

# Interview with David Jablin Editor & Publisher of “Imagination” Comic Fanzine circa 1970



Ken Meyer Jr. • Ink Stains • December 2018



**Q: When and how old were you when you got into comics in general?**

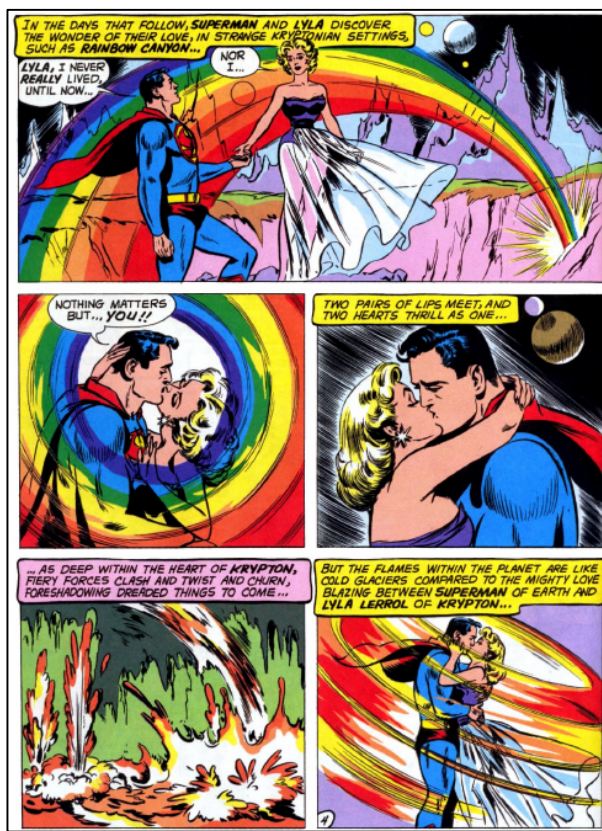
I was three years old when I picked up my first comic book. It was at a local barber shop in Flushing, Queens while reluctantly waiting for a haircut. Stuffed between some issues of Archie and Highlights magazine, was a well-worn Superman comic — issue 113 to be exact. I can pinpoint this as the precise moment I was first transported to another universe. My mother read the cover aloud to me... “Superman: A 3-Part Novel!” Here was this colorful, caped character watching another strangely costumed man fighting a robot on this huge atomic TV. Superman’s word balloon read, “My father from Krypton was a Superman too! He had to protect a queen the way I do Lois Lane!” I got it. I couldn’t read it but I could somehow follow the whole story.



I was so entranced that I didn’t even notice I was getting my haircut during which I usually ended up crying. When finished the barber said I could keep it. WOW! Afterwards my mother took me right down the block to the corner candy store where I discovered that there were racks full of these amazing “comic books” stacked taller than I could reach... As I grew up, this particular candy store, named Dottie’s, would be my regular haunt for many years on the days when the new comics came in. Eventually I could even reach the top rack. And I wasn’t the only kid who grew up hanging around that corner waiting for the new comics to be delivered and unbundled. As a matter of fact, one of the other rabid comic fans was a young Howard Chaykin who lived just down the block.

There is no doubt that comics taught me to read. I used to ask my parents how to pronounce the words printed in bold and explain what they meant. Invulnerable, invincible and X-ray became part of my pre-school vocabulary. In fact, I remember very clearly how in kindergarten I got in trouble for secretly wearing my Cooper Superman Halloween costume shirt under my clothing. I left my top button open so just the top of the “S” could peek out. When any of the other kids curiously asked, “What are you wearing under your shirt?” I would quickly button up as if I was hiding something and said “Oh, nothing...” The teacher did not find this at all funny and I was sent to the principal’s office where I actually tried to pull the same stunt on him! Needless to say, they called my mother to come in and I was lectured about my hyperactive imagination.

At around age seven I begged my mother to take me up to the DC offices for a guided tour they offered back then. Some editor, I don’t remember who, explained the whole comic making process to us. I was riveted. They showed us the original pages for what I now know was Superman 141—a three part “imaginary” story where The Man of Steel somehow returns to Krypton and meets his parents. It was the first time I saw original comic art! There were these beautiful HUGE pages drawn by Wayne Boring (for what in retrospect was probably his best issue ever). I stared wide-eyed at all these amazing pages with my adrenaline pumping. I was immediately hooked. If I were directing that moment in a film, it’s where I’d call for the old Hitchcock “dolly-zoom” shot to zoom in on little me.



I was completely sucked into the story’s concept of going back in time and meeting one’s long dead parents as an adult (it was all concisely explained in dialogue on the cover). Wayne’s

renditions of life on Krypton blew the top of my young head off. Boring was the same artist that drew that first issue of Superman I saw back in the barbershop. By then I could recognize his “style.” There was my favorite character, Superman, drawn not on some cheap newsprint, but on large heavyweight paper. I was fascinated by the ink brushwork over the pencils. I asked the editor what the artist’s name was. “Boring.” It got a derisive laugh from the other kids. I was annoyed that they were not as in awe as I was. I raised my hand and offered that the cover looked as if it were drawn by a different artist. “Good eye, kid!” Mr. Editor said. “His name is Swan, Curt Swan” (who would actually become my favorite Superman artist). But his name also elicited another stupid giggle from this group of nitwits.

At the end of the tour each kid got a free piece of original art. They purposely gave me a Superman daily strip by Wayne Boring! Just three panels but they had both Superman and Clark Kent in them. Kent was in profile with that strange way Boring drew Clark’s glasses from that angle. I still have it. A couple of years later I took a similar tour up at the offices of Mad Magazine on MADison Ave. (Mad would also play a big part in my young adult life).

I immediately started drawing comic book characters incessantly. Over the years, I learned by “swiping” from all my favorite artists. For those who don’t know the industry term, it means closely studying and analyzing an artist’s technique and then basically copying them. I became quite the comic-art aficionado able to instantly recognize each artist’s particular style. When Marvel started doing creator credits I began to know them all by name. DC followed suit shortly thereafter. Here were heavyweights like Gil Kane, Carmine Infantino, Jack Kirby, Steve Ditko, Gene Colan, Joe Kubert, Steranko, all at the peak of their powers.

Comic collecting became a serious habit. DC, Marvel, Warren, an occasional Gold Key... Mad, of course... I absorbed them all. I also had definite opinions and creative ideas on how to improve things. I wrote an occasional “letter to the editor” that got published. On weekends, I’d troll used bookstores for back issues. I unearthed amazing stuff that was done before I was even born. Here’s where I discovered EC Comics and the genius of Wally Wood, Frank Frazetta, Al Williamson, Harvey Kurtzman, etc.

Warren magazines introduced me to another group of favorites such as Alex Toth, Gray Morrow, Angelo Torres, Reed Crandall, Jerry Grandenetti — not to mention amazing work from some of my Marvel favorites, like Ditko and Colan outdoing themselves in glorious black and white. Warren mags are also where I first gazed upon the work of an extremely talented newcomer named, Neal Adams! More on my personal experience with Neal in a few...

My school notebooks were full of sketches — usually mash ups of my favorites like Superman fighting The Hulk, Batman battling Captain America. I had Kirby’s Thor down. I memorized how to draw a Gil Kane punch. By age ten I had a drafting table in my bedroom. I learned the tools of the trade. I had Windsor & Newton brushes, jars of India ink and some radiograph pens. I



graduated to using real Strathmore paper and kneaded erasers. I wrote and drew practice stories and even taught myself how to use the infamous Leroy lettering machine that EC comics used for all their word balloons. It was not unusual for me to request art supplies for my birthday or a set of Faber-Castell pencils for Hanukkah.

However, back then, even with all the practice, I knew in my heart that I was not a natural. I needed the crutch of copying other artists to draw what I saw in my head. I had no real style of my own. But, what I did have was a good eye for talent. I appreciated what great comic art was

and knew all about who was out there doing it – both amateur and professional.

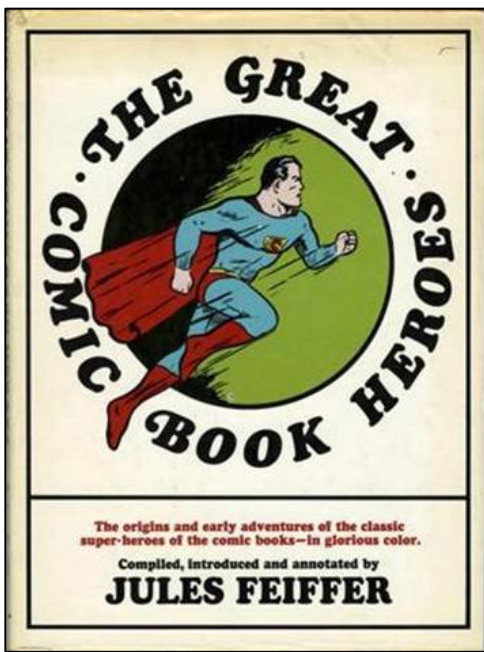
During my early teens, on two separate occasions, I found hardcover books that were complete revelations. Each was prominently on display at that cool bookstore on the East Side that was right next to where the arthouse movie theaters Cinema I



& II used to be. Going to the movies there then roaming this bookstore was one of my favorite pastimes. (That and checking out at all the pretty girls in Manhattan who somehow seemed hotter than the ones from Queens).

Anyway... The first was Alex Raymond's collected Flash Gordon strips beautifully reproduced in black and white. First time I'd ever seen them. I was completely blown away by his artistry. This led to me becoming obsessed with other comic strip greats like Hal Foster and Milton Caniff.





The other book was Jules Feiffer’s, “The Great Comic Book Heroes.” Here, an artist whose weekly cartoons in The Village Voice that I loved, wrote a loving tribute to the great comic artists of his time. It was a wonderful historical look back at the beginnings of what he unapologetically called an “art form.” Although the golden age styles of drawing in the book seemed primitive to me, my mind was truly expanded by having this comprehensive historical context.

The one artist in the book whose work totally stood out for me was Will Eisner. I don’t recall the year but sometime in the sixties, of all companies, Harvey Comics, published a couple issues of Eisner’s “The Spirit.” They were reprints but I did not know that at the time. It was work I had never seen before. Eisner’s unique panel design and cinematic

storytelling techniques became a huge influence on me.

But finally, here it was... actual books, featuring actual comic art on the shelves of an actual adult hip East Side bookstore — not on a squeaky spinning rack in some crummy corner candy shop. This was probably the first inkling I had that I wanted to create something in this art form that could be distributed at this level.

**Rolling Stone**

*The dummy in the Oval Office was built to one-third scale.*

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## Funky Reagan: jokes to dance to

<p><i>When a congressman I want to grease I turn to the man called Ed Meese To make a national park into a parking lot I turn to the man called Jim Watt For foreign policy that's strong and vague I turn to the man called Al Haig When a foreign dictator needs a push Well, I turn to the man called George Bush When human rights needs an underachiever I turn to Doctor Ernest Lefever*</i></p>	<p><b>I</b> think Americans need political humor they can dance to,” says comedian Harry Shearer, whose “Reagan Rap” video premiered this month on an ON TV special called <i>Likely Stories</i>. The sketch featured a two-foot-tall clay model of Reagan (“The eyes move, the lips move, and they got just the right fabric for the suit”) performing a rap song—rhyming, boastful, rhythmic talk over a heavy funk track — in a built-to-scale Oval Office. Says Shearer: “This seemed like a good way to poke gentle fun at rap records and poke less-gentle fun at Reagan.”</p>
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*Quick sidebar: Years later I met with Feiffer in NY when I was developing a comedy for HBO. Great guy. He was one of my screenwriting heroes who at 89 is STILL drawing comics! Anyway, I asked him if he’d like to write an ongoing animated segment featuring a Ronald Reagan claymation puppet that I was having designed. He was gleefully interested. We were in the studio where the puppet and miniature oval office set were located and he was riffing on some funny ideas, when we got word that Reagan had just been shot. All went quiet. We*

*slowly agreed that maybe the timing wasn't so great for this bit. After Reagan recovered Feiffer got too busy working on a screenplay to follow up. Satirical mastermind Harry Shearer stepped in and wrote a very funny Ronald Reagan 'rap' song with him doing the impression of ol' Ronnie as well. Rolling Stone magazine loved it!*

Comics taught me to think visually and how to dramatically tell a story in pictures. These skills fueled my desire to become a filmmaker. Understanding the art of sequential story telling gave me the raw ability to direct which I did for several of the TV projects I produced over the years (to some acclaim if I may brag). Being able to draw came in especially handy when working with cinematographers. To be able to do a quick sketch or storyboard proved most helpful – even if the characters in them tended to be posed like a Gil Kane superhero or a Frazetta, femme fatale.

### **Q: What was your first exposure to fandom? A specific zine? A Convention?**

My “fan-aticism” for comics went to the next level when at the age of ten I begged my parents to take me to the very first comic book convention in New York at the Statler Hilton. Here were my favorite comic artists in the flesh! I made my parents sit through the panels where comics were seriously discussed by their creators. In a way, it calmed their nerves that I was not alone in my strange fascination with comic books. My dad seemed to appreciate the fact that, for the most part, these artists were men of his generation who wore jackets and ties.

I was a polite young man so after a panel, if there was the opportunity, I would approach these guys, introduce myself and let them know what a fan I was of their work. I usually pointed out something about their style I felt was unique. My comments always seemed to be appreciated. I remember at this first convention when after a brief chat, Gil Kane signed my program. I remember thinking his silver hair was combed exactly like Green Lantern's.

But my actual favorite thing about these conventions was spending hours drooling (figuratively) over the original art that was on display or for sale. These conventions became a major yearly event for me. As I'm sure you know, these early gatherings would be hardly recognizable by today's extravaganza “comic-con” standards. They were relatively small and intimate affairs. Aspiring artists and writers from all over the country attended and were able to show their portfolios to editors and professional artists — as well as anybody else interested in taking a look. I was among this strange group — all of us toting around big art portfolios while touting our big ideas.

These events are where I initially met many of the remarkably talented “amateur” artists that I felt in my bones were bound for greatness. People like Bernie Wrightson, Jeff Jones and Mike Kaluta. Their artwork blew my mind.

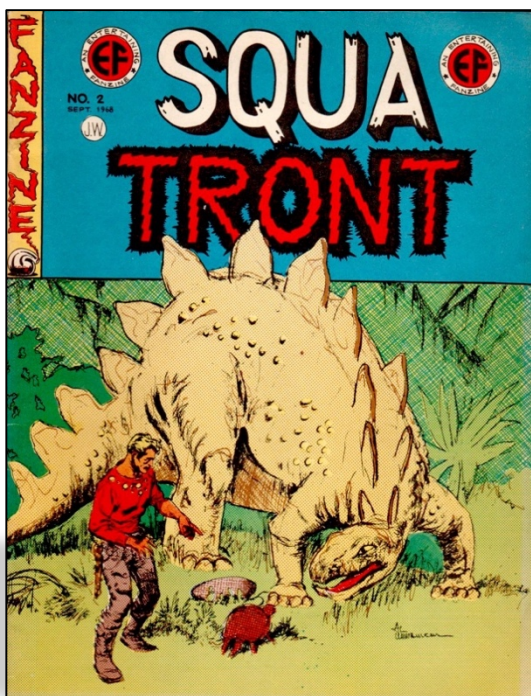
These guys were the real deal... the young guns in town. Longhaired hippie types that wanted to shake up the industry. It was the sixties! The Vietnam War raged. Nixon was in the White House and protest and pot were in the air. Revolution... political, musical & sexual swirled all around us.

An interesting phenomenon at these conventions worth noting was that small groups of aspiring artists and writers would spontaneously gather around discussing the hot button comic book topics of the day. We were all craving change. New and innovative styles of storytelling, better print quality, new formats geared to an older more sophisticated audience. We were passionate about artists having the ability to maintain the rights to their creations and to do material not censored by the Comics Code Authority. It was in this heady environment where the lightning bolt struck and I knew that I must produce my own publication someday.

