

Astre inconnu

ASTRE INCONNU ... C'EST AINSI QUE LE CAPITAINE ALLAN FANE BAPTISA CE PETIT ASTRE ÉTRANGE OU DEVAIT SE DÉROULER UNE DES AVENTURES LES PLUS BIZARRES QU'AIT CONNUES L'ÈRE DES EXPLORATIONS SPATIALES. ET MAINTENANT QUE LA RACE HUMAINE ÉTEND SANS CESSER SON EMPRISE VERS LES ÉTOILES, CE RÉCIT FUTURISTE POURRAIT TRÈS BIEN SE TRANSFORMER EN RÉALITÉ DANS LES DOMAINES INCONNUS DE L'ESPACE.



SES RÉACTEURS ATOMIQUES CRACHANT DES FLAMMES, LE VAISSEAU SPATIAL COMMENÇA À DESCENDRE.



L'ENDROIT PARAÎT TOUT À FAIT DÉNUDÉ. JE VAIS Y EFFECTUER PLUSIEURS TESTS ET VOIR PAR EXEMPLE DE QUOI EST COMPOSÉE L'ATMOSPHÈRE.



DITKO -mania

Published by BILL HALL
556 MAIN STREET
CROWELL, CT 06416
\$6 for 4 issues
(\$8 for foreign subscribers)

#45- May 1995

DITKOMANIA



Rob Ines, who drew the front cover and wrote this issue's "Ditko & Radio" article, publishes his own radio fanzine. The upcoming issue (#14) will have a short article on the Mysterious Traveler pulp magazine. If you're interested in more information, you can contact Rob at 1844 East Longmeadow, Trenton, NJ 48183.

Tristan Lapoussiere is a French Ditko fan. He supplied an article for this issue of DM and has promised an article for next issue. He is also working on a checklist of what Ditko art has been reprinted in France and he needs our help. Where did the page on the back cover appear? (The only clue we have is that it is from a Charlton comic.) At the end of the Ditko & Radio article there is a Marvel splash page that we also need help identifying.

The inside back cover is from **AMAZING ADULT FANTASY** #12. It is copyright Marvel Comics, of course.

Three issues of **PHANTOM 2040** have come out since the previous issue of DM. I love this comic! If you haven't read it yet, go buy it!!

Each issue is twenty pages of Ditko pencils that rival his peak Super-hero work from the Sixties. Ditko seems inspired by the stature of his subject. The Phantom predates practically every super-hero, including Superman and Batman.

Peter Quinones is the writer and he gives Ditko a lot to work with. Since I have never seen the cartoon that it is based on, I can't comment on how many of the futuristic plot twists are his.

Bill Reinhold is a lifelong Ditko fan who told me on the phone that he tried to ink it in Ditko's style. Actually he has done better than that as different pages utilize techniques from different eras of Ditko's ever-evolving style.

Speaking of inkers - the first issue of **PHANTOM 2040** has a pin-up that is penciled by Ditko and inked by John Romita Sr., the first time that they have ever teamed up.

Thanks for your support.

The following article first appeared in **ROCKET'S BLAST AND THE COMIC COLLECTOR** #31.

SPOTLIGHT ON THE PROS: Number 5 THIS ISSUE: STEVE DITKO

by Bernie Bubnis

The mystery surrounding Steve Ditko is about as thick as some of the fog he conjures up in his stories. At least, this was my observation of him before I managed to snag an appointment with him. Steve arose from obscurity to the artist of Marvel's best bread winner, **SPIDER-MAN**.

As I entered his private studio I first noticed a maze of shelves all over the wall to the right. A book on spiders caught my eye, so I promptly questioned him as to if this was any help in his present assignments. He chuckled and said, "H___, no!" It seems the shelves were filled to the brim with a complete collection of Steve's past efforts in the art field. The complexity of his studio, with erasure shavings spread around, made me wonder as to the time element in the artist's life. He told me he works, "From nine in the morning... until I get tired."

Let's go back to the beginning. In 1950, Steve left his home in Johnstown, Pa., chiefly to enter the comic book field. He enrolled at the Cartoonist and Illustrator's School and was greatly influenced in his work by instructor Jerry Robinson.

