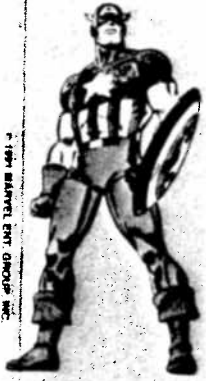


EXHIBIT U

**MARVEL
COMICS**

Five Fabulous Decades of the World's Greatest Comics

MARVEL



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SPECIAL
COLLECTOR'S
ISSUE

APPROVED
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COMICS
CODE
AUTHORITY

BY
LES DANIELS

INTRODUCTIONS BY
STILES

**700 COLOR
ILLUSTRATIONS!**

**FANTASTIC SUPER
HERO PROFILES!**

**BEHIND-THE-SCENES
ADVENTURES!**



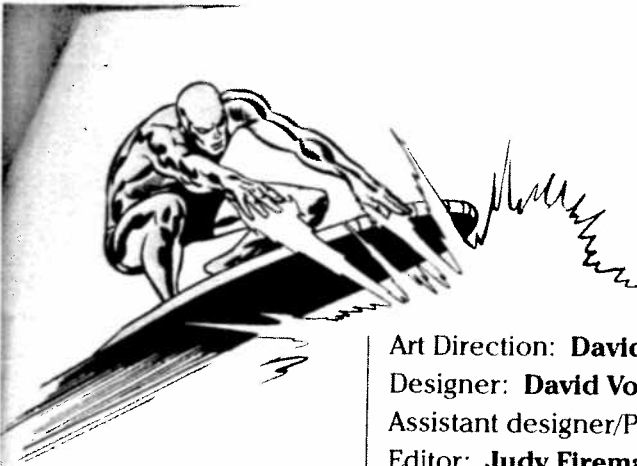
MARVEL

Five Fabulous Decades of the World's Greatest Comics

by
Les Daniels

Introduction by
Stan Lee

Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers



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and-white magazine exempt from Code censorship. Atlas hung on by a thread.

Atlas Shrugged

For a while, Atlas was able to stave off the worst effects of the general disaster. Because Goodman was his own distributor, he was independent of the nervous businessmen who kept some other comic book companies from getting their books to the newsstands. As a result, many of the industry's top talents drifted over to Atlas, but most of them didn't stay long. Declining sales meant fewer books and lower rates for free-lancers. "Every time I took another job I took another cut in pay," says

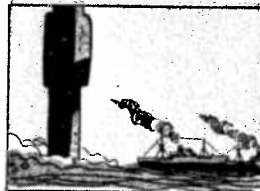
▼ Artist Don Heck's early work at Marvel included this series of well-crafted maritime adventures. From *Navy Combat* #1 (June 1955).

ANOTHER THRILLING NAVY COMBAT ADVENTURE STARRING "TORPEDO" TAYLOR
"ATTACK BY SEA!"



MEET "TORPEDO" TAYLOR, OF YOUR UNCLE SAM'S SUBMARINE SERVICE! IN WORLD WAR II, THE "BARRACUDA" AND ITS GALLANT CREW CHALKED UP A GREAT RECORD, AND WHEN THE SUB'S TIN FISH STRUCK HOME, YOU COULD BE SURE "TORPEDO" TAYLOR WAS ON THE JOB AT THE FIRING CONTROLS!

THEY CALLED THE SUB FLEET "THE SILENT SERVICE" THEY WERE THE UNDERSEA KILLERS WHO HUNTED IN THE SILENT DEPTHS OF THE PACIFIC! THEY STRUCK AND VANISHED! THIS IS THE STORY OF AN INCIDENT IN WHICH THE "BARRACUDA" WAS HUNTING JAP PREY IN THE CORAL SEA!



THE DISTANCE CLOSED! LIKE A GRAY GHOST, THE SLEEK BODY OF THE SUB LURKED BENEATH THE WAVES!



INSIDE THE STEEL HULL, POWERFUL ENGINES HUMMED AND THE SKIPPER APPRAISED HIS PREY CAREFULLY...



▲ Science fiction and fantasy art by Jack Kirby (above) and Steve Ditko (below) were Marvel mainstays during the late 1950s.

