

DICK GIORDANO

CHANGING COMICS, ONE DAY AT A TIME



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Green Arrow, Green Lantern
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by Michael Eury

GIORDANO

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introduction

It was his sideburns.

I wish I could say that the first thing I noticed about Dick Giordano was the mastery of his inking line, or his knack for drawing sexy women, or even his editorial run on Aquaman. My appreciation of those and countless other Giordano attributes came later.

The first thing I noticed about Dick Giordano was his really groovy sideburns.

It would be many years before I'd have the pleasure of meeting the legendary Mr. Giordano, but in 1970, at age 12, I saw Neal Adams' penciled portrait of Dick (as well as of himself, Carmine Infantino, and Joe Kubert) in a DC Comics house ad celebrating the Comic Art Convention's "Alley Award" honors presented that year to those talented gentlemen. Dick, who won in the "Best Comic Editor" category for his superlative work on *Teen Titans*, *Aquaman*, *Beware the Creeper*, *The Witching Hour*, and other groundbreaking DC titles, was depicted with monstrous muttonchops by Neal, his friend and partner. Since those sideburns were a fashion rage at the time, I thought that Dick Giordano was about the coolest guy in the universe, and wished that my dad would lose his flattop and grow 'chops like Dick's.

It wasn't long thereafter that I began to notice more than Dick Giordano's hairstyle. This was the period when DC finally started crediting its creative staff, after decades of mostly anonymous stories, and I soon spotted the name "Dick Giordano" in many of my favorite DC titles: as an inker, paired with pencilers Neal Adams on *Batman* and *Green Lantern/Green Arrow*, Irv Novick on *Batman*, and Dick Dillin on *Justice League of America*; and as the solo illustrator of numerous memorable Batman stories, plus Human Target, Green Arrow, and other backups in *Action Comics*. As my tastes matured and I grew to appreciate comics for their artistic value, Giordano became one of my favorites. Through the 1970s and 1980s, Dick Giordano's stature in the comic-book business was unparalleled.

So imagine, when I departed the staff of Comico the Comic Book Company in 1989 to become an associate editor at DC Comics, how exciting it was to work under editorial director Dick Giordano—even though by that time he had shaved the really groovy sideburns. After a year at DC, I received the unique opportunity to work closely with Dick as "assistant to the VP/editorial director," and became friends with one of the most talented and affable figures in the comics business.

Working by his side, I learned his secret: Dick Giordano is a mutant. He was born with the power of unbridled optimism. He's always smiling, and, while he's had a few creative disagreements with folks over the years, just about everyone in the comics business genuinely likes him. This has led to his ability—as an artist, an editor, a teacher, and an editorial administrator—to encourage the best from creators, guiding innovative series including, but by no means limited to, Steve Skeates and Jim Aparo's *Aquaman* and Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons' *Watchmen*.

Some comics folk are known as much for their self-promotion as for their published product, but rarely has Dick Giordano beaten his own drum. His career can, however, be best assessed by his relationships with his collaborators and coworkers, and with the characters to whom he's helped breathe life. By those measures, Dick is one of the industry's giants, and I am privileged to share his life, his achievements, and his recollections with you.

Michael Eury
Lake Oswego, Oregon
April 2003

EXTRA DAILY PLANET EXTRA

DC TAKES TOP HONORS AT COMIC ART CONVENTION!

July 3, 4, 5, 1970 — At the Comic Art Convention, held annually in New York City, four of DC's own came away with the highest honors.



CARMINE INFANTINO was foremost among those honored by PHIL SEITZ, chairman and organizer of the Convention. DC's editorial director was presented with a plaque inscribed: "To Carmine Infantino, who exemplifies the spirit of innovation and inventiveness in the field of comic art." Carmine is no stranger to awards. He was once named Best Comic Book Artist by The National Cartoonists' Society, and has won several Alley Awards.



JOE KUBERT, editor of such mags as OUR ARMY AT WAR and TOMAHAWK, also received a plaque. The inscription reads: "To Joe Kubert, for the cinematic storytelling techniques and the exciting and dramatic style he has brought to the field of comic art." Joe has been drawing comics since he was 16, and produces some of the finest work in the field.



DICK GIORDANO was named Best Comic Editor by the fans this year. The Alley Awards are voted on annually by comics fans, and are presented by The Society of Comic Book Fans and Collectors. A top artist, Dick edits AQUAMAN, TEEN TITANS, HOUSE OF SECRETS, WITCHING HOUR, and several other great DC mags.

DOUBLE HONORS FOR NEAL ADAMS!

Honored by the Convention "for the new perspectives and the dynamic vibrance he has brought to the field of comic art," Neal Adams also won an Alley Award as Best Pencil Artist. No wonder! At the age of 21, Neal was the youngest artist ever to have his own strip, and he is now serving as Vice President of the newly formed Academy of Comic Book Art. He's won acclaim from DC fans for his work on Batman, Green Lantern, Deadman and other features.



Dig Dick's mega-muttonchops!

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GIORDANO

LEARNING
the rules**Illustrator. Inker. Innovator.**

Throughout a career spanning over 50 years, Dick Giordano has made a definitive mark upon the comic-book industry. His many laudable attributes—his love of the comics medium, eagerness to experiment, ability to collaborate, equity toward others, and prodigious professional discipline—were largely shaped during his childhood by his parents.

GIORDANO GENESIS

Richard Joseph Giordano was born on July 20, 1932, at Manhattan's Bellevue Hospital. By his own admission, he was a "honeymoon baby," as his mother and father, who had known each other since childhood, were married in the fall of 1931. Nicknamed by relatives "Dickie" after the comic strip *Dickie Dare*, Dick Giordano, during his formative years, received frequent exposure to the arts.

His mother, Josephine Labruzzi Giordano, known to and loved by all as Pina, at age ten immigrated with Dick's grandmother to the United States from their native Italy. Dick's maternal grandfather chose to stay behind in his beloved homeland. A seamstress by trade, Pina was an amateur illustrator, indelibly imprinting Dick's future career path. "My mother drew quite a bit, and drew very well," he recalls. Some of her illustrations, mostly figure and fashion studies, remain Giordano's most cherished possessions.



(left and above) Pina Giordano's drawings, from the 1920s and 1930s. Courtesy of Dick Giordano.



More of Pina Giordano's extraordinary artwork. Courtesy of Dick Giordano.

She also had a passion for Italian opera. A Saturday afternoon ritual at the Giordano residence was to gather around the radio to listen to operas broadcast live from the Met, with Pina singing along with the heroines. The expressive melodies and dramatic orchestrations of Giacomo Puccini made that composer a household favorite. Young Dickie Giordano's eagerness to draw stories is attributed to the vivid musical narratives of Italian operas.

Graziano "Jack" Giordano, Dick's father, was also no stranger to the creative arts. A clarinetist and tenor saxophonist, he aspired to play full-time. In the early 1930s he bought a taxi license for \$10, and began supporting his family as a New York cabbie while pursuing his musicianship. The Great Depression derailed Jack from his musical path, limiting him to weekend gigs with a local band. His weekly take-home pay as a cabbie averaged \$6, and the family survived on a very strict budget. Early in Dick's life, the economically challenged Giordanos moved from Manhattan's Lower East Side to Queens, from their \$12-a-month apartment to a repossessed large house, sharing expenses with nine other family members.

At age four, Dick Giordano was diagnosed with asthma and a variety of allergies, and was bedridden during much of his early childhood. His medical bills and the financial restraints of the era led his parents to the decision of limiting the family to one child.

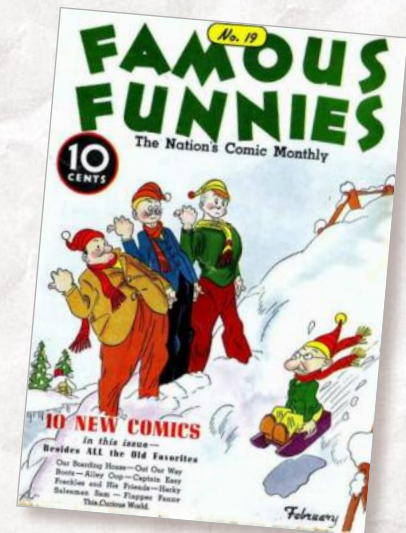
RECYCLING BROWN-PAPER BAGS

With no siblings, "Dickie" was afforded ample individual attention from his parents. His father read the Sunday funnies to him, piquing the lad's imagination. Dick was so enchanted by the newspaper comics that he grew impatient toward the end of each week, in anticipation of next Sunday's installments.

Before long, Giordano was reading autonomously, and soon voraciously. Since his illnesses prohibited his ability to engage in physical activities, there was little for him to do other than seek solace in words and comics. When Dick was seven, Jack Giordano bought for him an issue of *Famous Funnies*, an anthology that collected a month's worth of Sunday newspaper series in a comic-book format. At this point young Dick began to draw, inspired by his mother's artistic fluency, perhaps even being genetically predisposed toward illustration, copying the images from his favorite strips. "The Little King caught my eye because he was drawn so simply. He was my first comics drawing," remembers the artist.

But certainly not his last.

Regularly confined to bed or indoors, he occupied much of his non-class time with drawing. The youngster displayed a remarkable aptitude toward illustration, taking it very seriously, evolving past mimicry into scene composition. Giordano recalls that his first sequential drawing was a battle scene consisting of three layers: planes at top, parachutists in mid-air, and ground combat with soldiers and parachutists who had landed. "It was all in profile—I couldn't draw very well then," he chuckles.



Famous Funnies unlocked the imagination of young "Dickie" Giordano. ©2003 the respective copyright holder.

His mother encouraged his budding talent. With the scarcity of paper during the Depression, Pina Giordano cut panels from used brown-paper shopping bags to create drawing tablets for her son.

THOSE FRIGHTENING RED LIPS!

Famous Funnies introduced Dick Giordano to another world: comic books.

It was now the late 1930s, and super-heroes began to dominate the newsstands. “Dickie” was there, enthralled by their colorful adventures.

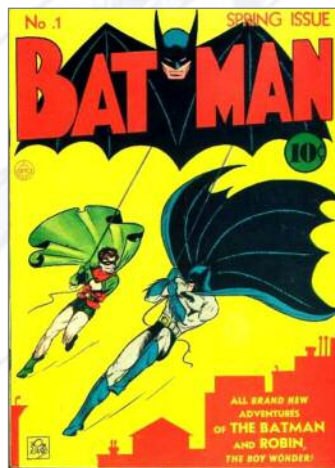
In young Giordano’s mind, one character stood out above the rest: Batman. He recognized that Batman’s heroics stemmed from bravery, motivation, and prowess, not from super-powers, and found this admirable. It was actually the Joker, however, that initially attracted his attention to Batman. During the villain’s first appearance in *Batman* #1, Dick confesses that “with his white skin and red lips, the Joker scared the hell out of me.”

Or at least shocked him into a vocation: “Batman was the character that made me think seriously about finding a way to make comics my life’s work.”

Other comics he favored during his youth include *Blackhawk*, *Captain America*—“although the character became passé when the war ended,” he asides—and *World’s Finest Comics*, a bargain “because it had twice as many pages for only a nickel more.” Giordano

often listened to radio programs while reading comic books, citing *The Lone Ranger*, *Jack Armstrong*, *the All-American Boy*, and *Inner Sanctum* as personal favorites.

Inspired by comic-strip and comic-book art, young Dick Giordano continued to draw. “My father bought me a drawing board and a lamp,” Dick explains, “which was cramped into my claustrophobic 2' x 4' bedroom in our very small apartment.” But in that humble environment he rigorously practiced his sketching, with “all of the encouragement I needed from my parents,” smiles Giordano. “I never had a discouraging word.”



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“Batman was the character that made me think seriously about finding a way to make comics my life’s work.”

SCHOOL OF INDUSTRIAL ARTS

Another early supporter of Giordano’s was his eighth grade art teacher, Mrs. Helle, whom he fondly recalls as a “gray-haired, little old lady with glasses.” Recognizing his developing skill, Mrs. Helle recommended that Dick enroll in New York City’s School of Industrial Arts, a vocational high school whose curricula funneled the slant of different subjects into the context of the student’s major.

“New York had—still does, for that matter—a tremendous system for their high schools,” Giordano elucidates. The School of Industrial Arts—which later became known as the School of Art & Design—is widely recognized in comics and cartooning circles as a premier training ground, its alumni including Neal Adams, Angelo Torres, the late Joe Orlando, and Anthony Benedetto (who ultimately abandoned his drawing career to become a singer—Tony Bennett).

Its sister institution, the School of Performing Arts, was popularized in the 1970s and 1980s as the setting for the movie *Fame* and its TV spinoff.

In 1946, at age 14, Dick Giordano began his studies at the School of Industrial Arts, determined to hone his craft and become a professional comics artist. But his advisors were vehemently opposed and talked him out of taking the cartooning class. They warned, “you’ll never make a living at that,” laughs Dick. So Giordano majored in illustration and advertising art, but continued to draw comics under the cloak of night.

Each week, teen-age Dick would spend hours after class poring over comics at Mr. Brown’s, a Bronx mom & pop’s newsstand/lunch counter. He became such a regular fixture that he made a lasting impression upon the staff there. Giordano recollects an experience he calls “mind-boggling”: “Flash forward 35 years—I was going to work at DC, and had accidentally left a package of artwork behind on the train. When I went back to get it, I encountered an older gentleman working with clean-up crew who asked, ‘Didn’t you used to buy comics at Mr. Brown’s years ago?’ This was the same guy who worked the newsstand counter!” Dick responded to the gentleman, “I can’t believe you remembered me!”

The robust wonderland of comic books was in marked contrast to the puritanical atmosphere of the School of Industrial Arts, whose no-nonsense policies were evidenced by its rigid shirt-and-tie, sweater-or-jacket dress code. Giordano remembers a particularly embarrassing but valuable experience involving Stanley Rose—a diminutive,



One of Giordano's earliest covers appeared on *Space Adventures* #3 in November 1952. Courtesy of Mike Ambrose. ©2003 the respective copyright holder.

dreams. In the early 1930s "John met and fell in love with a woman," explains Giordano, "who said to him that she had to buy sheet music to get the lyrics for her favorite songs," prompting Santangelo to embark upon a publishing venture. Ignorant of copyright laws, he printed and sold inexpensively produced and blatantly unauthorized magazines that pirated song lyrics. Santangelo was convicted of copyright infringement and spent a year in confinement, where he met and partnered with disbarred attorney Edward Levy, also behind bars. Upon their release the pair formed Charlton Publishing, the name supposedly derived from their young sons, both of whom were named Charles (although an alternate theory is that their first office was on Charles Street). In 1945 the company, headquartered in Derby, Connecticut, launched the magazine *Hit Parader*, which legally printed song lyrics, with Levy procuring the publication rights. *Hit Parader* was such a sensation, it inspired

additional Charlton periodicals including *Song Hits*, *Country Song Round-Up*, and *Rock & Soul*.