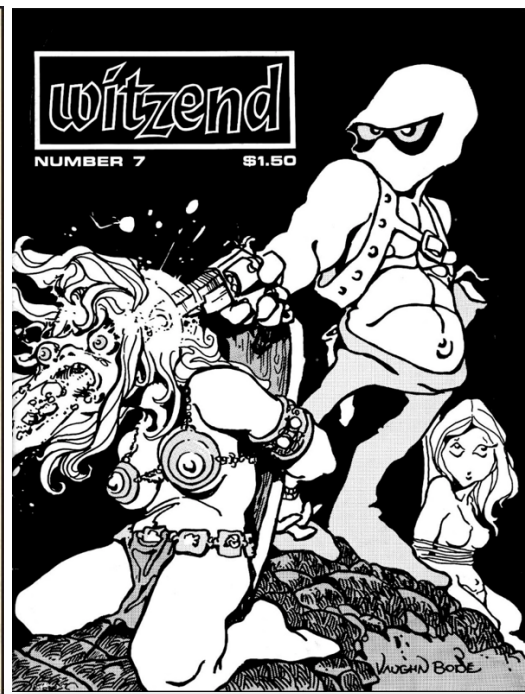
I always seemed like the youngest guy in the room. I'm 14-15 at the time but "played older." I was able to fit in with these mostly 18-20 yr. olds. I was passionate and knowledgeable. I was a funny guy. I made them laugh. They liked me.

**Q: Did you have any favorite zines as a reader?**

I really wasn't that familiar with the whole zine-scene. I think I bought a few issues of "Squa Tront" at a convention because they were printed so nicely. But usually whenever I picked up one of the others up the art looked amateurish to me. They had poor layout and design and shitty printing for the most part.



All that changed when I stumbled upon an issue of Wally Wood's "Witzend." This was the game-changer for me. A high-quality magazine, independently published, featuring professional comic artists 'doing their thing" outside the limits of the comics code. I thought, THIS is what I'd like to do — but instead feature the up and coming artists that I know about!



I would spend time in bookstores carefully studying the layout and design of the hip counter culture magazines of the day. I was particularly inspired by a literary and art magazine called The Evergreen Review. It was smart, it was sexy it was funny. My three favorite attributes. It experimented with different paper stocks and unusual layouts.



Looking back, I remember one issue in particular had a photo of a nude woman on its cover that looked as if she stepped off the page of one of Jeff Jones' "Idyl" pieces. However, Jeff would not create that series for several years later. Perhaps he was inspired by it too?



But these hip, indie bookstores were the environment I wanted my publication to live in. On the shelf, right between Evergreen and Interview magazines. I'm around 15 when I have this epiphany. Step 1. Get the money to do it.

**Q: About how old were you when you put Imagination together?**

It took about a year and a half from start to finish. So, I guess basically between the ages 15 and 17. By now my parents knew that I was serious about all this — so they were not shocked when I asked if I could use the money I received as gifts for my Bar Mitzvah to publish my own magazine.

I made a compelling case for my passion project. I did my homework and researched the hard costs of just printing a limited run of like 1,500 – 2,000 units with the kind of quality paper and art reproduction I was looking for. I had a "business plan" on how to recoup these costs and possibly even make a profit if I were able to sell the entire print run. I realized my folks were under the impression that this would just be a one-shot venture. In my mind however, what I was trying to accomplish would be like a TV pilot — a sample of what I'd like to continue to produce on an ongoing basis. I decided I would share that dream with them at a more appropriate time.

I was an excellent student at school with high grades so it was difficult for them to nix it right out of the box. The amount they agreed to invest was \$2,500. That was a hard number “not a penny more.” I also had to keep my father in the loop with whatever I was doing. (That, it turns out, I wasn’t so great at). So, in 1968, Imagination Publishing Co. was born for which I was now the official self-appointed “editor and a publisher.” It’s a company run out of a basement in Flushing, Queens with just one employee who could only work after school.

### **Q: How did you come about your material?**

It’s an involved story... I’m almost 16 when I go to a convention with a mission and a real commitment, and with real money burning a hole in my bell bottom jeans.

First, I approached Mike Kaluta. I was a fan. The detail and quirky concepts in his work mesmerized me. I basically pitched him my idea of creating this sample “pilot magazine.” One that would demonstrate that a premium printed magazine, packaged with the right mix of quality contributors, each whose work has something unique to say, could find an older more sophisticated audience if distributed in the proper venues — like bookstores — mixed in with other big-time art and literary mags.

Of course, all contributors would retain the copyright to their material as well as own their original artwork. I was completely upfront and said that the investors were my parents who believed in my ability to actually pull it off. I explained my lofty ambitions for quality layout and design. I showed him samples from other publications I was inspired by.

The one BIG catch was that I only had enough money to print a limited run of copies at this quality level. Therefore, I would be unable to pay any fees to the artists and was looking for contributions to this venture from specific talent who were my favorites. That was my pitch. Mike wanted in.

Now from previous conventions I knew Kaluta was friendly with some of my other favorites like, Bernie Wrightson and Jeff Jones. I was aware that each had already contributed spot illustrations or small galleries of their drawings to other fanzines. What I wasn’t aware of at the time was that these three super talented artists shared a single studio space on the upper west side of Manhattan. Mike invited me over to meet the guys at “the studio.”

When I look back I realize that I did all of this before I could drive. But I was a subway ninja on a mission back then. Gimme the address I’ll get there.



This shared space would later become known in the biz as “The Studio.” Other artists like Barry Smith and Bruce Jones would later become members. It evolved into a kind of hip comic artist commune. It was a large loft space with big windows that flooded the tall room with light. Each artist had his own unique spacious work area. There was always great music playing. They had pretty braless girlfriends who would waft through occasionally. These guys

were smoking pot and getting laid regularly. I wanted out of my parent’s house so bad after experiencing this.

But on this first visit it was just the four of us. To cut to the chase I did my passion pitch and the boys all bought in. We brainstormed together about a common format of some kind. I suggested something that could be done relatively quickly. I pitched the idea that the three of them each write and draw a 3-page story — something that would be representative of their unique sensibilities.

Strangely enough the idea for this three-page story concept came to me on the spot while looking at this HUGE painting by Jeff Jones hanging on the wall. It was at least ten feet high. It depicted, a single nude woman, aging from a nubile nymph into a voluptuous vixen and finally a sagging octogenarian. They laughed when I described it as “beautiful, frightening and funny all at the same time.” I pointed to it and said, “that’s a whole story right there.” I went on about the “rule of three” in comedy (I will touch on my comedy career in a bit). They all liked the idea of the quick rhythm of it.

They really hooked into the beautiful/frightening/funny notion. The timing was perfect for them. They could all jump right in. They’d set a deadline and all finish at the same time. I was excited. They were excited. The challenge was afoot.



BTW: Many years later I saw an image of that painting in a Jones retrospective online — but I never saw it published in print anywhere. Gotta wonder where that humongous original hangs today...



A few weeks later I got a call from Wrightson asking if I'd like to come by the studio and check out their progress. When I got there, it was only Bernie and Mike in attendance. Bernie was just beginning to ink his offering, "Conjure Woman." At first, he just showed me the opening splash page. The only panel inked in was the high angle of a witch stirring her smoking cauldron. Bernie's pencils were detailed and beautiful but his inking was amazing. His brushwork was so smooth and impeccable. The billowing smoke, the shadowing on the foreground objects, the atmospheric lighting gave it almost a 3D quality.

I got a huge kick out of his tongue-in-cheek choice for an, Uncle Creepy/Cousin Eerie style host. To me it was immediately apparent that it was a life-size, evil version of "Froggy The Gremlin,"

the rude frog puppet from the Andy Devine kid's show, "Andy's Gang."

Devine is probably best remembered as Wild Bill Hickok's sidekick — but on his kiddie show, which ran from 1955-60, there was this hilarious recurring segment where Froggy, would appear from a puff of smoke and croak his signature opening line, "Hiya kids, hiya, hiya" which always elicited big, "Yea's" from the kids in the peanut gallery. The shtick was that Devine and various of the show's cast would try to tell a story that Froggy kept interrupting by finishing their sentences with a rude non-sequitur. Devine and the others would blindly repeat it then angrily realize they'd been fooled



yet again by this nasty Gremlin. “Nooooo...” they would shout! Then Froggy would mischievously laugh causing an enormous roar from the kids in the audience.

This would go on until Devine demanded that Froggy, “pluck his magic twanger” which is what made this Mr. Mxyptlk like character appear and disappear in a puff of smoke. It slayed me every time. Obviously, Bernie too. If you’ve never seen it, do yourself a favor and check it out!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AFpzTaICKQU>



Dangling from a string on Wrightson's frog's finger like a yo-yo was a disembodied head. I asked Bernie if that was supposed to be "the head of Andy Devine?" He laughed, glad that I got the reference, and said. "It is now." He started to read the dialogue aloud to me doing a good imitation of Froggy's raspy voice. The frog's opening alliterative wordplay was a hoot. He had me cracking up. He'd slowly reveal the next large penciled page continuing to read aloud as if telling me some macabre bedtime story.

Page Two was also incredible. It was four dramatic panels framed with thick black borders, featuring an obvious Graham Ingels inspired old witch type conjuring up this Swamp-thing-ish muck-monster from the depths of her steaming brew. It rose slowly until it hovered menacingly

above her. Bernie now switched to a high-pitched hag's voice as she instructed her evil creation to "go out and wreak havoc on an all-too deserving world."



The third full-page was the pay-off as the suddenly clumsy creature does a huge pratfall out of the cauldron falling face first while spewing the putrid potion everywhere. It was unexpected and funny. "Beautiful, frightening and funny" — dead center bulls-eye I thought!

Bernie saw that I was literally wide-eyed and wowed by his work, probably because "wow" was the word I kept repeating over and over. I could tell he was greatly pleased and appreciative. With a big smile, he told me he'd be done in a few days and immediately went back to inking the opening page. I stood and watched him work for a few moments. It really was a thing of beauty the way he confidently added these long finely tuned brush strokes.

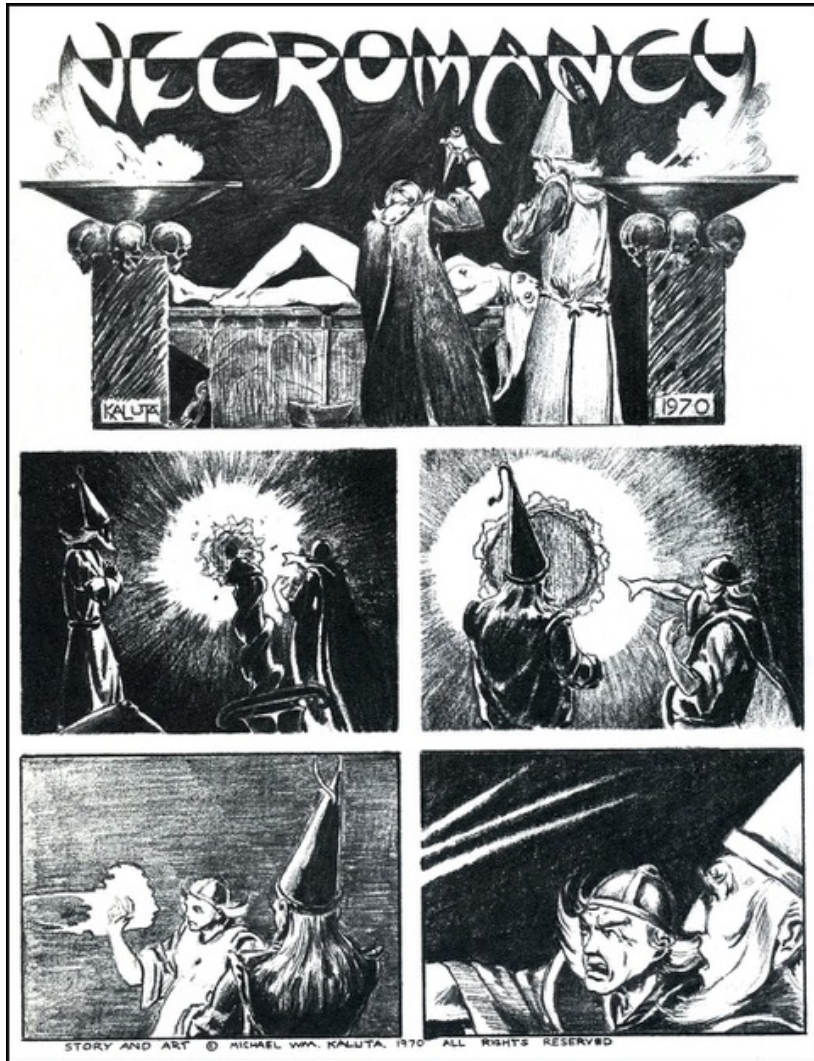
My eyes drifted, studying his workspace filled with an array of art books and eclectic collectibles. On one of the shelves I

noticed an actual Froggy dog "squeak toy." Very cool... I remember thinking. Many years later when eBay first came on the scene "Froggy-gremlin-squeak-toy" was my very first search. Happy to say I found one that still sits proudly on my office shelf.

Thinking back to the image of Bernie hunched over his crowded drawing table, dramatically lit by multiple drafting lamps, he looked just like the insane young, Dr. Frankenstein character right out of his classic illustrations.



Next, I floated on a happy cloud over to Kaluta's well organized work area. When I saw what he was creating I was truly surprised. All of the work I had seen him do previously were these highly detailed, meticulously inked pieces. Here, Mike was working completely in soft pencil on what looked like opaque tissue paper. He was just finishing it up page one.



It was dark and moody with deep shadows. I loved how he incorporated the beautifully designed title logo, "Necromancy" into the top of the first panel. BTW, "necromancy" was another one of those "big words" I learned while osmosing Robered E. Howard paperback novels one after another. This page felt like a dungeon scene ripped right out of one.

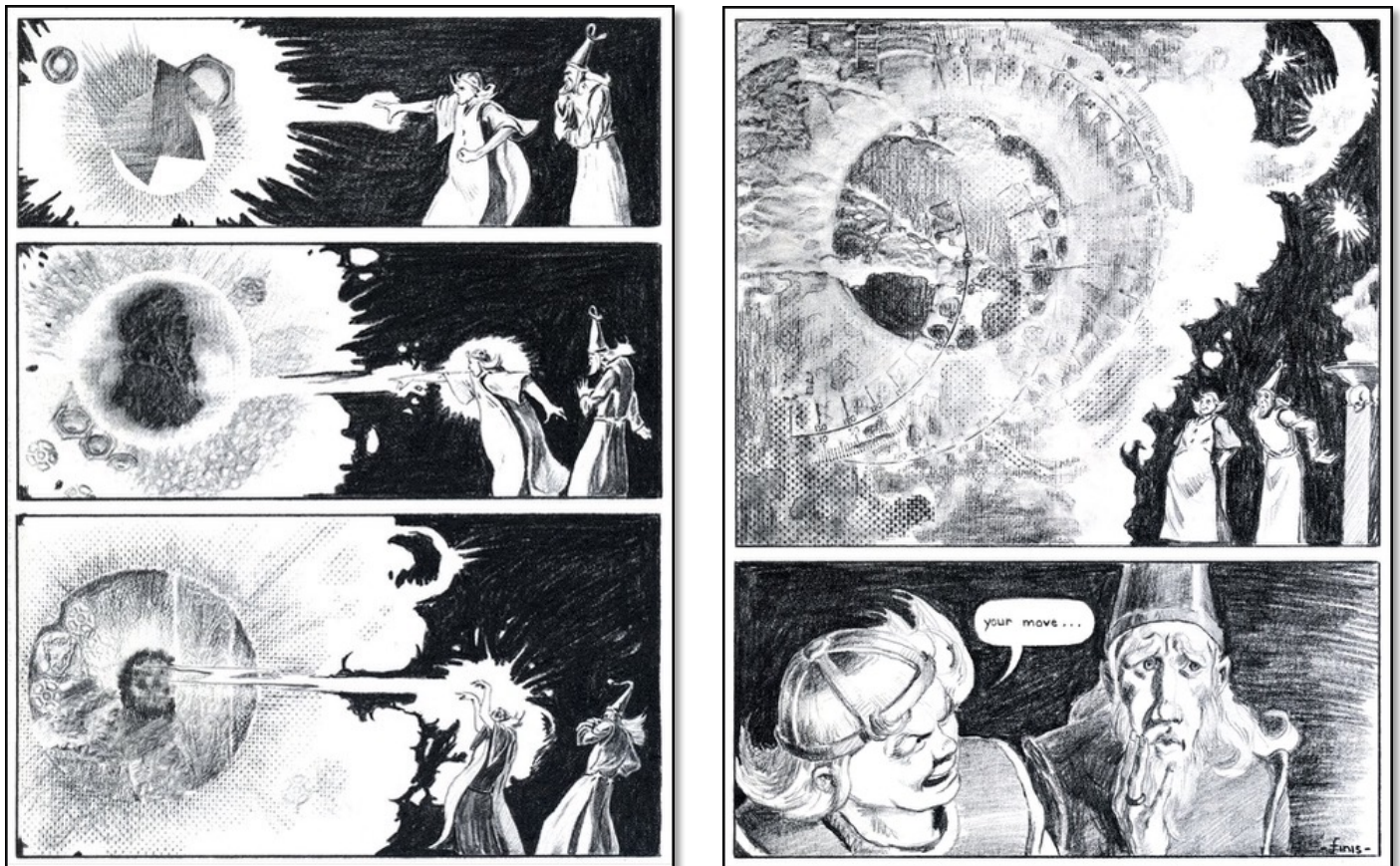
Two wizards were poised, one with dagger raised, for a ritual sacrifice of a young naked woman lying on a stone pedestal before them. With a close up of the already plunged knife in the foreground of the second panel, one of the wizards starts casting a spell that lights up the dark with a crackling power that continues to grow...