THE VILLAIN TO BEAT: THE YELLOW CLAW

To capitalize on the specter of a Communist conspiracy haunting American minds during the 1950s, Stan Lee decided to go all the way and create a comic book named after a Commie: *The Yellow Claw*. "We fashioned him after Fu Manchu," admits Stan Lee, referring to the famous villain created in 1913 by British author Sax Rohmer. (In fact, Rohmer also wrote a novel called *Yellow Claw*, but Fu Manchu wasn't in it.) Like his literary predecessor, the comic book Yellow Claw was a brilliant scientist; he also dabbled in the occult and had created an elixir that extended his life abnormally.

After the Korean war, the Red Chinese were disliked perhaps even more than the Russians, but *The Yellow Claw* avoided blatant racism by making its hero Chinese too. This evenhandedness may have been one reason why the comic book lasted only four issues, but then again, very few bad guys ever got their own comic books in the first place.

Revived in the 1960s, the Claw abandoned Marxism and set out to rule the world himself. If he hasn't succeeded yet, credit must go to Marvel heroes like Nick Fury, Captain America and Iron Man, who in recent years have struggled to thwart his nefarious schemes.



Top two covers by John Severin;
bottom cover by Bill Everett.
Clutching Claw by Joe Maneely.

John Romita.

Many artists were forced out of the field by economic pressures. Bill Everett took a job with a greeting card company. John Buscema, and then Gene Colan, drifted into advertising. "It was a very bad time," says Colan. "I had the full catastrophe. I had a house and a family and I just had to do whatever else I could." Romita held on as long as possible and then moved over to DC, where long-standing conservative fiscal and artistic policies had kept the company in comparatively good shape. He stayed at DC "doing really dreadful, mindless romance comics for about eight years." By 1955 it looked like Atlas might be nearing the end of the line.

Oddly enough, it was a group of recent arrivals at Atlas who eventually turned things around. Artist Don Heck had arrived in 1954 and was soon enhancing the war books with his vigorous work on characters like "Torpedo" Taylor. In 1956, artist Steve Ditko brought his unusual drawing style to the toned-down horror books and turned out a series of atmospheric fantasies. Most important of all, in 1956 Jack Kirby came back.

Recently separated from his longtime partner Joe Simon, Kirby was one of the most creative forces in the business and he needed the outlet that Atlas could provide. "When I got back they were practically taking the furniture out of the place," he says, "and I had to stop them. I had to have a place to work."

But before things got better, they got worse. Atlas, Goodman's distribution arm, was gradually becoming a liability. By 1957, because there weren't many comics to distribute and expenses were high, Goodman closed down Atlas and arranged for a deal with the American News Company, one of the country's largest magazine distributors. To Goodman it seemed like a good idea at the time. He didn't realize how far Dr. Wertham's poison had spread, and he never suspected that American News was itself on the verge of collapse until suddenly it fell. Catastrophe turned to cataclysm, and suddenly there seemed to be no way at all for Goodman to get the comic books to the customers.

Stan Lee was left alone in a small office with a backlog of finished art. There was no work for anyone, not even on a free-lance basis. "It was very tough," says Lee. "These were all people that I'd worked with. I knew their families. And I was asked to let everybody go. I don't know why Goodman kept me on. I guess he just felt that if there was any chance at all he wouldn't give up the comics completely."

The Thing that Lived

Somehow the company survived, even though it was now nameless since the Atlas trademark was gone for good. Ingeniously, Goodman made a deal with rival publisher DC to get his few remaining



shrapnel that is working its way toward his heart, Stark is ordered to spend his last days inventing new armaments for the Communists; instead he constructs a suit of transistorized armor that also serves as a pacemaker to keep his heart beating. As Iron Man, he conquers his foes and manages to escape, but he is doomed to

remain at least partially encased in metal until the day he dies. Life as a Marvel hero was never a bed of roses.

Don Heck had the honor of drawing the initial Iron Man story, a rare opportunity in the days when Jack Kirby seemed to get first crack at just about everything. And, in fact, Kirby did have a hand in Iron Man. "He designed the costume," says Heck, "because he was doing the cover. The covers were always done first. But I created the look of the characters, like Tony Stark and his secretary Pepper Potts." Over all, it was Heck's solid craftsmanship that set Iron Man on the road to success.

