

ALL-INTERVIEW ISSUE: "Pro2Pro" with SIMONSON & LARSEN,
MOENCH & WEIN, and letterers KLEIN & CHIANG • JOHN OSTRANDER
and color artist ADRIENNE ROY's final interview

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BACKISSUE!

TM

STEVE ENGLEHART

discusses his Bronze Age series,
including his collaboration with

MARSHALL ROGERS

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Marshall '07

Volume 1,
Number 51
September 2011

**Celebrating
the Best
Comics of
the '70s,
'80s, and Beyond!**

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BACKISSUE
The Retro Comics Experience!

ALL- INTERVIEW ISSUE!

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Steve ENGLEHART

INTERVIEW, Part 2

by Richard J. Arndt



Steve Englehart was one of the bright lights among the writers breaking into the comics field in the 1970s. He worked on such titles as *The Avengers*, *Captain America*, *Incredible Hulk*, *The Defenders*, *Master of Kung Fu*, *Batman in Detective Comics*, *Justice League of America*, and *Mister Miracle*, among others. The portion of this interview covering his 1972–1975 comics career appeared in editor Roy Thomas' *Alter Ego* #103. We resume with Steve's comments on his departure from Marvel.

— Richard Arndt

DEAD DREAMS

RICHARD ARNDT: When Roy Thomas left as Marvel's editor—he was editor-in-chief toward the end of his run—there seemed to be a round robin of editors, who came in and left rather rapidly, sometimes in less than a year. You left Marvel, sometime in 1976, also rather abruptly. I don't think I'd seen any writer leave all their books quite that abruptly in comics before. I mean, they may have, but it may have been outside my experience. I've never understood the reason why you left. I'm not certain that it's any of my business why, but I'm going to ask the question anyway and you can feel free to tell me to mind my own business.

STEVE ENGLEHART: Well, I've told the story before, so it's not a secret. Roy, from what I understand, preferred the creative side of life to being a full-time editor. He didn't like the structural and time demands that came in with the job of being the editor[*in-chief*]. There were group editors at DC, but at Marvel Roy was the main editor for the entire line. When he left, Len Wein came in, but I think Len also didn't like the responsibilities of editing an entire line of comics, the difficulties of being editor. Marv Wolfman followed him and then Gerry Conway followed him.

Gerry is a highly respected TV guy these days, but we were all young then and when he came in he said, "I've got all the power now so I want to write *The Avengers*." He'd just come off the *Justice League* over at DC so that may have had something to do with it. He called up me and said, "I'm taking *The Avengers* away from you." He also called up Steve Gerber and said he was taking *The Defenders* away from him. That was not how Marvel had been run in all the time I was there. It pissed us off and it pissed off people who were just standing on the sidelines. I said, "This was not the way things were supposed to operate. You can't take my book." He said that yes, he could, and he did. So I said that I'm outta here. I had signed up for a particular approach to the world and, in retrospect, having done this sort of thing for a long time I know that people can play that sort of thing in different ways, but that was the way I chose to play it. I said I was outta there.

Next Stop: Fourth World

After leaving Marvel Comics in 1976, writer Steve Englehart was lured to DC Comics by publisher Jenette Kahn, taking over *Justice League of America* and *Batman in Detective Comics* for a memorable year's worth of stories in each. Among his other DC assignments: a revival of Jack Kirby's *Mister Miracle*, with his *Batman* partner, Marshall Rogers. Cover to issue #19 (Sept. 1977).

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WRITER

BACKISSUE!

DATA CARD

Beginnings:

Art assistant to Neal Adams on "The Soft, Sweet Lips of Hell!" in *Vampirella* #10 (Mar. 1971) / "Iron Man: D.O.A." in *Amazing Adventures* #12 (May 1972)

Milestones:

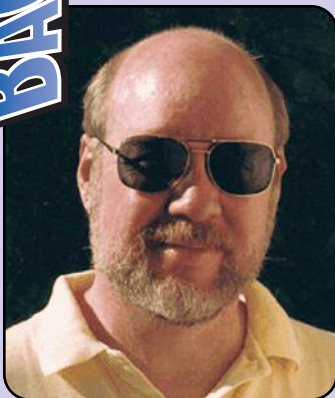
The Defenders / *Captain America* / *The Incredible Hulk* / *Vampirella* magazine (writing under the pseudonym "Chad Archer") / *The Avengers* / *Super-Villain Team-Up* / *Detective Comics* / *Justice League of America* / *Mister Miracle* / *Coyote* / *Green Lantern* / *Green Lantern Corps* / *Millennium* / *West Coast Avengers* / *Fantastic Four* (writing under the pseudonym "John Harkness") / *X-O Manowar* / *The Avengers: Celestial Quest* / *Batman: Dark Detective*

Works in Progress:

The Plain Man / *The Box Man* / *The Clock Man*—continuing the story started in his first novel, *The Point Man*, published by Tor Books

Cyberspace:

steveenglehart.com



STEVE
ENGLEHART

I can remember standing to one side of myself, watching myself say, "I quit." It was really stark, because all I ever wanted to do was write Marvel comics. Here I was, writing them—and then suddenly I wasn't. Without overselling it by any means, there's a part of me that knows why Captain America would quit when the reality that he believed in turned out to not be what it was supposed to be.

So I went away. I was suddenly unemployed. My wife had traveled around Europe for a year before we met and I always thought that sounded really cool. I figured that I was unemployed and there was no better time to travel around Europe for a while. We started making arrangements to do that and then I got a call from [DC Comics publisher] Jenette Kahn, who had just taken over the reins at DC from Carmine Infantino, and she said, "We need you to come over here and fix all our characters." I thought I had about a year before we could go to Europe and so that's how I went to DC and ended up revamping the Justice League. I also got the chance to write Batman [in *Detective Comics*]. [Editor's note: For an in-depth discussion about his *Justice League of America* stint, please see the Englehart interview in *BACK ISSUE* #45.]

People ask me how come I only wrote the *Justice League* and *Batman* for a year, and it was because it was always only supposed to be a year. DC knew that going in. I was going to do a year's worth of stuff and then I was off to Europe. So that's the story of why I left Marvel. ARNDT: *The last three titles of your last three Marvel comics you wrote all seem to point out reasons as to why you would leave. I was wondering if that was a coincidence, or that you actually put those titles in that way on purpose.* ENGLEHART: I remember that "The Dream is Dead" was the title for my last *Dr. Strange* [#18, Sept. 1976],

and that was definitely there for a reason. I forget what the other two titles were.

ARNDT: *Captain Marvel's was "Only One Can Win" [#46, Sept. 1976] and The Avengers' was "At Last ... the Decision" [#151, Sept. 1976].*

ENGLEHART: I think the *Avengers* title referred to the fact that the Avengers were having another membership shake-up, and that title probably fit with what they were doing. I had put that newest version of the team together. In fact, I'd brought Wonder Man back from the dead. I'd had a lot of plans for Wonder Man.

I'm not sure about the *Captain Marvel* title. Maybe it meant something, but I don't really remember.

But the *Dr. Strange* title was definitely a comment from me directly. I felt that I'd established some sort of relationship with the readers, and I suppose I could have given an interview to let them know the reasons, but inside the office there really wasn't any way to say, "I'm quitting because Marvel's policy has been changed drastically." I wanted to say goodbye to the readers.

That's It ...
I'm Outta Here!

Doctor Strange #18,
Captain Marvel #46,
and *Avengers* #151—
all cover-dated Sept.
1976—featured a
disgruntled and
disappointed
Englehart's last tales
on those series.

Cover art by
Gene Colan and
Al Milgrom (*Doc
Strange*), Milgrom
(*Capt. Marvel*), and
Jack Kirby and Dan
Adkins (*Avengers*).

© 2011 Marvel Characters, Inc.



I still did my professional best to finish off those final scripts. *Dr. Strange* was not at the end of its story arc, but I didn't use the opportunity to kill everybody or anything like that. I left the book all set so that it could be published the following month with the new team who took over after I left, but the title "The Dream is Dead" reflected my last message on the book. A goodbye to the fans.

ARNDT: *Just as a message to the original fans, what was your intended ending to that "Dr. Strange meets Ben Franklin" tale that was interrupted by your leaving?*

ENGLEHART: I was obviously playing around with the fact that Dr. Strange didn't have enough time for his other-dimensional girlfriend, Clea. That was going to lead wherever it was going to lead. Soap-opera stuff like that I basically let write itself. Somebody would make a decision that would lead to the next step, and we'd see what happens. But in the mystical side of things, Strange and Clea were going to come back to the present—this was in 1976—and discover that Stygero was still alive and he was getting his natural power from American patriotism. He was feeding off all the psychic energy that was coming into America. Thus, he'd never died. That's basically all I remember of the storyline.

This was to be my Bicentennial story. I rarely sat down and wrote out an outline that said, I'm taking Strange to 1776 and here's what I'm going to do in each issue. I figured out the plot to an issue, to see how that went, and the decisions I made writing that issue would help me figure out how the next issue's story would go. A lot of time, over the years, when I've left series, people go, "Did you have a real plan for what was going to happen next?" I guess, *vaguely*, but I myself wouldn't have found out what it was until I wrote it. If I didn't write it, I wouldn't know how something was supposed to go. Still, that's the direction I was moving in on *Dr. Strange*. It was to be a Bicentennial story.

DOUBLE-SIZED DILLIN DOINGS

ARNDT: *When you went to DC, they were doing the regular Justice League title almost as a Giant-Size book. Each issue had about 33–35 pages of new material.*

ENGLEHART: Actually, I created that version. It had been a regular book. Jenette wanted me to come in and basically do whatever I did for all the DC characters. DC was really moribund at that point. Everybody who was a big star who'd worked for DC had largely gone to Marvel. Neal Adams had gone over to Marvel. Gil Kane, Mike Friedrich, and Bob Brown had gone over to Marvel. Gardner Fox had gone over to Marvel. People were bailing on DC. Marvel was really where all the action was at. Marvel had the better books, the more fun books. DC was just stuck and didn't really know how to get unstuck. They had been convinced for so long that they were the number #1 comic company that when they became number #2, they didn't really have any plan of what they were supposed to do about it.