I started my "wowing" again. As he turned to pick up the other pages I asked about the unusual paper stock he was using. He said it was necessary to do a certain kind of "special effect" technique he had always wanted to try and that he was about to demonstrate.

He laid the last two pages side by side. Page two had three horizontal panels showing the shorter wizard straining to make the energy field grow larger and more powerful. Inside were strange highly detailed textured images to illustrate the sorcerer's powerful spell. Mike explained that he was experimenting with an old art technique called "frottage" (French for rubbing) developed by Max Earnst back in the early 1900's. Earnst, Mike explained, would lay sheets of paper on weathered wood floors and then rubbed over them with a soft pencil. The results suggested mysterious forests peopled with birdlike creatures.

Mike was using various textured objects like old medallions one with a king's head, another smaller one had a horned elf's face on it. He also used some regular nuts and bolts to produce these rub-through effects. I then watched as he placed a curved plastic protractor under the last page and repeatedly rubbed while the measurement increments and numbers showed through. It really worked great — and was something I had never seen before. The closest thing I could think of at the time were the weird photo montages that Kirby occasionally did to illustrate something cosmic.

On page three, after creating a cave-sized incantation throbbing with weird imagery, the smaller sorcerer turns to the other wizard and smugly says "your move..." I loved this quick, amusing payoff that was so incongruous to the dark and deadly mood of the previous pages. The whole thing was basically a "spell-off" competition between two wizards who physically embodied the classic comedy team characteristic of one being tall and skinny the other short and pudgy. Abbot and Costello could have easily played the parts.



"Brilliant!" I loudly exclaimed shaking his hand aggressively. Mike too was most pleased by my display of honest enthusiasm. He then explained that Jeff Jones couldn't make it but had said he wanted them to show me what he was working on. Mike took me over to Jeff's workspace and called for Bernie join in.





Sitting on Jones' large drawing board were three complete pages except for the lettering. What struck me immediately was the unusual layout of two long vertical panels on each page. The pages looked great sitting side by side -- like a vertical storyboard. Jones style was sparse compared to the other guys but no less inventive. Here in stark black and white we find ourselves in deep space. I loved the lighting in the first panel as a small spacecraft moves past the dark side of a moon revealing the majestic planet Saturn.

The next panel showed a smiling older astronaut. Jeff cleverly sold weightlessness by having a pill capsule floating out of his hand and a strand of his thinning hair standing up. I had only seen Jones do fantasy and sword and sorcery stuff. As far as I know this was his first foray into full out science fiction. Also, there were no word balloons per se. All the dialogue of the astronaut talking with an off-screen mission control, were placed in stacked caption boxes on either the top or bottom of each panel. I was amazed by how Jeff's art sold the huge the scale of the story so realistically with this minimalistic style.



Jeff did not go for a comedic punch line but instead came up with a unique spine-tingling twist for an ending. After rejoicing being the first space craft from earth to make it to Saturn — things quickly turn dark when it's revealed that the planet's huge rings are comprised of derelict alien spacecraft that got sucked in and never made it back home. It would have made a great Twilight Zone episode but here Jeff powerfully sold it in three beautifully designed pages.

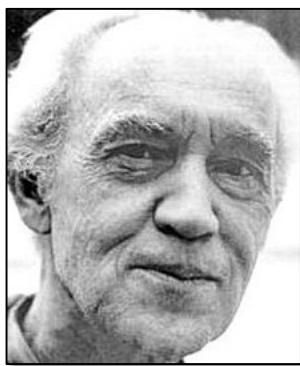
The three of us stood there admiring these special aspects of Jeff's "Explored." I commented that the aged astronaut was such an interesting character choice. This was no heroic Flash Gordon/Buck Rodgers type. Bernie pointed to a photo on Jeff's shelf. It was of the acclaimed fantasy artist Roy Krenkel who they all deeply admired. It looked an awful lot like the astronaut in his story. We all smiled.

I could tell that there was a good-natured competition among these guys. They were obviously huge fans of each other's art. You could tell that they were trying to impress each other. This is what made, "The Studio" so historically important. Working in this creatively-charged, super-synergistic environment during this formative period for all of them no doubt made them all better artists. These guys inspired each other and pushed one another to evolve into the iconic artists that they would shortly become.

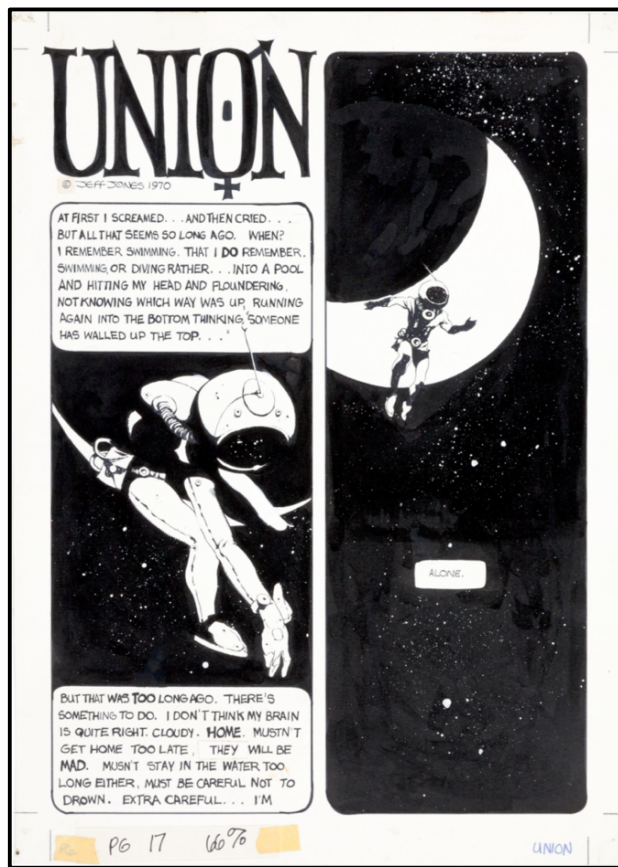
*Sidebar: Within a year another piece by Jeff, done in the identical format, popped up in a terrific fanzine, called, "Phase" entitled, "Home." Jeff obviously had plans to continue doing a series of these disconnected deep-space horror stories. Shortly thereafter, Wrightson, Jones, Kaluta and Bruce Jones would wisely decide to put out their own magazine which they titled, "Abyss." They funded it by collaborating on an original limited edition, signed and numbered art portfolio. They contained large, poster sized illustrations by each of them printed on fine art paper. It was an impressive collection.*

*Jeff Jones' contribution to the actual magazine was another of these sci-fi pieces done in that same format entitled, "Union." it showed a lone astronaut floating in space. His artwork on this*

*one had seemingly leaped to the next level. I was in awe of his use of lighting -- the pitch-black shadows that emphasized the character's utter isolation. I thought it was brilliant. That particular piece is still my all-time favorite comic work by Jones. Some years ago, the original art for the whole six-page story was being auctioned off on Heritage's web site. I was seriously in the game right to the end but unfortunately was outbid at the very last second by another crazed fan with a faster trigger finger.*



About a week after my previous visit I went back to pick up the originals. I bought a brand-new art portfolio for the occasion to hold them. At first I was worried about smudging Kaluta's pencils but he assured me that had sprayed them with a special fixative to prevent that. As I turned the pages in the portfolio containing their collected art we all got the first real feel for the magazine. The boys seemed very pleased. I was ecstatic.



In one fell swoop I had in my hot little fan-boy hands pristine samples of the best work I've seen from these up and coming artists whose work I so admired. Each successfully showcased both their writing and drawing chops as well as their unique sensibilities — and I instigated it!

The work also represented three distinct fan-favorite genres -- horror, sword & sorcery and science fiction. These offerings were not quick sketches that I had seen from them in other fanzines. These were clearly three beautifully illustrated, extremely clever, "professional" stories as good or better than anything out there. Whatever endorphins I (still) get when I see amazing original comic artwork were surging. In other words, my spidey-sense was cranked all the way up to 11.

My "Imagination #1" magazine was becoming a reality!

*Sidebar: It was actually my Dad who suggested the name, "Imagination." It wasn't until decades later that it came to my attention that the name had been used not only on a then defunct pulp size sci-fi fiction mag, but also for a mimeographed limited run fanzine edited by a young Forest J. Ackerman and his "Science Fiction League" back in 1938. One of "the league's" members and contributors was a young Ray Bradbury. I'm supremely sure both these publications were completely off my father's radar. Years later, when I started my own production company, I proudly christened it Imagination Productions. It has remained that way for the past forty 40 years.*

As I was leaving the studio, the conversation turned to what I was thinking about doing for the cover. I told them I was going to try to approach comic book super-star Neal Adams. Neal was already a big supporter of these guys so they were happy to put me in touch. They actually seemed eager for him to see their latest work.

Adams was already a rock star in the comic industry. His realistic style and dynamic panel-busting layouts offered something completely new. To me his emergence on the scene was not just a game changing artistic breakthrough it was more like a spark that ignited a complete renaissance in comics.

By this time Neal had already done, The Spectre, Deadman and completely reinvented Batman. Neal then switched over to Marvel and did the same for X-men! The Green Lantern/Green Arrow series with Denny O'Neil was without a doubt a watershed moment for the entire industry.



It's well known that Neal was THE very vocal leader in the fight for artist's rights. It's legendary how he basically shamed DC comics into coughing up some much-needed annual income for

Superman's creators, Siegel & Schuster -- but also insured they would receive creator credits in perpetuity in all media. The fact that he also was instrumental in having artists get their originals back made him a giant in our eyes. It set the stage for a tectonic shift in the entire industry. "New rules," where artists and writers could fight and win the right to maintain ownership of their intellectual properties AND share in the profits, were on the horizon.

When I "dialed" Neal's number I was actually a little nervous. It's not every day you get to call one of your heroes. The conversation went well. I gave him my well-honed pitch and he said he was impressed by my ideas, passion and balls. He appreciated my goal to position it as a highbrow art magazine to be distributed to bookstores.

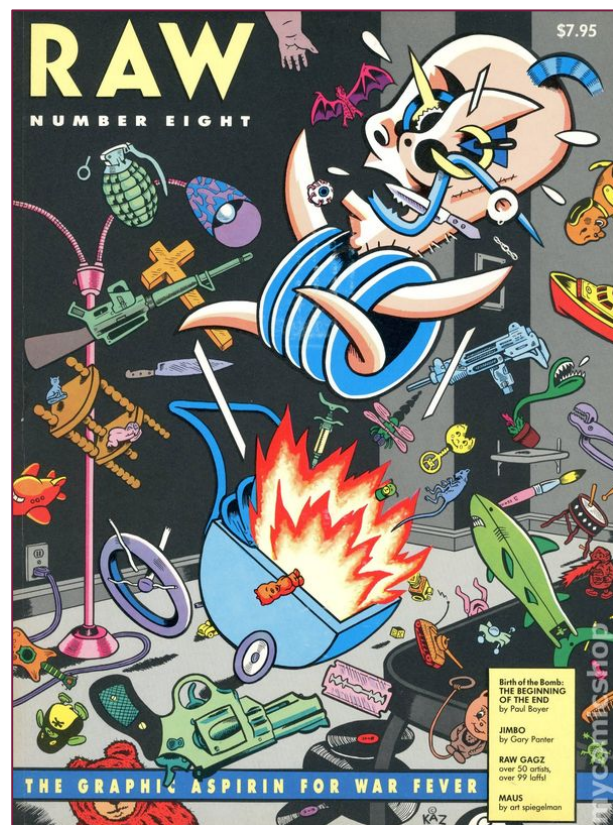
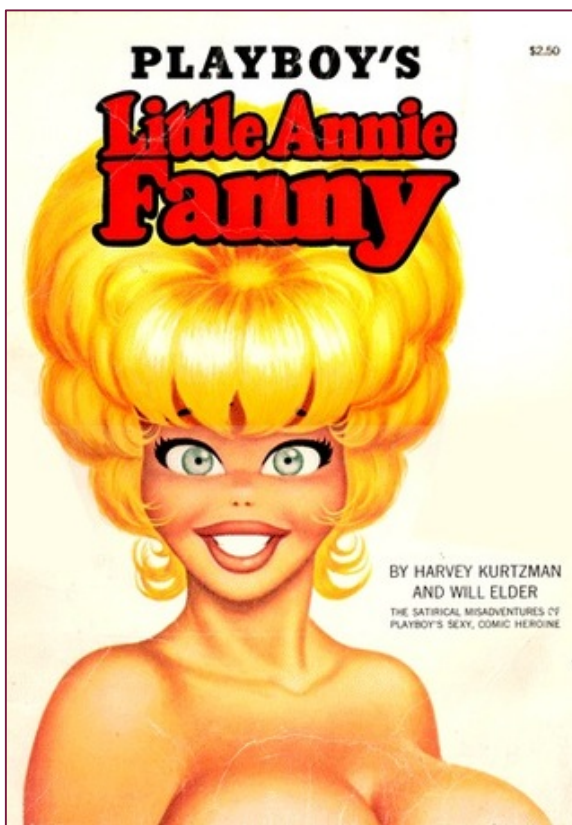


When we met, I showed him the completed stories by Jones, Wrightson and Kaluta. He studied them closely and commented on how impressed he was with the rapid speed they were all improving. He agreed with me that this was some of the best stuff he'd seen them turn out to date. I asked him if he'd be willing to contribute the cover which was going to be in color. He told me that frankly he was WAY too busy to do anything new for it -- but he did have an unpublished early work that I could use. He showed me sample pages that he wrote, penciled and inked that were a proposal for a syndicated daily strip like his early Ben Casey work. Entitled, "Tangent" it was full of Adams' dramatic storytelling techniques. Bottom line I was completely thrilled to have his work represented in the magazine.

As far as a cover was concerned he suggested I contact his friend, Gray

Morrow whose work I loved! He gave me Gray's number and said he'd tell him to expect my call. What a pro!

