

DITKOMANIA

Volume 1 Issue 46

50 cents

MARCH 1997

FANZINE BECOMES NEWSLETTER

After a year and half hiatus I felt that it was time for DITKOMANIA to return. The more time that passed since the previous issue the harder it became to produce an issue.

The computer that I used to create the recent issues (the really early issues were done with a typewriter, razor blade and paste) decided to die an agonizing, file-destroying death.

When I purchased a new computer it was with a dream of a DITKOMANIA reaching new heights of quality. I even bought a scanner for artwork.

I plan on publishing an issue every month. If you would like to send me any news, comments or Ditko snapshots I can be reached at Ditkomania@AOL.com.

This format is less expensive for me to produce so your subscription will be for twice as many issues as you had owed to you.

THE BIG STORY: YOUR SUBSCRIPTION ENDS WITH ISSUE #100



DITKO SLEEPS AT HIS DRAWING BOARD SOMETIME BETWEEN 1958 AND 1966!

In the 14 years that I have published DITKOMANIA three questions have been frequently asked.

1-What is Ditko's address and phone number?

2-What does Ditko look like?

3-What does Ditko think of DITKOMANIA?

Although I have kept quiet previously about his address and phone number it is not really a secret. He has a studio in New York City. From that you should be able to obtain his address and phone number.

The only picture I have of Ditko (besides the picture of a fifteen-year-old Ditko in a crowd scene that Cat Ironwood used for an ad that appeared in the COMICS

BUYERS GUIDE 15 years ago for a biography that she was planning to publish until Ditko canceled his support after discovered that she had been interviewing his brother) is this one from THE ART OF STANTON.

Ditko received the first 44 issues of DITKOMANIA. He then sent me a letter which he had clearly marked as not for publication indicating his displeasure.



Ditko in 1943 from a promo for the never-published ART OF STEVE DITKO.

NEW DITKO COMIC RELEASED

STEVE DITKO'S STRANGE AVENGING TALES #1 was released this week.

The first item is the Baffler featuring Ditko's wash technique that has not been seen since his EERIE and CREEPY work for Warren publications during the sixties. The artwork can't be faulted and the Baffler is an intriguing cross between Mr. A.

and Dr. Strange. This is pure Ditko at his clearest. Any lack of understanding is evidently caused by the reader's shortcomings.

The second tale is a Ditkophrenic, er schizophrenic, rehash of Stevenson's inspired Jekyll and Hyde tale.

"In Due Time" gives us more classic Ditko styling while highlighting exactly what the frequently maligned Stan Lee added to those Ditko/Kirby fantasy tales of the early sixties, reasoned perspective.

The final tale is an attempted triumph of form over substance while hammering the reader with Randian ideals.

Even though the last two pages of this comic are text and not by Ditko I must comment on them. The top of the page declares **A 300-Page Interview with Steve Ditko** in the next issue of . . .

THE COMICS JOURNAL

(Nah, not really!)

It then goes on to explain that Ditko declines to be interviewed anytime, anywhere by anyone. (I guess the three fanzine interviews don't count.) It then presents excerpts from COMICS JOURNAL interviews with Seth, Stan Sakai and Gil Kane discussing Secretive Steve.

The next page is a full page standard ad for the COMICS JOURNAL with this description tacked on - "The magazine that talks about but not with Steve Ditko"

But wait there's more. We are informed that each issue contains Reviews of Comics Ditko may have heard of; aesthetic criticism that may infuriate Ditko; biting

commentary on the profession that probably leaves Ditko shaking his head in disgust or bemusement.

STEVE DITKO'S STRANGE AVENGING TALES #2 is due out in May and the first issue has been out less than a week so your local Comics Shop can probably back-order it for you.

MUST READING

First is COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE. If you read every issue cover to cover you WILL find a Ditkofact.

Issue #44 was devoted to Wally Wood. Even though it barely touched on the fact that they were extremely close pals, it did have an excellent article by Ditko-collaborator, DITKOMANIA-contributor and novelist Will Murray about the untold secret origin of Spider-Man.

My second recommendation is for THE JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR. This publication is part of the reason that there hasn't been an issue of DITKOMANIA for such a long time. The high standards that THE JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR has set for fan publishing is intimidating.