As most new artists do, Ditko trekked back and forth from one company to another, trying to land a job. Finally, in 1953, the big chance came. He pin points "Stretching Things" in **FANTASTIC FEARS** (Vol. 1, no. 5) as his very first stint in comics.

He confesses, however, that it was the Charlton people who gave him his first real

chance. I speculated on the fannish idea that maybe Charlton would soon fold, but Steve shot back a startling rebuttle, "Why with their own presses they can produce a comic book for almost nothing... and still make money. They've got it made."

Up until now everyone has been under the impression that there was only one copy of the Kirby 3-Der, CAPTAIN 3-D. Steve offers a new beam of light on this for all the Kirby completists in the audience. He definitely did the inking on the first 3 CAPTAIN 3-Ds (along with about 6 other artists, including Mort Meskin). I quickly pointed out that there was only one copy issued. Steve refers to the fact that the 3-D fad came and went in a flash so the last two issues might have been docked before they were released.

Bringing up Marvelmania, I learned that he disliked doing the old 5-pagers for Lee's pre-superhero monster comics. Although I was preassured of the answer, I asked him if he would want to work for another company. He grinned sternly and said merely, "No, never..."

The topic shifted to the lessening quality of Kirby artwork. Ditko pointed out that Jack was a real master of speed, and he needed it to keep up with the assignments Lee was throwing at him. "It stands to reason that Jack's work tends to look hurried, because it is! Anyone who is that buried under work will surely not take the extra time necessary to make it perfect. Jack's a real genius." [Editor's note; anyone who thinks Kirby can't be great when he wants to, should take a closer look at the "Tales of Asgard" series in JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY. This is one of the best (if not the best) drawn and most under rated strips that appears in any comic being published today.]

I happen to think that artists have heroes of their own, so with this in mind, I asked Steve who his favorite artist is, one that was working for another company. He replied, to my surprise, that it was Mort Meskin. At this point I noticed a

fanzine dangling limply from one of his folders. He says he enjoys all fanzines, but enjoys the articles on old superheroes the most. The fanzine in question was a copy of Bronson's zine, BULLSEYE, with a marker at the Johnny Quick article.

Steve Ditko provided me with information for about ten other articles on him, but I prefer to release these as the urge to revive the Ditko fad strikes me.

Steve is comparatively recent to the field and he went way out of his way to help me get all the facts I needed for this article. I try to end all my Spotlight articles with a clever saying of some sort to show that the particular pro I'm writing about is a nice guy. Well, no fancy sayings this time, only the bare facts. Steve Ditko is a nice guy, thank the Lord he's one of us.

Ditkoquotes

"I gave the editor a list of things that I wanted to change on Spider-Man - y'know, make the eyes a little larger, add some webbing to his costume, and make it a bit blacker, all those things that you see - basically I wanted to make it a little closer to the way Ditko made it for those first two or three issues. Those first three issues of SPIDER-MAN, Ditko just wasn't aware that Spider-Man was going to turn out to be the bigshot character that he turned out to be. So, one of the reasons that I really like those issues, is that they're kinda erratic, y'know -- they look funky. After about fifteen issues, Steve had the look down pat. Those first issues had that nice, black Spider-Man that we've seen for awhile."

- TODD MCFARLANE, COMIC SHOP NEWS #126 [Nov 22, 1989]

"The Ditko SPIDER-MANS were a classic series; some of the best comics ever done, dark, desperate teenage angst and a good sense of drama."

- BOB BURDEN [FLAMING CARROT COMICS #29]

DITKO IN BONDAGE
by
Tristan LaPoussiere

Stanton (nee Eric Stanton, born September 30, 1926 in Brooklyn, NYC, from Russian immigrants) worked for girlie magazines (such as BIZARRE LIFE, BOUND and FOCUS-ON), but also - and mainly - for a specific form of comic books known as "bondage comics" due to the pervading presence of women held in bondage or fighting each other. Stanton's first work was a bondage comic called BATTLING WOMEN, in 1948. Before that he had worked for "mainstream" comics (although the term did not exist) as a letterer and inker for artist Gordon "Boody" Rogers on Prize's BABE, DARLING OF THE HILLS and Columbia's SPARKY WATTS.