*Long sidebar: Besides being a brilliant, innovative artist, Neal was also a very smart, no nonsense businessman. He quizzed me on my long-term goals with this project. I shared with him my idea for trying to acquire the rights to already famous works by major authors of fan-favorite fiction and adapting them into “graphic novels.” I said I felt that, “Imagination” could become a creative “brand” that would package and present these unique pairings of author and artist. (What I basically envisioned doing is what Byron Preiss would brilliantly accomplish around eight years later with Gray Morrow and Roger Zelazny and followed by Chaykin’s adaptation of Alfred Bester’s “The Stars are My Destination.”) My thought, to stand out on the shelves, was to do these publications in a 9” x 12” format – similar to the then recently published, Playboy’s “Little Annie Fanny” compilation. The same size, I believe, that Art Spiegelman’s wonderful “Raw” magazine would use a decade later.*



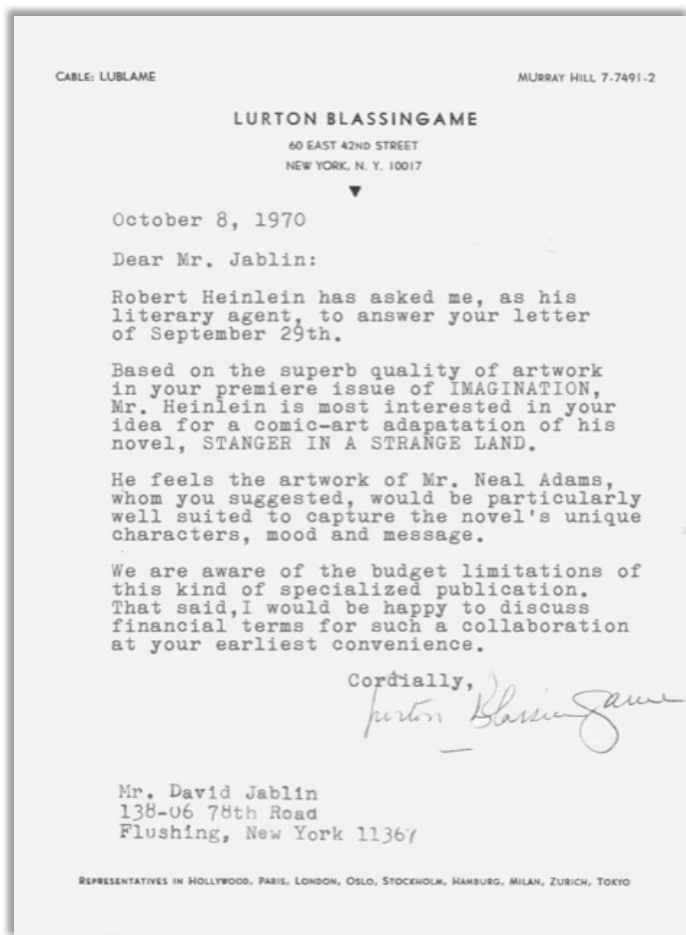
*As encouraging as Neal was he could also be quite blunt. While he admired my vision and certainly didn't want to squash my dreams, he was very direct in telling me that he did not think my “business model” was sustainable. That to pull off what I was thinking it was going to take serious money. I explained that I was very aware that I would have to raise money to continue publishing and that the whole purpose behind this “pilot magazine” was to use it as a calling card to lure investors.*

*I also shared that I recently had a conversation with my father's corporate attorney in which he detailed a popular tax incentive available at the time to investors who became part of a*

*“limited partnership” for a “risky” venture. It would allow them to legally get up to a 5-1 write off on their income taxes for the amount they invested. In other words, even if they lose they win. Neal laughed when I compared it to the recently opened Mel Brooks film “The Producers.”*

*It was well known that Bernie Wrightson would kill to adapt Shelley’s “Frankenstein” and that Kaluta was a fanatic for anything written by Edgar Rice Burroughs. Also, that another up and coming artist I knew named Howard Chaykin, was frothing at the mouth to adapt, Samuel R. Delany’s novel, “Nova.” (Howard would later become a member of Neal’s Crusty Bunkers). I said my personal dream would be to adapt my all-time favorite sci-fi novel of that era, Robert Heinlein’s classic, “Stranger In A Strange Land.” This seemed to hit a chord with Adams who said he’d love a crack at that one -- wondering aloud if the rights would even be available. I said, with his permission, I would inquire... In my mind, I was already imagining how cool Neal’s version of Valentine Michael Smith and Jubal Harshaw could be.*

*To put a time stamp perspective on this, National Lampoon (who I would also later be involved with) who would end up publishing lots of artwork by these artists, would not exist for another year. Its sister publication, “Heavy Metal” would follow seven years down the road after that.*



*Basically, at that moment in time, no one was doing anything like what I was pitching. So, about a month before finalizing Imagination #1, I contacted Robert Heinlein’s big-time literary agent, Lurton Blassingame by mail with the idea. I also sent along some photo prints of some of the completed art. About a week later he wrote back saying that he had run it by his client and that Heinlein was indeed very interested! I replied, “Fantastic!” and that I would follow up after the publication of our premiere issue. Neal was definitely surprised by the quick response. He basically said if you get the right kind of money, I’m in. Within a month after we printed the first issue, and it having some limited success, I made a beeline to my Dad’s lawyer with the idea of forming a limited partnership to raise \$100,000 for an additional four issues to be published quarterly and sold at five bucks a pop. As a favor to my Dad, he agreed to adapt an existing form he had used*

*to my specific project and send them to some clients he thought might be interested.*

*To make a long and frustrating story short... in the end Neal Adams would turn out to be 100% right about everything. My business plan sucked and serious money would be impossibly hard to come by. Passion and perseverance do not always win the day.*

*During my entire senior year at high school and summer before college I was meeting at night and on weekends with groups of investors this lawyer knew -- mostly comprised of doctors, and dentists. Hard as I tried, even wearing a tie, I couldn't even find one who took the idea of doing serious graphic art "comic books" seriously. "The funnies" were meant to be read on newsprint. The prevailing belief was that no one was going to spend \$5.00 on a comic book. Remember regular comics cost 12 cents at the time. These N.Y. investors were looking for something "sexier" – something where they could rub shoulders with their favorite actor or eat for free at a restaurant they could brag they're an owner in. The only bright side about dealing with all this rejection was that these hard lessons prepared me for my later swimming in the shark infested waters of Hollywood.*

When you could drop Neal Adams' name on a call to a top pro like Gray Morrow the door happily opened. I was familiar with Gray's work from the great stuff he was doing for Warren. I put him right up there in the company of such EC Masters as Wood and Williamson. But, it was the independent work he was turning out for Wood's "Witzend" that really excited me. Brilliantly executed stuff done in a variety of styles from highly detailed pen work rivaling that of 18th century master, Franklin Booth to innovative photo realistic black and white wash. His original character, "Orion" was my absolute favorite "sword and sorcery" comic art to that date.



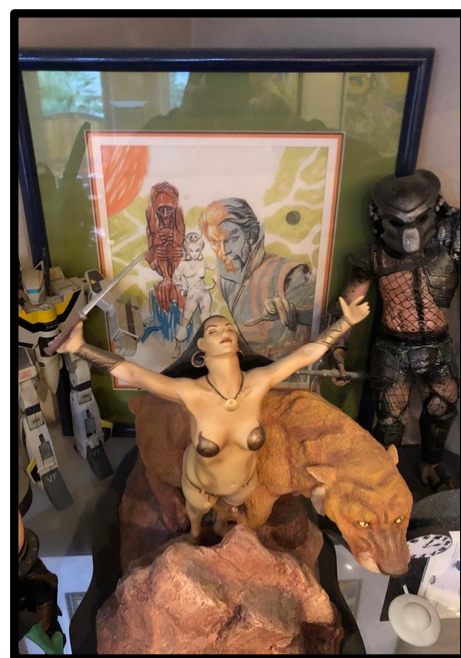
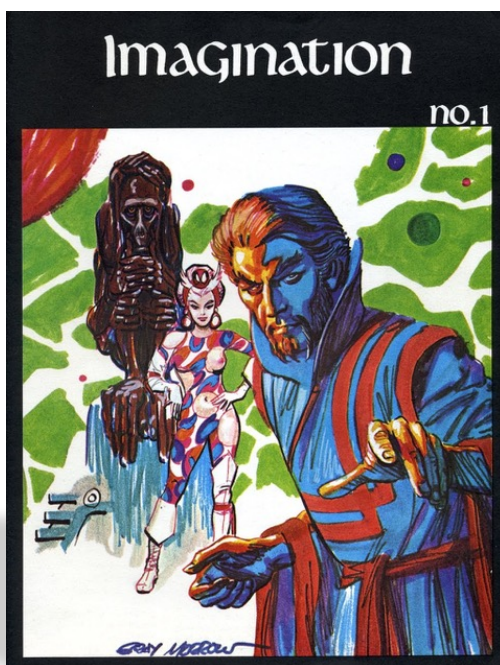
I took the subway to Gray's studio in Brooklyn armed with my trusty portfolio carrying the three "Studio" pieces, Neal Adams' "Tangent" pages as well as some of the avant-garde magazines I was using as inspiration for layout and design. I did my sales-spiel and showed him



the portfolio. He too took time to carefully study The Studio boy's pages. He was obviously impressed by what these young downtown turks were turning out.

He gave me a quick tour of his crowded studio. I didn't see any comic book art pages there. He seemed to be working on multiple paperback book or fantasy pulp magazine covers like, "Galaxy" all at the same time. He would do these smaller detailed preliminary designs in black and white wash, I assume for approval, and then do much larger fully painted versions on what looked like Masonite boards, leaving plenty of room for title logos. Something curious that really caught my eye near his drawing board was a Prince Valiant page that he said he did as a sample for Hal Foster who was thinking of retiring and was interviewing several "ghost artists" such as he and Wally Wood. I don't know it was ever published anywhere but it was great.

I also noticed he was using these interesting dual tipped water colored markers that he was able to blend. I hadn't seen that in anyone's tool kit before. I asked him about them and he showed me another small piece about 10" x 10" that he was working on utilizing them. It featured a sorcerer casting his spell on the viewer. It had a sexy, partially nude, colorfully costumed sorceress behind him standing next to what looked like an alien totem pole. He said that it was something I could use if I'd like. I liked! He said, "See, he's commanding the reader to use their imagination." Gray then said I could keep the cover art if I could do him a small favor and run a one-page promotional piece in my magazine for a self-published art book he was about to release. Originally, I didn't plan on running any ads whatsoever but I agreed immediately because... a) I wanted to keep that cover piece for myself and b) it was a great excuse to feature even more great Morrow art in the mag. I placed it on the inside back cover. The original for the cover of "imagination" is still proudly displayed in my office.



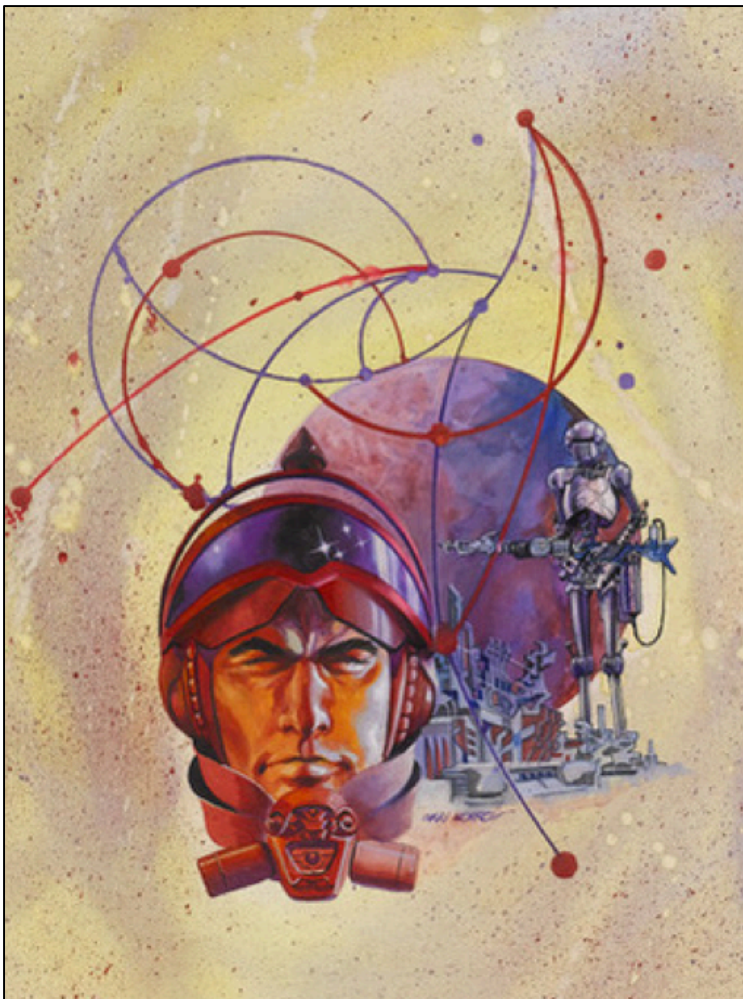


Gray also offered me a rough illustration that appeared to be another preliminary for a paperback book cover and said I could use it as well if I liked. I used it as a front piece on the inside front cover for my opening editorial. Many years later I noticed the finished painted piece up for auction on Heritage. I don't know what it was ultimately used for but it was fun to discover. That was the only time I met Gray and although he was somewhat older than my other contributors I found him to be a sweet, down to earth gentleman who was equally passionate as us young guys about doing excellent work.

**Q: I am assuming you knew Stillwell, since there was so much of his work in the zine. Is that right?**

Actually, I met Bill at a convention like all the others. I thought his portfolio was amazing. If memory serves me Bill showed me a completed story — a barbarian piece he had already sold to Warren that had not yet been published. Very polished and detailed stuff — beautifully inked with some nice wash work.

Bill was not a hippie type. He was very straitlaced, very professional. What was also different about him was that his style was coming from a completely different set of influences other than the EC, Frazetta, Williamson, Wood, school. At this point in time, everyone else seemed to be badly imitating either those guys or Jack Kirby and Neal Adams. If anything, to me Bill's work harkened back to the classic Raymond and Foster school of lifelike illustration.



I believe Bill was in medical school at the time. I'm pretty sure he told me that he also did detailed anatomy drawings for medical journals and text books. I actually think some of his influences may have been from the cadavers he told me he worked with. (Now that I think about it, I believe a few years later Bill did another piece for Creepy actually called, "The Cadaver").

But what really caught my eye were his pencil samples. They were so tight that I didn't feel they required any inking whatsoever. Bill was very interested in being a part of the project. He definitely wanted his work to be seen alongside the other talent involved (who he later would become quite friendly with). My suggestion was that he do an entire story completely in finished pencil which was something he hadn't done before. I also suggested he use his talent for drawing human anatomy to do something sexy -- and possibly modern day -- a genre that I did not have represented as yet.

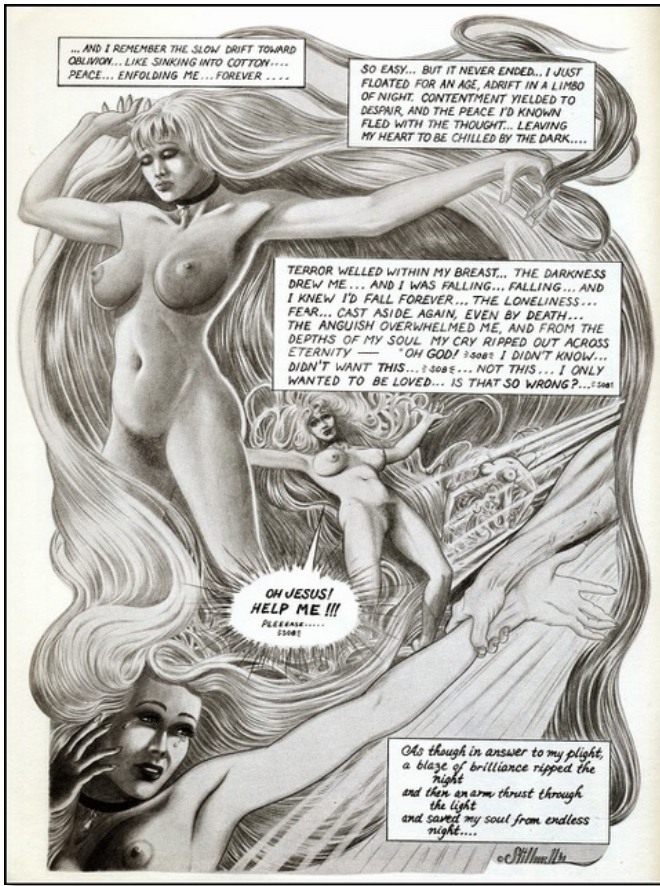
After pondering it for a few days we spoke on the phone. He had an idea that he was excited about that he felt would justify the finished pencil approach. However, he felt strongly that the three-page format was too limiting for the story he had in mind. Also, he wasn't too crazy about my suggestion that there somehow be an element of humor involved. Bill wanted to do something personal — close to his heart. He guaranteed it would be no more than six pages, very sexy but not gratuitous. Honestly, at the time I really didn't mind a little gratuitousness.



What can I say? Nudity was big back then. It was part of the zeitgeist of the times. After all it was 1969 — the summer of love! Woodstock, man! Even my favorite highbrow literary magazine, "Evergreen," that published original writings from everyone from Samuel Beckett to Alan Ginsberg also showcased "erotic" photography -- sometimes even on its cover. Remember, this was the era in which guys told their wives and girlfriends they only read Playboy for the articles.