It is magazine-sized and each issue has a theme. The latest issue (#14) spotlighted Thor. The next issue ships April 20 and its focus is science fiction. A sample copy is \$4.95 from : TwoMorrrows Advertising 502 Saint Mary's St. Raleigh, NC 27605

Last but certainly not least is the recently revived IT'S A FANZINE. It is an old-fashioned style publication that has been around for a stunning 17 years. It is jam-packed with articles and artwork. If you like comics you'll love IT'S

A FANZINE! A sample copy is a mere \$2.50 from: Gene Kehoe 1421 Bertch Ave. Waterloo, IA 50702

As a further incentive to try either THE JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR or IT'S A FANZINE tell them that DITKOMANIA sent you and I will add 2 issues to your subscription. (and yes - that means if you try both I will add 4 issues!!)

ONE OTHER COMIC WAS RELEASED IN THE LAST YEAR AND A HALF WITH NEW DITKO ARTWORK

MARVEL: HEROES & LEGENDS is an odd comic. It is a retelling of FANTASTIC FOUR ANNUAL #3, the classic wedding of Sue and Reed issue. The cover declares that it assembles the top talents of Marvel's pantheon - Stan Lee, Terry Austin, John Buscema, Sal Buscema, Gene Colan, Steve Ditko, Ron Frenz, Al Milgrom, Fabian Nicieza, Tom Palmer, Bill Reinhold, John Romita Sr., Marie Severin and Joe Sinnott.

6 pages of the Fantastic Four and Doc Doom pencilled by Ditko and inked by Reinhold doing his best to make it look like the sixties Ditko (and succeeding!) 'nuff said?

Matt Groening presents 49 THINGS THAT DISTURBED ME WHEN I WAS A CHILD

45. The way Steve Ditko drew women in early Spider-Man comics.

(TREEHOUSE OF HORROR #1, 1995)

DITKOMANIA

published by Bill Hall; 556 Main Street; Cromwell, CT 06416

Volume 1 Issue 47

50 cents

April 1997

NO NEW DITKO ARTWORK

since last month's issue of this newsletter.

OCTOBER 1993

brought an exciting release for Ditko fans - the DARK DOMINION ZERO ISSUE, a 150 trading card set masquerading as a comic book. A limited edition binder completed the transformation.

In September 1993, in the COMIC'S BUYER'S GUIDE #1035 a news release stated- "The most evil of all the characters is the treacherous Chasm, Alexander's arch-enemy. Chasm feeds off human paranoia and molds it into negative energy. Chasm also is the lead character in an eight-page "Origin of Chasm" comic book that can be found only in the albums. Each album contains one "Origin of Chasm" comic book."

I own 3 albums - none of which included this bonus comic book. Was "Origin of Chasm" published?

The CBG #1035 release continues - "While thousands of Level One and Level Two cards exist, only 10 Level Three cards have been individually hand-created by Ditko. Each Level Three card is an original Ditko artwork."

Has anyone heard of any of these Level Three cards being located?



Ditko's only STAR WARS artwork.

The back of this 1993 Topps Star Wars card boasts an archetypal Ditko quote - "I don't understand how that is meant," answers Steve Ditko when asked about what inspired him to do this STAR WARS rendering. "The card situation was given to me to illustrate."

JACK KIRBY IS THE KING

I don't know where that leaves Ditko but if you don't think Kirby was (and is) the King of Comics, you need to study the subject

further. Eventually you will reach the inevitable epiphany.

This is not to demean Ditko. I believe that that if there had not been any other comic artists working from the mid-fifties until the mid-seventies, comics would have evolved at just the same rate.

Near the end of Jack Kirby's life Diamond Distributors promoted his Topps' Comics work by pointing out what he had accomplished during his sixty years in the business, including these career statistics -

Most Pages Published in a Single Year: 1,158 pages in 1962

Most Pages Published in a Single Month: 142 pages in September 1947.

Most Covers Published in a Single Year: 102 covers in 1964.

Career Total: 20,318 pages.

Career Total: 1,385 covers.

The logical question is "How does Ditko compare?"

DITKO'S STATS

Most Pages Published in a Single Year: 701 pages in 1963.

Most Pages Published in a Single Month: 88 pages in Mar. 1962

Most Covers Published in a Single Year: 31 covers in 1972.

