

EXHIBIT ZZ

JACK KIRBY - THE MASTER OF COMIC BOOK ART

Interviewed February 1987 by Ken Viola

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I thank God that in February 1987, before he passed through that portal to the Positive Zone and the cosmos beyond, I got to meet and interview Jack Kirby.

Like a lot of you, I was fortunate enough to come of age and grow up with Jack Kirby. Over 25 years had passed since my seeking and fertile mind had first encountered and embraced Jack's art as it leaped off the racks right into my hands.

There were a lot of comic books to choose from in those days, or so it seemed, and not much money to buy with, even at 10¢ each... but Jack's work never let you down. I can still, if I close my eyes and let myself fall back, feel that thrill of excitement and anticipation that came from the discovery of a new Kirby book.

I firmly believe that the best part of us all, the finality that gives meaning, purpose and satisfaction to our lives, is the ability to communicate and share with each other what is special about being human; to feel down to the very fiber of our being that tingle, that spark deep in our soul. The Essence Of Life.

When I first began the journey to make my 1987 film *The Masters Of Comic Book Art*, I had no idea it would end up being about *The Storyteller* - artists who both drew and wrote. It is the supreme challenge of the artist and their ability to tell the story - to break it down visually, in terms of content, time, space, action, emotion, reflection... et al. The accomplishment of that goal is to take the personal and private experience of the artist and give it to the reader. To then be able to communicate that same spark of life to the masses is the rarest of gifts. That achievement is Jack Kirby's life's work.

In a medium which is comprised of a singular expression, uniquely composed of a combination of words and pictures, with Kirby's work you almost didn't need the words.

He came from a humble and oppressed beginning. Instilled with a strong work ethic and an overwhelming thirst for survival, he self-intellectualized with his own hand, heart, and mind his means of escape.

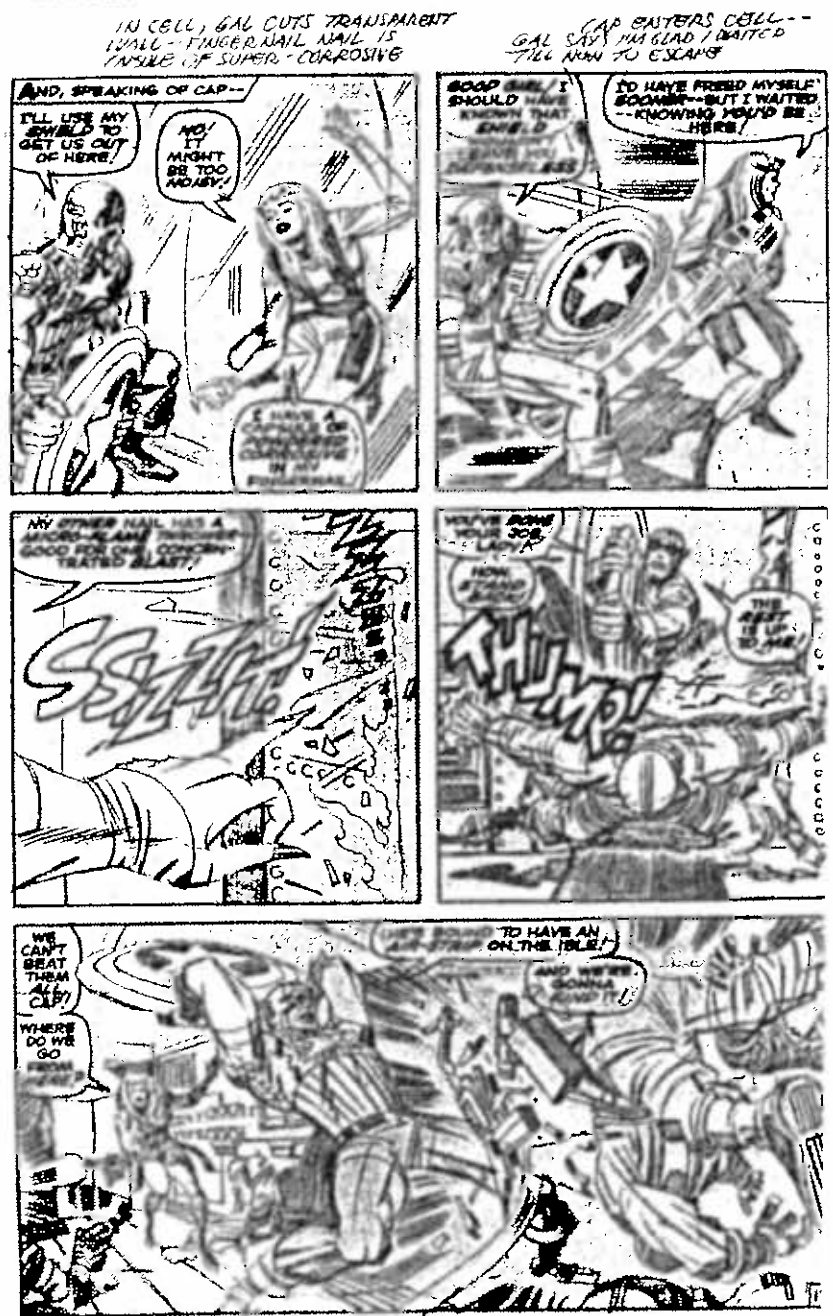
When I visited him in his home in Thousand Oaks, California, he had made it to the top of his mountain. Jack had the support and love of his wife, Roz. His children were grown. He was happy, fulfilled. The legacy of his life's work lived on: a true triumph of the real American Dream.