The other name usually associated with Bondage comics (besides their precursor John Willie, who created Gwendoline) is that of ENEG, the most used among other pseudonyms for Gene Bilbrew, a black artist (born 1923, Los Angeles - killed himself in New York City, 1974) who worked as a staffer at Will Eisner's studio in the early

1950s (he assisted on The Spirit), and before that, in the 1940s, did a strip called the



Bronze Bomber for THE LOS ANGELES SENTINEL. Incidentally, he also illustrated the cover for a record by Charlie Mingus, EXPLORATION by Teo Macero (label Debut, ref. DLP 6), as well as an advertisement for the Charlie Mingus Record Club published in the December 1st, 1966, issue of THE VILLAGE VOICE.

Now, one interesting thing to note is that these three people (Stanton, Ditko and Bilbrew) all studied at the Cartoonists and Illustrators School in New York under Jerry Robinson and - at least for Stanton and Bilbrew - Will Eisner.

Stanton and Ditko knew each other, as did Bilbrew and Stanton (I suppose Ditko and Bilbrew also did know each other, but am not sure).

That does explain why Stanton's style is so close to Ditko's (I myself at a time thought "Stanton" was but a pseudonym for Ditko, but have since discovered, being exposed to more Stanton work, that it is not true). They were taught by the same artist.

(By the way, I have noticed at several times that Mort Meskin's style in the 1940s, especially on Golden Lad, bore a resemblance to Ditko's later. This is not surprising when you know that Meskin and Robinson often teamed up during that period, and that their styles thus interacted. Moreover, Meskin is cited among



Ditko's influences.)

It seems only natural, then, that Stanton took Ditko as a partner in 1955 (a year during which Ditko produced almost nothing for the comics).

What of their collaboration? First, the page reproduced in DM #34 is, to the best of my knowledge, pure Stanton, although the signature, with a high "S" and similarly high "t"s, may remind us of Ditko's own signature in the 1950s. Second, as far as I know, Ditko assisted Stanton on only two occasions: on a story called "On A Kinky Hook" (reprinted by Bros in 1991 as *THE KINKY HOOK*) and on another on, called "Sweeter Gwen" The only problem is that the first (left unfinished) is from the early '60s, and that the second, an homage to John Willie (who died in 1962), is from 1963.

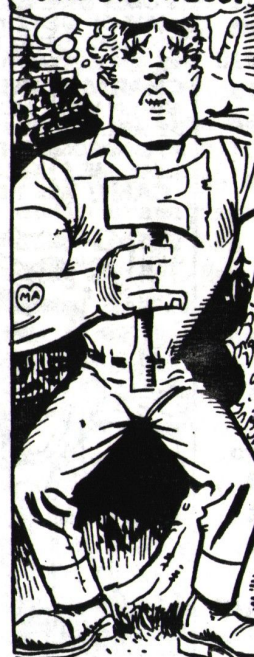
The questions we are left with are what did Ditko do for Stanton in 1955 (if we assume that he actually joined him in 1955) and, where did he find time enough in the early 1960s, with all the rush that the creation of the Marvel Age entailed, to work with Stanton? Still another question is what was the motive? One could understand that Ditko did work with Stanton in the mid-'50s, perhaps because he did not find work elsewhere (I strongly doubt it) or simply because he needed a break, but why do it later, when he was assured to get more work than he could take?



Was it to help a friend and former classmate, or to have the opportunity of doing "Good Girl Art", or what? And why did his work go uncredited? Was it his own will (yet he is not a man to disavow what he does) or Stanton's? This is one more mystery surrounding the career

FORTUNATELY CLOSE
BY IS OUR HERO, TEDDY
TRUEHART...

HARK! DO I HEAR
THE SWEET VOICE OF
MY SWEETER GWEN?
GREAT SCOTT! SHE
IS IN DISTRESS!



HAVE NO FEAR,
SWEETER GWEN
I AM COMING
TO YOUR AID!



of our beloved Sturdy Steve, and if we cannot have his point of view, Stanton's at least would be much appreciated.