Career Total: 12,026 pages

Career Total: 374 covers

GUEST REVIEW

by

Rob Imes

Yes, \$3.00 is a bit steep for a 22-page B&W book, especially from a miser like me, but I'll gladly pay that much for the simple wonderful feeling of buying a brand-new Ditko comic -- ESPECIALLY one that is 100% Ditko. For all the drawbacks that "100% Ditko" may imply, I find the results far more interesting than something he simply penciled.

I thought the shading on the first story -- not having seen Ditko's Warren work -- was unusual and effective, occasionally giving scenes a 3-D effect. Since the comic wouldn't be in color, Ditko's greys act as his color... although by the end of the comic, he has repudiated the very notion of greyness (page 22).

The art was great for the most part (I don't care for the final panel on page 5, too corny-looking) and seemed to cry out its mastery, that the very drawings are instructive to those wanting to draw.

I thought the caricatures on page 7 were unkind and crude, especially since the sentiments of most of the speakers sounded rational to me.

"In Due Time" was vaguely reminiscent of the 5-page Marvel fantasy tales although not nearly as charming or charmingly-drawn.

"Clyde & Claude" was silly when compared to more powerful Ditko revenge tales like "My Brother..." (MURDER #3), but I found it enjoyable nonetheless.

Pages 20-21 are the real bafflers: I've no idea what Ditko is trying to say here...but that's not necessarily a bad thing either. I thought the art throughout was excellent... as I said, it is very instructive. I would have preferred to see something more in the vein of the stuff that

was in *Revolver & Ditko's World*, though -- some eight-page tales with a beginning, middle, & end.

I'm quite a big fan of some of those stories like "The Hand of Ages" and those 1985-era Mysterious Traveler tales he did, most of which ended up in *Revolver/Ditko's World/Murder*.

To reiterate, I enjoyed STEVE DITKO'S STRANGE AVENGING TALES #1. In fact, I'm thinking I might even start buying some more new comics again.



An example of Ditko's classic Warren work.

DITKO IN CYBERSPACE

Many of you took me to task for not acknowledging that there is an excellent website that pays homage to Ditko. Its address is <http://www.geocities.com/Hollywood/7941/index.htm>

"With Dr. Strange, Ditko redefined magic, before that it was all Mandrake the Magician stuff."-Jim Shooter on QVC hawking a hundred dollar Dark Dominion item.

DITKOMANIA

An interesting statement from the man who became a professional comic writer at age 13. Given my Ditko-obsession it is natural that I would like to credit Ditko for as many innovations in the medium as possible.

Ditko the Objectivist redefining anything spiritual, except to dispute it, is an ironic concept. My grasp of Ditko's Randian ideals is that there is one reality. A harsh reality where you are good or evil - no in between., and being good is not any guarantee of victory. No Heaven or Hell, just chemical-accident sentience for your lifespan where you chose to be a part of the solution or a part of the problem.

It is difficult for me to reconcile this philosophy with Ditko's many fine occult tales. It has been even been theorized that Ditko is the only Objectivist in comics - all the rest are Subjectivists.

Something that CAN be researched and proved or disproved is supplied by Christoph Melchert. In SHOCKWAVE #92. Examining AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #32 he observes "Ditko gives us three small panels of Peter grieving, hiding his face from us, then a page-wide panel of him smashing a desk in rage. To punctuate a dramatic turn by cutting from a small panel to a large, this way, became commonplace in the 1970's, but the artists of the '70's learnt it from artists like Ditko in the '60's."

Christoph Melchert is a longtime comic historian so my inclination is trust his observation. If you should happen to be reading a comic from before this time period (1966) be aware of the dramatic use of panel layout, or lack thereof. I will be doing the same. Between us maybe we can document this as a true innovation by Sturdy Steve.

DITKOMANIA

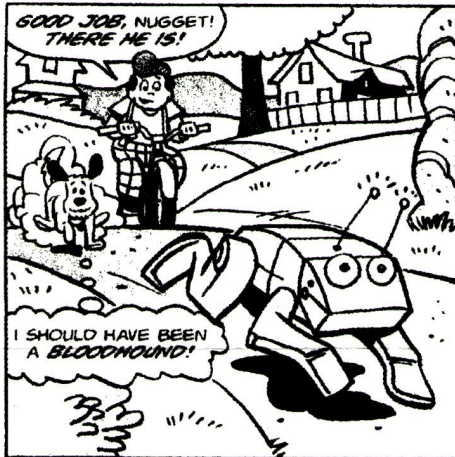
Volume 1 Issue 48

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published by Bill Hall; 556 Main Street; Cromwell, CT 06416

MAY 1997

NEW DITKO ARTWORK



Big Boy and Nugget's Ditko adventure!

