wants that!

Basically fans want the Code loosened to the point where a story about drugs and such could pass; if a person is cut, he bleeds; things that shouldn't really be restricted. Everyone is tired of such pro's as Steranko, Ditko, etc. being hampered in their story telling.

Mike Robertson suggested that we try to get the help of Science Fiction Fandom and went on to say this could be accomplished by putting as in several of the S-F mags, like Galaxy, Amazing Stories, Xoven 13, etc. Horror Fandom could help too, and we could get in touch with them through Larry Ivie's Monsters And Heroes, Castle of Frankenstein, and other monster magazines.

Our only blockade (and a rather big blockade) is M-O-N-E-Y. If people really supported our movement, they would back us with a little green stuff. If everyone would send in, say 50¢, we would be able to get these ads in the above mentioned magazines, and get this campaign on the move. Send all money to me. Remember...this is for the benefit of ALL fans so please help out!((All those who send in any money to help out will have their name and amount of money sent in immortalized in print on these very pages next issue. So, send in that green stuff!! -Ed.))

As you probably realize, comic fandom can't do much good on its own, so if we could get the support of S-F and Horror Fandom, and one other group we could make it. That other group being PRODOM! There are plenty of pro's who feel the Code should be revised, so if you correspond with any of them, ask for their opinion and support. ((OR, if you have a particular favorite in the pro field, write to him through his publisher, and ask for support - Ed.))

One of the committee chairman, Jim Wilson, thought we might use Tom Crawford's article, "Resolved: Revise the Code?" published in the Fantastic Fanzine Special # 1 as a basis for our version of what the code should be like. What do you think of this idea. Tom more or less wants changed the same things I do.

Also, we need a good, reliable publicity man to help handle the publicity angle; to contact other fanzines, pro's, pro magazines, etc. to ask for their help and support. Any takers? Write me at the address printed in the Club Memo's page if you want to help out.

If you bought the IOCC Newsletter # 1, or received one of Jim Wilson's flyers, you probably noticed three letters that you were asked to write. When you write these, write a fourth one: "Personal" - Carmine Infantino, Editorial Director - c/o National Periodical Publications - 909 Third Avenue - New York N. Y. - 10022. I feel that just because the campaign is being based from a Marvel-oriented 'zine doesn't mean we should exclude DC. ((The IOCC Newsletter # 1 is still available from FF - as well as # 2; both for 25¢ for those interested - Ed.))

Mark Petach is in the process of publishing a 'zine, Interout, which will, along with having regular contributions like Interviews with Ralph Reese and Terry Bison (editor of Web of Horror) etc. carry quite a bit of Campaign material. More info next ish!

Here's some news that, if all goes well, will be a big shot in the arm for our cause. Ray Richards is quite active in the Republican Party of his state. I'll quote the rest from his letter: "...I happen to be head, or rather the County Chairman of the Fulton County TARS, besides a few other offices and I am in good graces with the power structure at the moment, so I might be able to talk to my Congressman about it. Now would be a good time to start on it, for instance, I will be attending several Conventions soon and I'll be able to talk to several Congressmen besides the TAR leaders and perhaps dig up some Congressional support for it, which is really what was needed..."

((Thanks for the Progress Report, Duffy. I hope that this stirs some good fan reaction in all FF readers. I'd like to remind all loyal supporters that we are selling beautiful, Campaign Stationary -- for only 2¢ per sheet; minimum order is 15 sheets. All orders mailed flat. And a note to the fanzine editors back -- ing our campaign; please write and inquire about "R.K.C.S."; I will answer all inquiries pertaining to this from fanzine eds! - Ed.))

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# PROJECT REPAY

## PROGRESS REPORT no. 3

It would seem that we should start off by simply getting right down to business, not necessarily because this is an "all business" column, as such, but basically because the situation dictates that we do such. So, I'll be perfectly blunt about our situation; it very simply is not good. To begin with, I received no answers to my request for help, but such can be overlooked, however, it is very disheartening for me to look over the record books. Why?

The above question is very easily, but not satisfactorily answered..... Since last issue (The FF Special), when it was reported that the treasury held some \$19.00 --- which wasn't really bad.....for a start -- we have boosted the total bank account to a flimsy amount of only some \$27.00, an increasing of just \$8.00. It would seem that there is a general lack of interest among you fans, as we have not collected quite as much money as we should have; to help further, the life of the account, I was forced to foot the bill for the last two subscriptions, while also contributing further. Unfortunately, I cannot possibly repeat this act, so as of February 13, the treasury now holds just \$24.00!

But, enough of the dismal facts, and on to the business at hand. To receive subs this time out are:

1. William R. Lund SA B849185  
USNSA Tan My Supply FPO  
San Fransisco, Calif. 96639
2. Sp/4 Doug Schnieder  
HSB 3/34 Arty  
9th Division APOSF 96373

Bill Lund, a regular FF reader and former contributor will receive a sub to Daredevil, while Sp/4 Schnieder will receive one to the Avengers.

### JUST FOR THE RECORD

To help save money on a more conservative basis, we are forced to terminate the original plan which we hoped to put into use; that is, we no longer will be able to send out two subscriptions each month. Instead, we will order two to coincide with the publication of each issue of the FF; however close together or far apart each may be. Unfortunately, our current position necessitates such an act. It is hoped that we may soon be able to find ourselves in the proper position once again, so that we may soon continue on in the former manner.

By the same token, we hope to someday raise enough cash to branch into other fields and I hope to deliberate further on this subject with each chance we get. Obviously, servicemen do not center their interests on just comics; as a matter of fact, the most popular



field is sports. I have learned that it is possible to get cut rates on certain publications that would also be enjoyable to our men overseas, not just in the sports or comic field. It would be most appreciative if either Gary or I could hear from you so we could learn your thoughts and opinions on the matter.

I contacted the publishers of Marvel Comics on the matter, asking for their assistance; not on lower rates, but on locating worthy servicemen that may have written the Bullpen etc. However, Marvel neglected to answer our request, and we are yet to hear from them.

You know, we (I) could still use some help.....

That's just about it for this issue. I only hope that you will all find it in you to give at least 50¢ each; y'now, just that much from each and every one of you will quite adequately fill our "kitty" and help us to better serve the men for quite some time. So, how about it? Will it hurt that much? After all, if Ken Kraft can contribute regularly, so can the rest of you...

