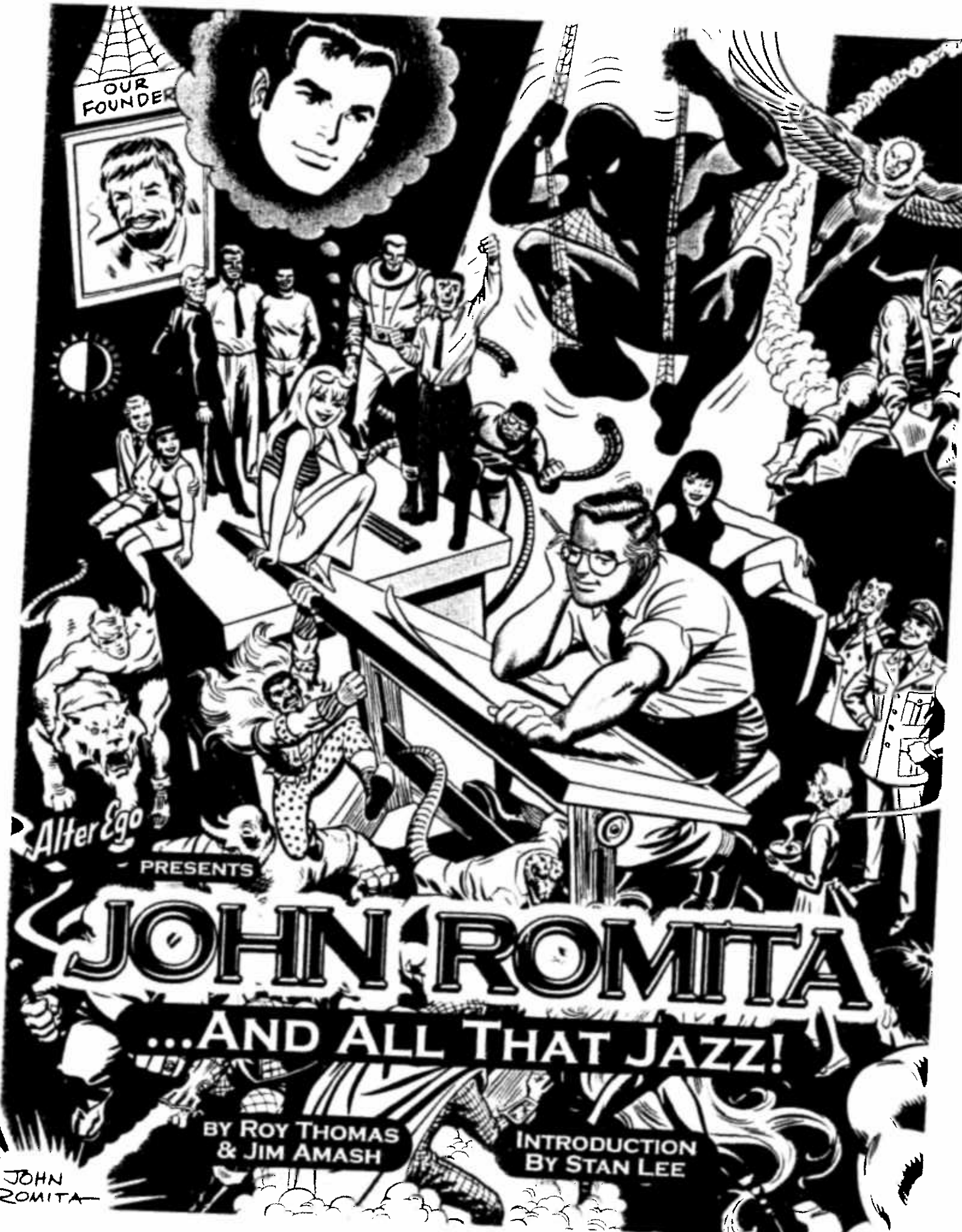


# EXHIBIT V



OUR FOUNDER

Alter Ego

PRESENTS

# JOHN ROMITA

## ...AND ALL THAT JAZZ!

BY ROY THOMAS  
& JIM AMASH

INTRODUCTION  
BY STAN LEE

JOHN  
ROMITA

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JOHN  
ROMITA

# John Romita ...And All That Jazz

by Roy Thomas & Jim Amash

Designed by Christopher Day  
Front cover art by John Romita  
Front cover coloring by Tom Ziuko  
Proofreading by Christopher Irving