They got rid of [publisher] Carmine Infantino, who I always liked, and brought in Jenette, because you always fire the coach when the team is losing. The first thing she tried to do was to try to hire John Buscema and to try to hire me. She couldn't get John Buscema, but she could

get me. I was unemployed! I had lunch with her and she discussed how she wanted me to fix all their characters.

I said, okay, that I could do that, but that I also wanted to write Batman because I'd always liked the character.

When I started to work out the Justice League, I said to myself that I've got to give each one of the League members characterization and I've got to include all of them in a story. They've got to have good supervillains to fight. I very quickly realized that that was simply not possible with only 17 pages, which was the industry standard at the time, to work with. There were no rules where I came from, so I suggested a monthly book that was double-

sized. Fortunately, *Justice League* was drawn by Dick Dillin, who could do that many pages.



DICK DILLIN

Giant-Sized Justice

Dick Dillin and Jack Abel's cover to the Englehart-penned *Justice League of America* #146 (Sept. 1977). (Dillin devotees, you're gonna love *BACK ISSUE* #58, starring the Bronze Age JLA!)

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The Definitive Batman

(below) Detail from the cover of *Detective Comics* #476 (Mar.-Apr. 1978), illustrated by Marshall Rogers and Terry Austin. (right) The cover to *Detective Comics* #475.

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When I inquired of DC years later why they've never reprinted that stuff, they said it's because nobody wanted to see Dick Dillin artwork. You can take that for what it's worth. To me, it's proof that corporate policy is not always the best judge of what fans may want to see.

ARNDT: *It does seem odd, since they're reprinting the 1960s material in the Showcase Presents format. There's plenty of Dick Dillin artwork in the later years of that.*

ENGLEHART: Well, me and DC have our issues, too. In any event, Dick Dillin was the perfect artist for that format. If I was going to write the *Justice League*, it made sense to do it with the *Justice League* artist. Either Mike Sekowsky or Dick Dillin had been the main artists since day one. I was very happy to work with Dick Dillin. Plus, Dick Dillin was old-school. If you said to him, "Dick, we're going to double the workload on your book," he would just say, "Okay, send me the script."

So I came up with the idea of doing a double-sized monthly edition of the *Justice League*. That was all cool. But, for whatever reason, they decided to start the double-sized issues a month before I was slated to begin. Trouble with that was, they only had one regular 17-page story in place, so they came to me to ask if I could write a one-shot 17-page story to accompany that story and fill out the book. So I ended up writing a 17-page story that came directly in front of the issue I was actually supposed to have started the book on. My first *JLA* story was intended to be the Green Lantern-gets-captured-by-the-Manhunters story.



MARSHALL ROGERS

That first Green Lantern tale is also clearly two 17-page stories stuck together, but after that, all the *Justice League* issues I worked on were intended and appeared as double-length stories. I accomplished what I set out to do. I got to give each *Justice League* characters an in-depth characterization and still keep the team functioning and the action continuing.

ARNDT: *Those early Justice League tales that you wrote are clearly highly regarded.*

The Manhunters story was adapted for the Justice League animated series.

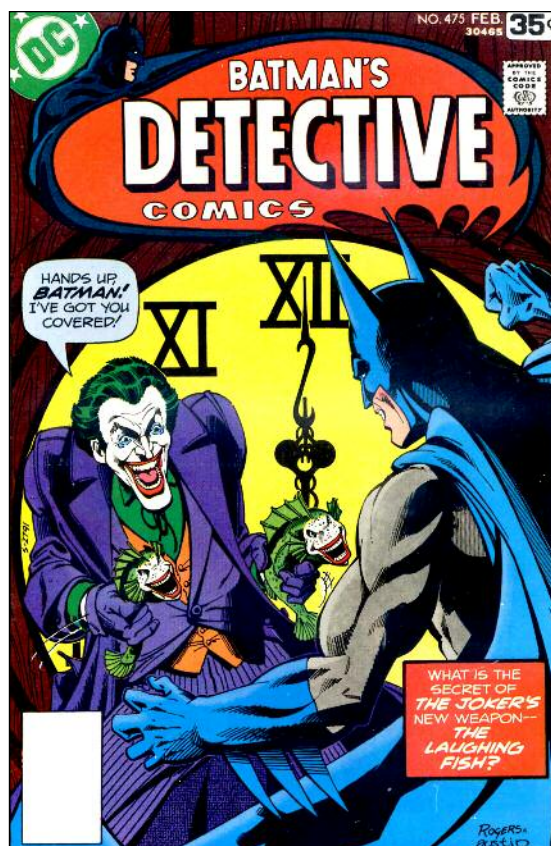
ENGLEHART: Yes, it was the first episode.

BATMAN WITH MARSHALL ROGERS

ARNDT: *They also adapted part of your famous Batman run, although in that one, they combined the first half of your "Laughing Fish" story with the second half of the Denny O'Neil-scripted "The Joker's Five-Way Revenge." Had you already headed*

for Europe when your Batman stories began to appear?

ENGLEHART: No, The first issue or so appeared when I was in the States. Those were penciled by Walt Simonson. He was the original penciler I was supposed to work with. Getting Walt to do that book was a big deal, too, because DC just didn't have artists of that stature in their bullpen at the time. I knew Walt was into illustrating the Batman, but one way or another he only had time to do rough penciling. Al Milgrom finished the pencils and inked those issues. It's a bit like what I was saying earlier [in *Alter Ego* #103], about Tom Sutton, in a strange way. I don't mean to compare the two in any way, but I personally was very serious about the Batman. I really knew what I



THE ORIGINAL **Pro²Pro** INTERVIEW: **WALTER AND ERIK**

audio-recorded by **David Hamilton**

conducted August 22, 1993
and transcribed by Brian K. Morris



Top Cop and Thunder God

Our interviewees' signature characters, Erik Larsen's Savage Dragon and Walter Simonson's Thor, mean business in this art montage.

Thor © 2011 Marvel Characters, Inc.
Savage Dragon © 2011 Erik Larsen.

Editor's note: At the 1993 San Diego Comic-Con, **Walter Simonson**—a fan-favorite still basking in the glow of his lauded Thor and Fantastic Four work at Marvel—and **Erik Larsen**—a newer fan-favorite then enjoying success as one of the co-founders of Image Comics, where his Savage Dragon was a big hit—went one-on-one in a panel interview recorded by David “Hambone” Hamilton. Thanks to BACK ISSUE and the trusty ear of Brian K. Morris, who transcribed this nearly 20-year-old tape, you don’t need a “Time Scope” (more on that later) to enjoy this blast from the past.

“LEARN WHILE YOU EARN”

WALTER SIMONSON: Erik, how did you start in comics?

ERIK LARSEN: How did I get started in comics?

SIMONSON: Sure.

LARSEN: Gee whiz, Walt. [Walt laughs uproariously] That’s a very good question. I must say, that’s very perceptive of you to think of that.

SIMONSON: [Walt laughs again]

LARSEN: Published my own fanzine about 11 years ago with a couple other friends, and we just got our act together, or tried to. I had this “Dragon” thing that I wanted to send to Charlton Bullseye, but they had too much stuff. They advised me to send it to everybody I could think of because they thought it was professional enough to do so.

SIMONSON: Did you write and draw it?

LARSEN: I wrote and drew it and inked it, lettered it.

SIMONSON: All right, an all-rounder!

LARSEN: All around everything. [laughs] It was interesting, in retrospect. I still got a copy of that somewhere.

SIMONSON: Ah, keep those copies, kids. A valuable collector’s item. [chuckles]

LARSEN: The three of us that were going to the comic-book store at the time all published this thing. It was, like, a 72-page monsters comic book that we

put out. We sent around to *The Buyer's Guide* and all those, some people who reviewed it actually wanted to try to start up their own comic-book companies.

This guy named Gary Carlson called me up and got ahold of me, and we did some stuff for a comic called *Megaton* with him. And then the way comics is, one job just sort of leads to another and leads to another. I ended up working at Americomics for a little while, [chuckles again] work I'm especially proud of.

SIMONSON: What were you doing there?

LARSEN: Superhero stuff. I was doing a book called *Sentinels of Justice* and doing a terrible job on it [Walt chuckles again], just awful.

SIMONSON: Were you writing that stuff, too, or was somebody else writing it?

LARSEN: At that time, somebody else was writing it. Then the stuff for *Megaton*, I ended up doing work for four issues of that. The first two, I was plotting on it and adding a lot of dialogue. And then the other two, I just wrote myself. I guess I've always known what I wanted to do. This is like getting the people out of the way to let me do it.

SIMONSON: Hmm, delicately played. [laughter] So what happened next?

LARSEN: I was a penciler, and I ran into [Marvel Comics editor-in-chief Jim] Shooter at a Chicago convention and showed him the stuff that I'd been doing—not the Americomics stuff, but some of the stuff for *Megaton*. He saw it and said, "How would you like to do a job for *Marvel Fanfare*?" I didn't know that meant, "How would you like to do an inventory job that's going to sit around for a long time, we'll give to Vinnie Colletta to ink, we'll have John Romita redraw all the faces, and have it show up three years from now to embarrass you?" I thought it actually meant *Marvel Fanfare*. [chuckles again]

SIMONSON: Mmmm...

LARSEN: So I suggested to him, "Why don't we plot it tomorrow?" He was sort of taken aback by that. He said, "Okay, why not?" [Walt laughs] So we did.

SIMONSON: Who ended up scripting it?

LARSEN: Stan Lee.

SIMONSON: No kidding?

LARSEN: So I was sort of subbing for Jack Kirby here.

SIMONSON: Right. You could do worse.

LARSEN: [chuckles] It's good work if you can get it!

SIMONSON: Well, I never had Stan Lee script my stuff! And so you started working for Marvel after that?

LARSEN: Not even! It was like that job didn't lead to a lot of other stuff and I ended up doing five issues of *DNAgents* and was just skipping around. I did a fill-in for *Amazing Spider-Man* fairly early on, and some DC stuff, and then I went right into doing *The Doom Patrol* for a year or so. And then from that, I popped over to Marvel and did *The Punisher* and then *Marvel Comics Presents* and then *Amazing Spider-Man* until I got good and tired of that. And then I was going to go off and do *Nova*, my big favorite.

SIMONSON: Marvel's old *Nova* character?

