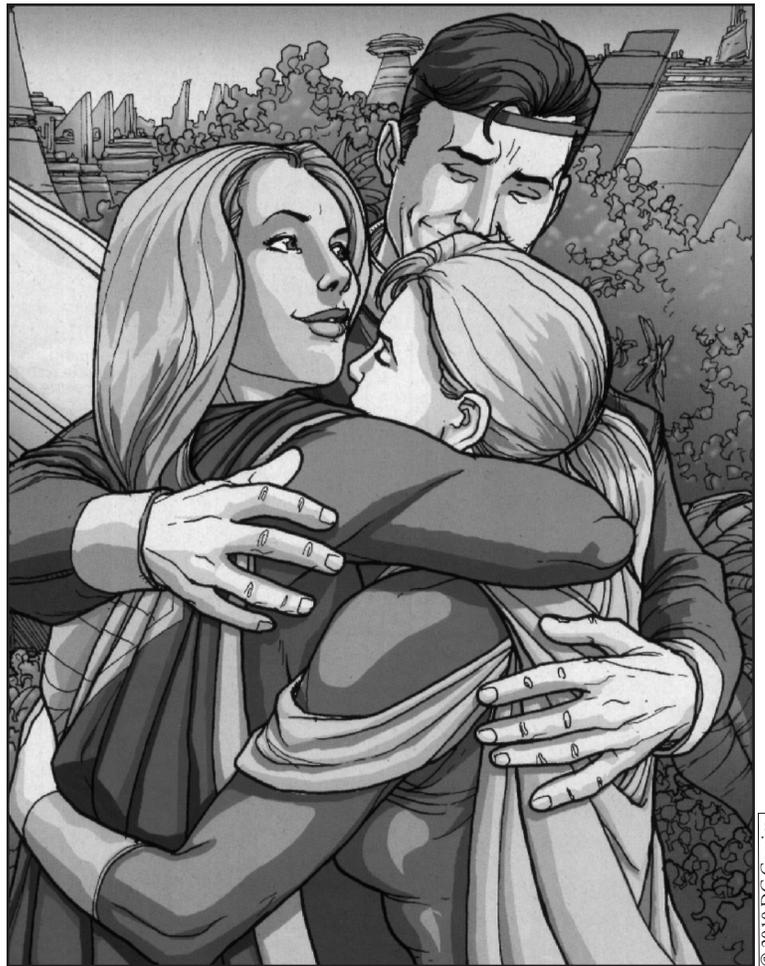
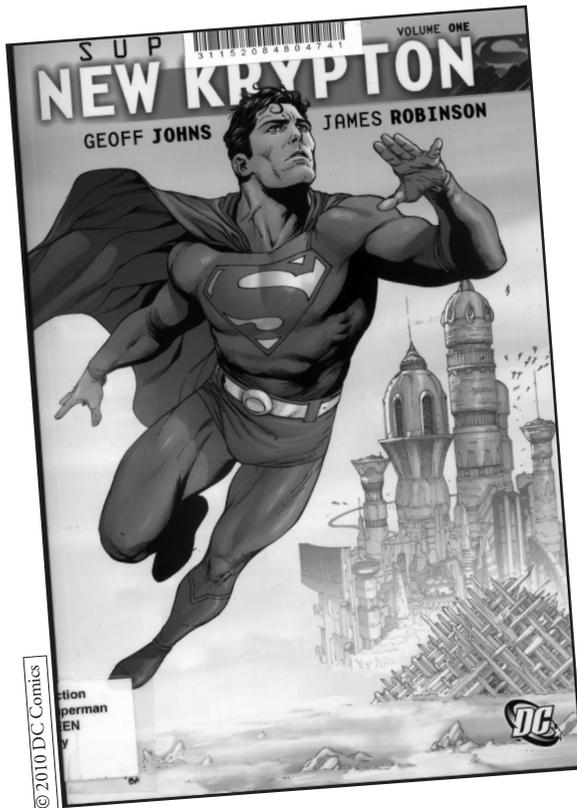


What follows are the opinions of Don Ensign, 250-A S Paseo Cerro, Green Valley, AZ 85614 (520) 829-7703 donensign@yahoo.com (www.sharingmystory.blogspot.com). ©2010 Don Ensign. Printed as a part of Alpha-Omega #155.