You can get this comic for free. It is BIG BOY MAGAZINE from the same named restaurant. Frisch's Big Boy is located in Ohio, Indiana and Kentucky. Bob's Big Boy is in California, Delaware, Hawaii, Maryland, New Jersey and Virginia. Kip's Big Boy can be found in Texas and Elias Big Boy is in Michigan.

It boasts a charming five page story penciled by Ditko, inked by Luke McDonnell and written by Craig Boldman who shares the following -

"When I was told that Ditko would be doing the penciling for the issue, I wanted to write something that I thought would suit him. The story involves a weird robot which constantly changes its configuration, from a sort of robot dog to a robot bird to a fish to a monkey, etc. I thought that Ditko could concoct a really imaginative, weird-looking machine to fit the bill.

Well, I always do my scripts in 'storyboard' form -- I basically sketch out the story in extremely loose form. The artist is not expected to follow my layouts; I merely do them to present the story in a clear fashion. But apparently, Steve wasn't made aware of this, and he actually followed my layouts fairly closely, and even used my rough doodle of the robot as the basis for the robot he drew. The result was, Steve did a great job and was the consummate professional, but I ended up defeating my own purpose by providing those roughs. I would much rather have seen Steve go his own way. Having said that, however, it's still a lot of fun to share a credit box with one of the greats!

One of the really rewarding things about working on this comic -- To stop in the restaurant and actually be able to observe kids as they read it. (Though just as many of them are busily coloring the picture on the back!) This may well be many kids' first comic book. It's fun to work on a book that is seen by "regular people" as opposed to hard-core comics fans. It's good to spread Ditko's name out to that crowd, too."

DITKO COMICS I MISSED

(But not missed by Chris Harper and Bob Heer)

1995

SABAN'S MIGHTY MORPHIN POWER RANGERS [Marvel]

2 Dec "A Simple Misunderstanding" [10 pages] {Ditko pencils/ Jim Amash and Pond Scum inks}

1996

SABAN'S MIGHTY MORPHIN POWER RANGERS; NINJA RANGERS/ VR TROOPERS [Marvel]

5 Apr "The Boy Trooper" [10 pages] {Ditko pencils, Tom Christopher inks}



From SABAN'S MIGHTY MORPHIN POWER RANGERS/ VR TROOPERS #5

INTEGRATION INNOVATORS

FIGHT COMICS #2, released in 1940, told the life story of black boxing champ Joe Louis.

On June 18, 1941 A. Philip Randolph and others met with President Roosevelt about their proposed March on Washington on July 1 to protest discrimination in war industries. A week later Roosevelt signed an Executive Order forbidding discrimination in war industries. Randolph called off the march

In one panel of the Sub-Mariner story in ALL-WINNERS SQUAD #14 there was a black waiter on a ship. The book is dated April 1941.

Jack Kirby and Joe Simon created a teen-aged sidekick group called the Young Allies in the summer of 1941. One of the members was "Whitewash" Jones, a Harlem black kid with a harmonica. YOUNG ALLIES COMICS lasted 20 issues and five years.

U.S. Supreme Court ~~banned~~ segregation on interstate buses on June 3, 1946. April 9, 1947, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) sent the first Freedom Rider group to test the ban.

In 1947 Joe Lewis fought Billy Conn on the cover and inside TRUE SPORT PICTURE STORIES.

Jackie Robinson was the first black American to play major league baseball. On April 15, 1947, Robinson played his first game for the Brooklyn Dodgers. He endured spikings, death threats, hate mail and more.

Four months after Robinson's entry, Larry Doby was signed by the Cleveland Indians and was the first black player in the American League.

Black newspaper writer Orrin Evans produced ALL NEGRO COMICS #1, dated June 1947. It was the only comic produced by, marketed to and featuring blacks. A second issue was never printed because Evans' newsprint source would no longer sell to him - nor would any of the other vendors.