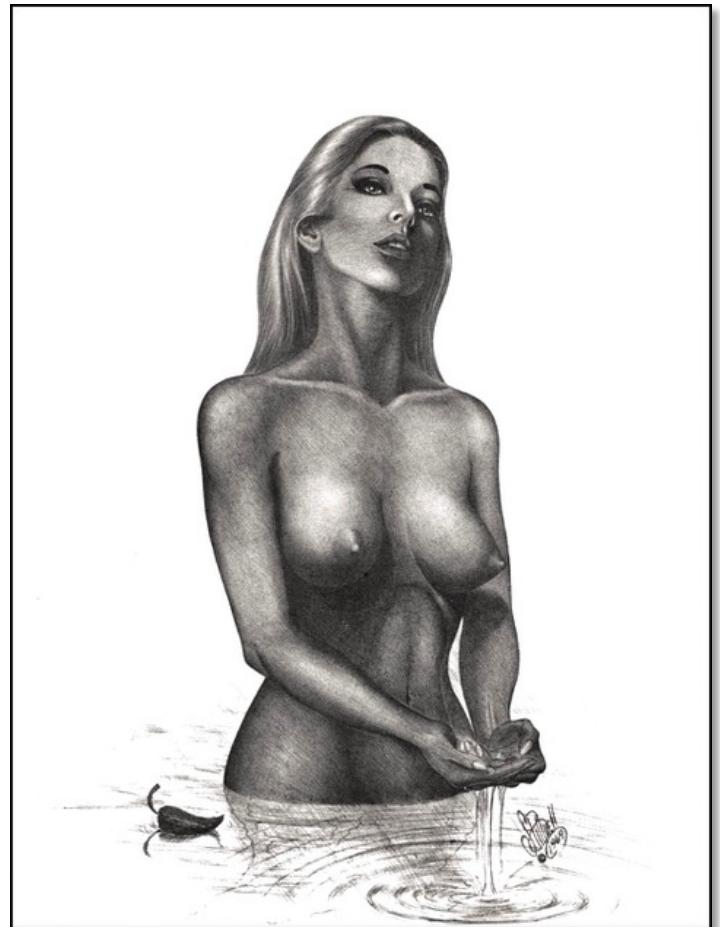
Bill drew great nudes. I used one of his unpublished portfolio pieces as my back cover. It took him around a month but, as promised, the piece he delivered was certainly beautiful and... different.

Bill basically wrote an original love poem that he illustrated impeccably. Six gorgeously rendered penciled pages of an Adam and Eve like fantasy in



which a “modern-day” young buxom woman has passionate sex in a lush Eden-like garden with a handsome muscled man who rode in on a unicorn. Now admittedly, I thought the piece was a little on the soft, hooky, saccharine-side but it was masterfully executed. I ran it by some of the girls I was friendly with at Jamaica high. My mini focus group all said (in their cute sing-songy Queens-girl accents) that it was “very nice...very romantic...” I was relieved.

The originals of his “A Gift of Love” were stunning. Such subtle shading. I had the printer redo them when I saw the first test prints from the negatives. He altered the exposure to enhance the artworks subtleties but I never really thought the final printing did them justice.



Bill also came riding to the rescue with Howard Chaykin's contributions...

You mentioned in your initial email to me that one of the stories, "Lady Madoña" credited to Eric Pave & Bill Stillwell, reminded you of early Howard Chaykin. Well, you have good eyes. As I mentioned earlier I knew Howard "from the neighborhood" back in Queens. He hung around that same corner candy store, always with his trusty sketchbook hand. He was more than willing to show it off to the other loitering comic book fans playing handball and sneaking cigarettes until the truck with the new comics arrived.

I thought his raw sketches were great. Definitely influenced by silver-age greats like Gil Kane, Joe Kubert and Carmine Infantino — but he did them with such ease. Space pirates, gun slingers, barbarians and sexy girls were his favorite subjects. I shared my ambitions about publishing something on my own and he was most interested in participating.

Howard was a smart, well-read kid. Over the years we got somewhat friendly, and although he was about five years older than me we found common ground talking about our shared artistic inspirations -- comics and otherwise. He turned me on to some of his favorite science fiction authors, like Samuel R. Delaney and Fritz Leiber. He was also heavily into music and introduced me to such artists, as Ry Cooder and Ian Tyson who were definitely off my Beatles/Stones/Beach Boys dominated radar. (A few decades later I would use Ry Cooder's wonderful song, "Down in Hollywood" song as part of a soundtrack score).

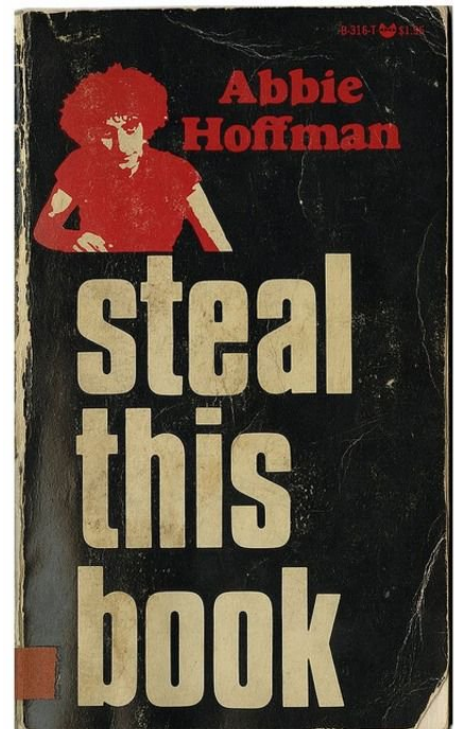
We were also both big fans of comedy and satire. We debated everything from the Marx Bros to Lenny Bruce. He absolutely insisted I read the novel, "Little Me" by Patrick Dennis whose work I was not familiar with. I volleyed back he had to read the satirical play "Little Murders" by Jules Feiffer which I had dragged my parents to see on Broadway. Anyway, "Little Me" was extremely clever. A faux biography peppered with staged photos to be as convincing as possible. Dennis did a follow up faux bio book which I preferred called, "First Lady." It also utilized staged photos — this time featuring Peggy Cass who I recognized from her being a regular panelist on, "To Tell The Truth." The novel was a very funny and prescient political parody that would definitely influence me down the road when making short film parodies and send-ups for Pay-TV.

Timeline check: Saturday Night Live would not premiere for another decade.

Now, I'm sure this will come as no surprise to you or your readers but a young Howard Chaykin was quite a challenge to work with. He was exploding with ideas — always on a HUGE space-operatic scale. But, as has been well documented elsewhere, (including in his own interviews), he was also exploding with some serious anger issues.

As a teenager, he always walked around with a cigarette dangling from the side of his mouth trying to look tough like one of “The Lords of Flatbush.” He was an anarchist-in-training who I now remember actually gave me his stolen copy of Abbie Hoffman’s “Steal This Book.”

By this time, he was just out of high school going to nearby Queens College and still living at home with his single mother and younger brother (who was a classmate of mine at Jamaica High). Howard also attended these early comic conventions showing his work to editors -- but at the time no one was biting -- mainly because despite his dynamic pencils and layouts his inking skills were more than a little rough. He too was frustrated by it. He definitely wanted to be a part of my first issue but would keep starting something and then angrily abandon it.



My goal was to premiere the magazine at the 1970 N.Y. Comic-Con. That was the deadline I was shooting for. I told him that I would hold pages open for him as long as I possibly could. A few months before my plans to “go to press” he showed me his tightly penciled pages for, “Lady Madoña.” They were his best so far! The piece had definite overtones of Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser (which years later Howard would adapt for DC) but they were fun and certainly a different style and tone than anything else in the book.

I quickly suggested to him that we let Bill Stillwell take a crack at inking his work. Howard didn’t know Stillwell at the time but I showed him samples of Bill’s work and it turned out to be a good mash-up. Bill preserved Howard’s dynamic storytelling and for the first time gave the finished inked

work a polished “professional” look. I personally added the zipatone to the pages which I felt gave it some additional depth. Howard seemed happy and relieved with the results. Stillwell then also inked some full-page promo art for another concept Chaykin wanted to do in a

"In The Dark Hour  
of  
Nova Christus..."



"O,  
Saving Grace."

## A PREVIEW:

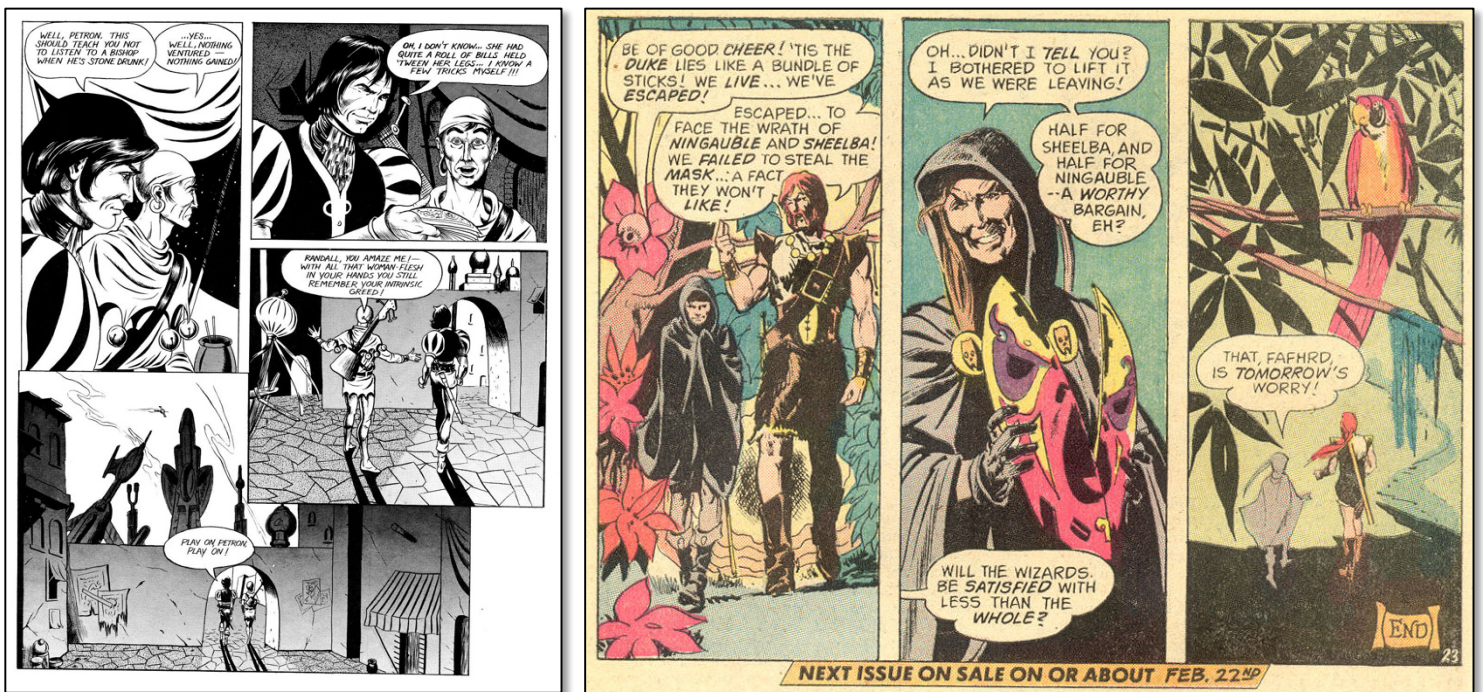


supposed next issue. I was definitely up for it. Howard was on a creative roll and his work was improving fast!

Unfortunately, as printing time approached some personal issues arose that would lead Chaykin to decide at the last minute to use the nom de plume, Eric Pave on his work. Too bad... I believe it was in fact his first official published work -- and it was work to be proud of.

About a year later I noticed that Chaykin and Stillwell would again team up on a sci-fi piece for another fanzine, called, "Reality." This time Howard used his real name. When Chaykin made his professional debut at DC adapting Fritz Leiber's classic con-men characters for their new comic, "Sword of Sorcery" — Neal Adams' "Crusty Bunkers" bullpen inking team did essentially the same thing with his work. With their polished finishing work it was an impressive debut. I was very proud of Howard. Local Queens boy makes good.

*Sidebar: Looking back, although Howard's drawing talent was decidedly more raw than the other guys he came up with -- from the very beginning he had -- and continues to have -- the best writing chops of any of them. Although we fell out of contact long ago, I've always appreciated the level of smart satire he's brought to all his creations. As an artist, I think he finally hit his stride with, "The Stars Are My Destination" adaptation and then never looked back. "American Flagg" and "Times 2" remain my favorite of his indie work. Howard must be almost 70 years old now —yet he continues to turn out innovative topical work at an incredibly high creative level. I'm still a fan and I hope that the winds of time have somewhat whittled away that enormous chip he used to carry on his shoulder.*



So, now with this fantastic line up of never seen before material created by Jones Wrightson, Kaluta, Adams, Morrow, Stillwell and Chaykin I was itching to “start the presses!”

In researching printers, I met a fellow named Al Shuster. I can’t remember who introduced us but he had a small independent print shop that was doing everything from text books to coffee table books, to outright pornography — but he was also a huge comic book fan and collector. He dug the idea of what I was trying to accomplish and was willing to work within my budget. He really walked me through the entire process.

I spent a lot of time up at his shop. To this day whenever I catch a smell a of a certain kind ink I get a sense memory that brings me right back there watching the big pre-cut sheets rolling hot of the presses. I did all the layout and design in his offices with an X-ACTO knife and rubber cement.

Looking at it now, there’s definitely stuff that is quite weak to me — such as the layout and design on the short stories. I was trying to contain them to one page each but the three-column layout and font choice just looked flat and uninteresting to me. Re-doing typesetting was a lot more complicated and expensive back then. There would be no Apple computers for another 14 years and we’d have to wait another 4 years after that for Photoshop.

It was Shuster’s idea to add some grayed-out imagery behind them. He had some public domain graphics laying around. I found a few that seemed vaguely appropriate to the individual stories and used them. It helped, but I was always disappointed with how they turned out.



Al Shuster, I believe, went on to promote and run the first Star Trek conventions. I remember tuning into an old Tomorrow Show with Tom Snyder interviewing him and the entire original Star Trek cast along with Harlan Ellison (who I would later become friends with).

My master game plan was to debut the premier issue at the 1970 NY comic convention. I'd take out a full-page ad in convention's program featuring samples of the issues artwork and me and my (still) best buddy, Sam, would man the dealer's table and hawk 'em ourselves. On Shuster's advice, I decided to do an initial print run of only 500 copies to test the waters. We sold out the entire run over the three days and got A LOT of feedback from fans and pros alike.



*Big sidebar: A very obscure fact is that after that convention, due to specific feedback, I decided to make some changes for the next run of 1,500 copies. One of the pieces I included in the first run was written and drawn by another young artist I met at a convention. His name was Dan Recchia. He had an already completed story he showed me that was unabashedly gross but which I found kinda funny. His art style was whacky but so well executed! He had and incredibly detailed graphic style that really appealed to me. It felt like Robert Crumb meets Gary Panter by way of Basil Wolverton. I really wanted that underground kind of sensibility to be represented in the premier issue. The piece was called, "Al In Toiletland" about a guy who*

*gets flushed down his own toilet and splashes down in this psychedelic place filled with talking turds and other flushed flotsam and jetsam. You get the picture.*

*Well, when the guys from "The Studio" saw the first run of the magazine they en masse felt that the "toilet piece" dragged down the quality of the overall magazine. I solicited feedback from buyers at the convention and it was a definite negative consensus. I probably made a mistake positioning its pages directly in the center of the book so that the still fresh off the presses magazines would naturally open right to it. I decided to just remove it completely on the second printing. I remember that Dan was justifiably pissed but seemed to understand the pressure I was under from the better known artists involved.*