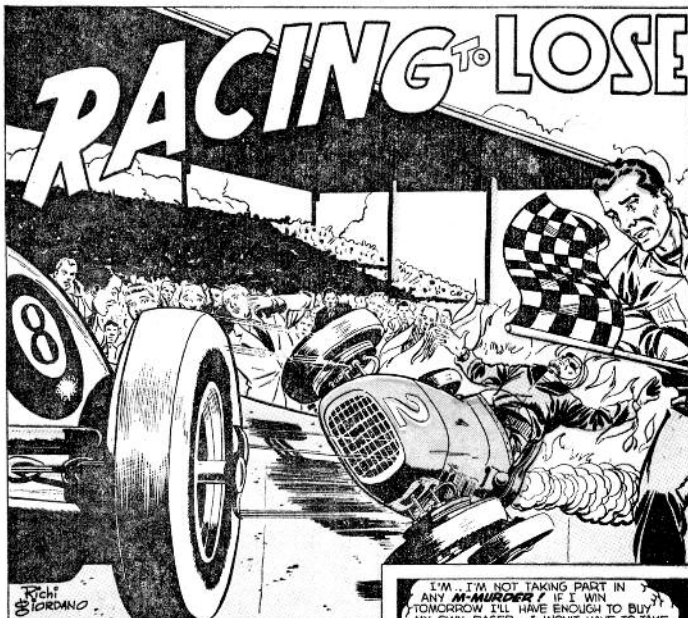
Virtually everyone who knew Santangelo remembers him as a shrewd and persuasive businessman who always looked for ways to save a buck. "He was a great gambler, a numbers man," according to Giordano. "If he wanted to buy a car priced at six thousand, he'd say, 'I've got five thousand in my pocket'—and they'd take it!" This penny-pinching philosophy hampered the creative potential and quality of Charlton's magazines, but afforded the company its most unique characteristic: under its official name of the Capital Distributing Company, Charlton's editorial, production, distribution, and printing wings were all housed under one roof at a seven-and-one-half-acre plant. For a while, the company even owned its own paper mill.

Giordano illustrated this inside-front-cover filler from Space Adventures #4, January 1953, noteworthy as a showcase for Charlton Comics' less-than-stellar production values: paper clips that fell onto the negative are clearly visible in the middle panels. Courtesy of Mike Ambrose. ©2003 the respective copyright holder.



HOT RODS & RACING CARS

SEVENTEEN YEAR OLD MICKY LANE WANTED TO MAKE ENOUGH MONEY TO BUY HIS OWN MIDGET RACER, SO HE PASSED HIMSELF OFF AS BEING TWENTY-ONE TO GAMBLER MACK GARDNER. UNDER GARDNER'S SPONSORSHIP AND INSTRUCTIONS, MICKY COMPETED IN THE WEEK-END RACES ... BUT IT WASN'T WHAT HE'D DREAMED ABOUT, BECAUSE HE WAS...



OKAY, SO THE GUY MISJUDGED AND WAS KILLED... IT COULD HAPPEN IN ANY RACE. YOUR ORDERS WERE TO KNOCK THE FAVORITE OUT OF THE RUNNING, NOT *WIN* THE RACE! REMEMBER ... WE DON'T WANT TO BE PUT UNDER SUSPICION!



Jack Davis, and Alex Raymond are apparent. While his inking style was still two decades from the refinement that ultimately made him a comics master, some hints of his future greatness would occasionally appear, mainly through expertly placed blacks that offered stark contrast.

Giordano recalls this period of his life with great fondness. He was establishing himself as a professional artist by day, and enjoying life after hours, "doing whatever it is 20-something-year-old guys do," he grins. Inspired by illustrating cars in Charlton's hot rod titles, Dick developed an appreciation of automobiles, rendering them on the comics page and driving them in real life. He bought for himself a 1953 Dodge, and with the help of a few friends customized it into a dual-exhausted noisemaker, worthy of the pages of *Hot Rods and Racing Cars*. Life was good for the young artist, and his natural friendliness made him well liked among peers.

Al Fago was impressed with the young artist, as well.

The middle-aged editor had two daughters roughly Dick's

HOT RODS & RACING CARS

PROBLEM: IN THE PICTURE BELOW, FIND THE MAN WHOSE WIFE WAS JUST INVESTED HIS LAST HARD-EARNED PENNY ON A DOWN PAYMENT FOR A...

CAD-ALLARD



In 1945 Charlton also started its comics division with *Zoo Funnies*, but released very few titles through that decade.

Occasionally an original concept like *Atomic Mouse* and *Nature Boy*—or a brazen attempt to push the boundaries of graphic violence, such as *The Thing!*—would surface from among the mundane anthologies, but as a

The artist signed his work "Richi" Giordano in many of his earliest published stories, like these from June 1953's Hot Rods and Racing Cars #10. Courtesy of Mike Ambrose.

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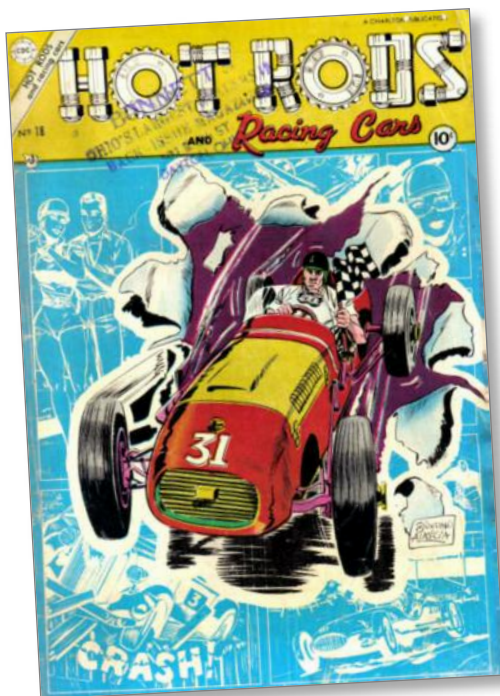
rule Charlton cared very little about its comic books.

Dick Giordano cared, however, taking his work seriously. During this freelance stint with Charlton, which lasted from 1952–1955, young "Richi" Giordano (as he

often signed his work) began a long journey of

artistic maturation. His efforts were, like those of so many other illustrators, influenced by his favorite artist du jour—examine Giordano's covers and pages during his professional infancy and homages to Wally Wood,

Richi Giordano



Dick Giordano's talent expanded as the comics market contracted in the mid-1950s. The hot wheels on this September 1954 cover of Hot Rods and Racing Cars #18 were penciled by Giordano and inked by Charlton mainstay Vince Alascia. Courtesy of Mike Ambrose. ©2003 the respective copyright holder.

With Charlton's unexpected restructuring, Dick Giordano's professional dilemma mirrored the title of this story he illustrated: "Moment of Decision." From Strange Suspense Stories #20. Courtesy of Mike Ambrose. ©2003 the respective copyright holder.

STRANGE SUSPENSE STORIES



On a few occasions, Giordano also freelanced for Charles Biro, writer/artist for comics publisher Lev Gleason, whose *Boy Comics*, *Crime Does Not Pay*, and *Daredevil* titles had, prior to the Code, pushed the limits of graphic depiction of gore. The belligerent Biro was extremely difficult to work for, Dick claims, while recalling his illustration of a *Crimebuster* adventure for *Boy Comics*: in the story, Giordano consistently drew one of several gunmen as left-handed, for variety's sake, but was ordered by Biro to redraw him as right-handed solely because the script did not specify that the gunman was a southpaw. But art corrections and arbitrary revisions still paid the bills, and he and Marie planned an April 1955 wedding.

In March 1955 the Bronx Contingent was caught blindsided when Charlton owner John Santangelo unexpectedly announced a dramatic plan to restructure his company: he offered the freelancers continued employment, but only by their joining the staff in Derby, with the caveat of a page-rate reduction from \$20 to \$13 per page. "He guaranteed all the work we could do, weekly pay-checks, and mentioned a profit-share plan and hospitalization," recalls Giordano. This proclamation sent shockwaves through the group. "Most of the Bronx Contingent bolted," Dick remarks. Faced with the reality of a pay cut and a 130-mile round trip daily commute, Giordano received pressure from his parents to postpone his wedding "because it looked like it was going to be harder for me to make a living, or certainly not the kind of living I was making before." His fiancée had just accepted a position at County Trust Bank in Westchester County, fronting its new "Special Checking" department, and had a promising career in banking. According to Dick, "we had more than enough to get by," making Charlton's offer more palatable. Still, he hesitated, reluctant to commit to exclusivity and to forego his freelancing freedom, but since the playing field had dramatically diminished and since "my samples weren't good enough for the majors," he consented, concluding his first foray into freelancing and becoming a Charlton staff artist. Before he could begin his new job, there was one piece of unfinished business....

(right) "Wholesome" material like Western shoot-'em-ups largely avoided the scrutiny of the comics witch hunt forged by Wertham's Seduction of the Innocent. Giordano penciled and Vince Alascia inked this cover to October 1954's Cowboy Western Comics #51. Courtesy of Mike Ambrose. ©2003 the respective copyright holder.



From left to right: Newlyweds Mr. and Mrs. Richard Giordano, and Pina and Jack Giordano, the groom's parents. Photo courtesy of Dick Giordano.

Honeymoon-bound newlyweds. Photo courtesy of Dick Giordano.

Dick Giordano and Marie Trapani were married on April 17, 1955. While on their one-week honeymoon in Miami Beach, Florida, the newlyweds received an unexpected wedding gift from Dick's new boss: John Santangelo offered to let the couple stay for free for two extra weeks at a property he owned in Florida. The ecstatic Giordanos appreciatively accepted Santangelo's offer. With Santangelo's reputation of manipulative persuasion, however, one wonders if this was more a ploy to ensure Dick's loyalty than a gift of generosity.

Upon their return to their new Bronx apartment in early May, Marie Giordano started her new position, and Dick began what would become a lengthy stay at Charlton Comics.



GIORDANO

BREAKING
the rules

“A worthy editor has one primary directive: to make the creative people look good.”

Dennis O’Neil,

The DC Comics Guide to Writing Comics

Dick and Marie Giordano had their first child, Lisa, in 1956. During the latter months of her pregnancy, Marie was ousted from her job, since employers in the 1950s did not offer prenatal benefits or leaves of absence, forcing the young family onto an even stricter budget. Dick was tiring of the daily commute, and in early 1957 relocated his family from the Bronx to a less expensive apartment in Derby, Connecticut, less than ten minutes from the Charlton offices.

Now in his second year in the Charlton bullpen, Giordano continued to improve his artistic skills and, to some degree, his speed on covers and short stories for newer series like *Davy Crockett* and *Badge of Justice*, while maintaining his contributions to *Racket Squad in Action* and *Space Adventures*. He found the work unchallenging, and

laments that “I was never really fast enough to make a good living.” For his creative advancement and for the financial stability of his family, Dick Giordano needed a change.

GIORDANO’S STRIP SEARCH

Even though he was earning a living as a comic-book artist, Giordano aspired to draw a newspaper comic strip, a goal fomented during his childhood from his love of *Famous Funnies* and from his appreciation for Ray Gotto’s 1945–1958 strip *Ozark Ike*, which he describes as “Li’l Abner as an athlete.” To that end, he developed two prospective comic strips.

The first was *The Life and Loves of Lisa St. Clair*, starring a fun-loving playgirl (named after his newborn daughter) beneath whose frivolous exterior lurked unwavering business acumen. Remembered by the creator as “Grace Kelly meets James Bond,” Lisa romanced men, gambled, and hopped around the world. Inheriting numerous businesses when her industrialist father passed away, Lisa

Badge of Justice #22, just one of many covers Giordano contributed to Charlton titles. Courtesy of Mike Ambrose. ©2003 the respective copyright holder.



preferred jet-setting to corporate board rooms and harbored, says Giordano, “a father complex,” a paternal specter looming over her. Regarding the strip’s title, the focus was on “more of her loves than her lives, more of her romances.”

Giordano storyboarded almost six months of *The Life and Loves of Lisa St. Clair* continuity, but located no syndicator interest. The concept eventually found a publishing home, however: during his late-1960s editorial stint at DC Comics, while editing the romance title *Young Love*, Dick shared the storyboards with writer Jack Miller, who loved the strip and signed on to script it. Veteran romance artist Scott Pike (known among Silver Age super-hero fans as the creator of Dolphin in *Showcase* #79, an issue edited by...Dick Giordano) illustrated the series, converting Giordano’s storyboards into comic-book format, and it ran for several issues of *Young Love*, beginning with issue #68.

Dick’s second stab at newspaper syndication was *Lili Galop*, a circus strip pitched to him by writer Frank Braden,

“I’ve always wanted to have female characters as my protagonists, not only because they are sexy, but because I believe that women have a better role in the world.”

who was an employee of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus. “I took it because it had a female lead,” he admits. After illustrating several weeks of continuity Giordano realized that “the circus, not the characters, had become star of strip and it went nowhere. Still, I had some fun with it.”

It’s no coincidence that both of Giordano’s prospective comic strips starred female leads. “My mother taught me, in subtle ways, about the superiority of women,” he reveals. “I’ve always wanted to have female characters as my protagonists, not only because they’re sexy, but because I believe that women have a better role in the world. Men are more emotional than women; women learn to control their emotions, but men hold them in, and therefore, they’re more emotional because they won’t let them out—they won’t cry, they won’t yell, they won’t do anything but hit.”

Dick had yet another idea for a strip that never made it to the drawing board. Fondly recalling the 1953–1957 television series *Omnibus*, hosted by Alistair Cooke, Giordano wanted to use *Omnibus*—“which means ‘something for everyone’”—as a strip title, in a series about a writer who imagined himself in a boundless variety of roles—“as a tennis player, a mountain climber, etc.” Knowing Giordano, if *Omnibus* had made it to paper, that writer probably would have been a woman.

After the failure of finding a syndication home for *Lili Galop*, Giordano reassessed his goal of becoming a comic-strip illustrator. He found inspiration from the artistic renaissance unfolding in comic books of the 1950s, particularly in EC Comics’ titles, and was particularly impressed with the work of EC luminaries Wally Wood and Al Williamson: “If comic books can be that good,” surmised Giordano, “maybe I should think more seriously about them.” Thus, Dick Giordano chose the world of comic books as his home.

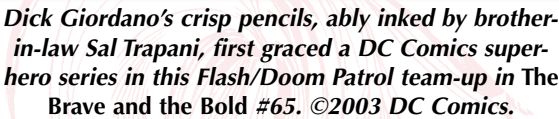
CHANGES AT CHARLTON

Al Fago, however, was about to leave that home. Embroiled in a labor dispute with John Santangelo, Fago resigned from Charlton and started his own line of magazines. “Unfortunately, he lost money,” recalls Giordano, “then he opened a small typesetting and photostatting business that he ran until time of this death.”

Colorist Pat Masulli was appointed by Santangelo to replace Al Fago as the managing editor of Charlton’s comics division. Recognizing Giordano’s artistic and production capacity, Masulli hired Dick as his assistant and put him on salary, eliminating his need to churn out pages for pay. Dick jokes that he got this promotion “partially because Pat was interested in my welfare, and partially because he thought, ‘this guy’s dangerous because he knows as much as I do and could take over the job.’”

A year into his position under Masulli, Giordano grew disenchanted after several disagreements over editorial content and voiced his desire to leave. Wanting to keep Dick in the Charlton stable, Masulli offered him what Giordano calls “a sweetheart deal I couldn’t turn down,” a freelance commitment to “package books for Charlton under several *noms de plume*.” His payments were veiled behind the pseudonyms since “John Santangelo didn’t like seeing any one person making a lot of money.” From his downtown Derby studio, Giordano assembled a legion of pencilers from New York including Jack Abel, Pete Morisi, and Don Sherwood. Later, after the studio relocated to Ansonia, writer Joe Gill and letterer Jon D’Agostino came on board from Charlton’s staff. Abetted by his assistant Frank McLaughlin, Dick was inking 20–30 pages a week, earning his inking rate plus doling out a percentage for recruiting the pencilers. When a Charlton bookkeeper inadvertently discovered that Dick was working under aliases, “they held up my checks for a while until they determined that I wasn’t doing anything illegal.”

(right) Laaaa-dies and gentlemen, preee-senting, for the first time anywhere, Lily Galop, the previously unpublished newspaper strip, lushly rendered by Dick Giordano and written by Frank Braden. Courtesy of Dick Giordano. ©2003 Frank Braden and Dick Giordano.