The Executioners Ezekiel 9



Superman: New Krypton



Superman: New Krypton

Vol. 1 DC Comics, 2009, 176 pp., \$17.99

This volume compiles several slightly connected storylines. The opening stories deal with Jimmy Olsen returning to investigate concepts Jack Kirby injected into his comic book series (Fourth World) in the early 1970s including a clone of the Guardian.

This book has an uneven quality in terms of story line. When I picked it up I was expecting stories about New Krypton/Kandor and yet we also have the aforementioned return to Kirby's 1970s Jimmy Olsen DNA project with sequences of Brainiac and Lex Luthor before we get into the New Krypton section. The most affecting scenes are the funeral of Jonathan Kent and Clark's family priority conflict with his Earth mother Martha Kent. Where does

his loyalty lay--with his blood relatives in Kandor or his Earth family? The premise in the last part of this book is the secret Kryptonian city (Kandor) and its super powered inhabitants being revealed to the world. Also arresting scenes are Superman's (Kal-el) and Supergirl's reunion with her parents, Zor and Alura. Martha Kent's welcoming of Krypto, the Super Dog is also heart warming. Besides these quiet, happy events we have several battles including a Kryptonian pile-on of a resuscitated Doomsday. Remember

him? The Hulk-wannabe who killed Superman back in the 1990s.

The artwork on this story ranges from competent to very good.

The visuals are by and large much "quieter" than the Teen Titans book. There are pages of well paced conversations and well as the usual fight scenes. My favorites of the seven pencilers are Jesus Merino, Gary Frank and Pete Woods.

New Krypton even with its convoluted storyline makes for a much more pleasant comic book reading experience than the Teen Titans book. ☺



Teen Titans: Child's Play

**Teen Titans:
Child's Play**
DC Comics, 2010, 208 pp.,
\$14.99



Back in the mid-1960s I came across a tryout book (*The Brave and the Bold*) with the adventures of a group called the Teen Titans. It was sort of a junior Justice League which took the proteges of the major DC super heroes and combined them into their own team. They were Robin, Speedy, Kid Flash and Wonder Girl. Sometime later they received their own title which lasted into the early 1970s and was revived in late 1976 and ended in 1978.

The *New Teen Titans* began in late 1980 under the creative tutelage of Len Wein (editor), Marv Wolfman (writer) and George Perez (penciler). This was one of the books that revived my interest in super hero comics. Wolfman and Perez were able to create characters that were likeable, that you cared about and had interesting problems and back stories. For several years it rivaled Marvel's decades-long fan favorite the *X-Men*. Anyone interested in super hero group comics knew the *New Teen Titans* were a must read. However, George Perez left the art chores and while Wolfman had some superb replacement pencilers the book was never the same. Over the years there have

been several reboots but none of them have equaled what Wolfman and Perez did on the book. "Child's Play" is largely a similar effort to grab the New Teen Titans aura, but for all its flamboyant and frenetic art, it doesn't make it. This book compiles seven issues of the most recent *Teen Titans* run (#71-78), The first story is a setup tale which centers on the conflict (verbal and physical) between the group's bad girls, Ravager (daughter of Deathstroke) and Bombshell (a sort of female Captain Atom) with Wonder Girl (Cassie Sandmark) trying to bring peace between the combatants. The next three issues presents an extended slugfest ("Child's Play") with the current Teen Titans (Wonder Girl, Ravager, Bombshell, Miss Martian, Aquagirl, Blue Beetle, Static Shock) and a group of super villain convicts (Mammoth, Shimmer, Jinx, Rumble, etc) who break out of Alcatraz. The next two issue storyline "Wild Thing" involves Gar Logan (Changeling, one of the original New Teen Titans) returning to take over leadership of the group from Wonder Girl. This story involves a battle against a giant, five animal-headed demonic monster. Raven (another former New Teen Titan) also appears and provides opportunities for flash backs to the glory days of the group. Next up is "A Family Affair" (and "Tortured Soul") which