Meanwhile, Heck was introduced to the intricacies of The Marvel Method of comic book creation. When he was first handed a story synopsis, Heck told editor Lee: "You've got to be kidding. I'm not used to that. I'm used to a full script." Eventually Heck adjusted, and gradually came to enjoy the chance to contribute to the stories, but he remembers that some artists "said the hell with it and left." Some top talents in the field passed in and out of the company quickly because they never adapted to Lee's revolutionary method. "Stan would call me up," says Heck, "and he'd give me the first couple of pages over the phone, and the last page. I'd say, 'What about the stuff in between?' and he'd say, 'Fill it in.'"

Heck's solid background in war comics helped him get Iron Man off to a good start, but he wasn't entirely pleased with the character's armor despite his boundless admiration for Jack Kirby. "He was terrific," says Heck. "He was always willing to help somebody or tell you how to do something. And as for the super heroes, the main reason they existed was Jack Kirby. He used to call them 'the guys in the long underwear.'"

Kirby's original Iron Man suit, realistically bulky given the circumstances under which Tony Stark had to build it, soon changed from forbidding gray to gold. Later, it was streamlined into a red-and-gold design by Steve Ditko. Perhaps because the suit is a machine, many artists have been tempted to tinker with it, and over the years, Iron Man's costumed appearance has changed more often than that of any other Marvel super hero.

Iron Man, a wealthy patriot with a war injury, might have reminded some readers of President

John F. Kennedy, whose inauguration in 1961 had infused the United States with a feeling of adventurous optimism. Stan Lee has never compared J.F.K. to Iron Man, but he has speculated that the Kennedy era's spirit provided the ideal atmosphere for the introduction of new super heroes. Kennedy's assassination in 1963 ended the era all too quickly, and signaled the advent of the turmoil that would characterize the rest of the decade. Kennedy had encouraged the buildup of American troops in Vietnam, and as the war there became more deadly and more divisive, Iron Man began to look even more like a symbol of The United States: he went halfway around the world to fight for what

Iron Man clanks his way into *Tales of Suspense* #39 (March 1962) (below). By issue #44 (left), Iron Man had acquired a golden glow. Covers by Jack Kirby and Don Heck.





▲ The elegant simplicity of Jack Kirby's work is evident in this penciled page, which was nevertheless rejected in favor of a different approach to the action, inked by Paul Reinman. From *Avengers* #3.

and one of them was a black man named Gabe Jones. The visual stereotypes once common in comics were no longer acceptable at Marvel, and eventually Stan Lee was obliged to send a detailed memo to the company that did the color separations to make it absolutely clear that Gabe was a black man.

Marvel's progressive attitude delighted most readers, but annoyed at least one. Flo Steinberg recalls opening a letter addressed to the Sgt. Fury staff that read, "You pinko commies! What have you got against the Nazis? I'm going to come to the office and shoot you all!" The FBI was called in, but nothing ever came of the threat. Clearly, however, the new Marvel style was making an impact on the reading public.

The Super Group

By September 1963 it was easy enough for Marvel to fulfill Martin Goodman's 1961 wish that his company could publish a comic book as jam-packed with popular super heroes as DC's *Justice*

League. By late 1963, Marvel had super hero stars to spare, and some of them were joined together to form a new super hero group called *The Avengers*.

The original Avengers were Iron Man, Thor, The Hulk and Ant-Man, along with his female partner, The Wasp. Including the antisocial Hulk in the group was an odd choice, even for a company that made a specialty of character conflict. He quit in the second issue, but returned in the third to battle the remaining Avengers with the help of the traditionally testy Sub-Mariner. Jack Kirby handled the penciling for the first eight issues—exactly as long as he had stuck with *Sgt. Fury*—and then Lee turned the series over to "utility man" Don Heck. *The Avengers* often had a crowded look as multiple villains showed up to fight the many heroes. "It was easy enough for the writers," Heck notes, "to say that six guys come in from the left and six guys come in from the right, but the artist had to draw them all."

Given the rambunctious nature of Marvel's super heroes, it's not surprising that over the years *The Avengers* proved to be a singularly unstable super