In 1963, the year Giordano's son Richard was born, Dick's brother-in-law Sal Trapani returned to Connecticut after having worked in Hollywood on the animated TV series *Clutch Cargo* and *Space Angel*. "He had lost contact with the comic publishers," Giordano recalls, "and asked me to draw pencil samples which he inked and took around to them. Our deal was, he'd do all the leg-work, and as his silent partner, I'd get half the page rate. Sal got us Dell, DC, and ACG. I was paid but uncredited...which was fine. Dick's uncredited efforts saw print in several issues of *Movie Classic* comics versions of *Beach Blanket Bingo*, *Dr. Who and the Daleks*, and *The Bulge*) and in TV-inspired titles *Camp Runamuck*, *Get Smart*, *Rock High*, and *Hogan's Heroes*. "I even ghost-penciled a chapter of a comic for Joe Sinnott," he recalls, that comic being Dell's *The Beatles* #1 published in September 1964. "I also drew covers and penciled interiors of *Kla*, a super-hero created by Joe Gill, myself, and Sal Trapani." He did his first work for DC Comics during this period: a Flash/Doom Patrol comic, *The Brave and the Bold* #65.

Giordano found ample work in the 1960s drawing stories and covers for Charlton's and DC's burgeoning lines of romance comics. This genre, launched in 1947 by Joe Simon and Jack Kirby in *Young Romance* #1 (originally published by Prize Comics but later acquired by DC), was, by that very cover's banner under its logo, "designed for the more adult readers of comics." While the "adult" claim is

debatable because of their central characters—immature, self-indulgent young women whining through 6–8 pages until finding true love by story’s end—romance comics were targeted toward young girls and became an industry staple through the 1950s, enjoying an explosion of popularity in the 1960s until finally breathing their last gasp in the mid-1970s.

By the mid-1960s Giordano’s illustration style had matured to a stage that fans would recognize today. After years of cutting his teeth on western, crime, sci-fi, and hot rod tales, and from his early training in illustration and advertising art, Dick’s clean, realistic rendering and concise storytelling—plus his finesse for drawing beautiful women—made him perfect for romance comics. The artist, however, recalls that he originally found these stories a challenge:

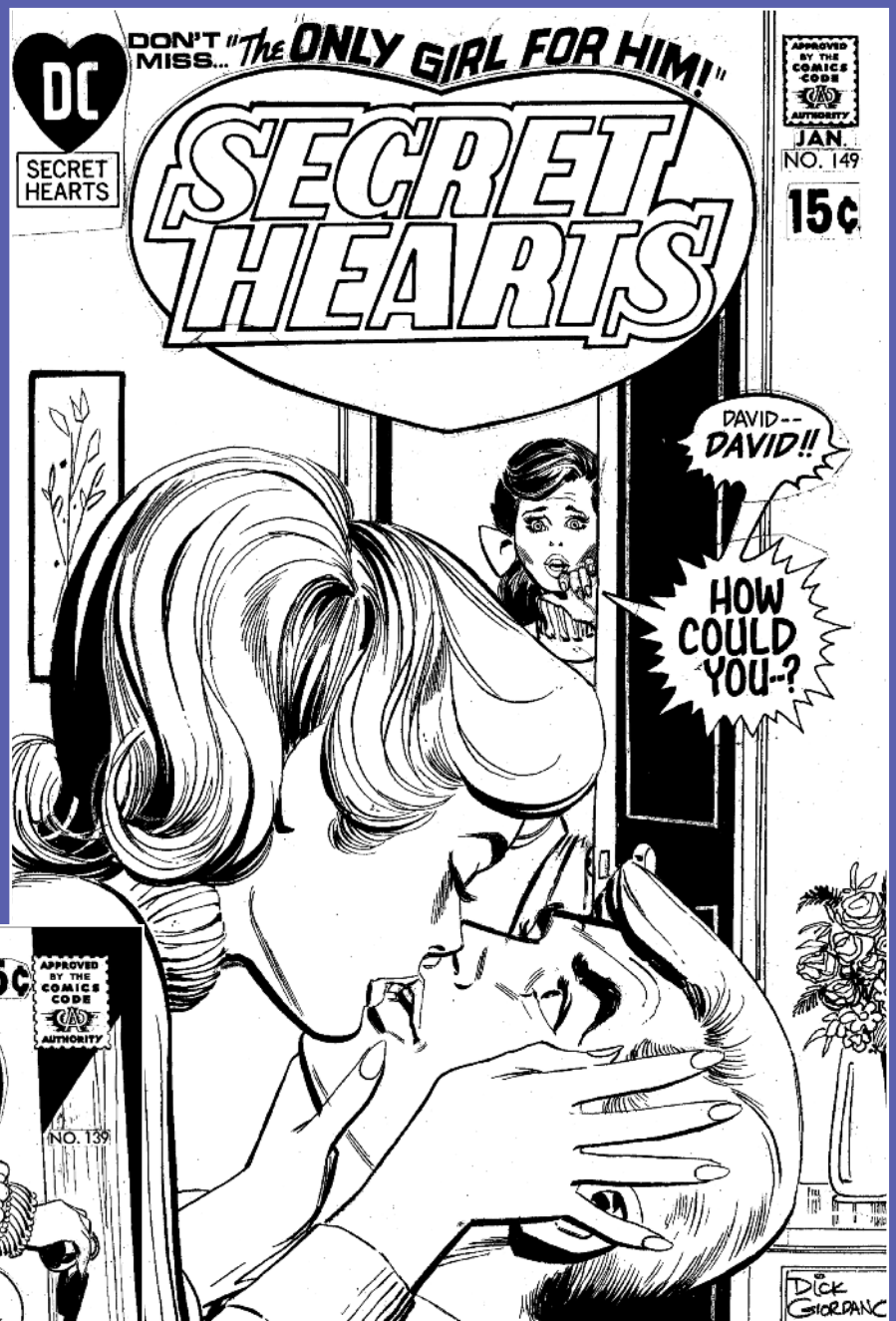
“The reason they’re harder is that they’re emotionally based,” Giordano explains in a 2001 interview in *Last Kiss* #2. “The subtle hand movements and body language are very hard to do from memory, so photo reference was something I used quite a bit.” Dick remembers taking extensive series of photographs of friends to use as models in his romance-comic work.

John Lustig recruited gigolo Giordano to illustrate an all-new romance parody for Last Kiss #2.
©2003 John Lustig.



LOVE, Giordano Style

From the 1950s through the early 1970s, Dick Giordano artwork was as common in Charlton and DC romance comics as were tears on a pillow. The artist's clean, realistic rendering and concise storytelling—plus his finesse for drawing beautiful women—made him perfect for this genre.



(above) Open the door for your...cheating boyfriend?! Another Giordano classic from 1971. Courtesy of Terry Austin. ©2003 DC Comics.

(left) A dozen years before the promo poster for the James Bond film *For Your Eyes Only* used a woman's legs to frame a background image, Giordano effectively employed the technique for this 1969 cover. Nobody does it better than Dick! Courtesy of Terry Austin. ©2003 DC Comics.

comics line, and brought two possibilities to Dick: the animated version of *Abbott & Costello* and a brand-new ABC-TV sitcom called *The Flying Nun*. Convinced that *Abbott & Costello* would make a better comic book, Giordano selected that series (although discovering soon thereafter that *The Flying Nun* would score high in the ratings) and offered it to new discovery Skeates, "one of the funniest people in the world." Skeates storyboarded his A&C scripts, so riotous they left the editor "rolling on the floor." Giordano regrets that the illustrator he assigned to the project, "competent humor artist" Henry Scarpelli, provided an interpretation that wasn't as funny as Skeates' storyboards. But on the merit of that early work, Skeates soon found regular assignments from Dick on the horror anthology *The Many Ghosts of Doctor Graves* and on other Charlton features.

Giordano recruited the multitalented Pat Boyette, a radio and television announcer by trade, after uncovering his art samples and correspondence in a pile of Pat Masulli's unanswered mail. The editor was in a deadline pinch on a war series and, intrigued by Boyette's quirky rendering style, gave the neophyte artist a chance. Soon, Pat Boyette was a Charlton regular, while maintaining his broadcasting career and indulging yet another sideline as a writer/director/producer of B-movies (*The Weird Ones*, *Dungeons of Horror*, *No Man's Land*, and *The Girls from Thunder Strip*). Dick recalls, "Pat had this deep, wonderful voice. He really enjoyed comics, even though they paid less than his other work."

Jim Aparo caught wind of Giordano's openness to new talent and timidly showed his wares to the editor in 1966. Dick recognized Aparo's talent and assigned him a backup story. Before long, Jim Aparo emerged as one of Charlton's premier artists, and ultimately jumped ship to DC Comics where he became renowned for his Batman and Aquaman work.

17 BOOKS A MONTH!

Giordano edited Charlton's entire line of 34 bimonthly titles, without the support of an assistant. "Can you imagine that I was editing 17 books a month?" he comments. "When I think of that now, I can't believe it." He acknowledges that his role with many of the series was as traffic manager, merely making assignments and shepherding pages through production, but he remained in "a state of constant motion," even laying out the covers for all the books. "I was young enough to handle stress," says Dick, "although at the time I didn't look at that as stress." In retrospect, Giordano chuckles, "I gotta tell you, that was a job and a half."



From a comics con circa 1966–1967, Dennis O'Neil, Steve Skeates, and Dick Giordano light up a Charlton panel.

Jim Aparo on GIORDANO

Dick Giordano? What can I say about Dick Giordano? Plenty!

Dick got me started in the comic book business in 1966 when he made an appointment for me to see him in his office at Charlton Comics in Derby, Connecticut.

He observed the samples of comic pages that I created and was very interested. Out of his desk drawer came a seven-page script that he offered to me to illustrate.

I was quite pleased. I accepted the script with thanks and headed home. After I drew the first page I decided to make the trip back to Charlton to seek his approval. I was thrilled, I had broken into the comic-book field.

The script I drew was "The Wild Life and Adventures of Miss Bikini Luv," which appeared in *Go-Go Comics* #5, February 1967.

As time moved on, Dick was offered editorship at DC Comics. He asked if I, as well as others, was interested in following. Were we? You bet we were!

Aquaman was the book they wanted me to illustrate. Other scripts also followed. Then *the big one*: **The Brave and the Bold** with Batman and other DC stars.

Dick, it all started with you and Charlton Comics. I can't thank you enough. It's been great!

Jim Aparo
January 2003

Giordano developed a trio of methods to avoid succumbing to the pressures of his burdensome workload. His most cherished diversion was his family. Dick's adherence to a stringent schedule helped him separate the demanding components of his life, affording each its due time. Punctually clocking out each day at five, he'd promptly return home to spend time with his wife and his children. Dick and Marie Giordano set a positive example of an affectionate relationship: "My kids grew up watching me give my wife a big hug and a kiss, and a loving swat on the butt. We were always kissing and hugging and holding hands." When disciplining their children, Marie and Dick "would teach lessons by example, showing or telling them *why* they shouldn't do something rather than just saying, 'Do as I say.'"

Secondly, Giordano learned that leaving the office for his lunch hour helped alleviate the stress of each day. He has maintained this pattern for decades, even when working from a home studio, and is stymied by his anxiety-ridden colleagues intent at eating lunch at their desks: "I don't understand why more people don't understand that you've got to get away from things."

Dick discovered his third pressure release shortly into his editorial stint: "That's when I started drinking Rob Roys," he smiles, referencing the libation that has become his trademark to anyone who's ever had the pleasure of dining with him. Giordano acquired a taste for Sweet Rob Roys during executive lunches with Pat Masulli, and to this day continues to enjoy the drink as his relaxant of choice.

ACTION HEROES

While the Sweet Rob Roy may have been Dick Giordano's signature drink, the Action Heroes became his signature project at Charlton.

Prior to Giordano's return to staff, John Santangelo, noting the growing popularity of superheroes with DC's Silver Age relaunchings and with the emergence of Marvel Comics, mandated to Pat Masulli that Charlton milk this trend. Only a handful of efforts were initially produced under Masulli's watch, the first two of which listed below, coincidentally, featured artwork by then-freelancer Dick Giordano: a short-lived *Blue Beetle*

ROB ROY RECIPE

2 parts Scotch whiskey
1 part Italian Vermouth
1 dash of bitters

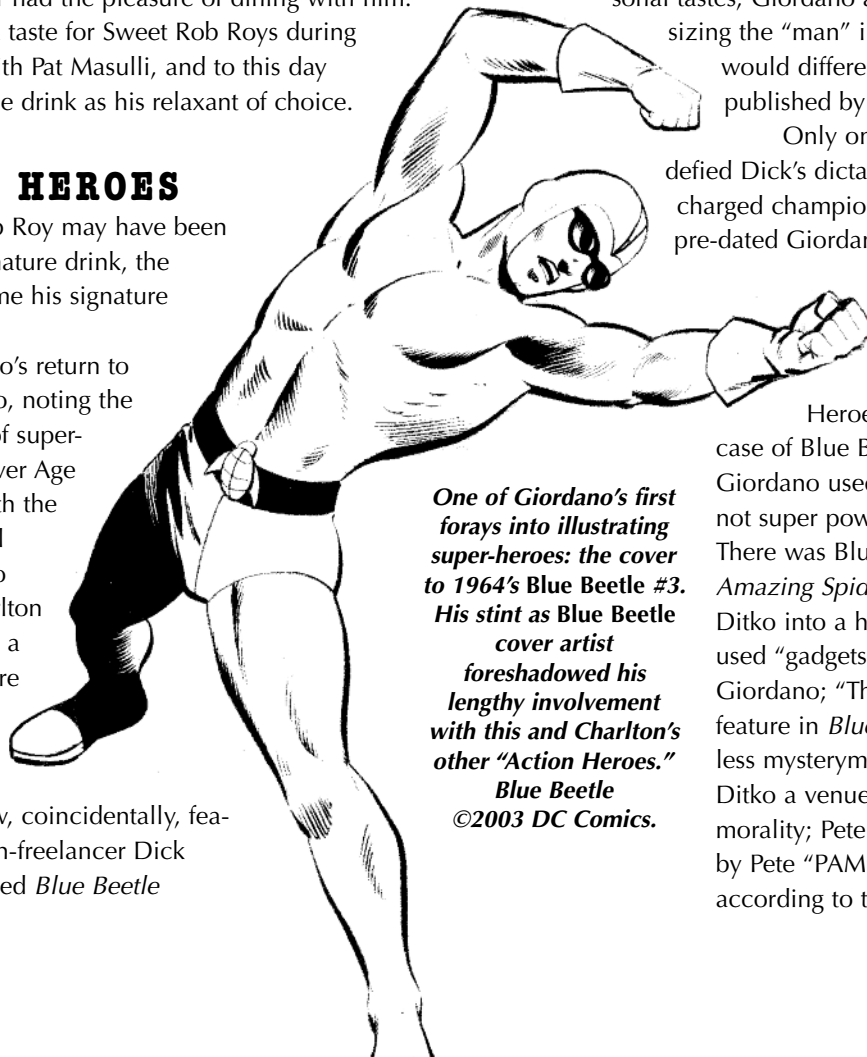
series in 1964; five issues of *Sarge Steel*; Son of Vulcan, a hybrid of the Mighty Thor and the original Captain Marvel, in *Mysteries of Unexplored Worlds*; and Steve Ditko's *Captain Atom*. There was no direction, no ambition, just random product.

Editor Giordano had a vision: heroes without powers. Action heroes.