PARENTS' MAGAZINE published two issues of NEGRO HEROES, dated Spring 1947 and Summer 1948, featuring all-reprinted material.

President Truman issued Executive Order 9981 on July 26, 1948 mandating equality of opportunity in the armed forces, effectively integrating troop units.

On Halloween 1950 Earl Lloyd made his debut as the first black NBA basketball player.

In 1950 Fawcett published three issues of NEGRO ROMANCE, two issues of JOE LOUIS and a one-shot of ROY CAMPANELLA, BASEBALL HERO. From 1950 to 1952 they published six issues of JACKIE ROBINSON.

In 1953 EC Comics published "Judgement Day" in WEIRD FANTASY #18. A space-suited Earthman tours Cybrinia, a planet of orange and blue robots. The only difference between the robots was skin color but the blues were victims of prejudice and segregation. In the last panel the Earthman removes his helmet to be revealed as a black man.

On May 17, 1954 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that racial segregation in public schools was unconstitutional.

NEGRO ROMANCE #2 was reprinted as NEGRO ROMANCES #4 in 1955.

Excluding these anomalies, until the sixties, blacks appeared in jungle books spotlighting heroic whites.

Rosa Parks was arrested in Montgomery, Alabama, for refusing to give up her bus seat to a white man on December 1, 1955. The Montgomery Bus Boycott began. On November 13, 1956 the U.S. Supreme Court upheld a lower-court decision banning segregation on Montgomery, Alabama, city buses. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and other boycott leaders called off the boycott a month later after gaining concessions from the bus company.

On July 21, 1959, the Boston Red Sox became the last major league baseball team to break the color barrier, when Pumpsie Green pinch ran.

On February 1, 1960 students in Greensboro from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University began at the Woolworth lunch counter, by February 10 the movement spread to five other southern cities.

In May President Eisenhower signed the Civil Rights Act of 1960. In October Dr. King was arrested for sitting in at lunch counters in Atlanta, Georgia, and given a harsh sentence. Presidential candidate John Kennedy called Coretta Scott King to express his sympathy.

In 1962 OUR ARMY AT WAR #113 had an appearance by a black World War II soldier named Jackie Johnson.

Marvel Comics in 1963 in SGT. FURY AND HIS HOWLING COMMANDOS #1, had black World War II commando Gabe Jones as one of the Howlers. The pencils were by Jack Kirby. Gabe Jones appeared in all of the issues of this title. When Marvel turned Nick Fury into their entry in the 1965 spy craze, Gabe Jones was there too.

Ditko's efforts helped make the Marvel Universe the first truly integrated comic universe. The following checklist is offered as proof:

AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #4 [9/63]

Black cop - page 17, panel 5 - page 19, panel 6

Peter's Black neighbor - page 21, panel 3

AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #9 [2/64]

Black prisoner - page 14, panel 1 - page 18, panel 1

AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #12 [5/64]

Black pedestrian - page 14, panel 3

AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #23 [4/65]

Black cop - page 3, panels 1, 2 & 3 - page 7, panel 5

Black pedestrian - page 4, panel 4

AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #24 [5/65]

Black pedestrians - page 6, panel 1

AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #27 [8/65]

Black cop - page 4, panels 2 & 3 - page 5, panels 3 & 6 - page 6, panels 1 & 2 - page 7, panel 3 - page 8, panel 1 - page 13, panel 1

AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #28 [9/65]

Two black high school students - page 2, panel 1

Black member of Peter Parker's graduating class - page 3, panels 2 & 3

Black pedestrian couple - page 8, panel 5

Two black members of Peter's graduating class - page 17, panel 4

Black member of Peter's graduating class and a black father - page 17, panel 5

Black student and his parents - page 18, panel 4

STRANGE TALES #136 [9/65]

Black follower of Mordo - page 3, panel 2

AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #29 [10/65]

Black pedestrian - page 2, panel 3 - page 7, panel 1

Black Daily Bugle employee - page 8, panel 6

AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #31 [12/65]

Black Empire State University student - page 9, panels 3 & 4 - page 10, panel 3 - page 13, panel 7

AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #33 [2/66]

Aunt May's black doctor - page 14, panels 1 & 3 - page 19, panel 5

Black Daily Bugle employee - page 16, panel 4

AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #34 [3/66]