## Dedication

From Jim Amash:  
To my wonderful wife Heidi, who never complains—  
and to my mother Genevieve,  
and to my late father Joseph,  
who I wish could have seen this book

From Roy Thomas:  
To Dann, who knows how much these people,  
and these memories,  
mean to me

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half a dozen issues of *Rex* by Gil Kane in front of me every time I had to do that dog! I used Gil's work for animating him. Gil had this great ability to twist his body—

**RT:** *He was one of the best guys around for drawing animals in action. So how did things go bad for you at Timely?*

**ROMITA:** Around 1957 was when Stan and I were at our lowest ebb in our relationship. In the last year, he cut my rate every time I turned in a story. He was not even talking to me then. He was embarrassed, because he had given me raises for two years every time I went in, and then he took it all away. I went from \$44 a page to \$24 a page in a year.

**RT:** *As Gil was fond of saying, "Comics giveth and comics taketh away."*

**ROMITA:** Virginia kept saying, "Well, how long are you going to take the cuts until you go somewhere else?" And I told her, "I'll hang on, I'll hang on." Then, when it came time that he ran out of money and had to shut down, or cut down to the bone, I had done two or three days' work, ruling up the pages, lettering the balloons, and blocking in the figures on a story—and here comes a call from his assistant—she had beautiful bangs,



The Man & The Jazzy One

We guess John never did tell Stan Lee to go to hell! A late-'70s publicity photo, courtesy of JR.

beautiful brown hair, I forget her name but she was adorable—and she says, "John, I have to tell you that Stan says to stop work on the Western book because we're going to cut down on a lot of titles."

I said to her, "Well, I spent three days on it. I'd like to get \$100 for the work, to tide me over." She said, "Okay, I'll mention it to Stan." I never heard another word about the money, and I told Virginia, "If Stan Lee ever calls, tell him to go to hell." [laughs] And that was the last work I did for him until 1965.

**RT:** *Stan told me that Goodman would give him the word to fire everybody, and then Goodman would go off to Florida and play golf.* [laughs]

**ROMITA:** Oh, I understand Stan's pain, because I went through that, too, towards the end of working at Marvel in the '90s, and it was no fun. I remember I had just fought for and gotten a raise for one guy in the spring—and then in the summer we had to let him go. And I'm telling him, "Listen, it's got nothing to do with your work. They're just cutting down everybody here." But it was mortifying to have to do that. I had to watch him get this incredulous look on his face, saying, "Are you kidding me?" But, yes, that's how the Timely thing ended,