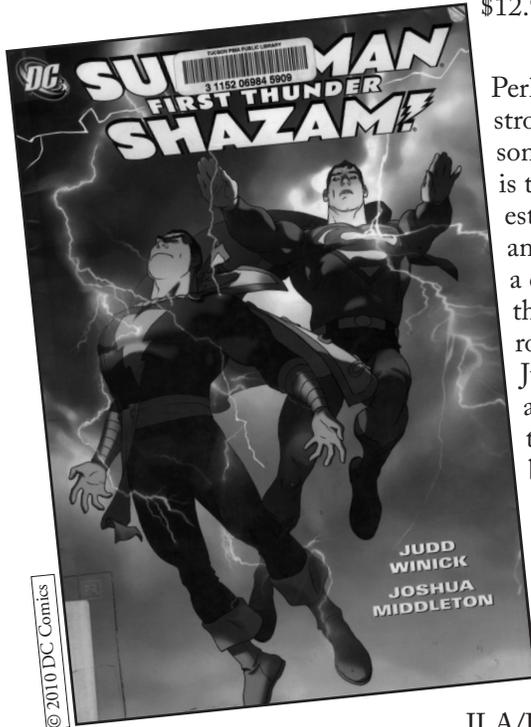
details the very dysfunctional family relationships between Slade Wilson (Deathstroke) and his two children Joseph (Jericho) and Rose (Ravager). This segment is particularly gruesome which much hacking and slashing of zombie versions of Slade's other family members (his former wife, and other children). [What is it with zombies!? Why does a segment of the younger generation(s) obsess with the "living" dead?] Some of the art in these stories can go toe-to-toe with the goriest that EC put out in their heyday. My overall impression. The art (even discounting the gross zombie stuff) by Joe Bennett and Yildray Cinar and their inkers in very dynamic, very energized. They are excellent with their anatomy and provide superb, diverse page layouts. These guys are at the top of their game. It's too bad the story is not nearly up to the level of the art. The writing exhibits very fleeting glimpses of interesting characterization. There are "normal" characters like Miss Martian and Wonder Girl that provide some balance between the extremely embittered and violent Ravager and Bombshell. The token male characters Blue Beetle, Static Shock, are largely ineffectual. The quiet scenes are overwhelmed by the over the top battle scenes that seem to fill most of the pages. This is not your grandfather's Teen Titans! ☹️



Superman/Shazam First Thunder

Superman/Shazam First Thunder

DC Comics, 2006, 128 pp.,
\$12.99

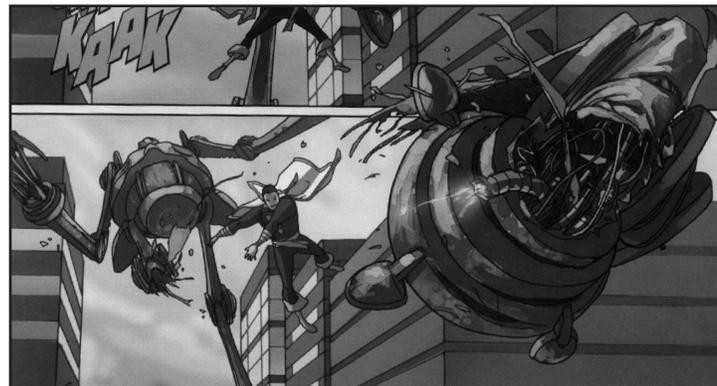


Perhaps one of the strongest things about some modern comics is their ability to take established legends and remold them into a compelling story that stays close to the roots of those legends. Judd Winick did a fine job retelling the first meeting between Superman and Captain Marvel. I admit I don't actually remember the first meeting between those two ionic heroes—perhaps in the