Black pedestrian - page 6, panel 4 - page 8, panels 2 & 3

AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #37 [6/66]

Black Daily Bugle employee - page 3, panel 8

Black member of a crowd - page 8, panel 1

STRANGE TALES #145 [6/66]

Black surgeon operates on Doc Strange - page 5, panels 1-6 - page 10, panels 6 & 7

Black pedestrian - page 3, panels 1-3

AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #38 [7/66]

Black boxer - page 1, panel 2 - page 2, panels 1, 2 & 3 - page 14, panels 1, 2 & 3 - page 15, panels 1 & 4 - page 16, panel 2 - page 17, panel 6 - page 18, panel 3

Black college student - page 10, panel 7 - page 11, panel 7

Unfortunately, Ditko left Marvel in 1966. Whatever disagreements Ditko might have had with Stan Lee they seemed to agree that the day of all-white superhero universes had ended.

In Ditko's final month of his first stint at Marvel, Lee and Kirby introduced the first black superhero to the Marvel Universe. Blacks finally gained the ultimate comic book equality with the debut of the noble Black Panther in FANTASTIC FOUR #52 [7/66].



The Marvel Universe's first black cop - the first black to appear in AMAZING SPIDER-MAN.

DITKOMANIA

Volume 1 Issue 49

50 cents

published by Bill Hall; 556 Main Street; Cromwell, CT 06416

JUNE 1997

NEW DITKO ARTWORK

since last month's DITKOMANIA - none.

IT'S OFFICIAL

STEVE DITKO'S STRANGE AVENGING TALES #2 has been canceled.

TONY TALKS

by TONY ISABELLA

(Excerpted from Tony's Tips ©Tony Isabella, from COMICS BUYERS GUIDE #994 - Dec. 4, 1992):

You can't imagine, unless you experienced it firsthand, that Marvel Comics experience of the 1960s. Those who compare it with the Image Comics phenomenon or even the Marvel successes of today couldn't be more off the mark. Image and Marvel 1992 are instant-gratification comic books. They're geared to the brief attention spans of readers more attuned to visual stimulation over all else. They *are* just looking at the pictures.

Marvel 1963 made and demanded of its readers a commitment to its bold new style. Lee and his artists were breaking the rules of comic-book creation every month. They were building an entire universe, whether they were consciously aware of their fictional engineering or not. The readers were somehow made to feel we were part of the whole process, as well.

My new heroes were Lee, Kirby, Ditko, Heck, and Ayers. Other names would be added to the list, as Marvel's universe grew. These five were the first. They "got" me into comics.

Ditko had two of the most realized worlds within the newborn Marvel Universe. His Doctor Strange stories were, literally, mind-boggling. His Spider-Man setting felt exactly like the streets I lived on.

JULY 27, 1964

That is the date of the first New York Comicon. It was a Monday and organizer Bernie Bubnis hoped that would increase his odds of getting professionals from DC and Marvel to attend. No pros from DC bothered to show; editors Julie Schwartz and Murray Boltinoff supplied original art for door prizes. Stan Lee sent David Twedt, a college student who was working at Marvel, and Flo Steinberg (Lee's secretary).

Twedt answered fans' questions about Marvel. During the Question & Answer session Steve

Ditko quietly entered and sat in the audience. Twedt referred a question about how much writers and artists got paid to Ditko. Ditko remained silent and shook his head.

"One thing I noticed about Steve Ditko. When he talks, he uses his hands and fingers just like Spider-Man" - Dave Bibby, one of the fortunate fifty fans that saw Ditko's only convention appearance.

WHEN STAN AND STEVE DID NOT COMMUNICATE

by CHRISTOPH MELCHERT

Together, Stan Lee and Steve Ditko produced some remarkably good comics. There is probably bound to be miscommunication in any collaboration, though, and we should expect to find the most evidence of it when a team is coming apart. I recently came across a couple instances in MARVEL MASTERWORKS #10. In the story from AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #24 (May 1965), page 9/ panel 8, there is a word balloon in lettering that does not match the rest and was obviously added just before printing: Spider-Man thinks, "Glad I didn't forget to grab my spider beam again." I checked the original edition, and lo, it was there, as well -- it wasn't from the MARVEL TALES reprint. It's an example of misunderstanding between editor Stan and plotter Steve, for Peter goes back at the beginning of the next issue to retrieve that very spider beam.