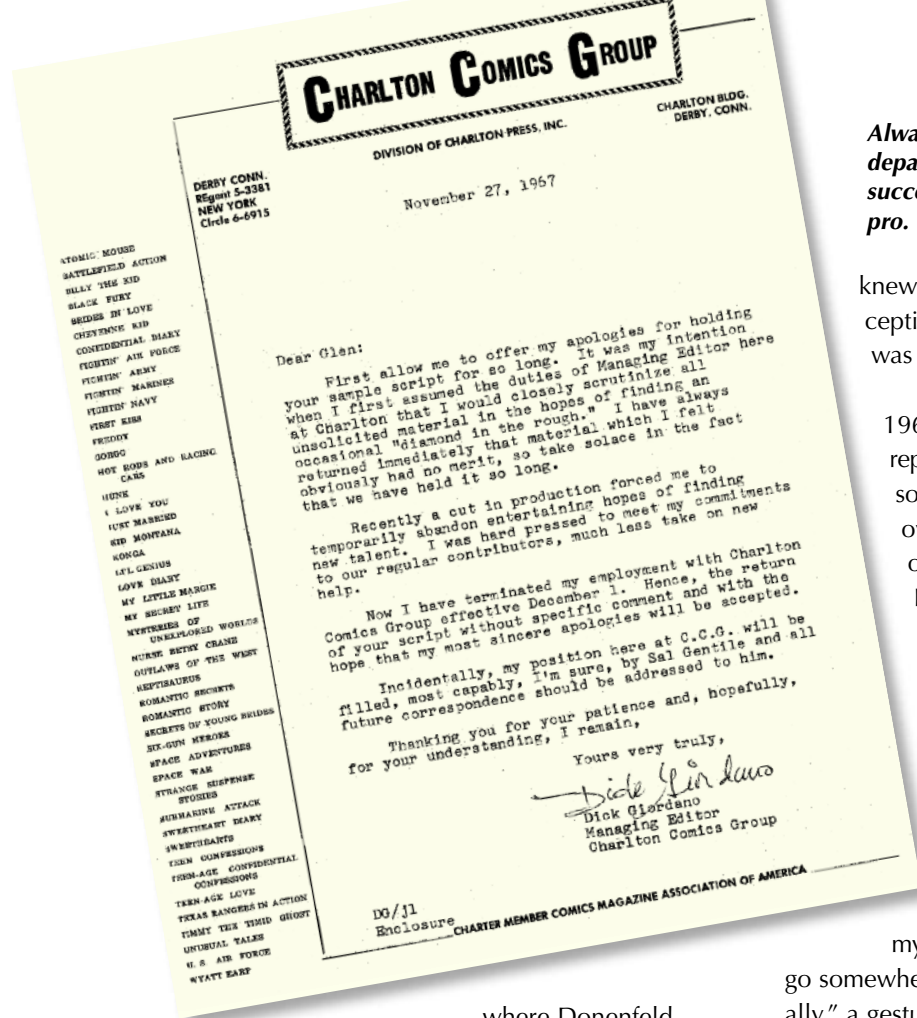
"That name was not an accident," maintains Dick. "I chose that term. Superman never did anything for me. Batman did. I always preferred heroes who could do things that we supposedly would be able to do." Beyond his personal tastes, Giordano also believed that emphasizing the "man" instead of the "super" would differentiate his line from those published by DC and Marvel Comics.

Only one of the Action Heroes defied Dick's dictate: Captain Atom, a super-charged champion whose introduction pre-dated Giordano's editorial tenure. But the editor immediately "changed his costume and weakened him."

The remaining Action Heroes launched (or, in the case of *Blue Beetle*, revived) by Giordano used abilities and weapons, not super powers, in their adventures. There was *Blue Beetle*, retooled by *Amazing Spider-Man* expatriate Steve Ditko into a high-tech quipster who used "gadgets like a stun gun," observes Giordano; "The Question," the backup feature in *Blue Beetle*, starring a faceless mysteryman who provided creator Ditko a venue to espouse his views on morality; Peter Cannon—Thunderbolt, by Pete "PAM" Morisi, a hero with, according to the editor, "the power of



One of Giordano's first forays into illustrating super-heroes: the cover to 1964's *Blue Beetle* #3. His stint as *Blue Beetle* cover artist foreshadowed his lengthy involvement with this and Charlton's other "Action Heroes." *Blue Beetle* ©2003 DC Comics.



Always affable, Dick Giordano announced his departure from Charlton's staff and mentioned his successor in this late-1967 letter to a fan and aspiring pro. Courtesy of Mike Ambrose.

knew nothing of this writers' movement or of the perception of Kashdan: "I didn't realize that someone was losing a job for me to get one."

Dick Giordano accepted the position, and in 1968 joined the staff of DC Comics. Sal Gentile replaced Dick as editor at Charlton, packaging some of Giordano's material and continuing to oversee the post-Action Heroes line. Glowing over his recruitment into comics' big leagues, Dick mentioned to Irwin Donenfeld that he'd like to bring over some of his creative people from Charlton. Replied Donenfeld: "Of course. Why do you think we're hiring you?" Dick laughs, "That sort of deflated me right away. They were hiring my guys, not me."

George Kashdan was gone once Giordano arrived on staff. "He came into the office two or three times after I was there,"

Giordano remembers. "He acknowledged my presence, but never indicated that we should go somewhere and talk. I would have welcomed that, actually," a gesture of atonement for his unwitting displacement of a DC staffer.

PRODUCTION JUNCTION, WHAT'S YOUR FUNCTION?

Giordano was assigned a slate of eight bimonthly titles—*Aquaman*, *Beware the Creeper*, *Blackhawk*, *Bomba the Jungle Boy*, *The Hawk and the Dove*, *The Secret Six*, *Teen Titans*, and *Young Love*—a far cry from the 34 he managed at Charlton. "I had lots of support and a full production department with a proofreader," he says. Quoting Paul Levitz, who was then a DC Comics fan but would later join the staff and ultimately rise to its top post, "I had a 'country club schedule.'"

As he did at Charlton, Dick exploited the letters pages of his titles as his direct pipeline to the fans. His arrival at DC was trumpeted by a lettercol blurb that included a caricature of the young, clean-shaven editor penciled by Joe

where Donenfeld lived. Little did Giordano realize at the time that he was being courted to replace long-time editor George Kashdan.

A cabal of DC Comics writers, including Bob Haney, John Broome, Arnold Drake, Gardner Fox, Otto Binder, and others, had recently made a power play for pay hikes, medical benefits, royalties, and limited character ownership. Kashdan's relationship with Bob Haney had intensified to the point where the author was writing most of the editor's books, a perceived stranglehold. DC management believed that the hiring of new editors would weaken the writers' power, and countered the writers' requests by raising their page rates as a panacea. Since Haney was regarded by management as an instigator in this movement, DC decided that his editor, Kashdan, was expendable. Nor was he the only one: some of the writers involved in the dispute found themselves blackballed at DC. At the time of his recruitment, Giordano



cover copy dilemma was solved.

Giordano also found Schwartz's devotion to his marriage inspirational. "Julie was very much in love with his wife," Dick attests. "He called her twice a day at specific times. One day, she didn't answer, and he knew something was wrong: he grabbed his hat and went home, and found her ill, unconscious, and got her to the hospital." Schwartz's romantic bond and intuition saved his wife's life that day.

"Julie is a wonderful guy," believes Giordano.

His opinion of Mort Weisinger, then the *Superman* editor, is quite the opposite. "He used to insult writers who came in with story ideas," Dick frowns. "Mort would say to them, 'I have to go to the bathroom. Do you mind if I use your script to wipe myself?' He had absolutely no respect for the creative community."

THE LENNON AND MCCARTNEY OF COMICS

But it was the fellow across the hall who made the biggest impression upon Dick: Neal Adams. The comics world had first noticed Adams in 1964 from his photo-realistic work on the *Ben Casey* newspaper strip. A few years later, the artist was working at DC, illustrating stories and covers for the *Jerry Lewis* and *Bob Hope* series, then

segueing into war titles before distinguishing himself on the landmark Deadman feature in

Neal Adams recalls his first encounter with Dick Giordano: "I remember that he looked like a little gangster, like part of the Italian mafia. But he had a twinkle in his eye, and was very friendly and very open."

Strange Adventures and on *The Spectre*. His challenging layouts and commercial-art techniques reinvigorated comic books, and by 1968 Neal Adams, in his mid-20s, was the field's "It" boy.

Neal Adams, at right, seems indifferent to his friend Dick Giordano's "made-up hand signal." Actually, they're just hamming it up for a 1972 fumetti titled "The Great American Dream," which ran in the first issue of Marvel's MAD magazine clone, Crazy. ©1972 Marvel Entertainment.

DC's offices had small rooms available for visitors' and artists' use. Adams set up shop in one of those rooms, across from the Schwartz/Giordano office. "Neal was charismatic," says Giordano. "He wore a tie and jacket and came in every day, even though he wasn't officially on staff. Neal was doing a million different things at that time, and always had something cooking."

Neal Adams recalls his first encounter with Dick Giordano: "I remember that he looked like a little gangster, like part of the Italian mafia. But he had a twinkle in his eye, and was very friendly and very open."

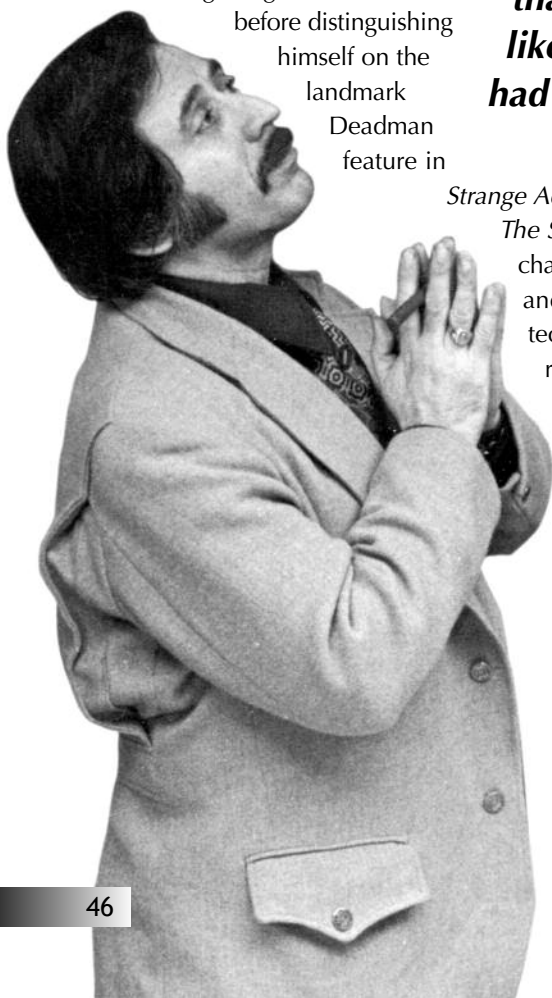
It was only natural that these talented young multitaskers gravitate toward each other. They were both dedicated to elevating comics as an art form, both breathing down the necks of DC's production staffers to challenge them to implement changes, and both interested in cultivating new talent. When new artists came to DC with portfolios in tow, Adams was as involved as Giordano with the review of their work. "Sometimes Dick couldn't help them out, because he had a given number of books," Adams explains, "so I'd take an artist who was worthy down to another editor, like Murray Boltinoff. And so we'd get guys moving through the system."

As their camaraderie deepened, Dick and Neal developed a method of communicating with facial and hand gestures. "Our relationship was very rare," Giordano says. "Visual signals like raised eyebrows meant something, indicating we needed to go off and talk

about things." "We thumbed and winked, and communicated pretty well by made-up hand signals," adds Adams. "And we pretty much had the same general point of view about things. We'd wrinkle our nose if some suit was coming by. If a new artist came by, we'd arch an eyebrow."

In 1968 Giordano became Adams' editor, inheriting *Strange Adventures* with issue #212, featuring the eighth

Deadman story, and by hiring him to draw covers for *The*





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Admits Giordano of his first attempt at inking Adams in World's Finest #175: "It was the weakest job I ever did with Neal." ©2003 DC Comics.

Witching Hour. Dick declares, "Neal and I had a near-perfect relationship at DC, when I was an editor and he was an artist."

Their first artistic pairing was far from near-perfect, however. Giordano had brokered a deal with Carmine Infantino to supplement his editorial salary with freelance art assignments, and took on inking work—faster for the artist to complete than penciling jobs—to maximize his earnings. Editor Mort Weisinger tapped Dick to ink 1968's *World's Finest Comics* #175, a Superman/Batman tale penciled by Neal. "I remember getting the pencils," says Giordano. "They were the best pages I'd ever gotten to handle. And it was the weakest job I ever did with Neal."

Neal Adams concurs: "When Dick first inked my work, I hated it. But I didn't hate it as much as other peoples' inks over my work. I wasn't used to the idea of someone else inking my work. I was an artist who'd practically had his way for all of his career, then at DC

they're telling me, 'People inking your work is the way we do things—that way we get more work out of you.'"

Adams explained to Giordano his artistic intentions, and offered some technical recommendations to make their styles better mesh. "Suddenly, Dick's work became more sparkling, and he put more into it," Neal reveals. Giordano was producing inks that made the penciler admit, "that almost looks like I did it." The synthesis of the Adams/Giordano approaches defined a look that "essentially became my comic-book style, unless I inked it myself," notes Adams. "It wasn't until I went over to Marvel that people started to realize that maybe my stuff isn't the same all the time, once they saw Tom Palmer ink my work."

"That almost looks like I did it," admits Neal Adams of Dick Giordano's inks shortly into their collaboration. From Green Lantern/Green Arrow #82. ©2003 DC Comics.



FIGHTING FOR CREATORS' RIGHTS

In the late 1960s, the ACBA—The Academy of Comic Book Arts—was formed. The organization, known primarily to comics fandom of the 1970s from its presentation of the annual “Shazam” Awards, was initially a forum for industry professionals to discuss the craft. Meeting monthly at Manhattan’s Society of Illustrators, the ACBA’s first president was Marvel Comics’ chief Stan Lee, with Dick Giordano as vice-president. Giordano and Neal Adams served on the board of governors, and both served terms as presidents—although Adams recalls being tricked into a lengthier term by his pal Dick. “Dick encouraged me to run for president, and once I was elected, he put a motion on the floor for a president’s term to be two years instead of one!” Neal laughs.

At the time, comic-book artists were exclusively work-for-hire. Their character creations were not their own, they had no leverage to obtain page-rate increases, they were deprived of medical benefits, and their original artwork—“their property, not the publishers’” adds Neal Adams—was not returned to them. In fact, it was stockpiled in closets and files, and often shredded or cut into tiers of three then thrown in the garbage or given away during office tours. “The artwork wasn’t considered to be of any particular value,” Giordano explains; “it’s not that it was being intentionally destroyed, but no one thought to ask for it back.”

Adams lobbied the Academy to bring creators’ rights to the floor, and the ACBA began to discuss these issues. But the group couldn’t agree on how to implement changes to benefit artists, so Giordano and Adams personally marched forward on their quest, empowered, from the publishers’ perspective, by the Academy itself. “What the Academy did,” Giordano notes, “was frighten the publishers just enough to know that we were there,” offering an implied threat of possible union solidarity. Both Dick and Neal networked behind the scenes, with Adams discovering, “if we could get DC or Marvel to make a change, then the other company would be forced to go along.” Adams remembers how he and Dick frequently petitioned Sol Harrison, contending that “the better your creators are treated, the more benefits they get that don’t hurt you as a company, the more they’re going to produce for you and make you more money. The better artists will be able to get more money from selling their pages, and in return they’ll want to put more effort into their pages, which will mean more for you—the publisher—without you having to pay more for it.”

Harrison got the message: by 1974 he was asking the ACBA to help return volumes of DC’s original artwork to their owners. Stan Lee at Marvel and Carmine Infantino at

DC began offering better page rates to top artists. “It was up to a very small number of people—Dick and me—to have these conversations with publishers to get them to make these changes,” Adams attests. Their efforts laid the foundation for better treatment of comic-book artists, although it wasn’t until the 1980s that some of Dick and Neal’s other desires for rights became policy.

END OF THE EDITORIAL TRAIL

When Dick Giordano was hired as a DC editor in 1968, Carmine Infantino was art director. Their positions were of comparable stature. Shortly thereafter, Infantino’s promotion to editorial director upset their working dynamic: Carmine was now Dick’s boss. “I came in one day and the whole thing had changed,” Giordano relates. “Now I was dealing with him on a different level. He could tell me what to do with my storylines.” From that moment, their different editorial methods would begin to clash, a chasm deepening between them.

