

ADVANCED IRON

#58



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HUBE'S SHELLHEADISMS

CAPTAIN AMERICA: THE TRUTH

There's an upcoming series about (well, *sort of* about) everyone's fave **shield slinger**. Like **US War Machine**, it takes place outside of "standard" Marvel continuity, and it doesn't deal so much with **Steve Rogers**; it weaves the tale of three **African-American soldiers**

in the US army around the start of World War II. Besides discussing the gross injustices done to blacks in the military and in society at large during those decades, it proposes that the **super-soldier serum** would have been tested on African-Americans before a Steve Rogers would have been used as a potential Cap subject.

Sound far-fetched? PC (politically correct, for the not-in-the-know)? Not to me. One has to consider what life was like for blacks in the late 30s-early 40s. It wasn't even *close* to society of 2002. They were literally second-class citizens, even though slavery had been abolished some 70-80 years prior. As Marvel has stated, the historical basis for TRUTH is solid; as they say:

"So that got me [Axel Alonso] thinking. And a common sense question came to mind: Would the Super Soldier program have conducted its first tests on blonde-haired, blue-eyed white boys? Now, anyone who's heard the word '**Tuskegee**' knows that probably wouldn't have been the case."

For those maybe not familiar with that episode in American history, between 1932 and 1972, in **Tuskegee, Alabama**, the U.S. Public Health Service conducted an experiment on some **400 African American men** - mostly sharecroppers from some of the poorest rural areas of the state - to see how the disease **syphilis** affected blacks as opposed to whites. **The men were never told the disease they were suffering from**, it's seriousness or the fact they weren't actually being treated."

According to **Newsarama's website**, TRUTH should be available sometime next month. I look forward to it. There's nothing I like better than a factual, reality-based story that is sure to stir some controversy.



On the other hand regarding **CAPTAIN AMERICA**, I heard what I consider disturbing news from former A.I. contributor supreme and still frequent e-mail pal, **Allen Bujak**. I don't collect **CAP** regularly (as of yet), but Allen informs me that in the latest issue (as of 10/18), an implication is made that the **9/11 attacks** and the **US bombing of the German city of Dresden** during WW II are analogous. Like Allen, I find this to be incredibly offensive. Comparing fundamentalist Islamic *terrorists* who are killing people merely for the sake that they believe their religion to be the only *true* religion, and Americans fighting an all-out war against fascist murderers bent on world domination is CONTEMPTIBLE. It is just another sick example of "moral equivalency" run amok, especially among the Left in our country. There's plenty for the Left – or anyone – to complain about regarding US policy past and present, but making ludicrous comparisons such as the above won't gain anyone to your side.



This kind of reminds me of **volume 2 CAPTAIN AMERICA** ("Heroes Reborn") [mostly] poorly done by **Rob Liefeld**. In that plot, **Steve Rogers** had to be "subdued" and "decommissioned" because he was against the **atomic bombing of Japan** to end WW II. I could never picture that – Steve Rogers, America's super-soldier, *against* ending the war without further American casualties?? Considering a manned attack on the Japanese mainland in order to defeat Nippon was estimated to cost up to *one million* American lives, how in the world could Steve Rogers oppose **President Truman's** decision?

When the **50th anniversary of the bombs' explosions** were commemorated in 1995, there was a flurry of "revisionist" history regarding the

decision. Some was, though, stuff that was already known – that demonstrations of the A-bomb's power would have been sufficient to garner a Japanese surrender, or that it should have been used (if at all) on an *exclusively* military target (Hiroshima and Nagasaki weren't). But I recall listening to some historians who claimed that a **pacifist cell within the Japanese government** had gained considerable power, and would have overcame the military rulers thus making the A-bomb decision moot. I also heard those claim that Truman's call was *exclusively* to scare the daylights out of **Joe Stalin and the Russians**. Exclusively? Give me a break. After all, **the Russians declared war on Japan on August 8** – two days after the first nuke! And (with respect, here) I heard from someone fairly close to me (with scientist ties) that the US actually had a **third A-bomb** and it was en route to Japan for use, but the Japanese surrendered before this could happen. To say I was flabbergasted – and extremely incredulous – is an understatement. There is absolutely NO back-up in ANY historical record for this. As a matter of fact, what *is* known is that had the

Japanese NOT surrendered after Nagasaki on August 9th, 1945, we would have had a problem – *we didn't have any more A-bombs!*

What does all this mean? It looks like **CAPTAIN AMERICA** will have to become a regular pick-up for me, now...if not only to write letters to its editors and set them straight.

IRON MAN – STILL MODERATELY AVERAGE

Iron Man sales figures are still languishing in **the mid-50s** (its ranking in the Diamond Top 300 of title sales). Why do I use the term “languishing?” Easy – considering **IM** *used* to be in the **TOP TEN** and **TOP TWENTY** of this scale, it is SAD to see how far he has fallen. If I've said it, I've said it a million times: **Volume 2 Iron Man** was in the top ten of this ranking routinely. Early **volume 3 Iron Man** was regularly in the top twenty. WHY??? The reason is as simple as Frank Robbins' pencils – *because Marvel made **Iron Man** a “flagship” title*. It was treated, alongside FANTASTIC FOUR, AVENGERS and CAPTAIN AMERICA, “**Heroes Reborn**” status. It had some top-notch creative teams on it (need I mention who?).