There is a more serious misunderstanding in AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #30 (November 1965), wherein Spider-Man faces a modestly costumed cat burglar, who is caught at the end, and also a mysterious gang of costumed hijackers looking for "uranium derivatives," who will turn out next issue to be working for the Master Planner, who turns out the issue after that to be Dr. Octopus. (Of course he would direct a gang to steal radioactive material: he started out as a physicist, remember?) The cat burglar is never seen with the gang, and none of the gang has been apprehended at the end. Yet Stan's word balloons make members of the gang refer to "The Cat" as their boss, while the cat burglar is made to scheme how to bring down Spider-Man (pages 12 and 13).

Interestingly, Stan's goof is pointed out by a letter printed in AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #34 (March 1966) from Richard Weingard of Castro Valley, California:

What happened to Spidey? I'm referring to the botched up SPIDER-MAN #30. You seem to have forgotten to put a plot in it. You started off with a crook called the Cat Burglar, who thinks he is

too insignificant for Spidey to fight. Then you have a gang of masked crooks whose leader is the Cat. Somewhere along the line you mix up the two and end with the Cat Burglar being captured while being called the Cat.

Plainly, it was Stan's mistake to connect the gang and the cat burglar, and Mr. Weingard needn't have been confused. Yet his mistake is understandable. Ditko was thinking in terms of a four-issue series, from 30 to 33. It starts off with some minor irritants, the gang and the cat burglar. The gang manages to elude him for the time being and Spider-Man just misses getting a reward for capturing the cat burglar. Meanwhile, Ned Leeds has proposed to Betty Brant and Spider-Man seems to be driving her apart from Peter. (I have heard that it was Ditko's plan for Leeds to turn out to be the Green Goblin, so that when he dies in a final showdown, Betty has one more charge against Spider-Man.) Then the gang becomes frustrating and more dangerous, as Aunt May's health cracks. At last, Spider-Man gets into the toughest spot in his career, trapped under tons of machinery as the Hudson River begins to flood the underground chamber. The full-page panel wherein he frees himself (AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #33) deserves its celebrity. Ditko is like the composer of a symphony, and AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #30 merely introduces the themes. Lee is more like the pop songwriter who figures his audience will pay attention for no longer than three minutes, or one issue and takes AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #30 for a whole piece. Actually, Ditko did give his readers a plot that unraveled in one issue, mainly the story of the cat burglar. It's too bad Lee didn't realize what he already had in his hands.

MARVEL: FIVE FABULOUS DECADES OF THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMICS

This statement of fact is also the title of an excellent book. Although I am somewhat miserly and can remember when paperbacks were 50 cents, I still found this book to be a bargain at \$25 (OK - so it was really only \$20 because of the discount given to me by the best comic shop in Connecticut - Heroes & Hitters.)

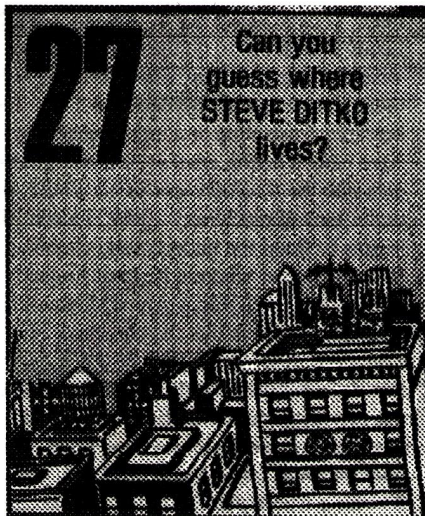
In it there is the story of the arrival of Roy Thomas at Marvel in mid-July 1965. A twenty-five year old comic fan and scholar, he started on MILLIE THE MODEL then graduated to helping Stan Lee with the expanding Marvel Universe. He was first known as Roy the Boy but his ability to organize and build on the first coherent

comic universe earned him the title of the Continuity Kid.

I have read the following quote in at least one other book on comic history: "Everybody was walking on eggs around Steve Ditko by the time I arrived because he and Stan had not been speaking for months." - Roy Thomas

The collaborations between Lee and Ditko from 1965 until Ditko quietly resigned in 1966 were achieved by passing work back and forth between intermediaries.