LARSEN: Yeah, *A Man Called*—or whatever it is. And that didn't happen.

SIMONSON: I did "What If *Nova* Were a Woman" one time, or something like that. That was a long time ago.

LARSEN: I remember it.

SIMONSON: I hardly do. [laughter]

LARSEN: Yeah, *What If!* #13, inked by Bob Wiacek. Back when he was using a brush.

SIMONSON: Right, that's before he inked Smitty, Paul Smith. Because that was when I thought Bob's stuff really took off and he went ballistic.

BACKISSUE!

ARTIST / WRITER
DATACARD

Beginnings:

"Cyrano's Army" in *Weird War Tales* #10 (Jan. 1973)

Milestones:

Creator of Beta Ray Bill / Manhunter in *Detective Comics* / Batman in *Detective Comics* / Metal Men / Hercules Unbound / Alien / The Mighty Thor / X-Factor / Star Slammers / Uncanny X-Men/New Teen Titans / Fantastic Four / Orion / Elric: The Making of a Sorcerer

Works in Progress:

Thor Omnibus / 2011–2012 Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide cover

Cyberspace:

Official Walter Simonson page on Facebook



Photo by Nightscream.

WALTER
SIMONSON

BACKISSUE!

ARTIST / WRITER
DATACARD

Beginnings:

Series "Vanguard" in *Megaton* (Nov. 1983, *Megaton Comics*)

Milestones:

Creator of the *Savage Dragon* and *Image Comics* co-founder / *Sentinels of Justice* / *DNAgents* / *Doom Patrol* / *Amazing Spider-Man* / *The Savage Dragon* / *Fantastic Four* / *The Defenders* / *Creepy* / *Nova* / *Aquaman*

Works in Progress:

Savage Dragon / *Herculean*

Cyberspace:

www.savagedragon.com

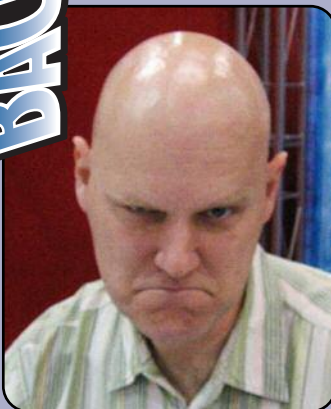
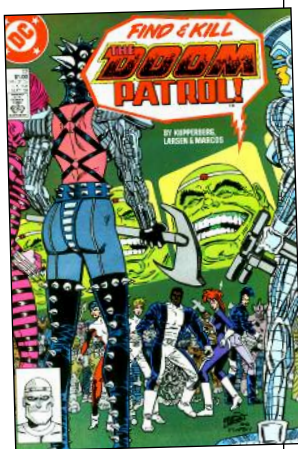


Photo by Happypeephead.

ERIK
LARSEN



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SECRET ORIGINS



LARSEN: That's when he switched over from brush to pen.
SIMONSON: Also, he had worked for a while out of Neal Adams' Continuity Studios and so he was kind of inking in the rendering style. And Paul, as I remember, came out of animation. He wasn't real young—he wasn't like a 19-year-old coming out of comics—I believe he'd been animation, so his work was very linear and not a rendering kind of drawing. Bob began doing the line work on Paul's stuff and it turned out that Bob had a beautiful ink line and he really just took off after that. By the time Bob and I did X-Factor together, his stuff had become so different and so beautiful. It was just great.
 Before that, we'd teamed up on an issue of the X-Men. Paul, at that time, could do one book in a month and he was asked to draw a double-sized issue. My wife [Louise Jones Simonson] gave it to him; she was X-Men editor at the time—so Paul was automatically a month behind. [laughs] So they asked me if I could do a fill-in to buy back a month, and Bob inked that and did a nice job. Bob was a little speedy at the time. We were a little pressed for time, so that was kind of a zip job.
 I kind of like goofy stuff in comics. I'm a little retro in that regard, maybe, but [in my X-Men issue], when Binary and Rogue were fighting, at one point, Rogue clocked Binary

and I had blown right out of the atmosphere. There's a shot of Binary turning around at the Moon and coming back down to Earth. [Erik laughs] I'm not sure how hard you'd have to hit somebody to send them to the Moon, but I thought, "Well, it looked kind of cool." [laughs] I guess she flew really fast. I thought, "Well, probably this isn't really how it would work, but who cares? It's comic books."

I was just thinking about all of the Honeymooners "to the moon" stuff with Jackie Gleason: "Well, okay. This is my chance to go, 'BAM! To the moon!'" [laughs]

So, we need another question now.

LARSEN: Okay, now how did you get started? I can do this too. That was easy.

SIMONSON: Well, it was easier back then, because there were a lot fewer companies. Actually, there were two companies when I got into comics. It was Marvel and DC, and that was it.

LARSEN: If you're doing superhero stuff, anyway.

SIMONSON: Yes, which is what I wanted to do, exactly. And also, there were no faxes, there were no modems, there were no FedEx drop boxes, which meant that if you wanted to do comics, you moved to New York. So I think the generation I came in with and the guys right after me like Terry Austin and Bob Wiacek, we were probably about the last generation of guys in comics to actually move to the city to get work.

Erik's Early Efforts

(left) Larsen, inked by Mike DeCarlo, from *Secret Origins* #13 (Apr. 1987). (below) Erik's "Marvel Fanfare thing" saw print with a Frenz/Milgrom cover in *Thor* #385. (above left) By '88 he was making a name for himself on *Doom Patrol*.

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I moved to New York in '72. I had just gotten out of art school. I'd done a comic in art school, a version of Star Slammers, as a degree project. It was about 50 pages long. I used about the last half of that story as my portfolio. A friend of mine who'd just come down from Rhode Island, where I was living, had gotten work as a writer in the beginning of the summer—Gerry Boudreau was his name. Gerry wrote comics for a while and then dropped out of the field, but he got me an appointment with Archie Goodwin up at DC. I showed my stuff to Archie and Archie looked at it and said, "This is nice, but what else can you do?," because it was all science-fiction stuff, the common wisdom being that science fiction didn't sell in comic books. So I wasn't liable to get any work out of this and thought, "Hell, no, I'm doomed! I'll starve on the streets." I ended up, by accident really, talking to Carmine Infantino, who was the editorial director or publisher or whatever. He was head honcho of DC at the time and Carmine liked the work I was doing a lot. It was very design-y and Carmine himself had a very strong sense of design. He has a real sense of negative space and stuff and the work I showed him appealed to him.

So he called in three of his editors and made them all give me a job and I walked out of his office with three jobs. [Erik laughs] One of them was from Archie and one from Joe Orlando and one from Julie Schwartz, and I did the ones for Archie and for Joe. I think the one for Julie, we kind of let drop quietly. I don't think I was doing work at the time that was really what Julie was looking for, and the story that I was offered was something about how all Kryptonians came to wear headbands, which wasn't the kind of story I wanted to do. So I did a story for Archie and a story for Joe. They were all short story backups in titles. By the time I'd done that, Archie was actually interested in feeding me these little, short, backup jobs in war comics. That was where you got your training like you do in the independents or Americomics and even Marvel Fanfare now. Basically, you make a few bucks and it's "earn while you learn."

LARSEN: My Fanfare thing didn't actually show up in Fanfare, it showed up in Thor.

SIMONSON: Oh, really?

LARSEN: Yeah, issue #385 (Nov. 1987). Ron Frenz and Al Milgrom cover.

SIMONSON: And Erik Larsen inside.

LARSEN: Erik "Larson"—my name is misspelled.

MANHUNTER MAKES A MARK

SIMONSON: Oops!

But the backups, I mean, the mystery books, House of Mystery and stuff like that and the war books, the backup stories were where you did your apprenticeship. You could earn enough money to just keep going, get better, and I did that for Archie for a bit. Then I did the "Manhunter" series with Archie, who was the editor of Detective Comics at the time. He wanted to create a new character as the backup for Detective that would be a contrast to Batman. So where Batman would be dark and ramble around the city and stuff, Manhunter would be brighter and ramble around the world. And where Batman didn't really use weaponry other than gimmicks and such, maybe Manhunter would use guns or different knives and whatever. They're both martial-artists, kind of. Batman was a martial artist, depending on who was drawing him at the time, and so we made Manhunter a deliberate martial artist, and we worked in ninjas.

I'll have to tell one of my favorite all-time stories from working in the business. I saw a letter to Archie when he was working at Marvel, when he was working for Epic, many years later. Apparently, after Frank Miller had been doing Daredevil for a while, running the Hand and all that martial-arts stuff, Archie got a letter from somebody who had come across our Manhunter story in reprint and he wanted to know how it was that we had been able to steal Frank Miller's ninja idea ten years before Frank did it! And I didn't have a good answer, you know? It was a "Time Scope" ... I turned my Time Scope on in '73, I looked forward to the future about ten years, and said, "Oh, I can swipe this." [Erik laughs] Well, maybe ninjas didn't belong to one guy, but it was funny. It was just a funny letter, the idea that you could, well ... "How could you steal this stuff ten years in advance?" And it was a very straight letter.

But the ninja stuff and the martial arts and weaponry in Manhunter, it really defined contrast with the Batman. It worked out very well. There was no fandom the way there is now. There weren't comics shops, there was no Direct Market, but there was really a tight professional community and Manhunter was very well received in the professional community. I didn't really have to look for work after that. I mean, that was really kind of my breakthrough series even though it only ran seven episodes.

LARSEN: I remember just the last episode because I was swiping from it when I was ten. [Walt laughs uproariously] I did that. I was doing my little hand-drawn Dragon comics. I remember looking at one of those



NEW to **Duel the Master**



Walt's Break-Out Series

(left) A panel-drenched Manhunter page from Chapter 5, originally published in Detective Comics #441 (June-July 1974). (right) Cover to the 1984 Manhunter reprint one-shot.

TM & © DC Comics.

It was the 27th year of MidSouthCon, a science-fiction convention in Memphis, Tennessee, that began adding programming for comic-book fans in the early 2000s. By mid-decade, the organizers went after a major creator each year as their Comics Guest of Honor. John Ostrander held that tribute when the following interview was conducted on March 22, 2009.