The writers and artists in Dick Giordano’s bullpen treasured the liberalness of his “hands-off” editorial style. The editor hired the people he thought were best suited for the material then let them do their jobs, adhering to his personal credo, “Too much structure is the opposite of creativity.” According to Giordano, Infantino did not share his creators’ appreciation of Dick’s methods. “Carmine preferred Joe Orlando’s approach to comics over mine. He liked what Joey did (he called Joe ‘Joey,’ and called me ‘Richie’). I thought Joe’s approach to comics was perfectly valid, and it worked for him. I thought mine was valid, too, and it worked for me.”

Occasionally Infantino would implement editorial directives that Giordano resisted. One particularly damaging disagreement was rooted in Neal Adams’ experimental panel layouts in several issues of *The Spectre*. “Maybe Neal went a little too far in trying something new, to the point of making sequential panel flow hard to follow,” admits Giordano, himself a risk taker, “but then Carmine created panel charts to make clearer storytelling, and required the editors to send them to our artists.” Giordano never circulated the documents. “I agreed with Carmine’s goal, but wanted to achieve it through different means,” says Dick, who later came under fire when Infantino discovered that the editor continued to ignore his orders to distribute the panel charts.

Giordano again locked horns with his boss when a handful of newer writers found themselves blacklisted by DC management due to political and policy disagreements. Dick paid no attention to the directive and continued to work with those authors.

A seemingly minor but recurring stumbling block in

Giordano's relationship with Infantino was Dick's daily five o'clock exodus. "He didn't like me running off at that time," says the editor, "but I didn't feel I was leaving anything undone."

These disagreements, plus the controversies spawned by some of the editor's gutsy innovations, led Giordano and Infantino to "drift apart to where it became difficult for either of us to give in," Dick remembers. "There are ten different ways to solve a problem, and I felt uncomfortable with Carmine's adherence to his methods as house policy. Maybe I shouldn't have been so stubborn, but I wouldn't have been as happy."

Giordano occasionally sought consolation through private chats with his friend Neal Adams, who commiserated because "I was too much a pain in the ass to Carmine, too," chuckles Adams. "Dick implied to me that his days were numbered there, because he was getting a little too much attention for his books," Neal reveals. "He indicated that if I had found something else that he'd be interested in joining me at a studio."

The proverbial last straw in the DC staff relationship of Dick Giordano and Carmine Infantino came on a morning in early October 1970 when, as Giordano recalls, Infantino ordered him to fire artist Gray Morrow over his objection to a story Morrow drew. Giordano refused, stormed out of his boss' office, and, after giving the situation a few moments' thought, returned and tendered his resignation, giving one month's notice. Flushed with anger, a rarity with the even-tempered editor, Dick approached Neal Adams and implored, "Let's go to lunch." Dick remembers Neal replying, "It's too early for lunch," but Giordano's raised eyebrows punctuated by a desperate "Neal...!" divorced the artist from his drawing board.

In a nearby restaurant, Dick, quivering with uncharacteristic emotion, confided to his friend about his resignation. Adams suggested that it was time to pursue more commercial work together in their own studio, and the two began to lay the groundwork for such a venture. Although intrigued, Giordano was tentative about the timing of such a commitment: "I was definitely interested," notes Giordano, "but tabled the idea to give me some time to lick my wounds."

After fulfilling the terms of his notice, Dick Giordano left the staff of DC Comics on November 4, 1970. Creative differences had made it impossible to for him continue his editorial position, but Giordano emphatically proclaims, "I stand first in line when it comes to praising Carmine Infantino as an artist. I love his work, his cover designs.

"I respect Carmine greatly."

HOLING UP IN THE BASEMENT

The "retired" editor found no shortage of freelance inking work, while the remaining DC titles he had edited months prior trickled into print. Most of his assignments came from Julius Schwartz. "Julie was a saint," beams Dick. "He would almost customize jobs for me. Julie would often call me asking if I had enough work, enough money. 'I'll write you a check if you need it!' he'd say." Schwartz kept Giordano busy with Neal Adams on *Green Lantern/Green Arrow*, and inking pencilers Adams, Irv Novick, Frank Robbins, and Bob Brown on *Batman* and *Detective Comics*.

Giordano also continued to ink penciler Mike Sekowsky on *Wonder Woman* and on the Supergirl strip in *Adventure Comics*. DC editors recognized his facility in illustrating beautiful women, and the artist was assigned frequent covers for romance titles and for *Superman's Girl Friend, Lois Lane*. He also handled solo art chores on several installments of writer Robert Kanigher's *Lois Lane* backup "Rose and the Thorn," which explored the alternate personality of the aggressive Thorn as the meek Rose's means of dealing with personal tragedy. "I think this was the best thing that Kanigher ever wrote," he believes, suggesting, "I always thought that Rose should have more multiple personalities, to create more storylines."

Operating from his studio in the basement of his Connecticut home, 80 miles away from the hustle-bustle of DC's Manhattan offices, Giordano acknowledges that he was

"a hermit" for a year, almost chained to his drawing table. Dick's only regular visitor was his long-time friend and associate Frank McLaughlin, who assisted him on background inks.



Another super-heroine sumptuously rendered by Dick Giordano: the Thorn!
©2003 DC Comics.

(right) This Sekowsky/Giordano cover, intended for 1971's *Adventure Comics* #407, was rejected by DC. Note the published version in the inset. Courtesy of Terry Austin. ©2003 DC Comics.



Dick Giordano Meets Peter Pan

In the mid- to late 1970s Peter Pan Records licensed numerous popular heroes and monsters from comics and TV—including Conan, the Fantastic Four, Plastic Man, the Flash, Aquaman, Dracula, Man-Thing, and Planet of the Apes—for a series of audio adventures as part of the company's "Power Records" imprint. Some were issued in "Book & Record" sets, featuring 20-page comic books with a 45 rpm record inserted into the inside back cover flap. Continuity illustrated many of these comics, with Dick Giordano, Neal Adams, Mike Nasser, Ross Andru, Gray Morrow, and other associates providing art for these releases:

THE ACTION COMES ALIVE AS YOU READ...

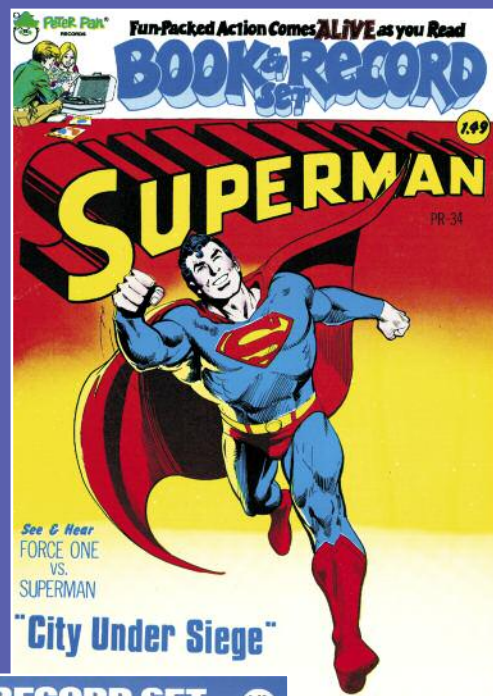
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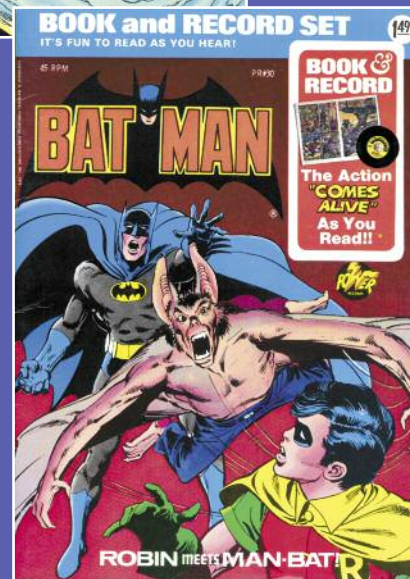
Giordano's art for this Power Records back-cover promo features the artist's rare renditions of two of Marvel's mightiest. Courtesy of Dick Giordano. Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman ©2003 DC Comics. Spider-Man, the Incredible Hulk ©2003 Marvel Characters.

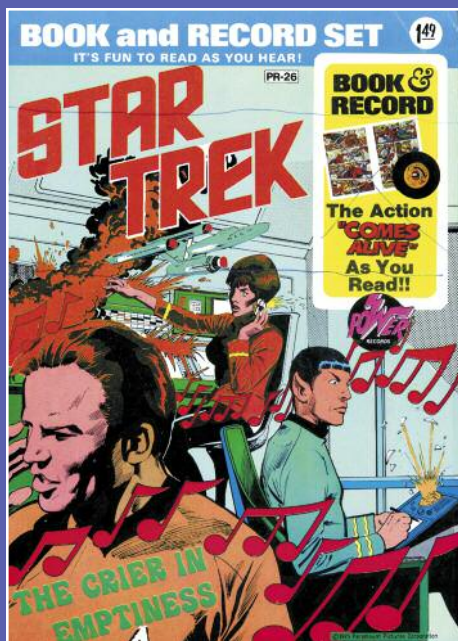
1978's PR-34, Superman in "City Under Siege," is graced by this Giordano cover. Courtesy of Dick Giordano. ©2003 DC Comics.



Space: 1999, PC-32, features a stunning 1976 Giordano cover with astonishingly accurate likenesses of stars Barbara Bain and Martin Landau. Courtesy of the artist. ©2003 ATV Licensing, LTD.

Dick inks Neal Adams on 1976's Batman entry, PR-30, featuring "Robin Meets Man-Bat!" Courtesy of Dick Giordano. ©2003 DC Comics.

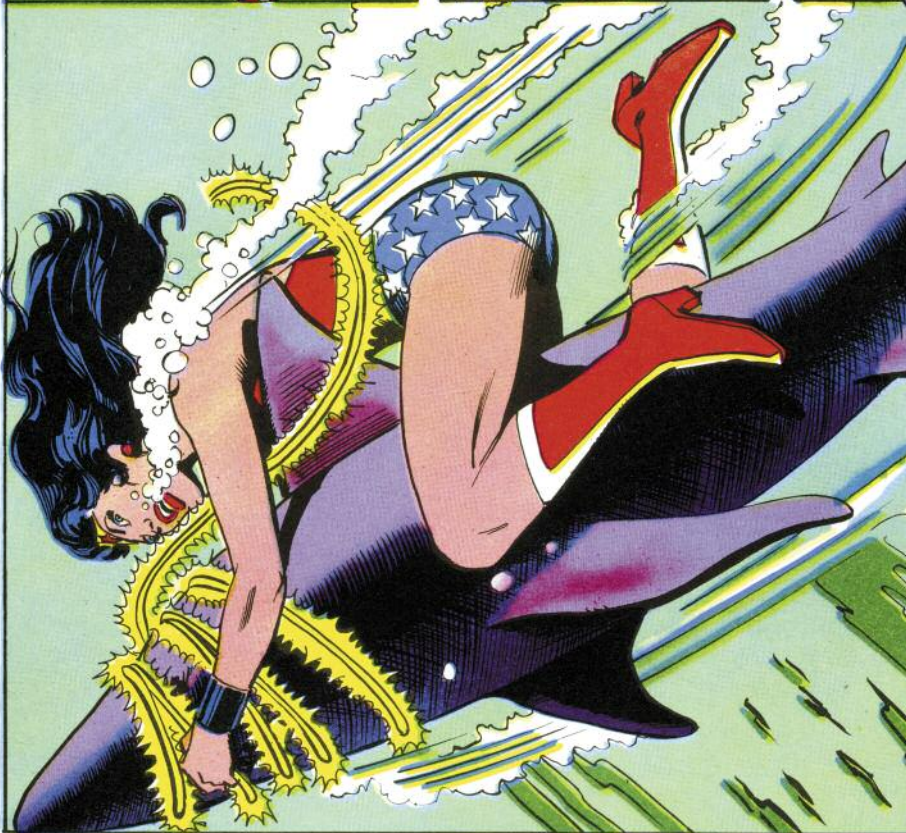
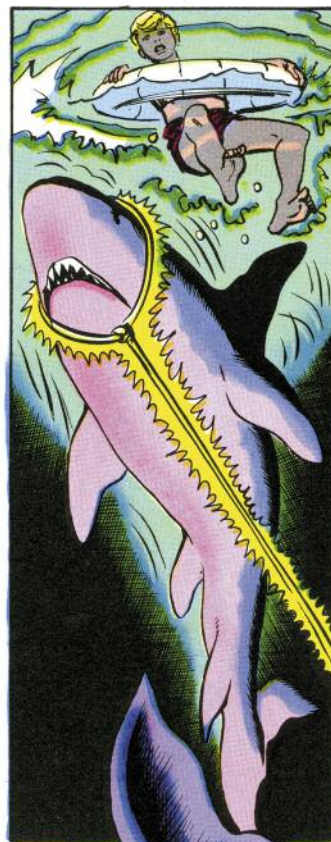




1975's PR (Power Records)-26. Star Trek: "The Crier in Emptiness." Courtesy of Dick Giordano. ©2003 Paramount Pictures Corporation.

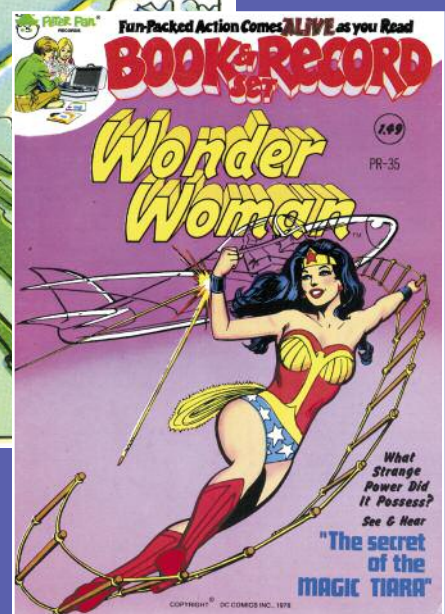


The enterprising Dick Giordano boldly goes into Star Trek territory in this page from PR-26. Courtesy of the artist. ©2003 Paramount Pictures Corporation.



Wonder Woman vs. Jaws, as illustrated in 1978 by Dick Giordano. Courtesy of the artist. ©2003 DC Comics.

Giordano inks Adams on the cover of PR-35, "The Secret of the Magic Tiara." Courtesy of Dick Giordano. ©2003 DC Comics.





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Sunbeam BATMAN™ and ROBIN™
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Sunbeam SUPERMAN™ and LOIS LANE™
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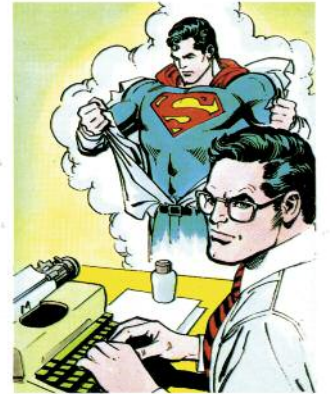


Sunbeam BATMAN™
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Sunbeam THE PENGUIN™
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Giordano drew 30 DC super-hero and super-villain cards, 14 of which are pictured here, which were inserted into loaves of Sunbeam Bread in 1978. Cards stained by bread oil are regularly found in the collector market. Courtesy of Dick Giordano. Characters ©2003 DC Comics.