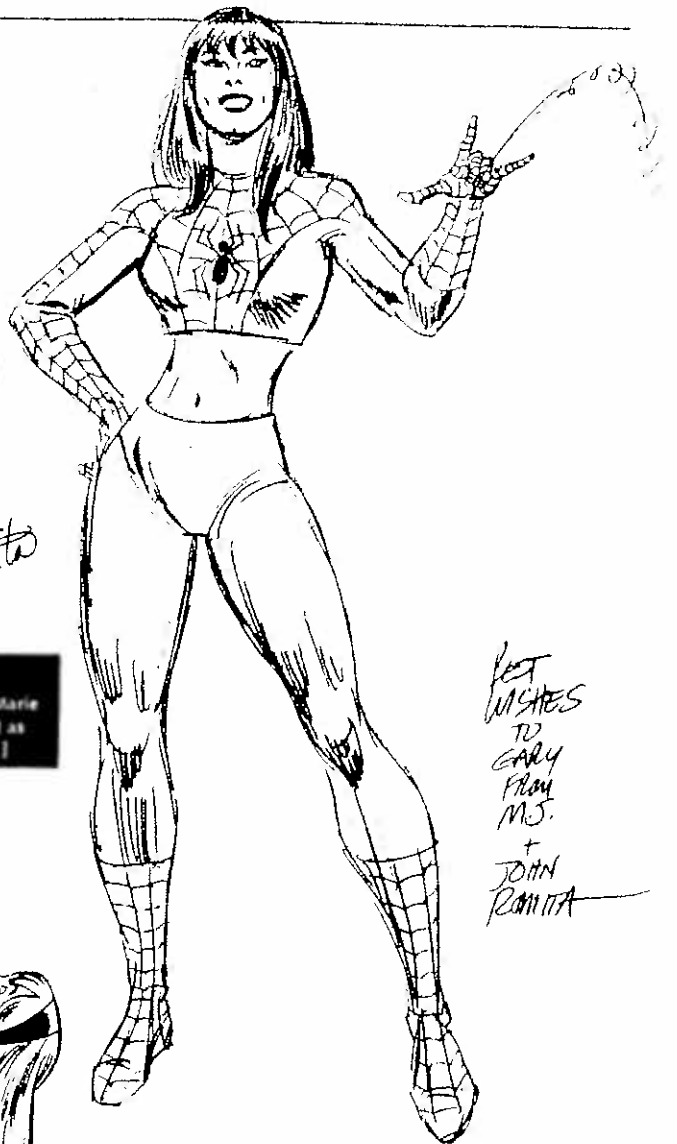


Did They Get A Discount?

Stan Lee may have talked John out of going into advertising, but years later he drew plenty of commercial art for Marvel—including this piece for Slurpee displays at 7-11 stores. Repro'd from original art, courtesy of Mike Burkley. [©2007 Marvel Characters, Inc.]

JOHN ROMITA

Marie Severin



**The Many Faces Of MJ**  
(Above.) One of the earliest style guides of Mary Jane from the 1960s, drawn by Marie Severin and John Romita—and (at right) 1980s penciled convention sketch of MJ as "Spider-Woman." Art courtesy of Mike Burkey. [©2007 Marvel Characters, Inc.]

KEVIN WISNES  
TO  
GARY  
FROM  
M.S.  
+  
JOHN  
ROMITA



ED DON  
WITH BEST  
WISNES—  
JOHN ROMITA '85

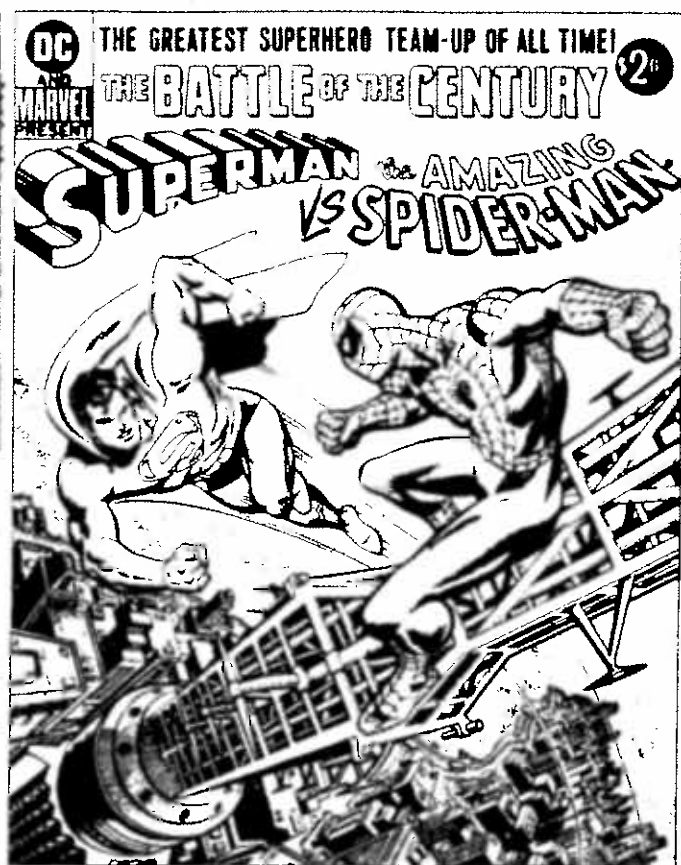
**But Let's Not Forget Gwen!**  
Collector Mike Burkey says this drawing was originally done for artist Don Simpson. [Spider-Man & the late Gwen Stacy TM & ©2007 Marvel Characters, Inc.]

trust Stan at that stage. I thought he would go up and down like a roller coaster. Frankly, I wanted to stay at DC, and I wished I could do a hero strip, even a Western like "Johnny Thunder." I was proud to tell people I was at DC. I felt like DC was the Cadillac of the industry. I bought their line that Marvel was crude-looking. I never read any of Stan's stories. I just saw the covers.