This introduction does not have to highlight Mr. Ostrander's achievements for two reasons. The first reason is because he beautifully covered his own career up to the time that this discussion took place. The second reason is because the guy mines his material so well that the interview is not out of date. For example, when we talked in 2009, he had been working for Dark Horse Comics on different Star Wars titles for several years. As of June 2011, he is preparing a new Star Wars comic for release by Dark Horse this December. Besides his reliable timeliness with miniseries, he often stays on long-running books to the ends of their runs, and that is meant only in a positive way. The ability to so fully develop his characters while guiding their sagas to inevitable conclusions is rare in the field.

We're more interesting for the people we know, and John did a wonderful job of demonstrating that truth. Whether besting his mischievous brother in church, collaborating on comic books with his two great loves, or expressing his admiration for a certain legendary Batman writer and editor, John was generous and welcomed us into his world. There was magic in the room and those in attendance knew it. Thanks, John.

— Eddy Zeno

EARLY DAYS

EDDY ZENO: Tell me about when you started reading comics.

JOHN OSTRANDER: I read everything that I could find. I finished all the Sherlock Holmes stories by the time I was ten. My mother believed Dr. Wertham and *Seduction of the Innocent*, so I was not allowed to read superhero comics which meant, of course, that they were all the more desirable and had to be read on the sly over at friends' houses. So that's how I got warped towards comic books.

In high school I went to an audition—I was at a boys' Catholic high school, which meant all-boys. The girl that I was interested in was attending an all-girls' high school. In order to get somewhere in her vicinity I learned that they were doing auditions for a play and they needed guys because, of course, they had no guys. So I went over and I auditioned. Because they only had a smattering of people, I got cast into one of the parts. The first time on stage, I found out I was actually good at something outside of reading. So I did that and my family was very impressed.

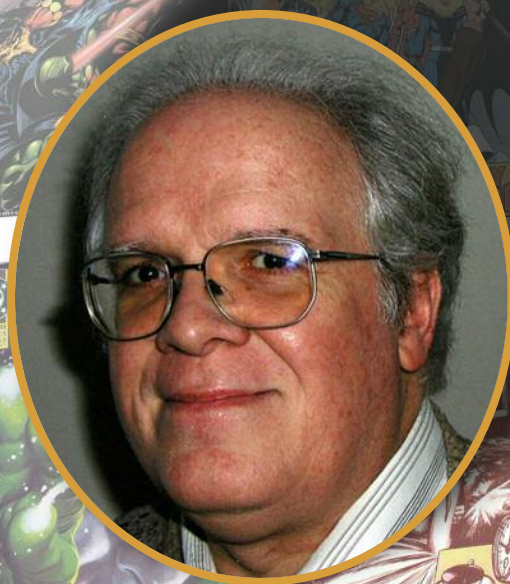
I have a twin brother, by the way, who looks and acts and sounds nothing like me, my brother Joe. I'm the flaming Liberal, he's the arch Conservative in the family, so there are certain topics we don't talk about and other things we do. When he calls me on the phone, we do dueling Elmer Fudds. [doing Elmer Fudd impression] "Be vewwy, vewwy quiet. We're hunting wabbits, huh-huh-huh-huh!" [audience laughs] We've learned that Elmer Fudd, by the way, is remarkably skilled and does a lot of different musicals and stuff like that. He has an affinity for Lerner and Lowe. "It's twue, it's twue! ... the cwimate must be wuther dwll to you, [sings] ahh-hummm." [audience laughs again] I could do Elmer Fudd all afternoon.

So my family came for the first time to show my brother, who is not noted for his tact—I learned tact

John Ostrander interview

by **Eddy Zeno**

conducted March 22, 2009 and
transcribed by Brian K. Morris



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from watching my brother, who got into trouble with everything and I'm, "Oh, no. I don't have to do that." The family gag was if Joe does something wrong, sooner or later, you'll find out because he'll tell you. John, on the other hand, will wait until he thinks that you're old enough to find out about certain things and then maybe he'll vent about it. Do I have time to do a quick story?

ZENO: Oh, yes.

OSTRANDER: Because we lived across the street from the Catholic Church, me and my brother were altar boys and we always got assigned the six o'clock mass. For those of you who don't know, there are certain rituals that are done in particular—this was before Vatican II, so this is all in Latin, facing the altar, and with altar boys, there's the book side and there's the bell side and the bell side was the glamour side. That's the kid who got to ring the bells at certain times during the thing. And the poor book guy just got stuck as a mule. He had to grab the book up in its heavy stand and come down and take it up the other side. So he did the grunt labor and the bell side guy got all the glory of ringing the bells. And because of ritual, the patterns were set. You need to know this because this defines my brother's and my relationship. All week long, Joe had taken the bell side. He just muscled in—he's three minutes older, he never listens, so he took that. From the moment you step out from like a side room, he gets set. So I positioned myself. On the last day I was going to ring the bells, by gum, by God, by gosh. And just before we were to go up there, Joe said, "John, the Father wants to see you." I went, "Oh, yeah?" And so I went back. The Father goes, "What are you doing?" We're supposed to go out and Joe starts taking my place. I go, "But! But!" and Joe's giggling, and out we go.

The other part: When you're on the book side, you're kneeling by the bells but you don't get to ring them and then you switch sides as part of the doo-dah. So while I was there, I started a little experiment. I discovered that there's a triangle set of bells held by nuts at the top. They weren't tightly fastened so I just started to unfasten them down to one last quarter-turn and left them that way. I went over to the book side—Joe's by the bell side. Joe's a mighty bell-ringer and he'd go *Ring-A-Ding-A-Ding-A-Ding, Ring-A-Ding-A-Ding-A-Ding*, going overhead. So it's in the middle of the big high set. He starts ringing and he goes *Ring-A-Ding-A-Ding-A-Ding, Ring-A-Ding-A-Ding-A-Ding, Ring-A-Ding-pingpingpingping* [audience laughs] all over the sacristy. He's just got one little bell that goes *ding-ding-ding-ding*. [audience laughs again] And I'm on the other side, going [snickers loudly]. [audience laughs once more] Joe gets up, genuflects in the middle, and then goes around, picking up the pieces of the bells while I'm going [snickers loudly again]. I never admitted to it until our 21st birthday [audience laughs and moans], so I guess I'm a sneak.

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE: Not even in confession, eh?

OSTRANDER: I didn't go there to sin; it was righteous retribution. [audience laughs] God approves of that. My God did. My God thought it was hysterical. And I will say my brother hung onto it because my Aunt [Helen] still lived in the same parish when she died and she had her funeral there. We were supposed to get up and talk about my aunt. My brother brings this up and tells this story from the front of the church and says, "We all know who God's going to hit on the way out." [audience chuckles] I say, "What's this got to do with my aunt?" But it's just Joe. He can't let go.

Aunt Helen lived to be 101 years old. Her father lived to be a hundred years old. She was my father's

W R I T E R

BACKISSUE! DATACARD

Beginnings:

"Sargon, Mistress of War" for *Warp* #1 (Mar. 1983)

Milestones:

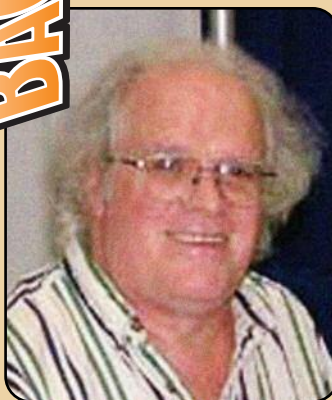
Co-creator of Amanda Waller and Oracle (repurposing Barbara "Batgirl" Gordon) / *Grimjack* / *Legends* / *Suicide Squad* / *Firestorm* / *Manhunter* / *Deadshot* / *Wasteland* / *The Spectre* / *Hawkworld* / *Martian Manhunter* / *Punisher* / *The Kents* / *Heroes for Hire* / *Blaze of Glory* / misc. *Batman* projects / misc. *Star Wars* series for Dark Horse Comics

Works in Progress:

Star Wars / *Secret Six*

Cyberspace:

John Ostrander Fan Page on Facebook



JOHN
OSTRANDER

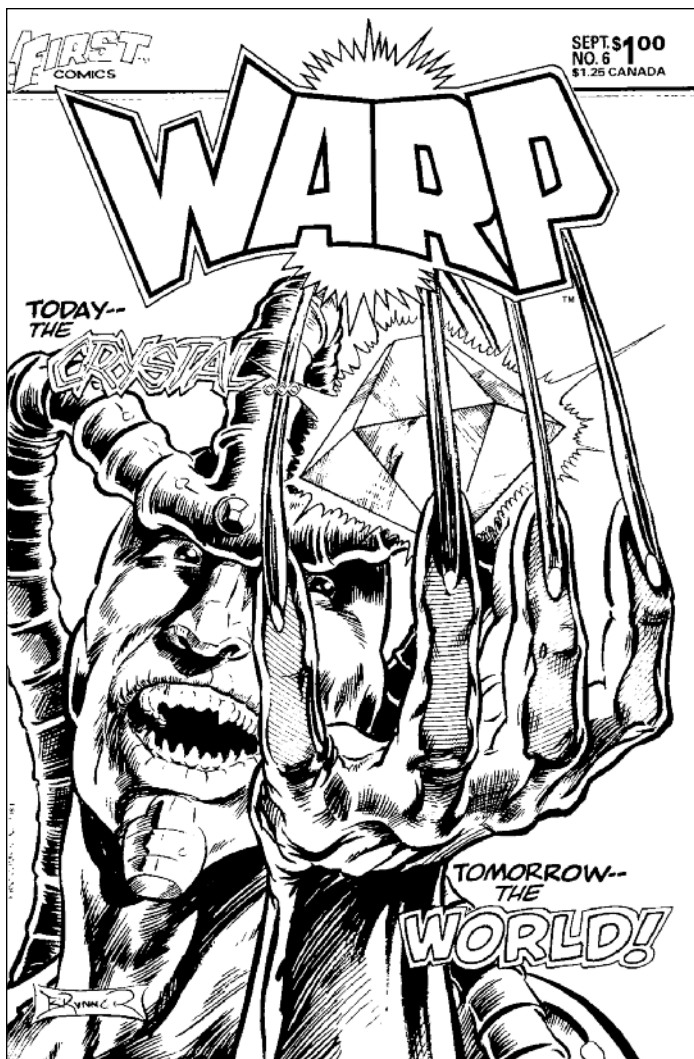


Friends and Family

(top) (left to right) Timothy Truman, Jan Duursema, Tom Mandrake, John Ostrander, and Kim Yale. (bottom) John's Aunt Helen.