Sunbeam CLARK KENT™
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Sunbeam GOOD vs. EVIL™
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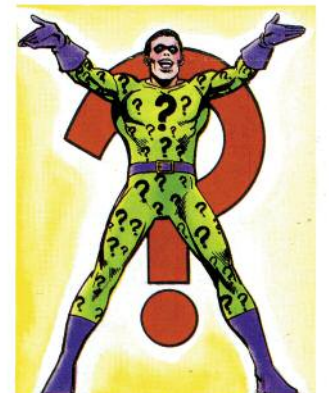
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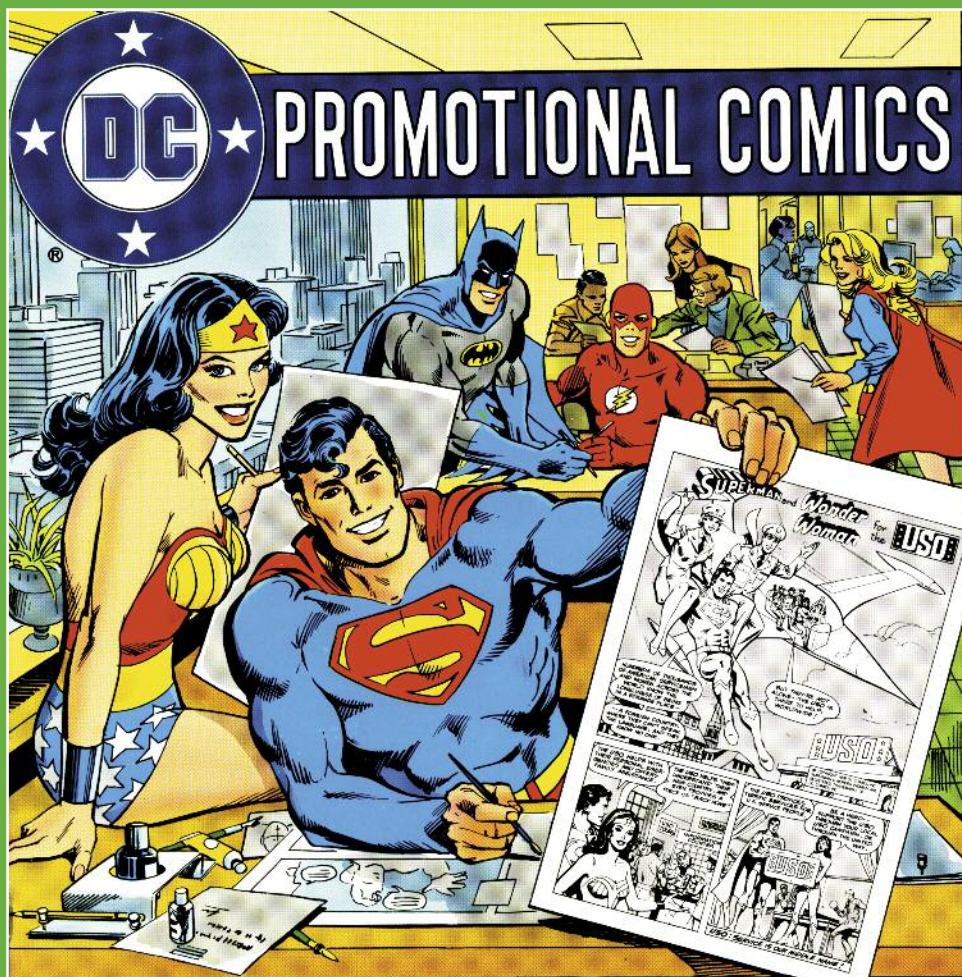
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WAY TO
PRESENT
YOUR
MARKETING
MESSAGE**

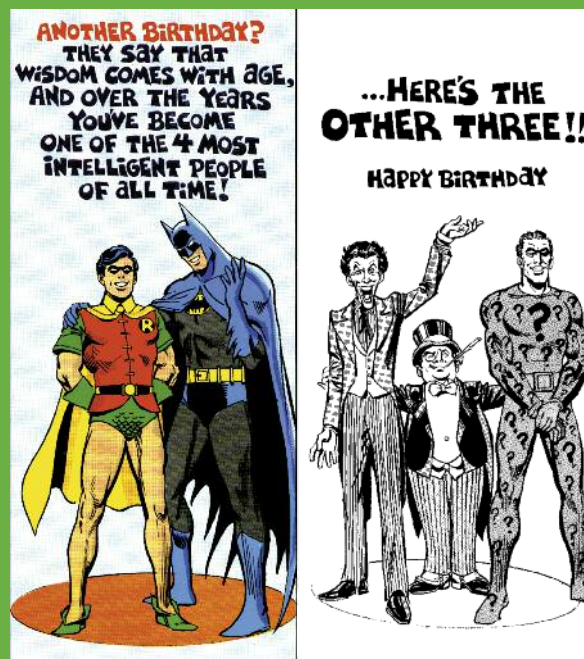
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EXCLUSIVELY
FOR YOU BY
DC COMICS**

A WARNER
COMMUNICATIONS
COMPANY 

Giordano inked José Luis Garcia-Lopez on this slick 1979 promo to potential licensors. Courtesy of Dick Giordano. Characters ©2003 DC Comics.



A fun Super Friends vs. super-villains Christmas one-sheet drawn by Dick in 1980. Courtesy of the artist. Characters ©2003 DC Comics.



A 1979 Batman and Robin birthday card illustrated by Dick, produced by Mark I. Courtesy of Dick Giordano. Characters ©2003 DC Comics.

OPEN FOR BUSINESS 24/7

"I worked in an office opposite of Neal at his drawing board," Dick recollects, "but our schedules rarely overlapped." "Dick started fairly early in the morning and quit at the end of the day, so he opened up the place," says Neal, "and I'd get in later and would stay until four in the morning."

Adams' propensity for working late-night hours and his and Giordano's desire to cultivate new artistic talent made Continuity akin to an art commune. "Continuity was open almost 24/7," Dick states, "closing, at best, for only a few hours on Sunday. There was always somebody around. Neal was genuinely interested in surrounding himself with talented people." The pace of the studio and its revolving-door accessibility kept it a full house: "They weren't all there at once, but there were always 10–12 regulars in the office," says Dick. "People would sleep on the floor or even in the hall by the elevator." As he opened shop each day, Dick would usually have to step over an obstacle course of sleeping artists to get to this office. "Since so many people came and went, my policy became, 'If he's here a month from now I'll ask him what his name is,'" Giordano jokes.

This constant infusion of veteran and new artists helped Giordano and Adams maintain and expand their output. The partners were always on the lookout for fresh talent, continuing the accessibility they started at DC, and for Giordano, at Charlton. Among some in the comics industry, Adams had a reputation for brutal critiques of newcomers' portfolios, but Dick is quick to add, "Neal offered specifics on how they could improve and prodded them to take their work seriously. He encouraged them to work harder and sent them away. Neal would then say to me, 'If they don't come back the next time, they're not interested.'" The young artists who made the cut received their trial by fire as one of the "Crusty Bunkers," a comic-book credit given to a "jam" inking effort by a variety of hands, with Neal and Dick handling the main figures.

From Continuity's procession of comic-art wannabes, Giordano sometimes recruited protégés with whom he spent a tremendous amount of time patiently mentoring. Steve Mitchell, Bob Wiacek, and Klaus Janson got their starts in comics working for Dick, and sharpened their abilities by assisting him on backgrounds, while benefiting from one-on-one instruction.

Giordano's role as teacher was not limited to his education of fledgling Continuity associates. In 1973 Dick began teaching a class in story-telling at Parsons School of Design in Greenwich Village. At the highly lauded institution, founded in 1896 by Frank Alvah Parsons, Giordano's curriculum focused on the fundamentals of illustration, basics often ignored in the 1970s as artists ventured into experimental and even psychedelic realms. Giordano's teaching

Just Some of Continuity's Associates

In the 1970s, Continuity Associates became a training ground for new artists and an employment office for seasoned professionals. Continuity artists, writers, associates, and friends during this period include:

Jack Abel
Vicente Alcazar
Sal Amendola
Sergio Aragonés
Terry Austin
Gary Bates
Howard Chaykin
Frank Cirocco
Ed Davis
Joe Deposito
Bill Draut
José Luis Garcia-Lopez
Michael Golden
Al Gordon
Larry Hama
Russ Heath
Mike Hinge
Klaus Janson
Alan Kupperberg
Polly Law
Steve Leialoha
Bob MacLeod

Frank McLaughlin
Frank Miller
Steve Mitchell
Gray Morrow
Scott Pike
Carl Potts
Ralph Reese
Mark Rice
Trina Robbins
Marshall Rogers
Joe Rubinstein
Bill Sienkiewicz
Walt Simonson
Bob Smith
Lynn Varley
Trevor Von Eeden
Bob Wiacek
Gary Winnick
Wally Wood
John Workman
Bernie Wrightson

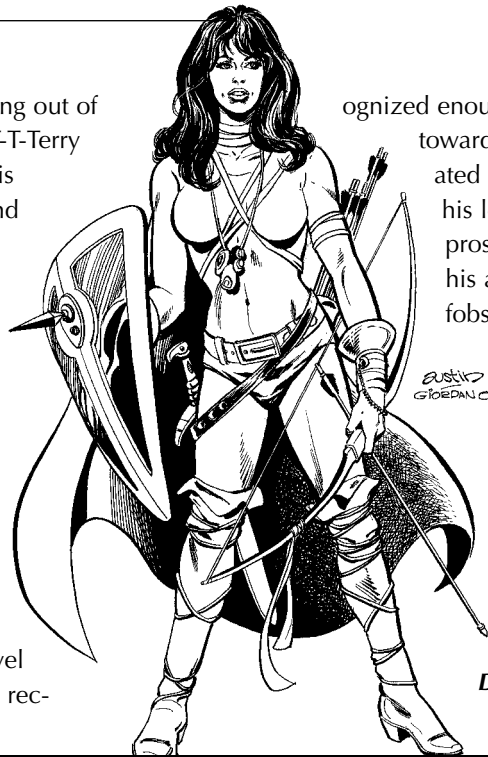
(Note from copy-checker Neal Adams: "To all the guys (Alan Weiss) we overlooked, I'm just going over this list (Pat Broderick) and, hell, I'll be writing forever. I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm so damn sorry if I didn't put down your (Brent Anderson) name. Oh, God! (Stan Kelly, Bobby London) Hold me...oh, crap...I'm dead...")

tenure at Parsons continued through 1976.

Although immensely likable and friendly, Pat Bastienne could, when necessary, provide a matronly voice of authority—Continuity's "mom" to Giordano's "dad." When artists were loitering instead of laboring, or simply got too rowdy, Pat would scold or even eject the bad boys. She recalls a morning in mid-1974 when, upon arriving to work from Connecticut, she and Dick Giordano noticed a new face, and a rather nervous one. A tousle-haired lad in his early 20s, fresh out of college, was inking some backgrounds on some comic-book pages when Pat, charged with trafficking artists for payment records, boldly marched up to

him and asked his name. Nearly jumping out of his skin, the young man stammered, "T-T-Terry Austin." Tentative about his abilities, this newcomer nodded toward his pages and meekly whispered, "Uh, Neal gave me this to do..."

Giordano eyed Austin's work and immediately recognized his potential, taking him under his wing as his inking assistant, although Austin remarks self-deprecatingly, "I'd like to claim I got the gig as a result of my nascent talent, but the truth is, I happened to be the guy sitting closest to Dick when his previous assistant, Klaus Janson, left for greener pastures." Terry Austin had been rejected by Marvel and DC Comics, but DC's Sol Harrison rec-



ognized enough promise in his work to steer him toward Continuity. As a fan, Austin had appreciated Giordano's approachable editorial voice in his letters columns and was awestruck over the prospect of learning from Dick. Terry started his apprenticeship by inking "shrubby, watch fobs, paving stones, plow shares, and assorted debris," he jokes, but over the course of two years honed his abilities under Dick's guidance and assumed more responsibilities, even inking figures, graduating to co-credit status on several projects before "Dick finally decided it was time to kick the young dodo out of the nest."

A rare Terry Austin-penciled, Dick Giordano-inked piece, courtesy of the penciler. ©2003 Terry Austin.

Terry Austin on GIORDANO

Let me say up front that Dick Giordano is my hero. A consummate (I think that means he enjoys soup) professional, over the years he has proven to be a generous boss, a sagacious mentor, a loyal friend, and even a bit of a role model (except sartorially; I'd never be able to pull off wearing those wild shirts he favors...).

At Continuity, poor, saintly Dick found himself saddled with me, undoubtedly the most thickheaded helper he ever attempted to whip into shape. To wit: Dick attempted to teach me to ink with a brush. Dick is the closest equivalent we have to a Japanese brush-master. He can do literally anything with a brush, including tip a ruler up on edge and rule perfectly even straight lines on buildings. I arrived in Dick's tutelage inking everything with a Rapidograph, which is the antithesis of the brush, as it is only capable of making one width of line with no variation. Taking advantage of the teaching component that Dick had said was part of the covenant between artist and assistant, about once a week I'd approach his desk and ask for a brush lesson from the master. After the first few futile attempts, my request would inevitably be met with a heavy sigh, followed in short order by Dick rolling his eyes heavenward, undoubtedly asking the Almighty for the strength to continue, after which he'd flip over the page he was working on and say, "Do some straight lines like this, then some curved lines like so..." at