I never read one *Spider-Man* book or even knew it existed until Stan came in with a pile of them and said, "How would you like to try *Spider-Man*?" The only thing I knew they were doing was *Fantastic Four*. When he showed me *Spider-Man*, I said, "You know, this looks funny. This looks like a teenaged Clark Kent." I apologized to Ditko years later. I was surprised to hear it was a good-selling book!

RT: Why did the work run out for you and others at DC?

ROMITA: Some big-shot up there found a stack of inventory stories and art in the closet—stuff they had paid for, but never used—and he said, "Why the hell are we paying thousands of dollars every month for new stuff when we got a closet full of artwork here?" And they just shut down; everybody in the romance department was let go. And it was typical. Martin Goodman used to say the same



### The Amazing Andru-Man

Now it can be told! John Romita didn't really sprain his wrist and need a fill-in Spidey story penciled by Ross Andru (and inked by Bill Everett); yet somehow the finished story wound up in the oversize *Marvel Super-Heroes* #14 (May 1968). But Ross shone for sure on the first-ever cross-company super-hero slug-fest in 1976 (inking by Dick Giordano, from a layout by Carmine Infantino). [Spider-Man ©2007 Marvel Characters, Inc.; Superman ©2007 DC Comics.]

thing to Stan years ago: "If we've got inventory, then why are you buying new artwork?" So DC just closed down the romance original-art department, and I was out of work.

RT: *In other words, don't eat for six months and maybe we'll give you work again? They did that with young mystery writers in the late '60s, which is how we got Marv Wolfman, Gerry Conway, Len Wein, and several other guys over at Marvel.*

ROMITA: DC didn't even say *that*. When [editor] Jack Miller told me—and of course he was on the frying pan already—I remember asking him, "Could you introduce me to some of the other editors?" And he said, "Nah, I don't think so—they aren't looking for anybody." He never even got off his ass to introduce me to anybody. He told me, "Listen, you're a freelancer. You're not on contract. You're free to go and get work anywhere." I said, "Well, gee, thanks." [laughs] "After eight years of being exclusive to DC." I said, "That's a pretty cold thing to say." He said, "Listen, my hands are tied. I can't give you any work." And I said, "Then why don't you get me an editor?" He never answered me. He was a real cold fish.

RT: *But you still didn't automatically think of going over to talk to Stan, did you?*

ROMITA: The truth is, I had been going through a little bit of a slump, an artist's block. I was having days when I couldn't produce a page. It reduced me to tears a couple of times, because I wasn't bringing any money in, and I was thinking, "What the hell's gonna happen?" Suppose I could never do another story! Deadlines used to terrify me, and I wasn't the kind of guy to fake it. So when this happened, I told Virginia, "I'm not going to Stan Lee. He's not paying

enough. I'm going to get into advertising."

I had been talking to Mort Meskin, whom I had seen a couple of times at DC. He had visited and had lunch with the guys; he was working at BBD&O [a major advertising firm], doing storyboards. He told me, "Comic artists are in demand over there. They don't even have to show them anything. If you tell them you've been making a living in comics for more than two years, they'll hire you on the spot."

And it just so happened that one of my neighbors and fellow volunteer firemen was one of the creative directors up there. His name was Al Nomandia. He had been a famous panel cartoonist, a very bright guy. I called him and he said, "Sure, come on in." So I went in on a Thursday, I think, and they hired me. They were going to pay me \$250 a week. It was \$75-\$100 more a week than I was making in comics. I took the job.