Stage Plays

(top) College-aged Ostrander (right) with Mike SaaD in *Waiting for Godot*. (bottom) First Comics brought Stuart Gordon and Bury St. Edmund's sci-fi play *Warp* to comic books, home of John's first scripting gig, the Sargon backup. Seen here is Frank Brunner's original cover art to #6 (Sept. 1983), courtesy of Heritage Comics Auctions.



sister and she was a party girl. At her 90th birthday, everyone knew what to bring her, which was either cartons of cigarettes or bottles of Seagram's 7, which was her brand. [audience chuckles] When we cleaned out her apartment, she still had about seven gallons left but I know she received a lot more. She had a drink every day and a cigarette. When she died, she died in her own apartment. I think it was too early in the day to have a glass of whiskey, but she had just started watching TV. She had a lovely hundredth birthday and her father before her gave me one of the life lessons that I've kept a long time, because once they reach this hundred, they get all the telegrams and stuff from all the high muckety-mucks and stuff like that, like the president and the governor and the mayor and senator.

He also got a new color TV that day, because his favorite thing in the world was watching the Chicago Cubs. He goes, "Well, that's quite nice, that's quite nice." When he also got a card signed by the broadcaster of the team and all of the Cubs, he went, [emphatically] "Well, isn't that somethin'?"

He and I once talked about my theatre ... the only time we talked about my being in theatre because he was a blue-collar plumber, he says to me, "Theatre. Theatre. Hmm, well ... that's a good trade, don't you know? God knows I couldn't do it. Then again, lots of them would be lost with a wrench in their hands, so I figure it all evens up."

And that's part of my approach to life. No one's better than someone else. It all evens out. I do writing, it doesn't make me better or worse than anyone else. It just all evens out.

"AN OVERAGE MICKEY ROONEY"

ZENO: [shows a slide of John as a thespian]

OSTRANDER: All right, this is from my theatre days in college. This is *Waiting for Godot* and I'm the guy on the right. That's back when I had hair [audience chuckles again] and something of a jawline. So there's a guy there, Mike SaaD, who's a very good actor. He's now out on the West Coast. I trained at Loyola University and had a bunch of really good teachers at that time. Dennis Zacek, who directed this play, later became the head of a small theatre in Chicago that won a Tony Award for, like regional theatres and stuff. He's still there. In my theatre career in Chicago, I was an actor, director, playwright, very bad producer—I was an overage Mickey Rooney. I'd go, "Gee, kids! Let's get together and put on a show." I'd put my money into it, forget to do the proper PR, and then wonder why no one would show up. Play writing is what actually led me into comics. My friend Mike Gold, who is an old friend of mine, he was in love with this play, *Bloody Bess*, that I co-wrote with my friend Bill Norris and was done at the Organic Theatre. The Organic Theatre was run by Stuart Gordon, who, later on, has gone on to make films like *Re-Animator*, for those of you who are aware of that. People who were in it included people like Joey Mantegna, the actor who's gone on and done a lot of things; Meshach Taylor, who did other things, as well [Editor's note: Such as TV's *Designing Women*.]—a number of really good people came out of the Organic Theatre at the time.

One example: Late in the run, I was playing a small bit part in *Bloody Bess* and I got slung in the air with my heels up in the air. The play starts with the pirates taking this merchant ship and the merchant captain defends himself. "You may kill me now, but my words, my words..." And one pirate goes, "Your words?," and then they do a single slash across the throat to release the blood bag and there's all this blood that comes out and goes into a bucket. That's the scenario. At this point in the run of the play, I was playing the merchant guy who gets slung up. And my co-writer, Bill Norris, was playing the guy who slits the throat. So I'm doing my bit and I have my heels up in the air and I'm going, "But my words, my words, they shall live!" He starts sawing on my throat with this knife, going, "Your words, you fat turkey? Your words?" So I'm just going, "Mmm, mmm, mmm!" and people say it was a lovely, realistic death moment. I'm just trying to keep from laughing.

Anyway, Mike Gold was a big fan of the play, he knew I was a big fan of comics, and so he decided to see whether or not I could actually work in the field. He gave me my first shot in comics, in the back pages of *Warp*! And then, from there, the rest is hysteria, I guess.

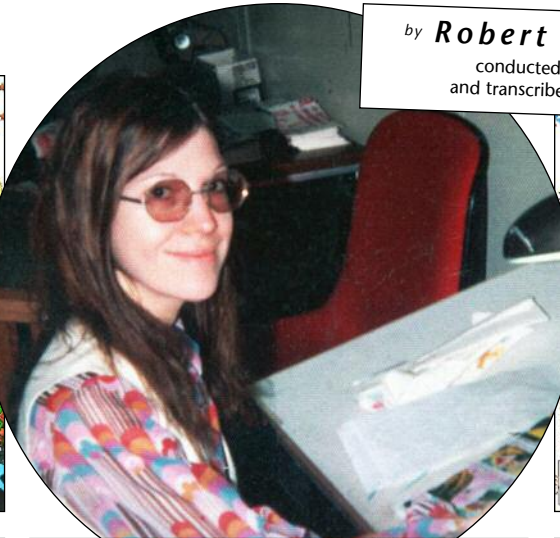
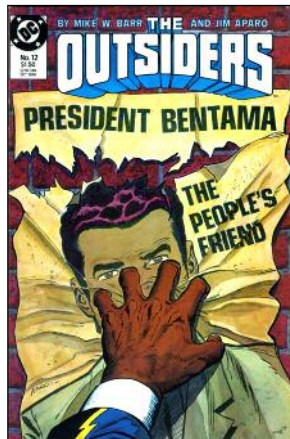
ADRIENNE ROY

INTERVIEW

Colorful Personality

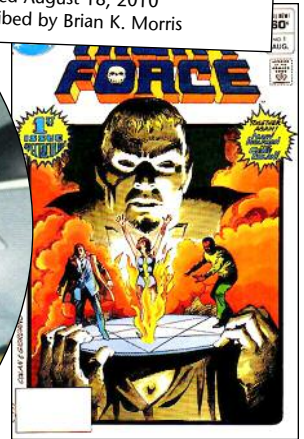
A pair of photographs of Adrienne Roy, courtesy of Anthony Tollin: (center top) Adrienne at her desk, circa 1978, during her first year in the DC Comics bullpen, and (center bottom) one of her last portraits, circa 2009–2010, taken by daughter Katrina. Also seen are four covers representing the versatility of her color résumé: *New Teen Titans* #1, *Night Force* #1, *Outsiders* #12, and *Slash Maraud* #1.

Covers TM & © DC Comics.



by **Robert Greenberger**

conducted August 18, 2010
and transcribed by Brian K. Morris



Batman benefitted in the 1970s and 1980s from a consistency in editorial control as Julius Schwartz helmed Batman and Detective Comics before ceding them to Paul Levitz, who added The Brave and the Bold to his portfolio and then handed the series over to Dick Giordano, followed by Len Wein. But what few recognize is that someone who was there during this period and well beyond was colorist Adrienne Roy, who handled a record number of stories featuring the Dynamic Duo. She was not a one-trick pony, as evidenced by her dynamic work over George Pérez's New Teen Titans and Gene Colan's Night Force.

Adrienne Roy was never a flashy colorist or a personality heard in fanzines or seen at many conventions. Instead, she chose to let her work speak for itself, as she dedicated herself to the craft while also indulging in other creative pursuits.

Time, though, was not kind to Adrienne, as computerized coloring led to fewer assignments. By 2000 she was largely out of work. Adrienne trained herself on the computer and explored other options before family issues kept her away from comics. Then her body betrayed her and she spent the last few years battling cancer. In the summer of 2010, Adrienne was told that she had a matter of months to live, and she

wanted her story told. I was honored to be approached to conduct her career interview, covering her life and work in comics. She managed to read and comment on the transcription before she grew too ill to continue. Her longtime collaborator and former husband Anthony Tollin worked with Adrienne to stir her dimming memories and get the facts right. What follows is the conversation she and I had along with additional materials and corrections from Anthony.

In the summer of 1980, I was a temp at DC Comics and Adrienne worked there at a spare table in a bullpen area that contained the photocopier I used throughout the day. She couldn't have been friendlier and more gracious, teaching me what she herself had learned only a few years earlier. I was happy to have her color comics for me when I later became a staff editor. And, as fate decreed, I also hired her for her last color assignment, a commercial job for Microsoft where her traditional training came in handy, making a Dick Giordano comic strip look like a 1960s romance comic. As always, she delivered on time and exceeded my expectations.

Adrienne leaves behind a body of work that speaks for itself and still has many admirers among editors, creators, and fans.

— Robert Greenberger



DISCOVERING FANDOM

ROBERT GREENBERGER: *Let's go back to the beginning. Tell me about being raised in New Jersey, and how you discovered art.*

ADRIENNE ROY: [laughs] Gee, I don't know. I was kind of a loner. I guess that was it. I'm just kind of a loner. I liked doing things that other kids didn't do. I liked looking at bugs and walking around the trails by the house by myself. I didn't like playing with dolls. I just wasn't typical and I certainly didn't want to be fitted into any kind of a mold. So what happened was, my parents knew of a stationery store in the next town over that sold piles of this yellow scrap paper. It looked like 8 x 10 scrap paper and they used to give me that to draw on and I would just fill it up. [chuckles] I just liked to draw and I kept at it. And I remember them enrolling me in an art school at kind of a children's art school at the Montclair Art School—Montclair Museum, I'm sorry, Montclair Art Museum in the next town. And I kept at it from there.

When I got out of high school, I didn't quite know what I wanted to do. I remember laying off for about a year and a half and then my dad encouraged me to take a couple of courses at the local college and I wound up becoming completely enrolled as an art student at William Patterson in Wayne, New Jersey, and I did a lot of painting there. In fact, I had a pretty broad art career. My explorations were very broad. I did photography and painting and they wanted you to take all the basics, so I had some two- and three-dimensional design work, but a lot of painting. I went to be a fine artist and that's what my degree was in, alternately, when I went back to finish up later in life because I left.