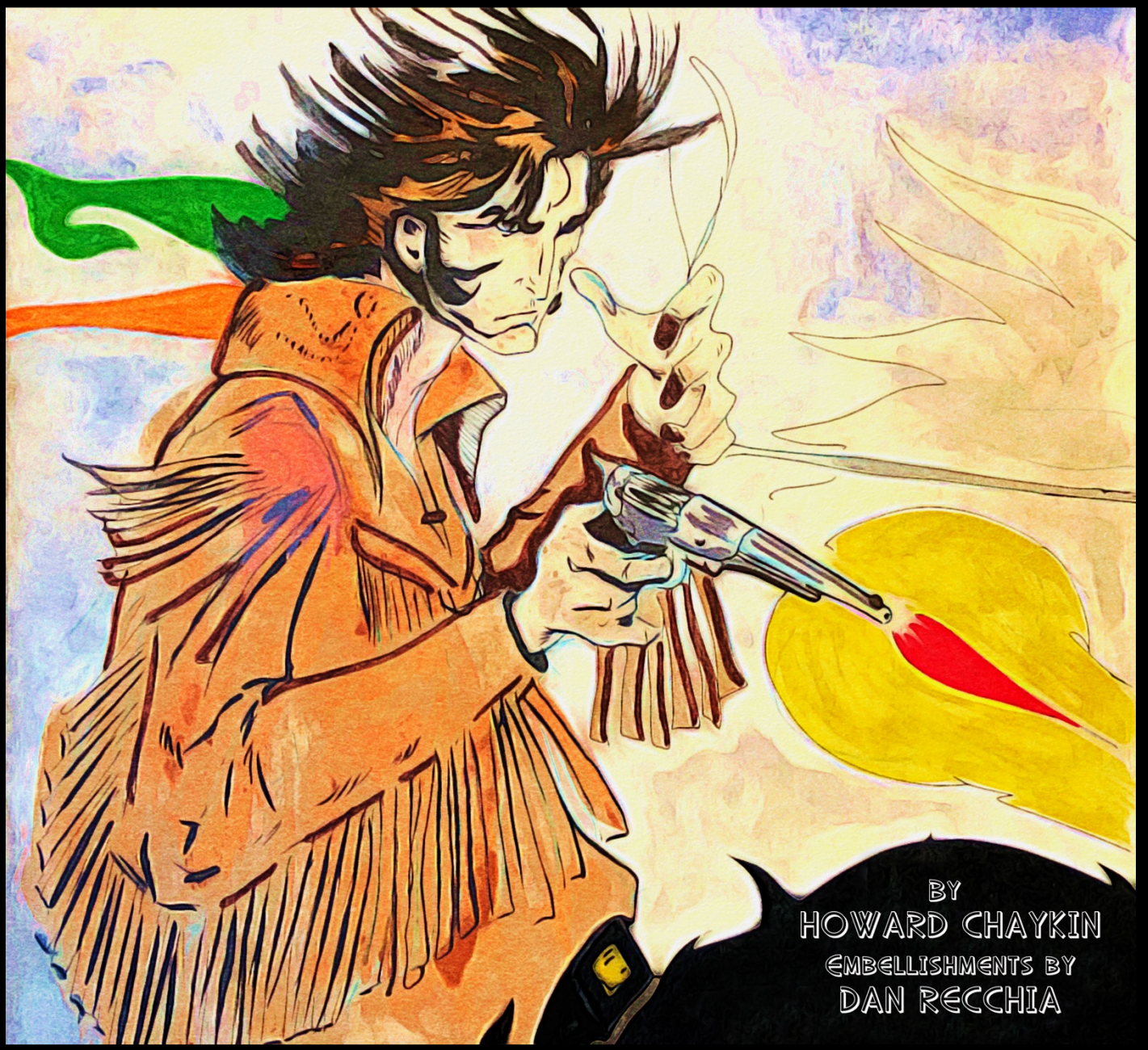
*I did think Dan was a brilliant technical artist so I thought to team him up with Howard Chaykin doing inks over some existing pages of a western that Howard had done some very rough layouts for and then, true to form, just abandoned. It was called, "Hawke" and it was a blood-splattered spaghetti western by way of Tarantino (decades before Tarantino made the scene). I really thought it had tremendous possibilities and something that I was definitely interested in pursuing. After the success of his collaboration that I'd put together with Bill Stillwell Howard was open to experimenting.*

*Dan disappeared for a month and then emerged with these beautifully detailed samples over Howard's rough pencils that I thought were really cool. Dan tried a variety of techniques, detailed line, broad brush work, crosshatching, stippling etc. He then painted over everything with a soft color wash that gave the piece a real vintage look. I loved it. Chaykin absolutely HATED it! Didn't even want the art back. I believe his exact statement was "I don't give a fuck if you burn it." At the time, I felt that Howard's over-the-top reaction was because Dan had actually done TOO MUCH embellishment and that it might be overshadowing his work. Unfortunately, I had to give Dan more bad news. I spared him Chaykin's exact review.*

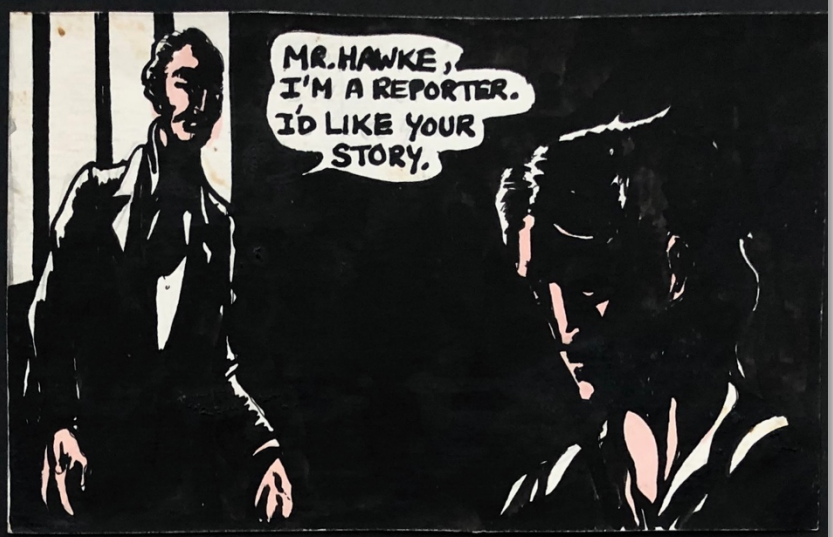
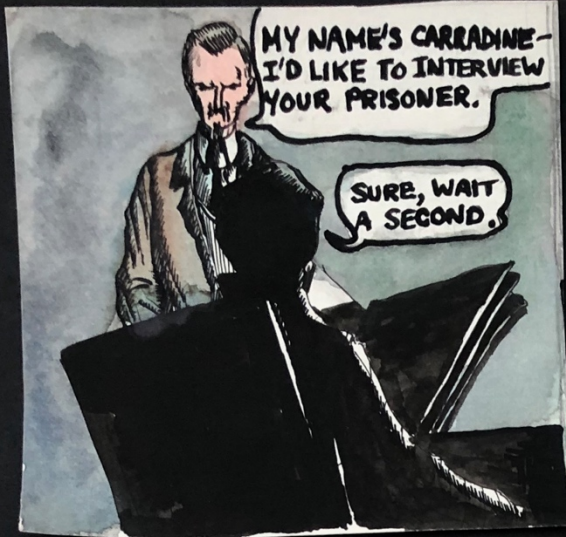
*Surprise scoop: While writing about this specific incident it sparked my gray matter that I might actually still have some of that old stuff somewhere in deep storage. This past week I made a rare visit to the catacomb where I keep all my old stuff that my wife won't let me keep in the house. Deep in the recesses I unearthed a portfolio from that era, wiped some major dust off and low and behold there were the test panels from, Howard Chaykin's "Hawke" (that I never burned). These pieces have literally not seen the light of day since the Johnson administration. While snapping some quick pics of them with my iPhone, I realized that no one has ever seen this material besides Chaykin, Recchia and myself. To my sixty-four year old eyes they seem far from something to be ashamed of. If anything, they are further evidence of Howard's raw talent at such a young age as well as Recchia's already polished finishing work. So, here for the first time anywhere is some official comic book buried treasure. I thought your readers would get a kick out of seeing this ultra-rare "lost" material. Remember these are just test panels and not a linear story...*

# HAWKE

A FABLE OF THE  
AMERICAN WEST

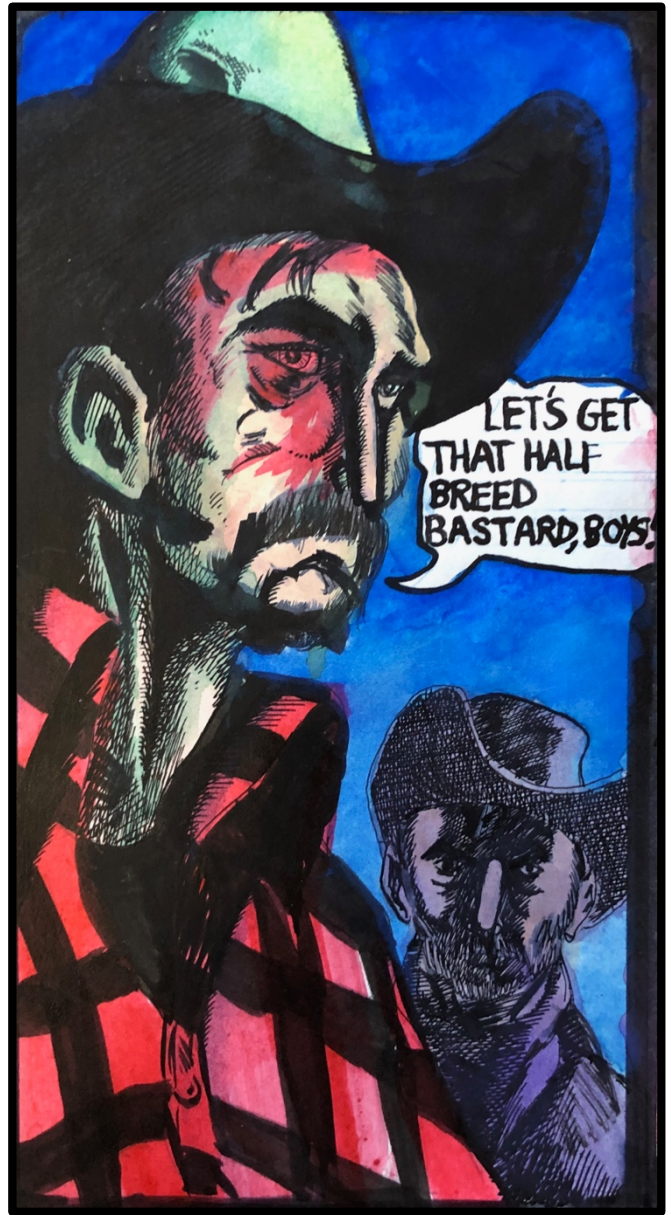
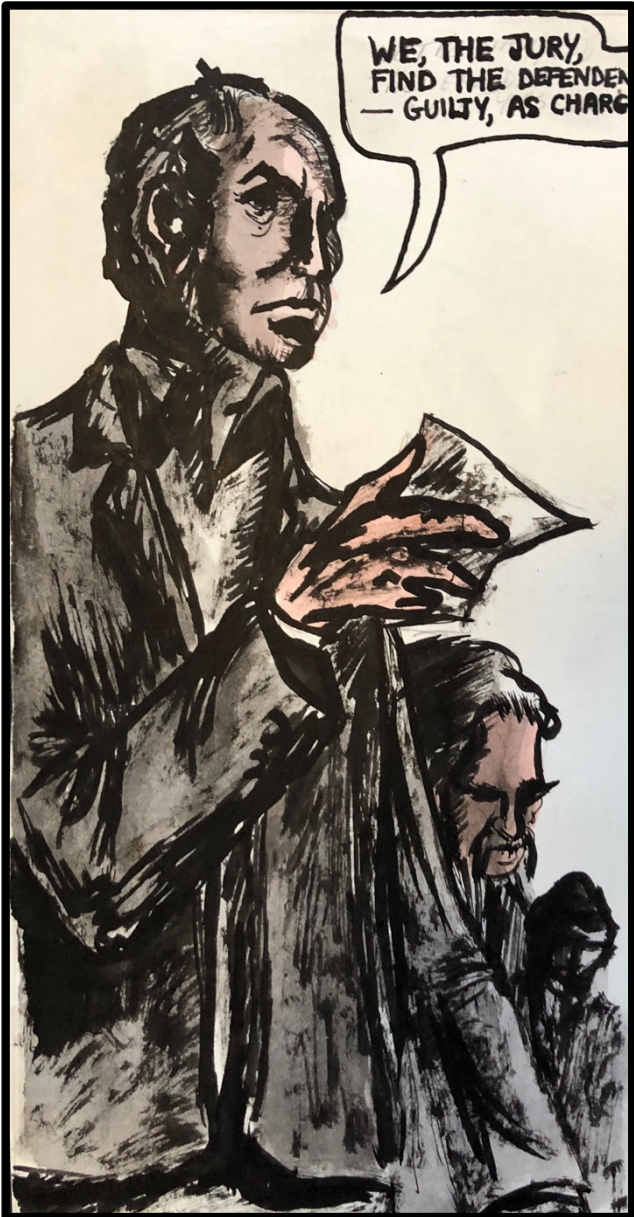


BY  
HOWARD CHAYKIN  
EMBELLISHMENTS BY  
DAN RECCHIA

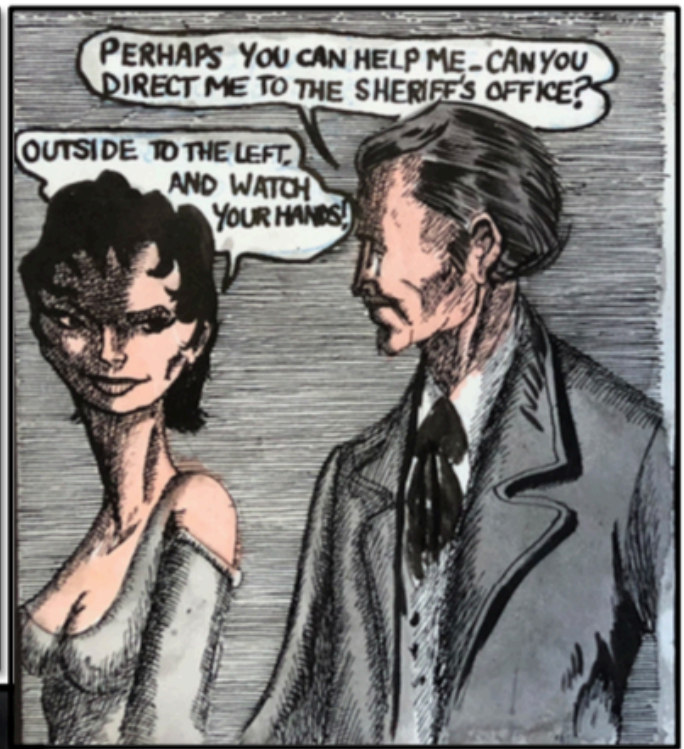


MY FATHER WAS A WEALTHY  
BUSINESSMAN FROM NEW  
YORK - MY MOTHER A STAR  
IN THE MUSIC HALLS OF  
LONDON.



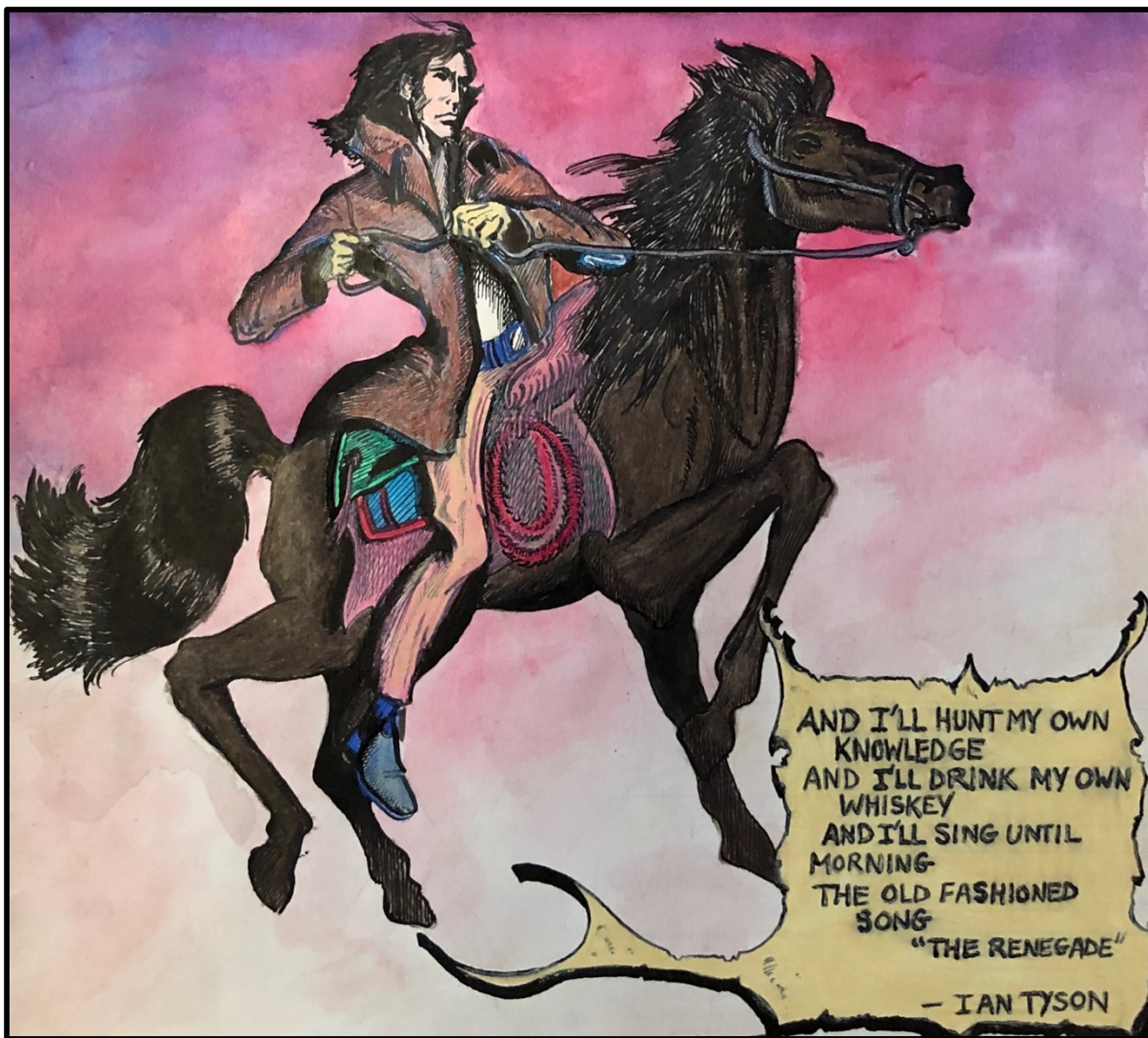












Fun stuff, huh? If Chaykin sees this and is still embarrassed by them, I apologize in advance. As a fan, I couldn't resist sharing for this interview.