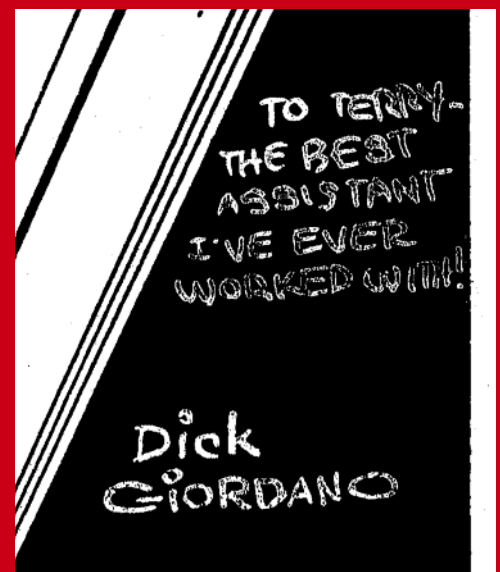
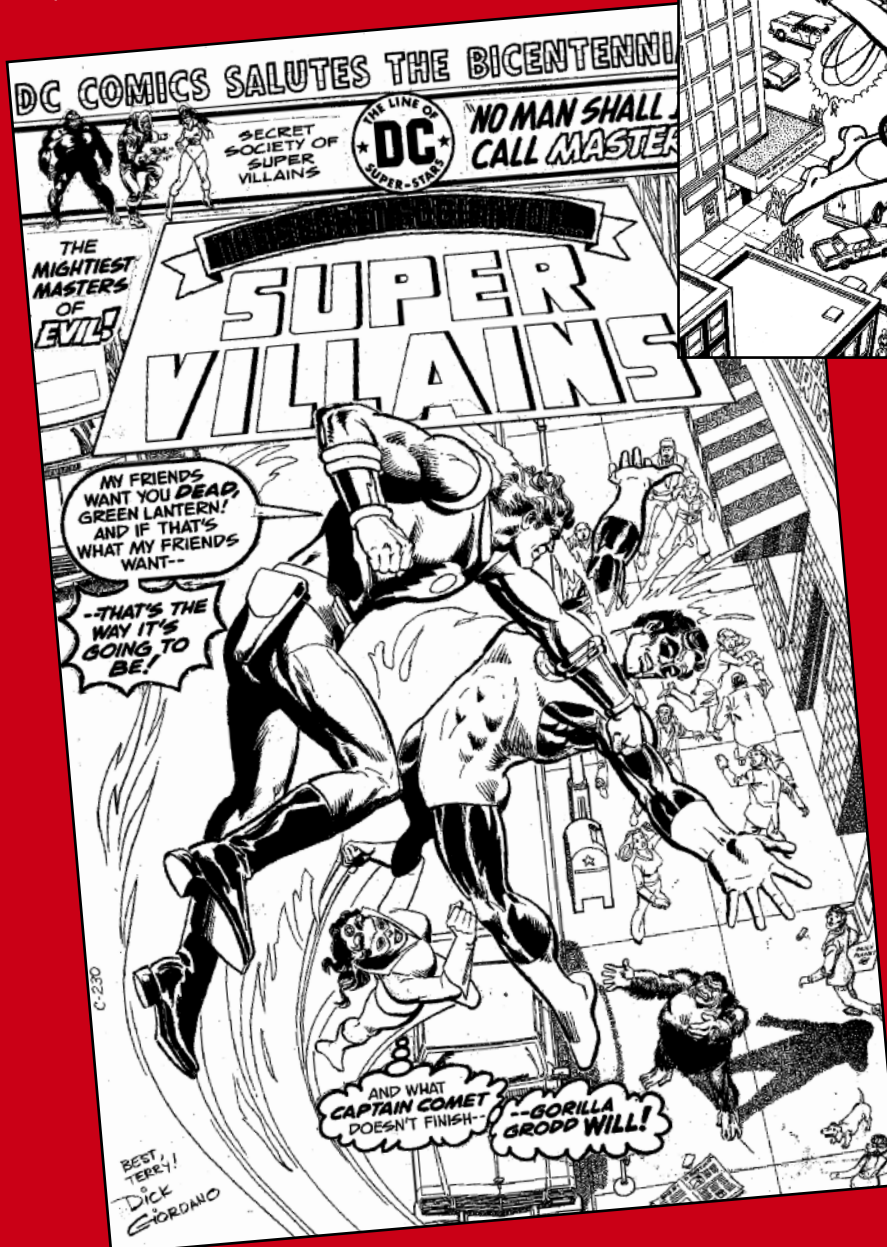
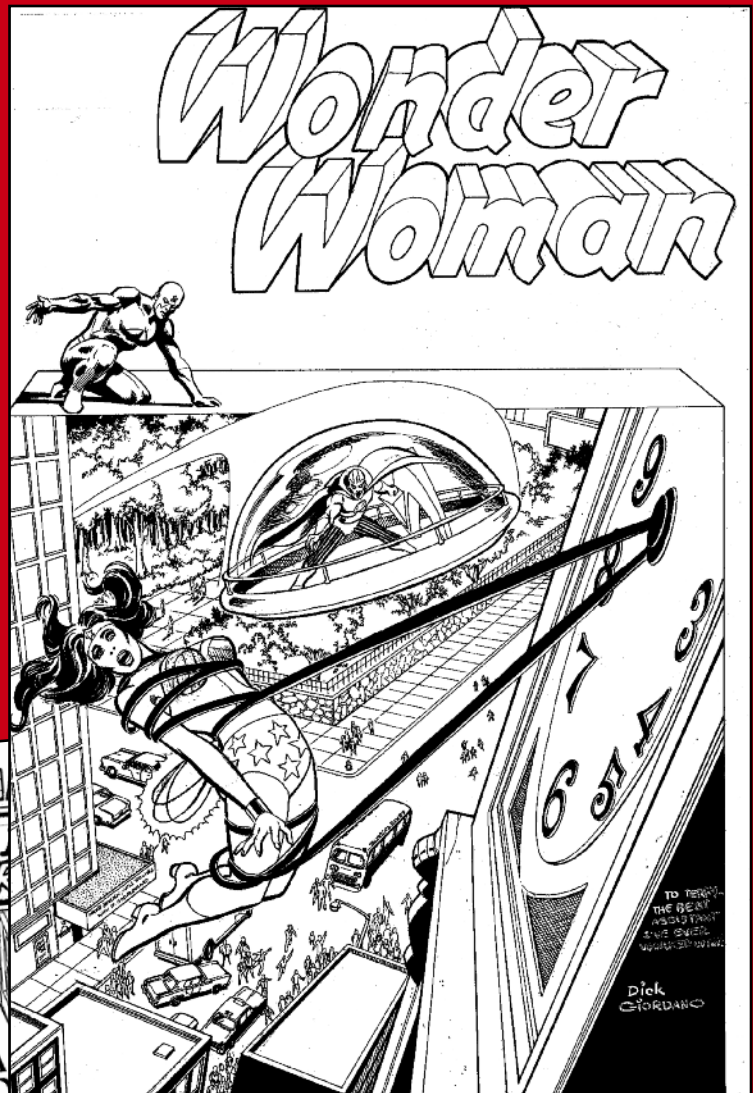
which point I'd attempt to imitate him, applying my ink-loaded brush to the paper with all the flourish and gusto of a bored custodian who is being paid minimum wage to swab the floor of a dentist's office at four o'clock in the morning. After a few months, moved by the tears of pain coursing down Dick's cheeks at having to witness this debacle, I gave up this pursuit and began to search for more flexible pen points that might allow me to more closely approximate a brush, thereby alleviating the hideous suffering of one of God's noblest creatures.

About six years ago, before Dick and Pat moved to Florida, I had a dental appointment in Westport and they drove down to meet me for lunch. At some point during the meal Dick said to me, "I've been looking at your work on **Superman Adventures**. Congratulations. You finally learned how to ink with a brush!" No, I had to admit, I'd just gotten good at using a pen to fake using a brush, and we all laughed at that. In hindsight, that compliment from Dick, my old boss, friend, guru, and guide, meant more to me than all the Eagle, Saturn, Alley, and CBG Awards I've been privileged to receive over the years. I figure that if I could fool the master, then maybe I wasn't so bad after all.

Terry Austin
February 2003

The Amazon Princess is two-timed by Chronos on the cover to 1975's Wonder Woman #220, illustrated by Giordano with Terry Austin background inks (note the artist's inscription to his assistant). Courtesy of Terry Austin. ©2003 DC Comics.

Captain Comet punches Green Lantern on this Giordano-drawn, Austin-assisted cover to The Secret Society of Super-Villains #2, August 1976. Courtesy of Terry Austin. ©2003 DC Comics.



GIORDANO

MAKING
the rules

DIPLOMACY

The Ability to Tell A Person to
"Go to Hell"

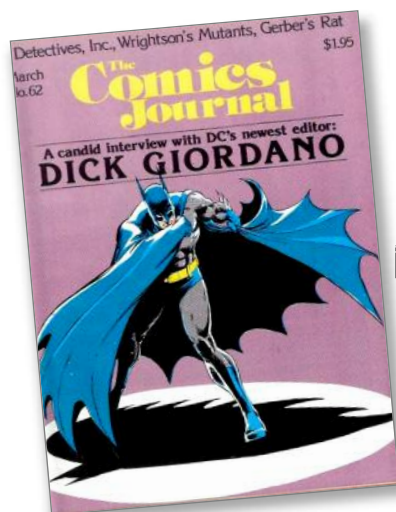
In Such a Way That He Actually
Looks Forward to the Trip.

—a plaque in the studio of Dick Giordano.

Gary Groth's in-depth interview with Dick Giordano was the cover feature in March 1981's The Comics Journal #62, also featuring this classic Batman cover art by Dick.

The Comics Journal ©2003 Fantagraphics, Inc.

Batman ©2003 DC Comics.

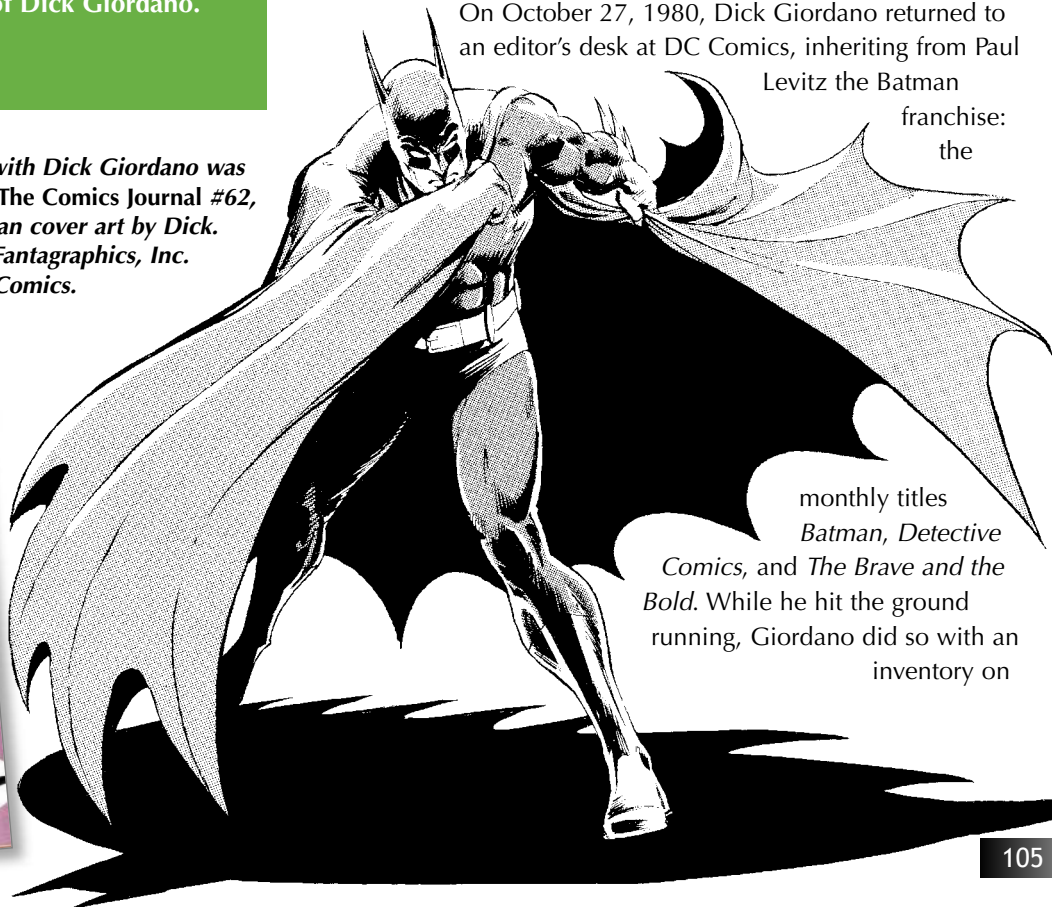


To begin his new position, Dick Giordano, one of the most magnanimous personalities in comics, was faced with the unsavory responsibility of terminating the Dik-Art staff. Fate made the chore easier: Bill Collins continued to assist Dick with his freelance inking jobs, although he eventually drifted out of comics, and Mike DeCarlo, like Dick's assistants who preceded him, had graduated into the big leagues as a solo inker. Frank McLaughlin kept busy with a number of regular assignments, including *Justice League of America*, where he succeeded Giordano as Dick Dillin's inker. Only Pat Bastienne found herself unemployed, a condition that would prove short-lived.

On October 27, 1980, Dick Giordano returned to an editor's desk at DC Comics, inheriting from Paul Levitz the Batman

franchise: the

monthly titles *Batman*, *Detective Comics*, and *The Brave and the Bold*. While he hit the ground running, Giordano did so with an inventory on

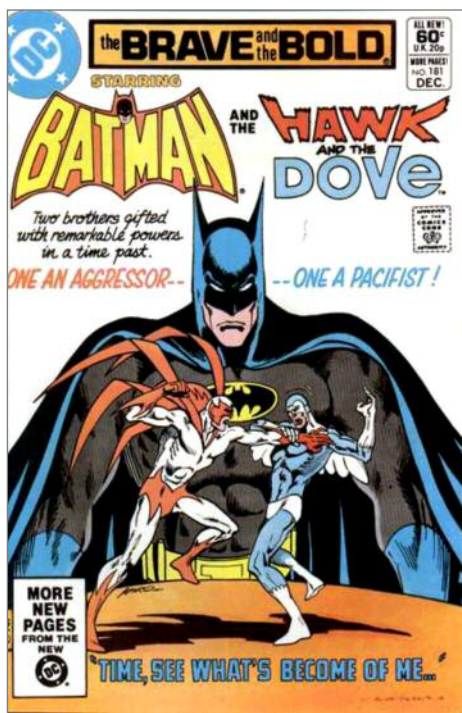


hand. “When I took over the Batman books, I had three issues of each series in the drawer. Paul would order three issues at once. The first one that came in was the next issue scheduled. He never shipped late.”

Giordano had no editorial mandate, only the desire, in his own words, “to produce good Batman stories.” Under the new editor’s guidance, the titles shifted away from self-contained stories-of-the-month to more sophisticated, multilayered tales often examining the dichotomy between the hero’s two identities, the grim Batman and the gregarious Bruce Wayne. *Batman and Detective* shipped two weeks apart, and this frequency, coupled with interwoven subplots, vested reader interest and created the impression of a bi-weekly comic book. A critically lauded storyline during this period involved a hauntingly seductive new villainous, Nocturna, and Batman suffering from vampirism. Gerry Conway and Doug Moench were the series’ scribes, and Don Newton and Gene Colan were the regular Bat-artists under Giordano’s editorial tenure.

The Brave and the Bold (B&B), the team-up title pairing Batman with other DC characters, is also remembered by Giordano as a delightful assignment. “We foreshadowed the next issue’s guest star with some drawing that would show who the guest was,” he beams. These visual hints included the silhouetted Creeper lurking on a rooftop, and Robin’s insignia inconspicuously plastered on the side of a passing trolley car.

As he did as a Charlton and DC editor in the 1960s, Dick afforded his writers enormous creative freedom, sometimes jettisoning continuity for the sake of a good story. “I remember one of my first bouts with continuity,” says Giordano. “We got Vicki Vale into a love affair with Bruce Wayne. One of the continuity freaks at DC protested, because Vale was married, according to one line of copy in a Batman summer special. Should I throw out this whole storyline because of one line of dialogue that somebody—who probably should have checked with someone in the first place—had written five or six years earlier?” Another case in point: a December 1981 team-up of Batman and the Hawk and the Dove in *The Brave and the Bold* #181’s



“Continuity is a tool. When you need it, you use it. When you don’t need it, you put it away. I was never going to turn down a good story to satisfy continuity.”

This issue of The Brave and the Bold ignored continuity, and few readers seemed to mind. ©2003 DC Comics.

“Time, See What’s Become of Me...”. This tale, scripted by TV writer Alan Brennert and illustrated by Jim Aparo, depicted the former teen-age superheroes as adults, having allowed them to age naturally from their previous appearance a decade prior—and thereby making them older than their Teen Titans contemporaries, who, like Batman and most other comics characters, aged at a much slower pace.

“As Denny O’Neil often said, continuity is a tool,” Giordano asserts. “When you need it, you use it. When you don’t need it, you put it away. I was never going to turn down a good story to satisfy continuity.”

Giordano was assigned a fourth monthly title in addition to the Batman books: *Arak, Son of Thunder*. From DC’s publishing perspective, *Arak* was the company’s answer to Marvel’s *Conan the Barbarian*, the popular sword-and-sorcery series that was beginning its second decade of publication. Daring to be different, however, Dick delivered an editorial edict—a rarity for the “hands-off” editor—that this new series would be nothing like *Conan*, an intriguing challenge for *Arak*’s author, Roy Thomas, also the writer for Marvel’s barbarian. Rooted in Native-American mythology, *Arak, Son of Thunder*, initially illustrated by Ernie Colón, was a modest success for DC, with fifty monthly issues and one annual published.

PAC-MAN FEVER

Most DC Comics readers are not aware that Dick Giordano’s rehiring was predicated on a double mandate: in addition to his line-editing chores, he was also the company’s “special projects editor.”

By 1980 newsstands, traditionally the venue for comic-book sales, had grown disenchanted with comics’ low profit margin and began eliminating them from their racks. Filling the void were specialty shops that catered exclusively to the comics (and sci-fi) audience. The industry was evolving.

Evolving, too, were new trends in youth culture. Video games, which slowly surfaced in the mid- to late 1970s with

Dennis O'Neil on GIORDANO

I know of no way I can begin to pay the debt of gratitude I owe Dick Giordano. Dick is responsible for much, if not most, of what's been good in what I've done for the past quarter-century. As an artist, he has embellished, amplified and enhanced my writing. As an editor, he has prompted me to some of my best efforts in an eerie fashion I don't understand and wish I could imitate. And as a boss...Dick hired me to edit comics when I was one of the worst prospects in publishing—"washed up" and "has-been" were, I believe, some of the epithets applied to me at the time—and he did so against the advice of at least some of his managerial colleagues. No one has ever, ever believed in me like that. Such faith is a gift beyond valuing.