JLA/JSA/Shazam crossover in the early 1970s (?). Winick is able to hone in on what the defining difference is between the Man of Steel and the World's Mightiest Mortal. No, it's not that Superman has telescopic vision, x-ray vision, heat vision and Captain Marvel doesn't. No, it's not that Captain Marvel's powers are magic based and Superman's abilities can be explained by pseudo-science. The

major difference is that Superman is a mature adult who has grown into his super powers though many years of experience. Captain Marvel, on the other hand, is an eleven year old boy stuffed into a body that is invulnerable, super strong and can fly. He may at times call on the wisdom of Solomon—but still he has the emotional resources of a boy. The emphasis here besides his hero worship of Superman is Captain Marvel's inability to control his emotions. This comes out in his raging blind anger over the violent death of his young friend Scott in a gang assassination attempt. There is a nice symmetry in this story when Superman and Captain Marvel meet and they become friends and allies. The obligatory battle between the two heroes (we've already seen that back in the 1970s) is forsaken. This battle comradeship deepens into a truly friendship as they reveal their true identities to each other. [On the flipside Captain Marvel's archfoe, Dr. Sivana and Superman's prime nemesis Lex Luthor meet

and mutually hate each other. Why not—they are so much alike.] Winnick does a commendable job in developing the classic confrontation between the old wizard Shazam and Superman. The Man of Tomorrow questions the wisdom of delegating of tremendous powers to a young boy. Can Billy Batson bear it? It is "fate" is Shazam's response. As stated before the plot revolves around the meeting of the two superhero icons and the machinations of Dr. Sivana, Lex Luthor, Eclipso and Sabbac. Josh Middleton handles the entire art chores on this four-issue compilation. He does an excellent job making each hero keep their distinctives and yet they are essentially equals in raw power and strength if not in experience. Middleton is a graphic story teller who is able to deal masterfully with normal quiet conversation scenes as well as gritty brawls. Judd Winnick and Josh Middleton hit a home run with this story. This is the best of these three series. 🍌



News & Notes

Comic Watch: The graphic novels (actually compilations) I'm reviewing this issue are ones that I found in the local public library. I thought they are fairly representative of the material that one of the major publishers is producing over the past several years.

Comic Greats: I thought the very brief RIP last issue to Frank Frazetta needed to be re-enforced. The art samples were taken from from a compilation book published in 1991 by Eclipse Press called *Johnny Comet*. The stories were written by Earl Baldwin and Peter dePaolo. Enjoy the great Frazetta art. The newspaper strip was published in in 1952 and early 1953 and not bad for a 23-year old.

Captain Marvel Jr. Book: The last year or so I've been working on reading many, many stories published during the 1940s and early 1950s on the character Captain Marvel Jr. As mentioned before many of these now public domain stories are available free on the web and also from several dealers on DVD for inexpensive purchase. I have also gotten several more "reader copies" of *CMJ* and *Master Comics* via numerous dealers through e-Bay and gotten some photo copies of *CMJ* stories from Michigan State University. There were around *CMJ* 600 stories published during these years and I've read over 530 at this point. I don't plan to read the entire 600 as I've gotten good samplings from each period and year of *CMJ*'s run. I've also written short (sometimes not so short) plot summaries of each of these stories. This helps me to think through how the editors and writers constructed the plots and dealt with characterization and theme issues. I have visited *CMJ* in these pages several times over the years (*AO* #103, 148) and produced an extended article on his post war years published in *Alter Ego* #s 19-22. However with so much new/old Fawcett comics becoming available I decided to do an even more in-depth coverage of the character. I see this as a two to four year project as there is

so much material to read and evaluate. I hope to publish a book with my findings in the not too distant future. It will be somewhat similar to the recent lengthy article that was published in *Men of Mystery* #80 by AC Comics. I'm especially interested in the moral and spiritual underpinnings of the *CMJ* stories.