**CREEPY'S CATACOMBS**  
**FANZINE REVIEWS**

<p><b>Imagination</b> NO. 1</p>	<p><b>FRIGHT &amp; FANTASY</b> NO. 3</p>	<p><b>WONDERWORLD</b> NO. 1</p>
<p><b>IMAGINATION</b> 138-06 78 Road Flushing, NY 11367 \$1.50</p>	<p><b>FRIGHT &amp; FANTASY</b> 315 Rushton Rd. Toronto, 10, Ontario 60¢</p>	<p><b>WONDERWORLD</b> P.O. Box 16168 Long Beach, CA 90806 75¢</p>

**I**magination is true to its title in many respects. The magazine sports a front cover by Warren alumnus **Gray Morrow**, plus interiors by **Jeff Jones** and **Neal Adams**. The formula is basically potpourri, consisting of highly entertaining odds and ends (such as an unpublished daily strip by **Neal Adams**) and a fine 3-page piece on wizardry by **Mike Kaluta**. **Berni Wrightson** fans will have a ball with his "Conjure Woman" contribution, about a witch with the right ingredients. **Imagination** it's full of, and all in all its visions are admirable. **Imagination** is a one-shot venture, likely to be selling fast, so if you have the coin, get on to this one.

**F**ilm buffs are very strange people. They enjoy doing very strange things. Like publishing filmzines. The quality of this gender of amateur publication is varied, as are all amateur projects. **Fright & Fantasy**, happily, is more than just a half-hearted effort. The book is filled with pictures and illustrations throughout its 36 pages, and the articles are both written and researched with an obvious love for film art. The lengthy article on the **Hammer Dracula** and **Frankenstein** series is in no small way entertaining, with authoritative analysis and breakdowns. **F&F** is not without its blatant flaws, but for 60¢, live a little!

**T**here are three or four magazines of this sort, dealing with indepth articles on the creators and the products of the graphic story field. **Wonderworld**, formerly **Graphic Story World**, is in front of the lot. Going beyond the usual specialized articles which cater to bespangled super-heroes and sadistic barbarians, **Wonderworld** reaches into the lives and creations of the new innovators as well as keeping tabs on the old guard. All aspects of the graphic story field are here at your ready fingertips: issue #9 containing a biographical sketch of artist-writer-innovator, **Richard Corben** just for starters. Urgently recommended. You won't find better.

Okay, back to the linear timeline... The other practically universal negative reaction from fans that I got on the first printing really surprised me. When we solicited buyers' opinions at the convention a big majority didn't like that I positioned Neal Adams' sample strips horizontally in their original format. I did this to maximize their size on the page. But this format required the reader having to turn the magazine sideways. A consistent comment was that it was "jarring" when doing an initial "thumb-through." So, in the second printing I reformatted the panels to work in a traditional vertical orientation which seemed to go over much better. I kinda preferred the original.

Fortunately, this pre-planned limited test run gave me the opportunity to be able to make these tweaks and edits without any additional printing costs. A couple of months later I did a second print run of 1500 copies. We got some great reviews in the fan press like, *The Comic Reader* and *R.B.C.C.* There were even some international ones that I had to pay to get translated. (Google translate would not be in existence for another 45 years). We got an okay write up in Warren's *Creepy*, *Eerie* and *Vampirella* when they were reviewing fanzines back then, and it definitely stimulated sales.

Orders with checks and cash started coming in at a surprising rate to my parent's home. Every day envelopes would spill through the mail slot in the front door like I hit a jackpot. I guess I actually did. There were orders coming in from all over the world in those colorful, striped international mail envelopes. I remember getting multiple bulk orders from **Phil Seuling** and **Bud Plant** who were the big-name distributors for this specialized market. I also remember orders coming in from industry names I recognized such as **Steve Englehart**, **Len Wein** and **Jim**

Shooter. I was thrilled when I started to receive actual “letters to the editor” most with rave reviews. I got to admit it all felt really good.

This volume of mail took my parents by surprise. I remember when our friendly neighborhood mailman (the kind that used to walk their route while whistling) suspiciously asked my mother what was going on? My dad had his office accountant officially start some “books.” His secretary helped with the shipping. He was not pleased with this arrangement but he hated when I procrastinated mailing orders out. This part of the experience made it most clear to me that if I were to continue this venture I was going to have to hire and pay people actual salaries. I must say that this packing, shipping and accounting part was definitely not my favorite thing. By this time my after-school activities included Driver’s Ed and dating which were definitely more fun than licking envelopes.

I did not do this project in a vacuum from the rest of my life. I told all of my friends from school -- most of whom could care less about comics. They just kinda dug what I was trying to pull off. I also kept my favorite, “Good Will Hunting” type English teacher in the loop. He always gave me encouragement as well as fabulous advice. He helped find the short stories and poetry that appears in the magazine. They were from students in his creative writing classes. I remember making a big point to thank him in my opening editorial. It was the only time I used his first name, Alan. He was always, Mr. Fleisig. I felt so grownup.

Recently my nephew, now 42, (who I turned into a major comic book fan by the age of four), found a mint copy of Imagination #1 for sale on eBay that was signed by most all of the artists. I never had this! He snapped it up for \$35. What a great gift!

**Q: As far as I know, there was only one issue of Imagination, correct? I can see there were plans for more...any information on that?**

I was so certain I’d be doing more issues that I actually solicited subscriptions and got a surprising number of takers. This really pissed off my father. His accountant ratted me out. My Dad was incredulous. How could I take cash money and guarantee something like this? He made me return the money and uncashed checks with an official letter of thanks with an explanation that I would be starting college soon and was uncertain that I could fulfill my publication schedule as promised. In reality he was right. The wind definitely went out of my sails after failing to raise money for additional issues and going away to college loomed large.

Once I got to The University of Miami my priorities quickly moved elsewhere. I went there because the school had a terrific communications department as well as an excellent hands-on film and video program (not to mention girls from Miami). I quickly became a DJ on the college’s 10 watt “progressive music” radio station, WVUM. I got a reputation for great music segue ways and being funny on the air. In my sophomore year, I convinced the program

director to air a half hour original sketch comedy radio program that I co-wrote, produced and edited featuring some of my fellow DJ's and drama students. It killed. That experience evolved into me producing and directing an original one-hour sketch show. It was shot on black and white video with that same talent group at the college's fully equipped studio and editing facilities. It was a big hit on campus. They'd played it at the school's sports bar, "The Rathskeller" occasionally like a local version of "The Groove Tube." A couple of these very talented and funny folks are still my closet friends.

I was clearly inspired by the comedy albums the National Lampoon was putting out at the time with Michael O'Donoghue, Christopher Guest, Bill Murray, Jim Belushi and Gilda Radner. Eventually they would take some of that material out on the road in, "The National Lampoon Show" revue which was a combo of sketches and music parodies. Chevy Chase and Richard Belzer would soon joined the cast. I got in touch with Christopher Guest, sent him some of my work and we became friendly. I did the same with Harry Shearer who was then part of the improv-group, "The Credibility Gap" along with Michael McKean and David L. Lander. They had just released a brilliant comedy album entitled, "A Great Gift Idea."

In 1980, Christopher and I would later produce a Pay-TV comedy anthology pilot, which ultimately went to series on HBO's Cinemax, entitled, "Likely Stories." It was one of the first original programs made expressly for Pay-TV. It is also notable for featuring the directing debuts of Rob Reiner, Christopher Guest, Billy Crystal, Harry Shearer and various others including myself. If you're interested in taking a look at these early, pre-Spinal Tap vintage comedy pieces they are all up on Vimeo. <https://vimeo.com/davidjablin>



*Quick sidebar: I met Stan Lee by pure coincidence when I first moved to LA in 1979. I was looking for a short-term lease on an apartment that I could also use as an office. Being from New York I instinctually gravitated towards high rise buildings. The only high rise buildings in West LA are on Wilshire Blvd. I went from one to another to check things out. VERY expensive. Most were condos and the few rentals available were 3-5 year leases. I guess it kept out the riff-raff for which I probably qualified.*

*I finally had a bit of luck with Crown Towers on the corner of Wilshire & Manning. Someone must have skipped out on their lease because instead of the standard three year commitment, they offered me a one year lease on a large two bedroom apartment for a very decent price. Of course it was on the third floor with a balcony overlooking the back alley. I remember a garbage truck pulled up while the manager was showing me the second bedroom. It roared throughout our conversation before beginning its siren-like back up beeps. Obviously, this unit was not their model apartment. But the building was an upscale place that had a doorman who would park guest's cars, a front desk that would accept packages and call when guests arrived. I proudly planted my Imagination Productions flag there for my first West Coast offices (and residence).*

*This is where Rob Reiner, Billy Crystal, Chris Guest, Harry Shearer and Penelope Spheeris and I would meet to plan out production for the pilot for "Likely Stories."*

*One day at the mailboxes near the lobby elevators I see Stan Lee getting his mail. After my triple-take I realized it was in fact him. Every Marvel "True Believer" knew what he looked like. I went to check my mail too. I pulled out the Daily Variety and Hollywood Reporter so I guess it looked like I was in show-biz. I approached Stan and said I'd be remiss if I didn't take this opportunity to tell him what a HUGE effect Marvel comics had on my young life and just how much it informed my abilities as a filmmaker. This tweaked Stan's interest and he wanted to know more about what I was doing.*

*We had a brief chat in the lobby where I quickly filled him in that I was trying to make original programming for the new Pay-TV arena. (At that time there had been only a few stand-up comedy or music specials). He didn't recognize Chris Guest's or Harry Shearer's names but Rob Reiner and Billy Crystal got his attention. I said I would love to invite him to the screening when it was done. We were going to have it in the building's small, but nice event/catering room on the lobby level. He seemed to genuinely want to come. I asked if he had a card with his number on it so I could let him know about it. To my surprise he said, "why don't I come upstairs and I'll get you one." Once in the elevator he pressed, Penthouse.*

*His apartment, which comprised the entire top floor of the building, had wraparound balconies with amazing 360 degree views. He explained that these were only temporary digs. He and his wife were in the midst of building a house in the Hollywood Hills. The apartment was high*

*ceilinged and dramatic — but strangely old-fashioned and feminine in decor. He offered that his wife, Joanne was the decorator as well as the dictator and that anything Marvel related was relegated to his small den where he gave me his card and wrote his home number on it.*

*When I finished the pilot, I called and invited him to the screening party. Unfortunately, the timing was off and he wasn't going to be available. He asked if I had a copy? I said I have it [on 3/4](#)" tape. He said, "I have no idea what you're talking about." I then surprised myself by inviting him down to my apartment/office to take a look sometime. To my great surprise, he casually asked, "What're doin' now?" I scrambled to clean the place up by just tossing everything in the bedroom. The living room had four desks with multi-button phones in it along with a rented couch and 25" TV. The phone installer, I'm convinced, thought I was a bookie. I had a carved wood Imagination Productions sign up in the foyer. I was wiping up coffee cup stains from the desks when the doorbell rang. I stuffed the Windex and paper towel into the desk drawer and answered the door.*

*A few minutes later there we sat, just the two of us, watching it together. I have to admit I was a little nervous before hitting the play button. I could feel the beginnings of flop sweat forming. Luckily, he got right into it and laughed easily in all the right places. One piece in particular that had him totally rolling was written and directed by Harry Shearer. It was an homage to the classic Abbott & Costello bit, "Who's On First." In it Harry plays a bejeweled rock concert promoter trying to buy a full-page ad for his latest mega concept. David L. Lander plays the strait-laced ad exec. (At the time Shearer, Lander and Michael McKean comprised the comedy troupe, The Credibility Gap). The promoter is having an impossible time communicating the copy of the ad because the groups names are Yes, The Who and Guess Who. You get it.*

*He also really enjoyed the tongue the cheek mini-documentary by Penelope Spheeris called, "Chinatown Punk Wars." It examined the real life story of two eccentric elderly Chinese restaurant owners in a competitive death –match over over booking punk rock groups in their restaurants. It was definitely a precursor to her brilliant feature film debut, "The Decline And Fall Of Western Civilization."*

*The one bit that he thought was a little "too inside" was a sketch with Christopher Guest and Michael McKean (directed by Guest) where they played two bandmates named Nigel Tufnel and David St. Hubbins. Yes, the same ones from Spinal Tap. However the movie, "This is Spinal Tap" would not be made for another four years. Here, Nigel and David are in a cheap LA motel room supposedly lost from the rest of their band. They're sitting on the bed playing their guitars and riffing on days of rock and roll past. Funny stuff.*

*In the bed are also two stoned and silent "birds" under the covers. They're just nonchalantly smoking and eating while blankly listening to boys. One of these brain-dead roadies was played by Lorna Paterson who was very recognizable at the time because of her role as the*

stewardess, in the recent comedy hit, "Airplane." She was the blonde who repeatedly slapped a panicked passenger revealing a lineup of passengers waiting to do the same.

What he was particularly fascinated with was the fact that I was a relatively young man pioneering a new medium. He was even more impressed that I raised the money myself. When he gave me my own Marvel moniker, "Dynamic-Dave" I nearly fainted.

We stayed in touch for years and I always sent him copies of what I was working on. By that time he even had a VHS. After watching a copy of my latest project he called and invited me to lunch. We met at his treasure strewn office on Sepulveda at what was the New World building at the time. Suddenly I was feeling as if I was bit by a radioactive spider, or exposed to massive gamma rays. A rush of energy surged through my body.

At lunch I told him about the emerging technology of CGI then still in its infancy. He knew nothing about it. I explained that it would absolutely change the way superheroes and their remarkable powers can convincingly be brought to the big screen.

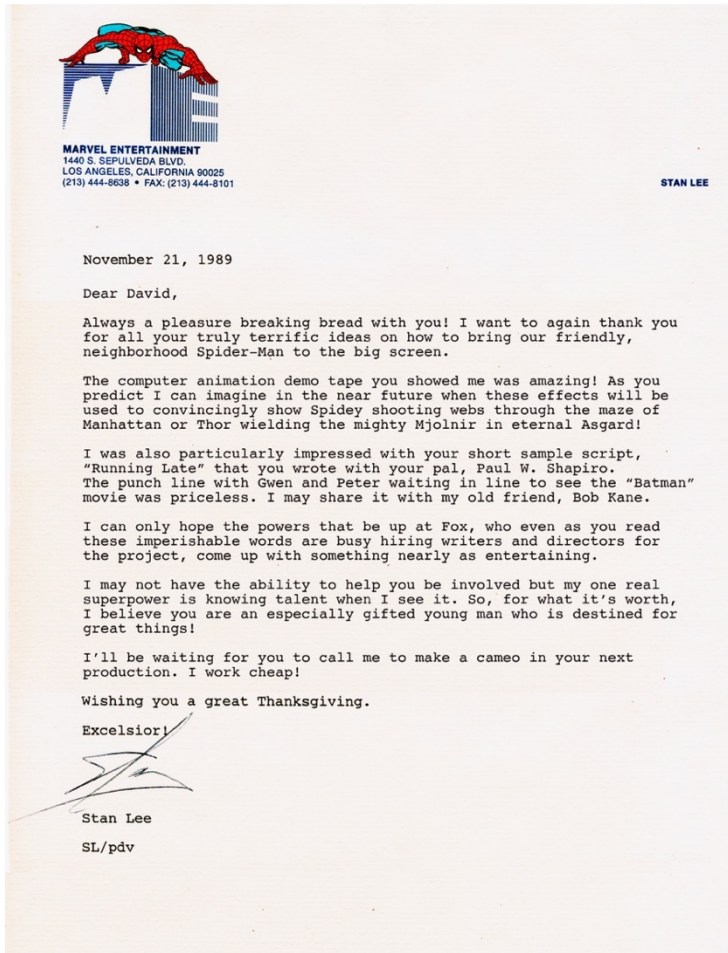
Timeline check: It would be another three years until James Cameron's 1991 Terminator 2: Judgement Day would introduce then never seen before liquid metal shape-shifting effect with the advanced T-1000. It was the first use of natural human motion for a computer-generated character and the first partially computer-generated main character.