Mike Grell, you ain't the answer I'm afraid....

SQUADRON SUPREME RETURNS



I took a personal interest in this news (thanks to Assistant Editor Pat C. for alerting me!) since my latest writing hobby has been an **Iron Man-Squadron yarn**. This project actually dates back to 1998 when I still had my **Iron Man What If site** up. Originally, I had **IM** ending up on the Squadron's world after he finished with **Obadiah Stane** (you can check out *this* story if you'd like – it's up at A.I. publisher Mike Connolly's **IM** site, www.angelfire.com/de3/ironmanff). I did some recent “refitting” of it now that **IM** has a time machine. Basically, **IM** and the SS have to battle the fascist regime that has taken over the SS's earth, picking up a few years after

NEW WORLD ORDER, the last SS story, penned by **IM** scripiter extraordinaire **Len Kaminski**.

But enough of that. **The Pulse** at comicon.com reports that **J. Michael Straczynski** and artist **Gary Frank** will be doing an all-new SS yarn in **spring 2003**. Based on what Frank stated in the article, I personally am kind of worried. He says it won't be in the **Marvel Universe** or the **Ultimates Universe**, it'll be “their own universe.” I don't know if he means “their own” as in the Squadron's (they *are* in their own universe, after all) or “their own” as in his and Straczynski's. I sure hope it's the former. There is a WAY too much

history behind the Squadron, not the least of which is deceased **Mark Gruenwald's** spectacular **12-issue series** and graphic novel **DEATH OF A UNIVERSE**. The SS has had one HELL of a time on their Earth, facing planetary totalitarian regimes at least three times and even the utter destruction of their dimension. To pick up "fresh" would be a HUGE disservice to this rich past. At the very least, Straczynski and Frank could pick up after the events of **NEW WORLD ORDER** where the Squadron could be victorious against the fascist "Global Directorate." Heck, even just a passing mention of how the SS won the "war" would be enough to placate fans (at least a little) and then the creative duo can shift into high gear telling their own story.

THIS AND THAT...



Former A.I. Editor-in-Chief **Roger Ott** has been absent from our pages for awhile (he's been busy at school), but he's been active in his off-hours working on an **interactive superhero database** based on the **Marvel Handbook series!** Here's what Rog had to say about it:

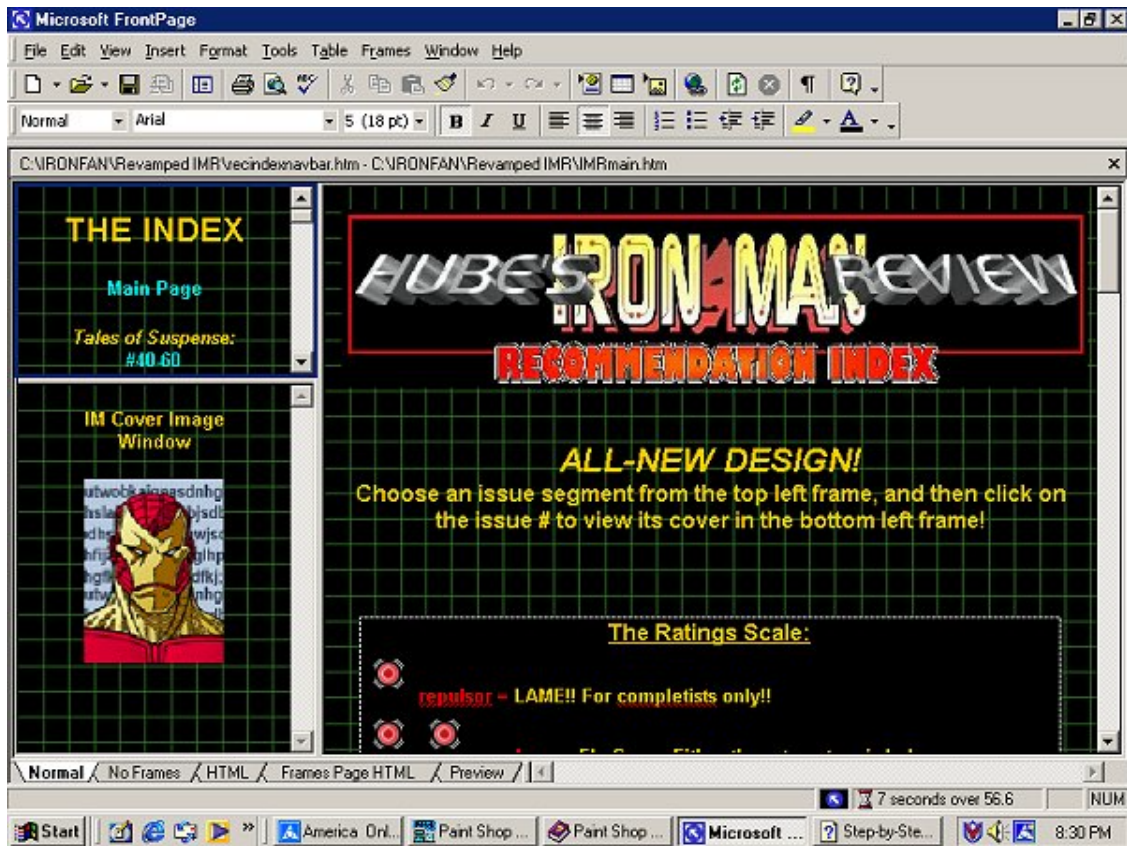
"I've always been a big fan of the **Marvel Universe Handbooks**, having collected every version of them every printed and reading them cover to cover numerous times. Over the last decade or so, ever since the PC became a household item, I always thought a **computerized version of the Marvel Universe Handbook** would by far be the ultimate version. But, there has been no word from Marvel on this happening, so I decided to take the initiative and do it myself. So, roughly a year ago, I started teaching myself **Visual Basic**, and began creating an application that will store all the expansive information that comprises the Marvel Universe (even the stuff that had to be left out of the printed handbooks because of space restrictions), and make it easily updateable as soon as information changes. It's a long, time-spanning project, but I should have a fairly decent Beta version done by the end of the year. Anyone who has any questions about it, or would like to become a Beta tester, can drop me a line at CyRog@aol.com"