Close-up and in-person, Jack was bursting with energy, crackling, glowing, and awe-inspiring: rough-hewn on the outside, kind and pure inside.

Jack told me that behind Dr. Doom's mask was a flawless, unmarked face that Doom could not bring himself to look upon. He told me how much he loved young people, among them kids who grew up in the 1960s, my generation. On the wall in his studio was a photo of Jack with Frank Zappa. How well he'd come to understand human nature.

"Comic book people are the nicest people in the world," he confided to me.

I miss him.



Cap slugs it out with several buddies - uninked pencils to Captain America #103, page 17.

KEN VIOLA: When you approach the blank comic book page, how do you service it in terms of the storytelling?

JACK KIRBY: I see that story first. I feel that story first. I know those people first, and I put them down as I'd like them to live on those pages. My stories are very sincere. My stories are people stories and there are elements that are very, very real. It doesn't matter what the subject is, and I've done stories on a wide range of subjects.

I feel that no matter what kind of a story you're going to write, if you're sincere in telling that story and not contriving it, you will find whatever you feel will have a pungent element of that story. The reader will feel it because he's (or she's) no different than you. I've always felt

to do something beyond their own way of life, for which they had no method. They were willing to put themselves in that position, to create new myths, which is not a small job, and did it!

I think it's not only laudable, but natural. I think every one of us has the potential and the urge to do it. Some of us do it with music, a lot of us with pencils, some with machines. The best car I ever drove was worked on by a young man who loved to work with automobile engines. This fella was an artist, he gave me a myth-making car. If I had Pegasus, I'd have felt the same as I did about that car, because it ran so smoothly that only an artist could've done that. And I feel that in his way this young mechanic did what I had done all my life.

KV: You've said that the intellectual approach to your work was based on growing up in New York.

JK: It had to be. Whatever way of life I projected was fashioned by what I was. Whether I wrote about Europeans, or people from other regions, it was my limited impressions that were put on those pages. They were involving impressions and somehow they made their way to the reader because he felt like I did.

I'm a people writer. I know the next guy. I know what he's thinking, what he's capable of. The age of the writer is immaterial. I'm no wiser now than I was at that time. I knew people well, I was brought up among throngs of them.

I remember doing an editorial cartoon in which Neville Chamberlain was patting the head of a boa constrictor — who was Hitler. In the center of the snake was a bulge which I labeled Czechoslovakia. Neville Chamberlain had just given Czechoslovakia to Hitler. The boss of the syndicate called me in. He sez, "You're only a young squirt. How dare you draw a political cartoon like that?!" During that day it was really important. These things were really happening. We either satirized or projected them in many ways. And he sez, "How would you know about these things?" I said, "It's not a matter of politics to me. I know a gangster when I see one! If you give a gangster one thing, he's gonna ask for more!" That was the way of things. It's something you just know and when you put it down the other guy understands.

All my stories have been that way, they've never been contrived. If I wrote *Peter Pan*, you would like it. Peter Pan would be a real great kid, and the characters would be the kind of people you liked, or disliked... and whatever I wrote would be positive, because ahead I feel there's a happy ending for us all. That may be from my love of the movies. I can't interpret it any other way. I feel it's real, and no matter what happens, the ending is correct. The ending is dramatic and we can understand it. And I hope everyone can interpret their own script.

KV: What are your basic concepts for the hero and the villain?

JK: The hero to me is an extreme, an ordinary guy in an extreme position. The villain is the same except the results of his actions can be very harmful and drastic. The hero's actions can resolve the situation in positive terms. He would do it for the villain's own good and welfare. The hero isn't a cardboard figure, and neither is the villain or the victim. I feel that all three have to

correct a very extreme situation in some hopeful manner, and that reflects in every story that I write.