This is kind of interesting: I started discovering comic conventions. I think my first one, though, was ... hmm, I guess my first convention was a *Star Trek* convention and I had no idea what a convention was. And when I

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Dear Stan, Gary and Dick,

"This Ravaged Land" in SGT. FURY #96 was a fine story from cover to cover. The ending was especially hard-hitting. The idea of the Sarge being out of action, and Dum Dum taking over goes to prove that Gary Friedrich is one of the best war-mag writers today. I would have liked it better, though, if you would have called the story "Dum Dum Sees It Thru!"; as on the cover, rather than "This Ravaged Land." For one thing, a non-serious title would be a change of pace, and also, "Dum Dum Sees It Thru" reminds me of the classic "Dum Dum Does It The Hard Way!" reprinted in #87.

As for the art, it was OK, but I'd sure appreciate it if John Severin would return to do the inking. The Gil Kane-John Severin cover was a masterpiece.

The letter-page was also very interesting this time around. Dwight Decker made a couple of good points that I agree with, concerning the excellent characterizations of the Howlers. Most WWII stories center around battle action, but I'd sure like to see a story featuring the people "Behind the Scenes"—you know, the ones on the home front, who kept our soldiers supplied with weapons, parachutes, etc. Do some stories about people who worked in munitions factories, or assisted in the sale of war bonds, and so on. How about a story where the Howlers go to a U.S.O. show? Bob Hope was entertaining then, as well as now.

Oh yes, I too would greatly appreciate seeing Nick Fury's present-day adventures in a strip or book of his own—and Mr. Decker's suggestion of making him a private detective is a good one.

Getting back to what I was saying before, I'd also like seeing more stories on underground movements in Germany, France, etc., as well as stories on the O.S.S. and other organizations.

More war-mags would also be a welcome addition to the Marvel line up. Thank you.

Mike Francis, 1737 23rd St.
Manhattan Beach, California 90266

Welcome, Mike. As you know by now, **COMBAT KELLY AND THE DEADLY DOZEN** has answered your last re-

quest—and since it features both Groovy Gary Friedrich and Darlin' Dick Ayres, it answers you in spades! Gary, by the way, was inspired by "Dum Dum Does It The Hard Way" when he plotted #96, so it's no surprise that "Dum Dum Sees It Thru" was on the cover. What is a surprise is that he didn't carry that title inside when he wrote the story, as you suggest. But, since our covers and stories are done separately, we guess it was just an oversight. Glad you picked up on it, though.

And we, too, would love to have Johnny Severin back on *The War Mag* for People Who Hate War Mags, but, what with KULL and THE HULK, plus batches of covers, Marie's big brother just doesn't have time. Maybe someday....

Dear Stan:

I was there at Carnegie Hall for "A Marvelous Evening" and I wanted to give you my reactions to the performance.

The night of Jan. 5 at Carnegie Hall found me quaking with excitement. I couldn't stop my hands from shaking slightly, and I was perspiring profusely. I had been handed an AVENGERS mag at the door (thank you!) and while I was waiting, I tried reading it. It was a great story, with beautiful artwork and wonderful dialogue as always—however, the whole thing went in my head at one end and came out the other. All I could think of was "A Marvelous Evening With Stan Lee" and I just could not concentrate on anything else.

Well, it was marvelous—the band, the readings, all the art work (and seeing it being done!), being introduced to some of my favorite members of the Bullpen, and Geoff Crozier (who said stage magic was dying out!), and seeing and hearing you especially! And that was the first act! In a fit of Marvelmania, I promised myself that first chance I got, I would get the subscriptions that I wanted so badly in to you, instead of having to hunt the local newsstands.

But, as always, there is another side to the story.

While Act I was spectacular—Act II seemed a perfect fizzle. "A Marvelous Evening" wasn't totally bad. The first act, as I said before, was excellent. The second act had some excellent facets to it as well. But certain scenes weakened it—and so weakened the whole of Act II and the whole performance. Perhaps it was a lack of planning—of anticipating the outcome. Chico Hamilton & The Players were good, but I think the last thing the audience wanted to hear was solos. They just didn't match up to the 'Marvelness' that had been generated thus far.

Maybe I am at fault for missing the point. Perhaps you were attempting to laugh at yourselves and all of us—"We know that superheroes don't exist" type of thing. Perhaps you meant it for the younger Marvelites (and the young at heart) in the audience. Or perhaps you had meant it as a reliving of the Golden Age when there were no such words as "corn" and "triteness."

But, through your publications, superheroes do exist—even if only in the mind. That night, I was hoping for something special to happen. And it did, for a time. The bad was bad, but the good of that night was of the very best.

Sincerely yours,
Adrienne Roy, 15 Franklin St.
Verona, New Jersey 07044

KNOW YE THESE, THE HALLOWED RANKS OF MARVELDOM:

R.F.O.

(Real Frantic One)—A buyer of at least 3 Marvel mags a month.

T.T.B.

(Titanic True Believer)—A divinely-inspired "No Prize" winner.

Q.N.S.

(Quite "Nuff Sayer")—A fortunate frantic one who's had a letter printed.

K.O.F.

(Keeper Of the Flame)—One who recruits a newcomer to Marvel's rollickin' ranks.

P.M.M.

(Permanent Marvelite Maximus)—Anyone possessing all four of the other titles.

F.F.F.

(Fearless Front-Facer)—An honorary title bestowed for devotion to Marvel above and beyond the call of duty.

finally started going to these things, I thought they were phenomenal. Robert Lansing was one of the guests. He'd been the guest star in the *Star Trek* episode "Assignment Earth," and he invited a group of us up to his room and entertained us with stories about Hollywood. I mean, especially for a loner kid that didn't have any friends, it was just amazing. And so I started going to these conventions by myself and as I was growing up I went to—let me see, what was it now?—it was a Famous Monsters of Filmland convention. Oh, and I should add too that about this time, I'd also discovered comics.

GREENBERGER: *Well, I figured that reading comics must have led to your going to the conventions.*

ROY: No, it didn't. [chuckles]

GREENBERGER: *So, what comic books did you read as a kid?*

ROY: What did I read? I read *Tomb of Dracula* and I liked *Sub-Mariner* and let me see, I think those were the two that I collected. I had eclectic tastes, what can I say? From time to time, I'd pick up other issues of other superheroes. I remember, oh, I loved the *Conan* series. There was John Buscema with Marv Wolfman. He was the writer on that, wasn't he?

Fandom Fury

(above) Adrienne's first comic-book byline was in the letters column of Marvel's *Sgt. Fury* #100 (July 1972), as she writes of attending Stan Lee's Carnegie Hall show. (left) Anthony Tollin and Adrienne Roy at a science-fiction costume dance, circa 1990.

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The Shadow or Bust!

(right) Adrienne's 1975 Shadow sculpture graced the front cover of Walter B. Gibson's *The Shadow Scrapbook* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979).

The Shadow © Condé Nast Publications.



GREENBERGER: No, it was Roy Thomas.

ROY: Roy, Roy, thank you. That's right, yeah. I had the complete Conan series, too, I remember that. I was already a Conan fan from reading the Lancer paperbacks with the [Frank] Frazetta covers. So I was coming in to comics from a completely different viewpoint, and so I didn't know that there were comic conventions, though I'd previously attended the "Stan Lee and Friends" night at Carnegie Hall. That was interesting. And then I discovered conventions. There was a Star Trek convention and Dark Shadows. I used to come into the city and hang out outside the *Dark Shadows* studio on school holidays, back when I was in junior high, and even got onto the Collinwood set once. I went to those and then this Famous Monsters of Filmland convention where I met Tony [Tollin], this odd guy, and I'd never dated before in my life.

GREENBERGER: Really?

ROY: And here was this guy following me around. [laughs] He was following me around and I guess we were in a film room and he just started talking to me and he wound up getting my telephone number. And he said he tried for six months to take me out and I was kind of shy. I used to hide behind pillars when I saw him at conventions, hoping he wouldn't notice me. But after a while, I finally agreed to go out on a date after we were shared dinner at fan Patia Sternberg's divorce banquet. The next week I made the trip into the city to go out on a date with him and he was quite smitten. I was still kind of confused, but I wound up marrying him.

ANTHONY TOLLIN ADDS: Adrienne came into town for that first date to see a film society showing of *Metropolis* or *Nosferatu*, but the print hadn't arrived so we went down to St. Mark's Place to see an Alfred Hitchcock double feature. Near the end of the second film, Adrienne realized that she'd missed the last bus back to New Jersey. Since I believed that I should at least escort my date to her bus, I ended up waiting with her through the next morning, first at Nathan's and then at the Port Authority Bus Terminal. During our eight-hour wait for the next bus, I learned that Adrienne was an amateur filmmaker who'd already directed her own stop-action animation film and a remake of Edison's 1910 *Frankenstein* film (then a lost film, but Adrienne had copied the original written treatment at the Museum of Modern Art and filmed her own 8mm film as a college project). She had also gone on several fossil digs. Adrienne had done a lot of really interesting things, and we had a lot of common interests, including comics, science fiction, art, horror movies, and classic films, and I knew that night that I wanted to share Adrienne's life. A month later we were engaged, and a little over a year later we were married.

GREENBERGER: Back to the conventions for a second—in addition to meeting Tony, back then, the male/female ratio at cons was pretty skewed towards the men. Did it bother you at all that you were one of the few females wandering around these shows?

ROY: I have to tell you the truth, I didn't notice that. [laughs] But yeah, as a matter of fact, there weren't that many women. I know, yeah. It was funny. I thought the conventions were great, although I have to say, I think *Star Trek* there, it was a little more evenly spread out.

GREENBERGER: Well, yes.

ROY: But with the Famous Monsters of Filmland, I was a vampire/Dracula fan so I had to go to that, and that was heavily male-attended.

Mentors

Watching over Adrienne's shoulder were

(center) DC production director Jack Adler, seen here in a 1974 trade-journal photo, and (left) DC president Sol Harrison, from a 1978 DC video tour. Photos courtesy of Al Bigley and Robby Reed, respectively. Under Sol's supervision, in 1978 Adrienne colored the wraparound cover to *All-New Collectors' Edition* #C-55 (page 46). Art by Mike Grell.