And then on Friday, like an idiot, I went over to Stan. I had already told him I would come over to Marvel. In fact, I had inked *The Avengers* over Don Heck, and I'd inked the Kirby cover, and I loved it.

RT: *That's the Kirby cover with that towering figure of Kang?*

ROMITA: I enjoyed that job. I told Stan I would love to just ink, but when he asked me to pencil, I told him, "No, I don't think I can." That's when I got the job at BBD&O. But when I called up Stan to tell him, he said, "Come on in. I'll take you to lunch."

So we went to lunch and he spent three hours browbeating me.



**Cap Makes A Big Splash**

(Left:) The balloon-less black-&-white copy of the full (and signed) John Romita "Captain America" splash page from *Young Men* #24, courtesy of Robert Wiener. The sound effects in panels 2-3 must've been done by John. A few of the thinner inklines, e.g., some of the scaling on Cap's shirt in panel 3, are nearly lost on these proofs. Of this long-lost 1953 splash, John wrote in a 2003 e-mail, after seeing it for the first time in exactly fifty years: "I didn't recall how silly looking that first splash was... Stan helped my career by not using it... and that Red Skull was pathetic... I'm not sure I should let you print it (just kidding... at my stage in life it's historic... or hysterical)." Hey, don't be so hard on yourself, John!

(Right:) The published version, with the Mort Lawrence splash panel, repr'd from b&w proofs from a sadly forgotten source. But, judging by Cap's dialogue in panel 2, it seems that a Red Skull balloon ("Let 'em have it!" or some such) was dropped somewhere along the line. [©Marvel Characters, Inc.]

**JA:** Were you were supposed to be the artist of "Captain America" from the beginning?

**ROMITA:** No. Mort Lawrence started the story, and either he or Stan was disappointed by the results. I happened to be in the office, and Stan said, "How would you like to be the artist on 'Captain America'?" I almost jumped out of my skin, because I was a Jack Kirby freak. Stan showed me the finished page, and I even think a cover was done.

**JA:** Could that have been the cover to *Captain America* #76, where Cap has that cartoony smile on his face?

**ROMITA:** It was either that or the cover to *Young Men* #24. Lawrence didn't do any covers after the *Captain America* title started.

**JA:** So Mort Lawrence had already done a splash of his own?

**ROMITA:** I think so. Far as I recall, Stan took the two bottom panels from my first page and put them under the Lawrence splash. But it never occurred to me to ask for my [unused] original splash back. I was too young and innocent to even think about it. I've made so many mistakes of omission and gave away so many wonderful things over the years that I should have kept.

Frankly, in the 1950s, I was sure comics were only going to last another year or so. I even threw out my sketches back then, so you can't go by what I thought. I picked up a photostat of a George Tuska page, which he inked with a number five brush. I pinned it to my drawing table and used it for inspiration for about a year. I used a number 5 brush and was doing all this fine detail work with a fat brush and a sharp point, and as long as I wasn't tired, the lines came out just fine. As soon as I got tired, the lines came out ugly and thick.

**JA:** What made you think that comics weren't going to last?

**ROMITA:** I was under that impression when I started in 1949, ghost-penciling for Les Zakarin, who was working for Timely and other places. I figured I'd just do these stories to make a few extra bucks. I had no plans to stay in comics. Everyone I spoke to thought we were treading water. Even Stan said he was waiting for comics to get so small that he couldn't make a living anymore, so that he could write novels and screenplays. Everybody I knew felt they were in it on a temporary basis, including Davey Berg, who was doing mystery stories and then war stories for Timely. He hadn't started at *Mad* yet.

As people like Dave, Jack Abel, and myself sat in the Timely waiting room for scripts or art approval, we would talk. We all had the feeling that comics were a dying industry and wondered what





At Jim Amash's cajoling, John R. sent us cover proofs he had of two of the covers he penciled for Trojan Comics. Here's the one for *Crime Smashers* #7 (Nov. 1951). John refers to these as "cover-style drawings," but he could already draw pretty gals! (©2007 the respective copyright holders.)