Steve Shipley

Welcome! Great to see you back in this pages again and with some color samples of your current artwork. Your work is maturing very nicely. As far as your question concerning doing web comics. While I'm not an expert there are several routes you can go. One, it doing a blog (through Wordpress or Blogspot) and uploading your comics to your personal blog site (I note you have a spiritual commentary blog on Blogspot). I've come across a number of blog sites (especially reprinting old comic books) that use this route. The advantages it that it is cheap (free) and relatively easy to do. The other method is to become involved in a multiple comics web site. Kurt Kolka does this with his Cardinal comic strip. He uses Comicssherpa.com but there are a number of others (like www.komikwerks.com). Another route is having your own personal website (www.steve-shipley.com) where you could store a lot of your comics. I came across a tribute web site for Alberto Giolitti (www.albertogiolitti.com) recently that houses a lot of his comics from Gold Key and other publishers.

Kevin Yong

Thanks for the 2010 San Diego Comic Con report. Sorry for the mass crowding. I understand as I was there two years ago with about the same size crowd (maybe a little more in 2010). Sorry for the bad planning on the part of the convention especially concerning the Saturday night mixer. Those sorts of events need to be open ended. Thanks for the great Con photos. Also thanks for your illustrated prose

Scruffy chapter. Well written as always with good gentle humor. I also enjoyed your World-Building Auto-Bio. It is important to publish this sort of personal creative background. Glad for your new air conditioned apartment and some part time work you are now getting.

Geoff Strout

Good review of the Neal Adams Batman book. When his stuff first appeared in the 1960s comic books it was overpowering--revolutionary. Liked you Wild Tangent drawing very much. Great stuff.

Eric Jansen

When the ACG super heroes Nemesis and Magicman came out in the 1960s I thought they were pretty lame even as a young reader. The problem is that Richard Hughes, the editor, really didn't like super heroes but felt forced into doing them because of market demand. His heart really wasn't into it. Also instead of reviving some of the company's old heroes from the 1940s like Black Terror, Fighting Yank, Pryoman, Captain Future or The Ghost he opted for these silly characters. The art by Chic Stone and the others were the strongest part of these stories. Your Legion drawings are as good as ever and it is amazing how you can knock those Silver Wolf breakdowns out.

Bob Wierdma

Thanks for the update on what's been happening. I'm amazed that it could get to 100 F in Ontario. In southern Arizona 100 plus F is normal for summer--it stay in air conditioning time. On the first page of your trib I first begin reading completely across your text and then I realized it was actually in three columns. I'd suggest making the column width a little wider.

Henry C.

Thanks for running the page you did for Jesse's story. Sorry for the hassles with Brian and with trying to get

Rob Marsh

Thanks for your tenure as Central mailer. You have passion and have stretched our thinking. I actually agree with much your analysis though not always with your solutions--or at least as I understand them it be. I am sorry you are so burnt out.

Steve MacDonald

Concerning your work ethic time usage problem here are some suggestions. You may have already tried this but here it is anyway. At the end of the year I map out a series of objectives that I want to accomplish during the upcoming year. I make a calendar (on the computer or by hand) for the year. When something has a specific date I plug it into the calendar. For instance, I plug in the deadlines for AO tribs and then determine when I need to start working the tribs in order to complete them. I have a list of activities I want to be involved in (events, trips, art or writing projects, etc). I also have a list of books (from other years) that I need to finish reading or purchase. During the year I refer periodically back to these lists of activities, appointments, projects and reading assignments to see if I am on track. I also write up a weekly schedule and pin it up in my kitchen wall so I can be reminded of what I want to accomplish during the week. I also do a "To Do List" daily that helps me to stay on schedule. Do I get everything done on a daily, weekly or annual basis that I want to accomplish? No, sometimes I forget to look at my lists and schedules! However I get a lot more done by doing this method especially as a single man without a spouse to remind me of these things. Do I get what I want to accomplish within the time frame set aside for it? Sometimes yes and sometimes no! I see time as rapidly fleeting away. What kind of footprint am I leaving for future generations when my time on this Earth is over and I go to my eternal home? Driven? Somewhat, but I do have time to watch some entertainment videos, an occasional movie, read magazines and comic books. A lot of it stems from what your goals