Despite their differences I have never seen a harsh word from Lee about Ditko. "To work with Steve was the greatest pleasure and privilege a writer could have," says Lee. "For instance, there was one scene that became incredibly famous: Spider-Man was trapped in a tunnel and had to lift something off himself in order to escape and rescue Aunt May. It was something readers have never forgotten."



Ditko yuks from the 1980 MARVEL CALENDAR

STAT CLARIFICATION

by CHRISTOPH MELCHERT

As for the substance of "Ditko's stats," I would observe to you, as I did not long ago to R. C. Harvey, that Kirby's 1,158 pages in 1962 were all or almost all pencils only, whereas Ditko's 681 pages in 1963 were mostly inked by him as well as penciled, so the comparison is more favorable to Ditko than one might think at first glance.

Of course, the main comparison has to be how well each one designed and drew pages (and plotted stories). Kirby was clearly more inventive. Ditko never pioneered a whole genre, as Simon & Kirby seem to have done with romance books, nor did Ditko have nearly the effect Kirby did on the way others went about writing and drawing super-hero comics.

There's a lot to Eisner in Ditko's work, too, but not always well done (e.g., inconsistent play with light sources), where Kirby's influences . . .

whatever they were, he seemed to show a lot more independence of them.

Ditko did a strange Dr. Strange, and a very good loner in Spider-Man; his later, more overtly polemical work has the interest of its adult themes & excellent graphics; still, there's not so clear a Ditko universe as there is a Kirby universe, whether defined by concepts like multitudes of interrelated super-humans or by environmental features like buildings that become playthings in the hands of super-humans.

I'm just as happy to sit down with '60's Ditko as I am with '60's Kirby, but I recognize that this has a lot to do with my personal moral earnestness, which makes me respond more immediately to Ditko's chosen themes than Kirby's.

JAMES ROBINSON SPEAKS

(This interview excerpt is from a must-visit website called Mania at WWW.MANIA.COM.)

James Robinson: It's a little while away for the reader, but Jack is going to go into space; he's just found a rocketship, and he's going off to find his predecessor, the Steve Ditko Starman. I guess it'll be more science fiction when I start getting into that. But even then, it'll be more like Ray Bradbury sort of science fiction than Larry Niven.

MANIA: And given your enjoyment of DC history, I'd venture to guess he'll be meeting some of DC's space characters along the way.

RJ: I haven't completely worked out who; I've worked out where he's going to, which is the planet of the Ditko Starman. But getting there, which is going to be a couple of issues, he is going to meet a character called ... I want to say his name is Ash, but it wouldn't be Ash, because that's the Joe Quesada character.

DITKO-RELATED FANZINE

I was pleasantly surprised by the ROBIN SNYDER COMIC BOOK LIST (1978-1997). It is 64 pages of information about frequent Ditko-collaborator Robin Snyder. Robin helped with this index so it includes information on unpublished projects, some of which were drawn by Ditko! As if that's not enough it also has two pages of Ditko artwork. The back cover is an ad from 1982 announcing Ditko's return to Charlton. The only place I remember the Charlton ad appearing is the COMICS BUYER'S GUIDE. The other page has the Ditko artwork from the packaging for the Mighty Crusader toys from 1984. A wealth of information for only \$3 (that includes \$1 postage) from Gary Usher/ 812 Nuckolls/ Glenwood, IA 51534-1840.



Cheap yuks at the expense of one of the most dramatic sequences in comic book history. (From the 1966 Marvel Card set)

DITKO COMIC I MISSED

(But not missed by Bob Heer)

1996

SABAN'S MIGHTY MORPHIN POWER RANGERS [Marvel]

4 Feb "Revenge of the Nerd" 10 pages {Ditko pencils, Tom Palmer inks}

DITKO IN YOUR FUTURE

MARVEL: HEROES & LEGENDS 1997

Marvel's newest once-a-year tradition. Stan Lee teams up with Steve Ditko, Sal Buscema, Dick Ayers, Al Milgrom and Gil Kane for a 48 page retelling of AVENGERS #16. The cover is executed by John Romita Sr.

This comic is due out August 23 which means that you still have time to contact your local comic shop and make sure they ordered it! (It is item #759 in the June PREVIEWS from Diamond Distributors.)



More Ditko-inspired jocularaty [from the 1966 Marvel Card Set]