**ROMITA:** Probably not, because I wanted to be a painter and an illustrator. I was doing Coca-Cola illustrations for soda fountains at a lithography house. I was making a big \$25 a week, but I did freelance pencils for Les and tripled my salary. That's why I even decided to go into comics.

Besides Timely, we also worked for a company named Trojan Comics. The art director was a little guy who wore a cowboy hat. I swear, working with him was like entering the Twilight Zone. I used to bring my pencils in and Lester used to ink them. In retrospect, I realize I was doing bondage covers. I only did three or four covers for them and Les inked them all. I also worked for Sol Cohen at Avon, but I don't think Les inked any of my stories there.

**JA:** Getting back to that first "Captain America" story: I compared the line work of the Xeroxes that Roy sent me of the other pages of the story to what was published, and I noticed some differences in line weights and detail.

**ROMITA:** Stan must have had someone touch those pages up. He was notorious for that.

**JA:** The inking on this first story looks a little different than your other "Cap" inks, even though your inks still show through. It always seemed to me that maybe Joe Maneely "beefed up" your inks.

**ROMITA:** I wouldn't be surprised, because Joe was close enough in the office to help out in emergencies. Joe was the guy in the late '40s and through most of the '50s who did what I did for Stan in the '60s and '70s, which was—whenever somebody's artwork came in that wasn't quite what Stan wanted, he'd bring it in to me to do touch-ups. Frankly, I didn't want to do that stuff. I was always late on my *Spider-Man* deadlines, and the last thing I wanted to do was to lose time, so I wouldn't be surprised that many guys touched up my artwork back in the 1950s.

Let me tell you something: the first time I met Jack Kirby in the Marvel offices, he was touching up a Steve Ditko cover—correcting the pencils. That was not the first time. Even in the mid-'50s, I used to correct stuff all the time. When my artwork was in there, people like Carl Burgos touched up my work mercilessly, and I corrected others' work when Stan asked me to. It was Stan's normal procedure.

Roy always kids me about not inking the circular stripes in Captain America's shield. I don't know where I got the nerve to do that, but I did draw the first circle with the star in it. I indicated in pencil where the circled lines should go, so the colorist would have a guideline. I don't know if Stan told me to do that, or if I decided to do it on my own. The colorists used to mutilate the job, and the colors went all over the shield. It shows you how we were flying by the seat of our pants.

**JA:** The cover of Captain America #76, that we mentioned before, is a strange one. There seem to be two, maybe three different artists working on that cover. [See p. 29 for this cover.]

**ROMITA:** I didn't work on that cover. I think Carl Burgos did most of it, or at least penciled it.

**JA:** I think so, too, but the Captain America figure is drawn by a totally different artist, possibly Mort Lawrence.

we'd do next. People forget that, at that time, there would be one or two good years and then a bad year, where everyone was struggling for work. And then there'd be another good year, and then maybe two bad years—bad enough that many of the guys left comics and went into technical art or advertising.

Gene Colan was working full-time in the Timely bullpen in 1948, and then he was laid off. He said it was the most traumatic thing that had ever happened to him. You know, when you're 19 or 20 and making a steady buck, and then you're told that the company's closing down next week, you feel terrible. So Gene had the bad break then, and once again in 1957, when Timely temporarily stopped publishing. You can imagine how those things made him feel.

Timely publisher Martin Goodman used to close shop at the drop of a hat. If expenses got too high, he'd say "the hell with it," and close shop. Nobody had any protection because there were no pensions, no severance pay or insurance plans, or savings plans. Everyone who worked in comics were flying by the seat of their pants.

I remember the atmosphere in the late '40s and early '50s—especially the mid-'50s, when Congress started to come down on comics. We were all watching the hearings—they made us look like butchers. You'd think we were killing children in every panel. I used to tell my wife Virginia, "I'll only do comics for a while, and as soon as it closes down, I'll get a job in New York, in a studio." Nobody I knew said, "I'm going to be in comics for the rest of my life." We all figured we'd have to get nine-to-five jobs at some point. It was a very negative period.

**JA:** Well, if it hadn't been for Les Zakarin, you wouldn't have gotten into comics in the first place, would you?