are. The activities you do should be oriented toward accomplishing those goals. Also you can't do everything. Sometimes you will have to say "no" the projects people want to involve you in. You need to know what you are about and what is really important to you. Also be realistic about how long a project will take to complete. As mentioned above the CMJ book is a two to four year project because of the massive amount of material to be researched and analyzed. Also be realistic about what projects you can accomplish. Don't become involved in something so massive that the prob-

ability of failure is great. Again for example the CMJ book is a major time undertaking, However I have a number of other similar projects that I've completed over the years. This one is probably the most ambitious but I do have a track record.

Frank Humphris

With so many comics vendors on the internet going to a brick and mortar comics shop can be a thing of the past. Frank sorry you haven't gotten the constructive criticism you're desired . If you want to share your current e-mail I'll attempt to do so in the future.

AO Forum:

(Rob I appreciate you coming up with these questions but I'd like to know your thinking is on them.)

Extraterrestrial aliens: We've gone through this question before (AO #42) but I'm sure lot of newer members haven't visited this question. A number of Christian writers and researchers over the past several decades have dealt with UFOs and life on other planets. The consensus is that UFO phenomena and occultic phenomena are very similar (even some prominent UFO advocates acknowledge this). Hence the idea that UFOs, which can't be explained by natural forces or hoaxes, are products of supernatural/demonic forces. If the Bible is correct that God created life (including man) on Earth by supernatural acts (not evolutionary processes) and we have no record He did likewise on other planets we are limited on how we can use outer space aliens. Kevin years ago came up with a creative way around this problem by having pre-flood man develop space travel technology that would plant humans on other planets before the Flood (Kevin I hope I'm remembering your scenario correctly).

This would allow aliens to be the sons of Adam (affected by the Fall and the Curse).

As far as being "distracting" probably not more than anything else in life. I see the Lordship of Christ as a mandate, not to escape the corrupting influence of the world by retreating to a monastery or a holy church huddle, but to confront the world with the truth of Christ wherever we can. Yes I know the world is corrupt and corrupting but probably no more so than during the days of Jesus or Paul (see Matthew 16:18, II Cor. 10:5). Yes, personal holiness is vital but we are not to so isolate ourselves from the world that the Lord has commanded us to win through His empowerment.

If "space aliens" can be used to convey Biblical truth (i.e. they are deceptive occultic/demonic beings or some other explanation consistent with scripture) I don't see a big problem. ☺

**COMIC
GREATS
Frank
Frazetta**

Johnny **COMET**

I'VE GOT A HUNCH HE WANTS TO KEEP ME OUT OF THE CENTINELLA SWEEPSTAKE RACE!

LATER AS JOHNNY DRIVES JAYSON HOME IN THE MOONLIGHT...
SO JAYSON WAS A SWINDLER...
YEP...AND THE STOCK CAR RACES HAVE BEEN CALLED OFF.



JOHNNY MAKES DASH FOR THE SIDE WINDOW...

Great Action & Composition

POPS WAYSIDE GAS STATION
GOOD EATS
GAS 28¢
TOO BAD ALL ROADS AREN'T DOWNHILL. THEN ONLY PEOPLE GOING UP WOULD HAVE TO BUY GAS.

IN THE NICK OF TIME JOHNNY PULLS OUT OF HIS SPIN AND STARTS TO ROAR DOWN THE STRAIGHT-A-WAY.

WHAT'S THE IDEA OF LOCKING ME OUT?
IT'S OKAY, OFFICER. THAT'S JOHNNY COMET.. ONE OF MY BOARDERS.

AT THIS VERY MOMENT...

YIPE!



Beautiful Women



Great Characters