The hero isn't free from the same things that plague the villain. They are both human beings with problems. The villain has the problem of greed, vengeance or whatever plagues him and it must be resolved. One villain I had was a likable fellow, and he'd give you a pretty good meal before he'd finish you off. He'd be nice and that was a realistic part of his make-up. He just had style but his intentions were very evil and destructive. He had the kind of problems that made him destructive, and therefore these problems not only had to be altered, but analyzed in some way, so they could be resolved. And the hero was the form of analysis.

KV: There was an incredible run of issues of the *Fantastic Four*, in which you created Galactus, the Silver Surfer, the Inhumans, and the Black Panther.

JK: Yes, that's true.

KV: Do you recall that period of creative breakthrough, and your inspirations?

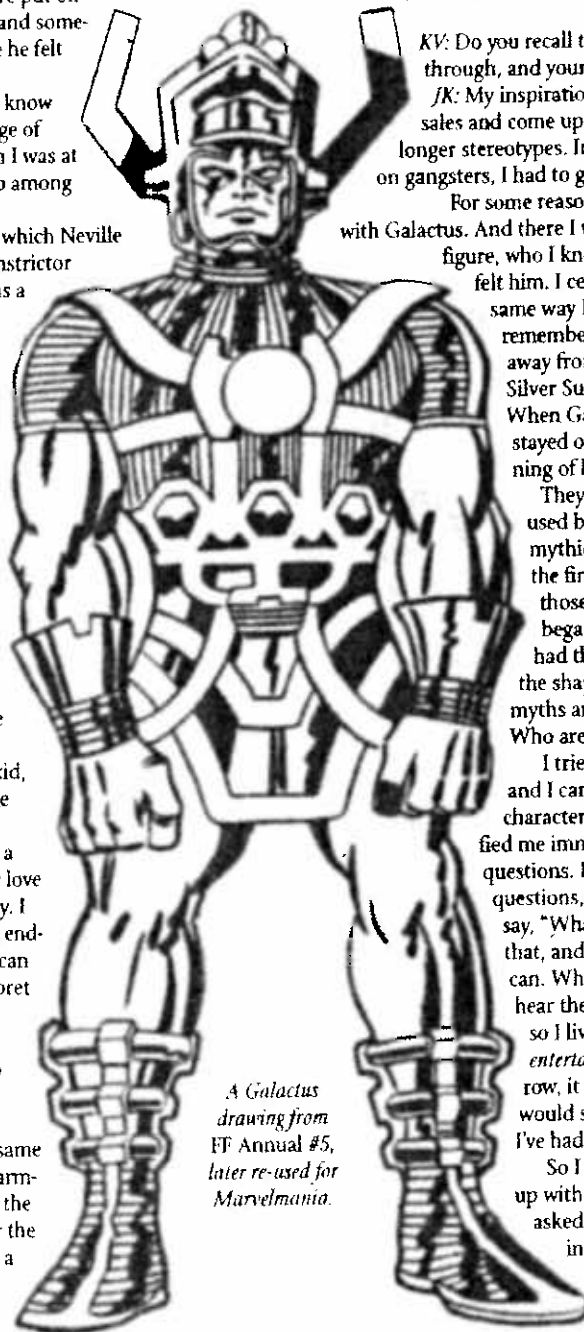
JK: My inspirations were the fact that I had to make sales and come up with characters that were no longer stereotypes. In other words, I couldn't depend on gangsters, I had to get something new.

For some reason I went to the *Bible*, and I came up with Galactus. And there I was in front of this tremendous figure, who I knew very well because I've always felt him. I certainly couldn't treat him in the same way I could any ordinary mortal. And I remember in my first story, I had to back away from him to resolve that story. The Silver Surfer is, of course, the fallen angel. When Galactus relegated him to Earth, he stayed on Earth, and that was the beginning of his adventures.

They were figures that had never been used before in comics. They were above mythic figures. And of course they were the first gods. I began thinking along those lines, and *The New Gods* evolved. I began to ask myself, "Everybody else had their gods. What are ours? What is the shape of our society in the form of myths and legends? Who are our gods? Who are our evil ones, and our good ones?"

I tried to resolve this in the *New Gods*, and I came up with some very interesting characters, and very good sales, which satisfied me immensely. Now, I didn't resolve the questions. I'm a guy who lives with a lot of questions, and I find that very interesting. I say, "What's out there?" and I try to resolve that, and I never can. I don't think anybody can. Who's got the answers? I'd sure like to hear the ultimate one. But I haven't yet, and so I live with a lot of questions. I find that *entertaining*. If my life were to end tomorrow, it would be fulfilled in that manner. I would say the questions have been terrific! I've had a good time.

So I felt these new characters I'd come up with were very valid and very real. They asked the question which is rarely asked in our society. It's felt and seen but rarely asked. Who are our gods? I'm sure you and I will never see



A Galactus drawing from FF Annual #5, later re-used for *Marvelmania*.