As a note, I'd like to add that, ironically, this collaboration seems to be more



documented in France than in the United States. In fact, there was a market for Bondage comics in France in the late 1970s, and several such comics were translated and collected in European form (that is, magazine-sized albums, hardback most of the time) and published by several companies. "On A Kinky Hook" was published in an album, STANTON, by Les Editions Deesse in 1977, and "Sweeter Gwendoline" in another LE RETOUR DE GWENDOLINE by Les Humanoïdes Associés (which created METAL HURLANT, the magazine which spawned the American HEAVY METAL) in 1978. These Bondage comics had very limited print runs, and the reprint of THE KINKY HOOK by Eros was perhaps a discovery for American Ditko fans. If you can lay a hand on it, you will notice that the style is characteristic, at best, of Ditko's of a certain period, with strongly hatched panels and heavy lines. The disheveled woman on page 11 is pure Ditko, as are the postures in general. But do not forget that some of these postures and gestures can also be constantly found in Stanton.

Voilà, that's all I can say until some more information is unearthed.



DITKO & RADIO by Rob Ines

BBC Radio recently wrapped up a serialized version of Spider-Man, loosely based on the early Lee-Ditko comics. The serial consisted of fifty 3-minute episodes, airing Monday through Friday from January 16 to March 24, 1995. The radio version updated the original stories with references to 1990s pop-culture, and placed greater emphasis on humor. Not surprisingly, the show's entries in Britain's RADIO TIMES regularly credited Stan Lee as Spidey's creator, ignoring Ditko's contribution. One article, titled "Comic Genius" (a reference to Lee), even printed a Ditko-drawn Spidey, yet failed to credit Ditko at all.

This isn't the first time Spider-Man has been audio-dramatized. In the 1960s, Golden Records released LPs of Marvel characters, including Spider-Man. The records came with a reprint of the character's first comic book, and the issue was adapted on the record. The listener knew when to turn the page of the comic because a voice would say the page number when it was time to turn. In the 1970s, similar Spidey records were released, although they did not adapt stories from the Ditko era.

In recent years, another Ditko character very briefly appeared in a BBC radio drama. A five-part Superman story called "Doomsday and Beyond" (released in the U.S. as "Superman Lives" on Warner Audio) included a short "commercial" by Jack Ryder, secret identity of The Creeper. Ryder asks the worth of The Justice League, including "God help us, the Blue Beetle," yet another Ditko character. (This drama was a very faithful adaptation of the death of Superman storyline.)

The Blue Beetle, of course, had his own radio series back in 1940, airing from May 15

to June 21 as a half-hour weekly show. This was decades before Ditko ever drew the character.

The previous are all examples of comics' influence on radio. What about radio's influence on comics, particularly Ditko comics?

In ORIGINS OF MARVEL COMICS, Stan Lee cited radio's Chandu the Magician as an influence for the creation of Dr. Strange. The Chandu radio serial was first broadcast from 1932 to 1936; the program was later revived in the late Forties. The story concerned a man named Frank Chandler who learned the art of magic from an Eastern master. When Chandler finally returned to America after much study (looking "dark as an Indian"), he had become known as Chandu, and possessed magical powers such as hypnotism and teleportation.

In the first Dr. Strange story, it appears that Dr. Strange is intended to be Asian, since he is drawn with the exaggerated eyelids one often sees in depictions of Asians in 1960s comics. A few issues later, however, he was given an origin which established that he was an American who left for the East to study magic with an ancient master, like Chandu. This may have been Stan Lee's contribution, since the origin of Dr. Droom was similar.

From December 5, 1943, to September 2, 1952, The Mysterious Traveler was on the air. (Of the 370 episodes broadcast, fewer than a hundred survive today.) The Mysterious Traveler first came to comics for a four-issue run in 1948-49. In November 1951, he acquired his own pulp magazine, ending with the fifth issue (around the same time as the radio show's cancellation.) And then, of course, came Charlton's TALE OF THE MYSTERIOUS TRAVELER comic in 1956, which ran until 1959. The OVERSTREET lists the 1948-49 Mysterious Traveler comic as radio-related, but not the later Charlton series. I've often wondered if the Charlton comic was really connected with the radio version, since the radio Traveler was a narrator who rides a train while the Charlton

Traveler flits from scene to scene, bound by no physical laws. Surely the Charlton character, however, was inspired by the idea of the long-running radio show.