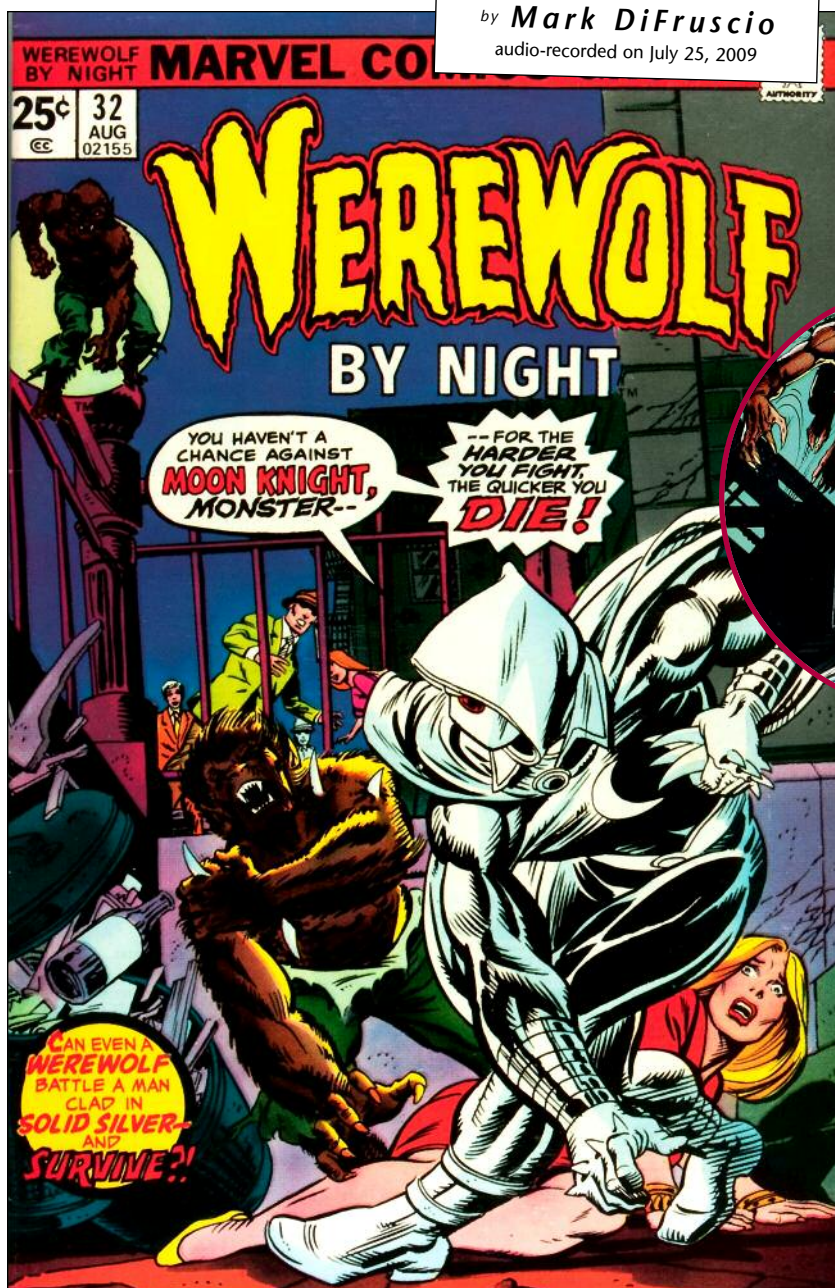
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LEN WEIN INTERVIEWS DOUG MOENCH

AT THE 2009 SAN DIEGO
COMIC-CON

by **Mark DiFruscio**

audio-recorded on July 25, 2009



Whenever two extremely prolific and highly regarded comics creators sit down together for an in-depth, one-on-one conversation, a certain frisson typically results. The unique interaction between seasoned professionals discussing their careers, their influences, and their craft is precisely what makes the "Pro2Pro" feature such a popular mainstay of BACK ISSUE.

In the case of **Len Wein** and **Doug Moench**, the two pros sitting down together have spent almost four decades working on many of the highest-profile books in the industry. While Len Wein is perhaps best known for co-creating *Swamp Thing* and *Wolverine*, Doug Moench is equally well known for his long and extremely popular runs on *Master of Kung Fu* and *Batman*, as well as for co-creating *Moon Knight*.

During the 2009 San Diego Comic-Con, Wein interviewed Moench in the hour-long "Spotlight on Doug Moench" panel, wherein the pair covered a vast array of topics...

— Mark DiFruscio

FORBIDDEN GLIMPSES

LEN WEIN: I guess we'll start with the obvious question: *What made you decide to become a writer?*

DOUG MOENCH: Um, I never did decide. It just happened ... it was just something that I naturally enjoyed doing. Almost like automatic writing. I just found myself suddenly writing things that sometimes added up to something, and sometimes didn't. That's from a very young age.

I think my first coherently written thing—actually, I drew it, too—was a comic strip in my 2nd grade school newspaper called *My Dog Sandy*. And my dog Sandy was constantly saving my butt from one thing or another. I guess, I don't remember, but I must've had a thrill seeing it in print. I remember much later, the first time I saw something in print, and that definitely was a thrill. But back then it was just fun, surprising, almost mysterious.

How about you?



Dark Knights vs. Wolf-Men

Doug Moench introduced one of his signature characters, Moon Knight, in the pages of *Werewolf by Night* #32 (Aug. 1975). Cover by Gil Kane and Al Milgrom. Coincidentally, his interviewer, writer Len Wein, pitted DC's Caped Crusader against a werewolf in *Batman* #255 (Mar.–Apr. 1974). Cover detail (seen in inset) by Neal Adams.

Werewolf by Night and Moon Knight TM & © 2011 Marvel Characters, Inc. Batman TM & © DC Comics.

WRITER / EDITOR

DATA CARD

Beginnings:

"Eye of the Beholder" in *Teen Titans* #18 (Dec. 1968)

Milestones:

Co-creator of Swamp Thing, Human Target, Wolverine, new X-Men, and Lucius Fox / writer: *Phantom Stranger* / Human Target in *Action Comics* / *Star Trek* (Gold Key and DC) / *Justice League of America* / *Swamp Thing* / *Marvel Team-Up* / *Incredible Hulk* / *Amazing Spider-Man* / *Thor* / *Fantastic Four* / *Batman* / *Superman* / *Green Lantern* / *Blue Beetle* / editor: former Marvel editor-in-chief and editor of numerous DC titles including *Batman*, *New Teen Titans*, *Who's Who*, and *Watchmen* /

TV writer: many animation credits including *X-Men*, *Batman*, and *Ben 10*

Works in Progress:

DC Universe: *Legacies* / DC Retroactive: *Batman—The '70s* / DC Retroactive: *Green Lantern—The '80s*

Cyberspace:

lenweinblogspot.com and Len Wein Fan Page on Facebook



LEN WEIN

WEIN: *I actually wanted to be an artist. All of my training was as an artist. I was a comic-book fan, seven years old. I was sick in the hospital as a kid, and my dad brought me a stack of comic books—*

MOENCH: Yeah, same deal. Same deal here.

WEIN: *—and my 9th grade art teacher said, "You actually can draw." So I said, I'm going to be a comic-book artist. And you can see how successful that all worked out for me. [laughter]*

MOENCH: Now, when I was sick, my mother brought me comics. A hundred comic books for a dollar—with the covers ripped off. Where they ripped off the publishers with phony returns. They would just rip off the logo, and send it in, like they were sending in the whole book, but they weren't. Saving postage, supposedly. And then they sold [the coverless comic books instead of destroying them]. Did we ever find out who was behind the "hundred-for-a-dollar" plastic pack scam?

WEIN: *I think those who found out ended up in the river. [laughter]*

MOENCH: I thought it was a great deal. And, you know, a hundred of them. So it had just about everything.

WEIN: *What was the first book you read? What was the stuff you read that made you go, "Oh, I like this..."?*

MOENCH: Well, that would've been before I was real sick. [Maybe] *Atomic Mouse* or something like that. And I remember forbidden glimpses (or at least I've convinced myself that I had) of the very end of EC. I'm not sure if that's an objective memory or if I just retroactively implanted it. But I do convince myself that I remember reading them at the corner store, and then buying something else because I knew my parents wouldn't go for EC.

What was your first?

WEIN: *It was with Detective Comics...*

MOENCH: Really? Oh, and you know what came right after that—my mother was born and raised in Scotland, and there was a fellow Scotswoman who lived way on the Southside of Chicago. And they used to visit back and forth, and when she would come to our place she would always bring me a brand-new *Tomahawk*. Which convinced me that horses were blue. Remember that? They colored all the horses blue? What else could you use?

WEIN: *They didn't have grey-tones.*

So ... you had no actual training as a writer?

MOENCH: No, no, not really. I have no idea how that grade-school thing came about, because no one else in the class was doing that kind of thing. They were all helping the teacher write or gather news of the class, you know, going on a trip or whatever. But no one else had the separate thing. So apparently a teacher must have corralled me or convinced me to do this. Or maybe I just did it on my own and showed it to the teacher and she said, "Oh you can put it in the newspaper." I don't know.

But I remember in high school I wrote some story, it was about racism. And I showed that to my high school English teacher and she liked it and she said, "Oh, you have to take this down to the [school] literary magazine right now." And later on, whenever anybody met me, and they found out who I was, and they had read that story, they'd say, "I thought you were Black!"

WEIN: *Well, you used to be.*

MOENCH: Yeah, well, [there is] that. [But] that should've probably given me a clue that I should do more of this. But I didn't until ... uh, I don't know, maybe two years out of high school, or a year and half out of college.