He is, in his quiet, self-effacing fashion, truly remarkable. I've begun to think of him as a Zen-mas-

ter-without-portfolio, a man who sits inside his own skin and observes without judging, who can become deeply involved in work and yet remain detached enough to know that it's not the most important thing in the world, who keeps his ego on a very short leash indeed, who seems utterly incapable of malice.

He's not good at everything, however. He has little gift for self-promotion, which may be why he is not as renowned as he ought to be. That's a shame because it means that young artists and editors don't profit from his good example.

Somebody ought to do something about that.

Dennis O'Neil
February 2003

Giordano emphasizes, "sometimes catering to the talent, understanding that they are the backbone of the company." Continuity contracts were implemented, paying creators a bonus upon the successful completion of a year's worth of issues, and contracted freelancers also became eligible for health insurance through DC.

Pat Bastienne's reputation as an advocate to creative people's needs led to her appointment as manager-talent coordinator. Beginning in the mid-1980s the pair frequently traveled together across the country and to other countries, meeting with established professionals and recruiting newcomers to DC. Pat became the liaison between dozens of writers and artists and DC's editorial staff.

When DC was developing a new, square-bound publishing format for its most prominent projects, it was Bastienne who coined its name: "Prestige Format." "I wanted to call it 'Premiere Format,' an homage to Charlton Premiere," reveals Giordano, but he abandoned his nostalgic preference and selected Pat's suggestion. Bastienne also named *Shop Talk*, DC's freelancer newsletter of the 1980s and early 1990s.

A CRISIS AT DC

Despite the buzz DC was attracting in the creative community and on the stands, Marvel Comics remained number one. The perception among Marvel readers was that DC was impenetrable, with nearly fifty years of history and continuity prohibiting safe passageway into their universe. Marv

Wolfman had a flash of inspiration about how to make DC a player among those readers—while waiting for a train.

"I was waiting for Len Wein, Joe Staton, and (former DC editor) Laurie Sutton at Penn Station to go to a (1983) Pittsburgh convention," Wolfman relates. "They were fairly late and I was fairly early. I literally brainstormed *Crisis* while waiting for Len and Joe and Laurie."

Since the advent of DC's Silver Age in the late 1950s, DC's characters had resided on two worlds: Earth-One, home of the then-current versions of Superman, Batman, and their super friends, and Earth-Two, where the heroes from the Golden Age of the 1940s lived. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, more parallel worlds were introduced, including Earth-Three, home of the Crime Syndicate; Earth-S (as in "Shazam"), where you found Captain Marvel and the other characters DC acquired from defunct publisher Fawcett Comics; Earth-X, residence of Uncle Sam, the Phantom Lady, and the remaining freedom fighters once published by Quality Comics. These multiple worlds, coupled with hundreds of issues published on many of DC's titles, attracted few readers. So Wolfman envisioned a means to wipe the slate clean, allowing every series, every character, a new starting point.

Crisis on Infinite Earths positioned a catastrophic disaster that threatened to eradicate the entire multiverse, forcing heroes and villains to band together for survival. The climax would culminate in a DC continuity streamlined into one world. Wolfman made his pitch to his friends during their weekend train ride, and they were utterly wowed. The next step: selling executive editor Dick Giordano on the concept.

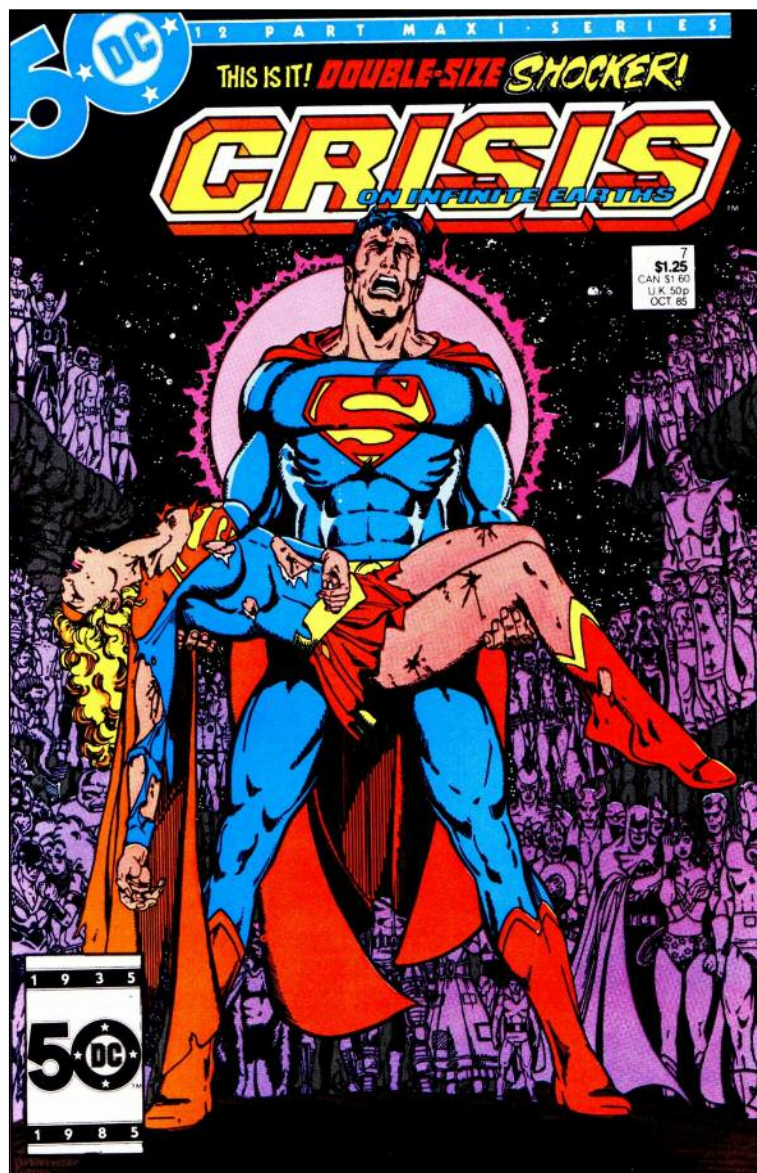
First thing Monday morning, Wolfman enthusiastically pitched the concept to Giordano. The author relates, “He loved it. There was no question. We immediately got up and

went into Jenette Kahn’s office and pitched it to her, and she loved it.” Paul Levitz was summoned into Kahn’s office for an impromptu confab. Upon the recapitulation of the concept for Levitz’s benefit, more details came to the fore. Giordano says, “To give *Crisis* resonance, somebody had to die.”

The principal target, suggested by Wolfman, was Supergirl. “I brought that in to Paul and Jenette,” Dick remembers. “They turned white,” especially since the 1984 motion picture *Supergirl* was a few months away from its release. But Giordano argued, “Let’s be realistic. Supergirl is Superman with boobs. She has no reason for being here. This is a dramatic story to offer.” Wolfman continued the pitch: “If Superman were revamped, he should be the only survivor of Krypton. Plus, by that point, the Supergirl character bore no resemblance to anything that made her interesting. She was hurting Superman, and nobody was buying her book. The idea was to do something major to say to the DC readers that everything had changed. Supergirl’s death would help the Superman books, it would indicate to the Marvel readers that these are not your father’s DC books.” In an aside, Wolfman confesses, “Of course, I always thought that in a few years, they’d create a new Supergirl. I never assumed otherwise. But for the moment, everything would be revitalized with *Crisis*.”

While *Crisis*, the series, quickly got the green light, Jenette Kahn and Paul Levitz spent weeks mulling over the

prospect of killing the Girl of Steel. Eventually, they signed Supergirl’s death warrant. And she was not alone on the executioner’s block.



“This is a dramatic story to offer,” argued Dick Giordano when lobbying for the death of Supergirl. He was right. ©2003 DC Comics.

With the help of Len Wein and associate editor Robert Greenberger, Marv Wolfman prepared a DC “death list” of characters he felt should be expunged from the mythos. Many were second bananas or ridiculously out of date—Aquagirl, Dove, Prince Ra-Man, and Bug-Eyed Bandit, to name a few—who provided little value to, or even detracted from, the overall line. However, Wolfman and Giordano were shocked by one character’s demise decreed by Jenette Kahn: the Flash. The sales on DC’s *Flash* monthly were seriously impaired by a lengthy, seemingly never-ending storyline featuring the Fastest Man Alive on trial for murder. Readers were bored and rapidly defecting from the title, and resuscitation was in order. “Flash was also selected for his weight as a character and for his role in DC’s history,” Dick recalls, “and to make it clear to the

readers that we were making changes.” Adds Marv, “Jenette suggested killing Flash, which I found as a surprise. She also wanted Hawkman dead, but I fought against that one.” Amid this talk of massacre, Dick Giordano smiled: this creative exchange signaled a new era for DC.

Who’s Who: The Definitive Directory of the DC Universe was Len Wein’s (abetted by Bob Greenberger) contribution to this massive renovation of DC’s characters. A 26-issue encyclopedia series, *Who’s Who* debuted with the March 1985 issue, followed one month later by the *Crisis on*

GIORDANO

REINVENTING
the rules

The first thing Dick Giordano did after leaving his DC Comics staff position was to shed his necktie. "I've worn a tie three times since then," he says. "Once was a funeral, the other two times were at weddings."

The second thing he did after retirement was to get to work.



Giordano returned to his first love, his drawing board (starting later in the morning than 4:00 AM, however). For the next three years he steadily commanded assignments from DC Comics, including inking a new *Catwoman* monthly series, Vertigo fill-ins ("Karen Berger calls me on fill-ins, because she knows I can imitate the style of the person who usually does the job," the artist explains), full art on the occa-

sional Batman job (like 1995's *Nightwing: Alfred's Return* one-shot), and random interior- and cover-inking assignments. Dick is ardently proud of *Modesty Blaise*, a 1994 graphic novel he illustrated, adapting the novel of the same name by Peter O'Donnell. *Modesty Blaise* is indisputably one of the most revered newspaper comic strips of all time, and its gorgeous, high-kicking heroine and the exotic locales of her adventures were perfectly captured in comic-book form by Giordano.

As a free agent, the artist began cultivating relationships with companies other than DC Comics. Giordano was approached by a potential publisher to serve as editorial supervisor for a venture called Totalvision, which would produce upscale illustrated novels for the bookstore market. Dick courted writer/artists Frank Miller, Howard Chaykin, and Bill Sienkiewicz for the series, but the project never reached fruition due to lack of financial backing.



Darick Robertson inked by Dick Giordano, from *Transmetropolitan* #3, March 1997. ©2003 Warren Ellis and Darick Robertson, and DC Comics.

his patented enthusiasm, excited that he would, at last in his long career, be able to illustrate a dinosaur story. Instead of a T-Rex, he got T-bones, as the script featured an ambulatory dinosaur skeleton rather than an actual flesh-and-blood dinosaur. "I've got all these dinosaur reference books with thousands and thousands of images of dinosaurs," he laughs, "and I get to draw *bones*!"

Knowing that readers expected *Cadillacs and Dinosaurs* to look like Schultz's work, he mimicked the creator's style, sparking the posting of online criticism Giordano found irritating: "What did they expect me to do, draw Popeye?" he exasperates. "I had his characters (model sheets) in front of me, so I copied them—that way it looked like Mark Schultz did it instead of Dick Giordano. If I had drawn them my way, it wouldn't have looked like the characters, because I don't draw girls like he does, and I don't draw heroes like he does. It wouldn't have been what readers expected."

Giordano adamantly argues that "swiping"—parroting another artist's style—is a legitimate practice when filling in for a regular artist, and has employed the process off and on throughout his career. Some editors appreciate Dick's chameleon-like ability to simulate other styles. DC's Karen Berger has recruited Giordano to sub on issues of *Sandman*, *Transmetropolitan*, *The Invisibles*, and *American Century*, and Giordano says she is enamored by his ability to keep the art consistent with its established style. "I always thought I did that well," offers Dick.

Topps Comics hired Giordano to illustrate the first three issues of its 1994 *Cadillacs and Dinosaurs* title, a continuation of the critically acclaimed and lushly rendered series by writer/artist Mark Schultz. Dick accepted the assignment with

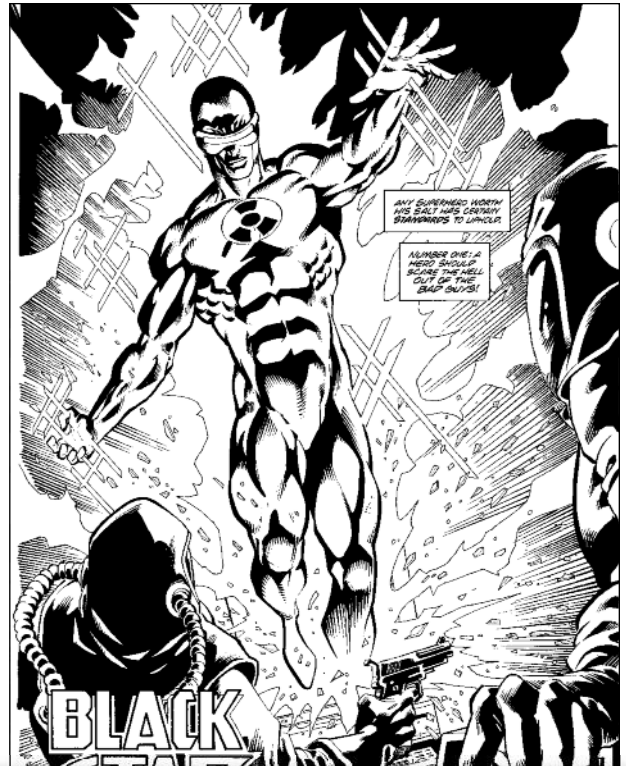
(left) Dick's most recent (as of this writing) Vertigo fill-in was in 2001 for *American Century* #7, where, he says, "I'm imitating someone else." The brushmaster is also the master of mimicry! ©2003 Howard Chaykin, Inc. and DC Comics.

(right) Giordano inks over Steve Parkhouse's pencils, from January 1999's *The Dreaming* #32. ©2003 Neil Gaiman and DC Comics.



NEW PARTNERSHIPS, OLD FRIENDS

Dick Giordano also found ample work from comic-book publisher Valiant Comics. Valiant, fronted by former Marvel Comics editor in chief Jim Shooter, got its start in 1991 by publishing comic books based on the video game "Super Mario Brothers" and on former Gold Key Comics titles *Magnus Robot Fighter*; *Solar*; *Man of the Atom*; and *Turok, Son of Stone*. Before long, Shooter was no longer with the company and Bob Layton was its editor in chief. The Super Marios were long since forgotten and the company's line had expanded with new super-hero comics.



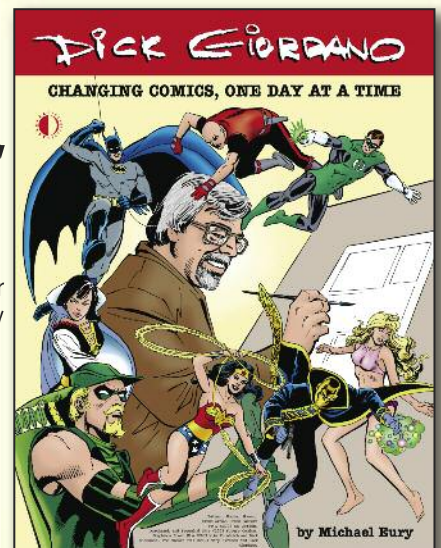
January 1996's *Solar*, *Man of the Atom*
Aaron Lopresti, inks by Dick Giordano. *Solar* ©2003

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