One of the most famous old-time radio plays was "Leiningen Vs. The Ants." Ditko drew an adaptation of this story in STRANGE SUSPENSE STORIES #20 (August, 1954).

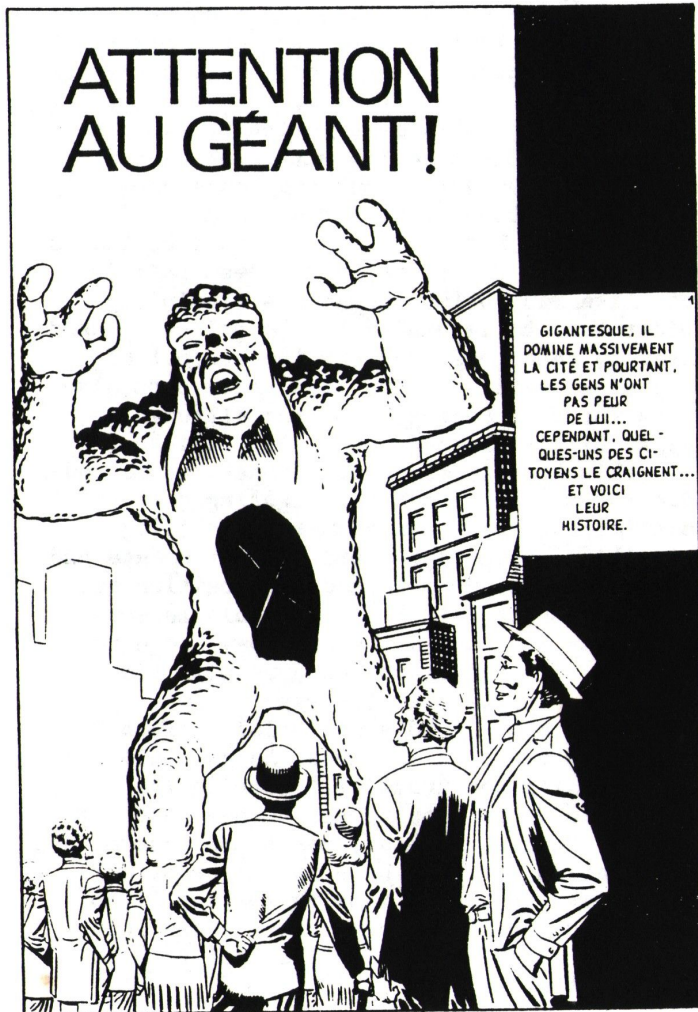
Ditko drew a few issues of JUNGLE JIM, which had been a radio show. He also drew for DC's HOUSE OF MYSTERY, but the comic apparently had no connection with the old radio series of the same name.

I conclude this examination of radio's influence on Ditko comics with a character that Ditko has never drawn, but who bears some uncanny resemblances to heroes like Mr. A. and The Question. Like them, this hero forsakes the usual costume for a simple business suit and hat. Like many Ditko characters, including Spider-Man, he is wanted by the police, chased after by reporters, and was the subject of screaming headlines. And this radio hero also works for a crusading newspaper although, unlike Ditko's heroes, he's the publisher.

This hero is the Green Hornet, whose radio adventures usually had him fighting corrupt politicians, businessmen engaged in illegal activities, racketeers, etc. Like Vic Sage and Rex Graine, the Hornet used his position as publisher Britt Reid to express his personal philosophy -- much in the same way, come to think of it, that Ditko has done with his own medium. A reporter for the paper once complained about Reid's editorials, "When Britt Reid takes sides on an issue, he goes all the way -- that's the trouble!," echoing the complaints Ditko's outspoken heroes face. By the way, Reid's secretary was named Lenore Case (inspiration for Nora Lace in The Question?).

I have no way of knowing whether Ditko ever heard the show during those years, but some aspects of Mr. A. and the rest seem to indicate that he had.

If any of these radio programs did have an effect on his imagination while he was growing up, Ditko has certainly paid any debt to them he could have owed. For example, his own abundant imagination made the recent Spider-Man radio drama possible. Perhaps the future will bring more Ditko heroes to the air, and Ditko will someday be properly credited for his contribution.



(C) MARVEL COMICS GROUP 1977