WEIN: *Were you part of any sort of organized comics fandom?*

MOENCH: Well, what happened was, I had been writing letters to the editor, and one of these things got published

WRITER

DATA CARD

Beginnings:

"Snow Job" in *Eerie* #29 (Sept. 1970)

Milestones:

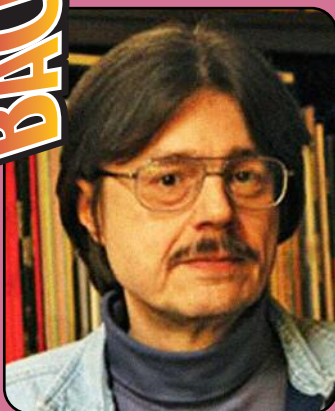
Co-creator of Deathlok, Moon Knight, and the Black Mask / *Creepy* / *Psycho* / *Planet of the Apes* / *Deathlok* in *Astonishing Tales* / *Werewolf by Night* / *Rampaging Hulk* / *Doc Savage* (B&W magazine) / *Godzilla* / *Master of Kung Fu* / *Deadly Hands of Kung Fu* / *Moon Knight* / *Thor* / numerous *Batman* projects / *Aztec Ace* / *Six from Sirius* / *The Spectre* / *Slash Maraud* / *James Bond: Serpent's Tooth* / *Batman vs. Predator II* / *Catwoman* / *S.C.I.-Spy* / TV writer: *Mighty Mouse: The New Adventures*

Works in Progress:

Batman: Unseen trade paperback / *Showcase Presents: Doc Savage*

Cyberspace:

obscenenewg.com/doug/



DOUG MOENCH



Blue Horses Couldn't Drag Me Away

As a young comic-book reader, Doug Moench was puzzled by the navy-blue coloring on horses in DC's *Tomahawk*. Cover to issue #84 (Jan.-Feb. 1963) by Bob Brown.

TM & © DC Comics.

in *Spider-Man*. And back then they would just have your name, and then Chicago, Illinois, or San Diego, California. But they wouldn't do the whole address. [Editor's note: Actually, full addresses were listed in the earliest Marvel lettercols. The practice of omitting the mailing address came later.] And there was a fellow in Chicago named Don Glut who scoured the Marvel letters pages for anybody who lived in Chicago. Then he would look them up in the phone book and give them a call and hit them up for a contribution to help pay for the rental fee [to rent] these serials: *Captain Marvel* and *Spy-Smasher* and so on. And he asked me if I would kick in 50 cents or whatever, a dollar. WEIN: *He's still asking me...*

MOENCH: Yeah, he's the biggest cheapskate in the business. [laughter] But he's a great guy. He's also the author of *The Dinosaur Dictionary*, on sale in museum bookshops across the land. He's become quite the expert on paleontology.

Anyway, so he and I started hanging out. [And] when we would hang out we would sometimes spontaneously write things without knowing what we were doing, and then show them to each other. And I always thought mine were way better than his, even though he was like three or four years older. I was, like, 14 or whatever. But one day he told me he sold a story to Warren [Publishing, producer of *Creepy* and other black-and-white horror magazines]. And I just thought, "hey, if he can do it, I can do it." And I was right.



Dear Stan and Steve,

I have no doubts that you will receive a countless number of rave letters dealing with SPIDER-MAN #14, this being one. Although the story did not have an intricate plot, it did present a very good idea which set the stage and started the ball rolling for action, an integral part of a comic book. B. J. Cosmos mentions getting a Beatle to play the roll of Spider-Man. I feel that a Beatle would have been better in the role of the Hulk. Examine the two mops which each contends to be hair and you'll get the idea. Now, action: This of course is the bright spot of the story. My favorites in action panels are: p. 5, panel 1; p. 15, panel 3; panel 5 of same page; and p. 17, panel 3. I also enjoyed p. 20, panel 6 but I always get a kick out of these sort of panels. Who the heck are the kooks who knock Mr. Ditko?? As far as I'm concerned, Steve's the best pencil and ink pusher you've got. Character development: All I'll say is "Great, as usual!" Those of us who do read the letters column have witnessed a fan by the name of Paul Gambaccini write a series of letters that were downright insulting in the earlier issues and that slowly softened up (as your mags improved) until recently he said simply, "All right, you've got me", meaning of course, over your "competitors". This has been and is being echoed all over fandom. Many saw the light sooner than Paul, a few after him, and sadly, there are some that still haven't seen the light of Marvel brilliance that clearly marks you from the rest.

Douglas Moench, 3838 N. Claremont
Chicago, Ill.

It's lucky we're so extremely modest or your praise might go to our pointy little heads! Many thanks, Doug!

WORKING FOR WARREN

WEIN: *How long were you at Warren for?*

MOENCH: Up until Marv [Wolfman] talked me into going to Marvel. Let's see, Warren was maybe '69 or '70, something like that. And then Marv and Roy Thomas called me [to Marvel] in '72, I guess. So I was only there for two years. It seemed like forever.

WEIN: *Well, working for [Jim] Warren could seem like forever.*

MOENCH: Yeah well, he was quite a piece of work. For a while, [Warren] bought everything I wrote, especially in the beginning when it was [editor] Archie Goodwin who bought it. Then there was this guy, his name was John Cochran, and apparently the number of writers had multiplied and he [as editor] could no longer buy everything. So he would, every once in a while, turn one down.

Then there was this outfit called Skywald. They had [magazines titled] *Nightmare* and *Psycho* ... and I figured, "Well, if Warren can't use this then I'll send it to them."

"The Light of Marvel Brilliance"

Doug Moench's letter in *Amazing Spider-Man* #17 (Oct. 1964) earned him a letter from fandom's Don Glut.

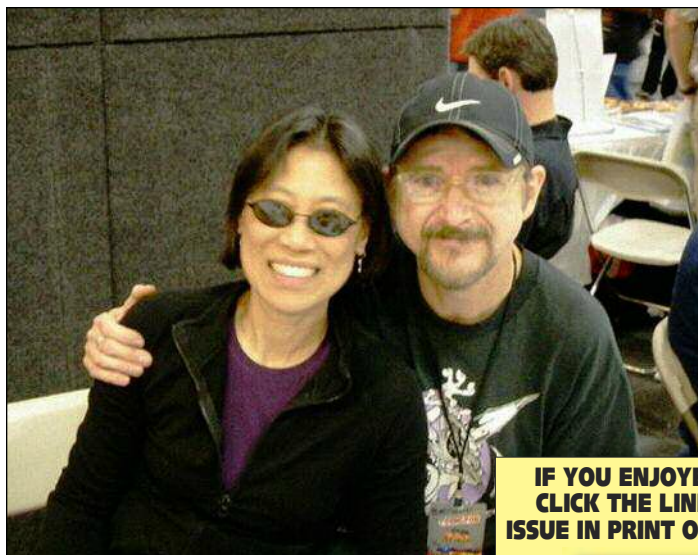
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THE LETTERERS COLUMN:

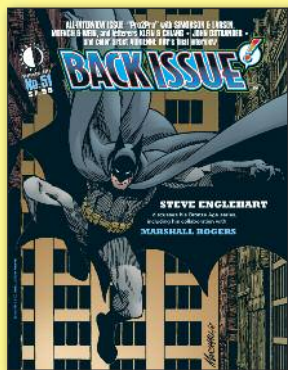
GOING PRO2PRO WITH JANICE CHIANG AND TODD KLEIN

TWO LEGENDS OF THE FIELD REFLECT ON THEIR LONG CAREERS AND TALK ABOUT SURVIVING PROFESSIONALLY IN THE DIGITAL AGE.

by Michael Aushenker



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BACK ISSUE #51

(NOW WITH 16 COLOR PAGES!) "All-Interview Issue"! Part 2 of an exclusive STEVE ENGLEHART interview (continued from ALTER EGO #103)! "Pro2Pro" interviews between SIMONSON & LARSEN, MOENCH & WEIN, and comics letterers KLEIN & CHIANG. Plus JOHN OSTRANDER, MICHAEL USLAN, and longtime DC color artist ADRIENNE ROY! Cover by Englehart collaborator MARSHALL ROGERS!

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Call them the underdogs of the industry. Lettered talented artists, but unlike pencilers or inkers, they bask in the glory of recognition and they are often at their best when they do not stand out (if you're noticing lettering too much, it slows you down from progressing through the story).

Fifty-one issues in, it's never too late to introduce The following is a first for BACK ISSUE: a roundtable discussion in which two of the industry's best and most prolific lettering veterans discuss their craft, their profession, and their memories.

A legend among letterers, Janice Chiang is a familiar name to any avid comics reader during the 1970s. She broke into comics in the mid-1970s, when she was freelancing for Marvel Comics, and she continues to work to this day. (And contrary to an erroneous credit on her Wikipedia profile, she did not do any work as a colorist. For 25 years, Chiang has lived in Woodstock, New York, with her husband, Danny Louie. Their son, Calvin, is something of a legacy, working in comics for Marvel Publishing in Los Angeles.

The award-winning Todd Klein has lettered some of the seminal cornerstone titles of comic books, including Alan Moore's *Watchmen*, Frank Miller's *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* and *Batman: Year One*, and Neil Gaiman's *Sandman*. He is as active today as ever and has won more awards than any other letterer. Klein resides in New Jersey with his wife, Ellen Smiga-Klein.

(Full disclosure: Klein's interview responses here are a combination of fresh quotes he gave exclusively to BACK ISSUE via email and excerpts from detailed passages he had posted at his blog, kleinletters.com/Blog/, which Todd directed me for certain questions rather than risk repetitive-stress injuries.)

— Michael Aushenker

wrote an interesting

long enough to be
ent on The Omega
year and a half.
e, and a lot of fun,
lettering, and since
the latter."

writing again?

e a look at my blog
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And yet, because of
comics, you probably
laborators!

ed up with Danny
collection named
about cantors who
many projects, so I

know the majority of freelancers by name only. I thought, "Oh, so that's Mike Vosburg! He sounds like a really nice guy." I had met Rich Buckler while waiting in line at the Big Apple Comic Con in October 2009. We had teamed on some books back in 1975, when I was working in the Marvel Bullpen. Rich said he remembered me ... nice to find a living witness of my first staff job in Marvel.

AUSHENKER: Todd, what steps did you take to adjust to the digital revolution in the '90s and make the leap from hand-lettering to digital lettering based on fonts you created by hand?

KLEIN: When I began in the comics business in 1977, all the elements on a page of comics were done by

A BACK ISSUE Exclusive

We extend our deepest gratitude to the talented and wonderful Janice Chiang (left, shown here with cartoonist Bob Camp) for lettering this article's title header. Thank you, Janice! (right) From production artist to letterer, Todd Klein at work at DC Comics, 1978. Photo by Jack Adler. Courtesy of Todd Klein.