I went on to pontificate that even with the recent mega success of Tim Burton's Batman, I felt that superhero movie still hadn't been done right. What was missing was the "Marvel magic" and most importantly a sense of humor. With the giant balls of steel I had back in those days I told him that Spider-Man would be the Holy Gail and that I was the guy who should direct it!

He said that he agreed, BUT... he hunched down and leaned in as if he were telling me a secret. "Sadly, I don't own any of the Marvel characters. The rights to all of them are spread all over town." His job on the West Coast was strictly to be Marvel's "ambassador to Hollywood." I could tell he was disappointed and slightly embarrassed that the various studios involved didn't seem to want his input.

I cockily said, "Maybe I can help..." I offered to do a sample Spider-Man short film that could capture the kind of super-heroic action heretofore not seen on the big-screen — as well as the irreverent sense of humor Spidey was known for. I said I knew a great writer who loves and understands the genre as much as I did. On "spec" we'd develop a script that I could bring to companies who are leading the way with CGI and maybe get them to contribute a scene as a proof of concept. I also said that I was plugged in the world of comedy and could possibly help land a star like Bill Murray or Martin Short. I even suggested, Mathew Broderick (Ferris Bueller) which was his clear favorite.

*I had an idea for a quick, fast-paced story where Peter Parker is running late for a movie date with Gwen Stacey. In order to get there in time he decides to swing via web across town. On the way he is attacked by several of his stock villains. Instead of continuing to fight he basically runs away from them to their great surprise and chagrin. Of course we choreographed some great action packed scenes loaded with quick Spidey like rejoinders and quips. Occasionally we cut to Gwen standing in a long movie line checking her watch and getting annoyed. When a sweaty Peter Parker finally arrives, the line is already in. He runs a litany of excuses by Gwen. She tells him what he needs to reduce his stress is a break from reality. He should just sit back and enjoy some pure fantasy. The camera booms up to reveal they are going to see, Batman.*



*Anyway, a few weeks later I sent him the short script called, "Spider-Man: Running Late." It was getting close to the holidays when show business shuts down. I thought he might have time to read it before the end of the year. I certainly wasn't expecting to hear from him until after New Year's. But several days later I got an extremely generous "thank you" letter from Stan for the meeting. In show business? I mean who does that?? It's one of my most meaningful personal collector's items. Oh, by the way... he also sent a letter to the other writer who he never met. What a guy!*

*My favorite part every time I read it, is the casual reference to sharing it with Bob Kane. To this day, the rivalry between Marvel & DC is legendary. Even as a mature adult, in my mind for Stan to have*

*been friendly with Bob Kane was like Reagan being secret best buds with Gorbachev.*

*As we all know Stan passed away recently after a truly unforgettable and most likely unrepeatabe record setting run of success. But he was never smug about it. I remember him as gregarious, down to earth guy who really loved to "kibbitz." He loved to laugh and make others laugh too. He definitely gravitated towards me because I did comedy. But the best compliment he ever paid me was that I reminded him of himself when he was first starting out. It was sad to read about his final days of elder abuse and confusion. But it seemed he never lost his joie de vivre or love for his legion of fans. R.I.P. Stan...*



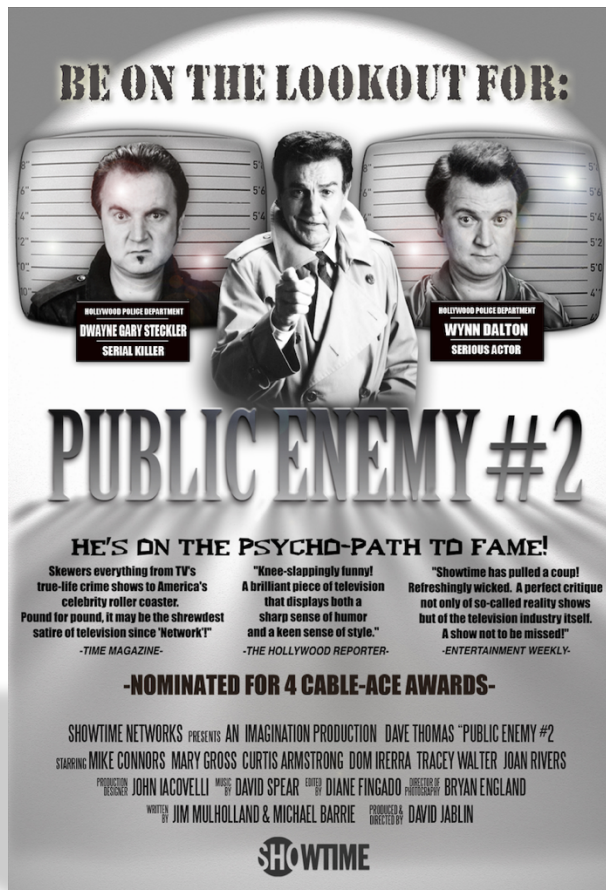
**Q: Have you preserved any friendships from comic fandom? If so, did they have any impact on your professional path?**

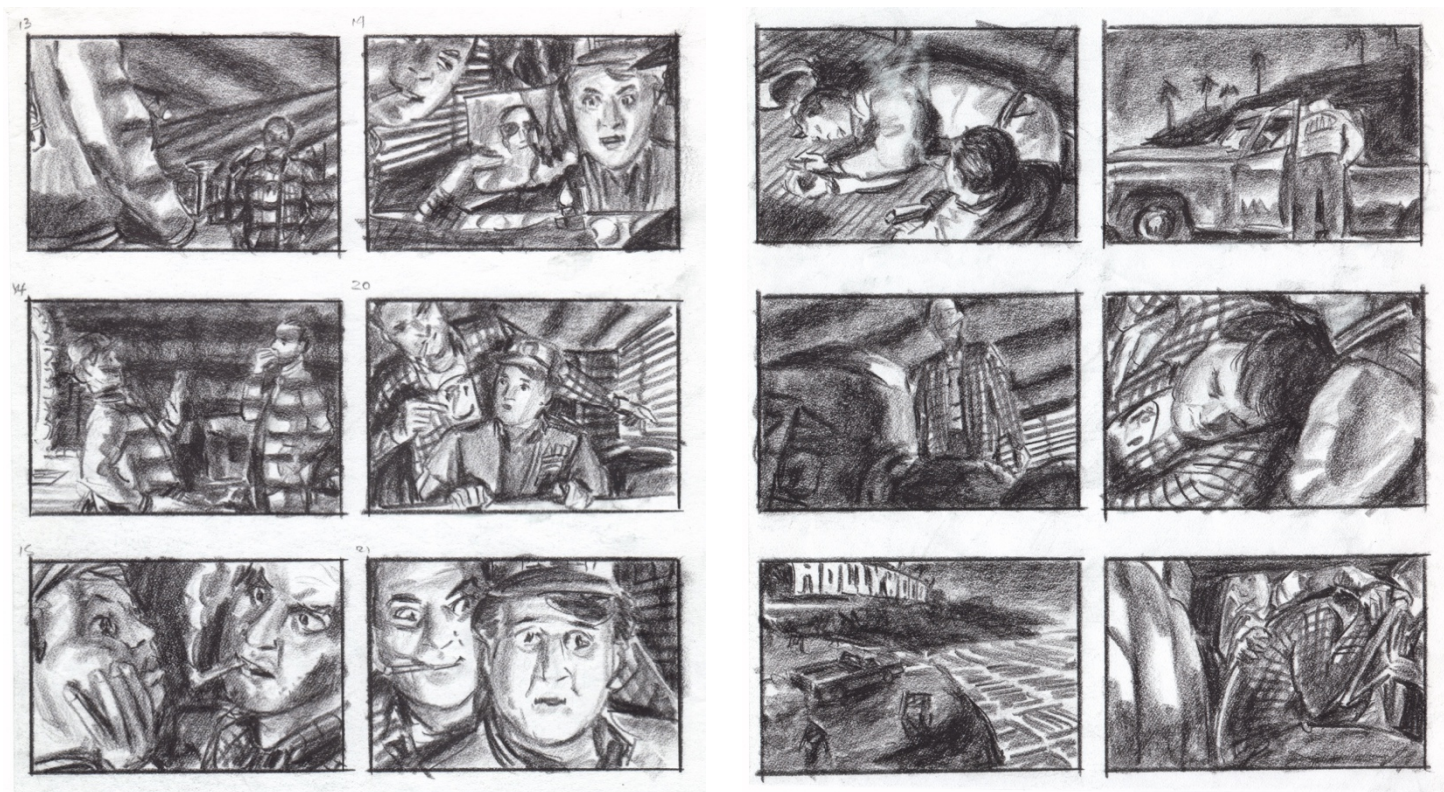
No, not really. I am not known for my social ability. However, the life lessons I learned putting that magazine together were like a master class for how I would “break into show-biz.” When launching my first production, “Likely Stories” back in 1979, I essentially followed the same formula I did with the magazine by building a critical mass of recognized talent and then putting together the financing. But this time I was successful in finding investors who agreed that Pay-TV was the next BIG THING and were willing to fund a test pilot.

Just like with my magazine I approached artists whose work I admired and basically built a coalition of the funny with both established and up and coming talent who were looking to begin directing their own work. Chris Guest and Harry Shearer introduced me to Rob Reiner. Rob in turn introduced me to Billy Crystal and so on.

Danny DeVito and I did several shorts together for that series and then soon thereafter we made Showtime’s first original movie together entitled, “The Ratings Game.” Based on my original story the film was a biting satire of the TV industry, written by Johnny Carson’s head monologue writers, Michael Barrie & Jim Mulholland, that became a critical darling, a hit for the network and won a Writer’s Guild Award. This success lead to a 14-year relationship with Showtime Networks where I had an exclusive “housekeeping deal” and produced and directed a number of award winning comedy specials and made-for-pay original movies -- all of which I am most proud of. Here’s a sampling...







Lately I am developing various projects, some for theatrical release, some for streaming on the web. It's the wild west again in the TV business. With the advent of Netflix, Amazon, Hulu and now Apple the traditional financing and distribution models are beginning to fray and the lines are blurring as to what platform means what anymore. Talk about your tectonic shift! It'll be very interesting to see how it all shakes out...

**Q: Would you like to share any thoughts about modern day fandom or the current state of the industry?**

Comic fandom today is alive and thriving. If anyone at the first comic book convention got in a time machine and visited any recent San Diego Comic-Con they would feel like they are entering the VR world of "Ready Player One." I remember at an early convention when a kid in a paper-mache costume of The Thing got first prize at the costume contest. Today "cos-play" is a worldwide phenomenon, and supposed amateurs are squeezing into costumes they've designed that as good if not better than the ones the studios make.

One of the shared feelings that we got at the original conventions full of a few hundred nerds and socially awkward dreamers was that "we were not alone" in this odd passion of ours. Today, there are literally legions of believers and dreamers all over the world who feel that these fantastic worlds of fantasy are the coolest thing going, ever!

What were once handmade, mimeographed black and white fanzines are now slick, well written journalistic websites. There are great blogs out there, such as yours, that not only keep the flame of the past alive but ignite further passion for the medium.

I remember Bernie Wrighton and Jeff Jones standing in a line to show Dick Giordano their portfolios. Not many got his attention for more than 30 seconds. Now there are major sites with millions of daily viewers that feature the work of up and comers for the world to see.

For better or worse, the internet has completely democratized publishing. Sites like Amazon's ComiXology now offer digital distribution of indie comics right alongside the big-boys. YouTube affords budding comic book filmmaker's the opportunity for their work to go viral globally. Once million dollar special effects are now available as free apps on your mobile phone. Fan made trailers and sample reels are mind-blowingly good. Just as an example take a look at "Superman Vs. The Hulk" starring a CGI Christopher Reeves!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pBbsvavno8I>

The comic arts are not only bigger than they ever were – they are bigger than anything the entertainment industry has ever seen shattering all box-office records. No matter what your opinion is of Stan Lee you gotta be amazed at what he lived to see happen with his work. Amazing!

Current movies based on comic book characters, even the bad ones, are for the most part mind-bogglingly well made. Visionary directors, such as the Wachowski and Russo Brothers, Chris Nolan, Zack Snyder, James Gunn, Josh Whedon and Patty Jenkins are finally bringing to the big screen in IMAX and 3D the cosmic scale that we were all imagining when reading these four-color adventures. They continue to push the special effects industry to new heights.

Don't even get me started on what's happening with video games. With budgets even bigger than movies they offer these gigantic "open sandbox" universes with characters and storylines that can be incredibly compelling and immersive. I assure my wife I play them just to keep up on what's happening in the digital domain. It's business...

### **Q: Do you still collect comics? If so who are your favorite contemporary artists?**

I continued to collect comics well into my fifties. It was fun to watch new generations of artists come along and grow into the leaders of the industry. It also been interesting to watch some who started as poor imitators turn into incredible innovators such as Frank Miller, Barry Windsor Smith and Bill Sienkiwicz.

I'm also in love with the "second-generation" artists like the Kubert brothers and Romita Jr. They have not only done their incredibly talented Dad's proud but continue to make major contributions to comic legend and lore.

Some of my other favorite current day artists are Bryan Hitch, Adam Hughes Mike Deodato, Stuart Immonen, Ron Garney and Alan Davis. Others who impress the hell out me are Dave Mazzicchelli, Lee Weeks, Frank Quietly, Tim Sale, Josh Middleton, Daniel Acuna and Chris Samnee.

I've loved watching major industry developments like "The Dark Knight," "The Watchman," "300" and "Sin City" become major crossover hits. The out of nowhere appearance of Alex Ross was a game changer like Neal Adams. Artists such as Darwyn Cooke, Bruce Timm and Michael Avon Oeming brought a whole new adult cinematic "animation" style sensibility to the forefront. It's also great to see the rise of female comic book auteurs like, Joëlle Jones, Nicola Scott and Kelly Sue DeConnick who continue to push the art form forward.

And, it's exciting that after a long absence Neal Adams has returned to the scene with such creative vigor and continues to innovate and excite.

I no longer collect comics. It basically became a matter of no time, not enough square footage and a wife who has accused me on occasion of showing signs of being a hoarder. A few years back I sold my entire room size, lifetime collection through Heritage Auctions and bought a new car with the proceeds. Of course, I kept a couple of short boxes of "important" issues that I just couldn't part with.

I have purchased some original art over the years from my favorite silver age guys which I keep in a nice portfolio in my office. I'm also a HUGE fan of the IDW Artist's Editions. It's fun to pull them out occasionally and study for a while. It has a calming effect on me. Lowers my blood pressure.

As you can tell from my lengthy and detailed responses to your questions I still have many happy memories from this particular creative era of my life. I am also still passionate about comic art. And, while I no longer collect physical comics I do occasionally purchase digital downloads from all the various sites. Good comics can still take me to that special "ommm..." place with the same feeling I had of being transported to another dimension back at that barbershop in Queens.

Whether distributed on paper or a digital device the job of the comic book creator remains the same. The same spark of genius and gift for innovative visual storytelling and design are a prerequisite.

Comics have always been a personal, “lean forward” experience in contrast to a movie in theater or even television which is by nature a “lean back” one. Millennials are big on leaning forward. They are being conditioned from birth to push a button and have their entertainment “on demand.” While I personally still prefer holding a real book, newspaper, comic, magazine or even a record album in my hands -- like it or not “digital distribution” is probably in the cards for all mass media.

I make a point to keep up to the nano-second with the latest technological developments out there. Like I did with comics I keep tabs on the up and coming visionaries that are pushing the medium forward. I am constantly investigating new forms of visual entertainment that can provide state of the art “lean forward” experiences.

Web publishing, I know is in my future. I love nothing more than collaborating with truly gifted artists who create, write, act, direct and draw worlds of pure imagination.

Uh, oh... I guess here I go again...

Best,

David Jablin