Nutty far-left conspiratorialist **Steven Grant**, a regular contributor at the **Comic Book Resources (CBR) website (www.comicbookresources.com)** is at it again. No, no, don't worry – I won't go off on him (and make him look totally ridiculous, too) like I did last issue. I *will* recommend you check out his articles, however. He has a new column up each Wednesday, titled "**Permanent Damage.**" He has his own separate message boards, so if you find his political prattling as heinous as I do, let him know on his boards. He seems to be pretty good at responding. Oh yeah – he also talks about comics every now and then.



Stay tuned for an all-new **Hube's Iron Man Review** website! It's slow work. Why? Check out the design below:



The new design will have three frames. The upper left frame will be the **issue segment frame** where you click on whichever 10-issue span of reviews you wish to see. The segment will then appear in the large right-hand (main) frame. In that frame, clicking on the issue's number causes that issue's cover image to appear in the **IM Cover Image Window** in the lower left!

Not only have I been working on resizing fonts and such, but I've had to make an individual web *page* for each cover image so as to keep the "grid" background image intact (trust me, it looks MUCH cooler than just having a standard white background).

-Hube



I'll begin with some unfinished business...

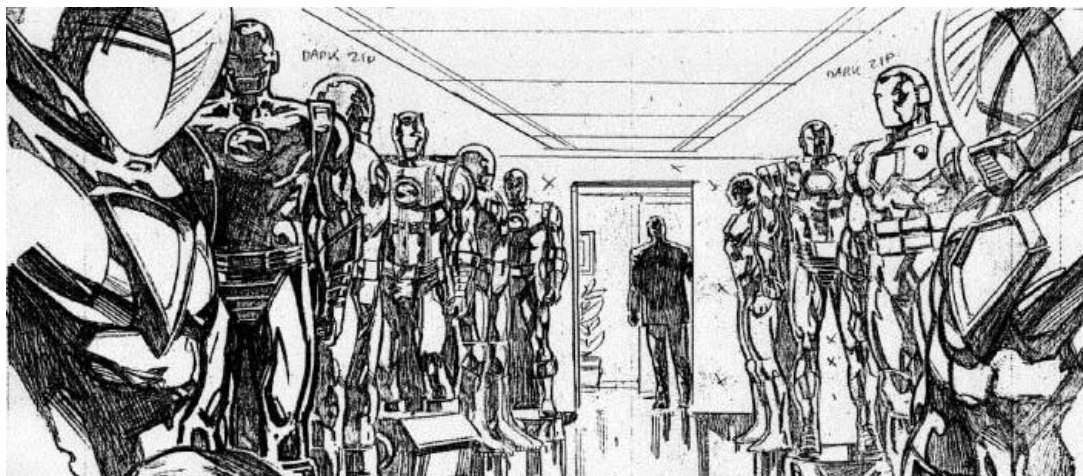
In **ADVANCED IRON #57**, I interviewed the super-talented ink artist **Bob Almond** who, with writer **Christopher Priest** and penciler **Sal Velluto**, helped re-establish in Iron Fans' minds the true greatness of **Tony Stark/Iron Man** in **BLACK PANTHER #s 41-45**. (If you haven't as yet read these issues, put them on your Must Get List immediately!) Bob had sent me some panels from **BLACK PANTHER #44** and **#45**, showing the creative process from initial page layout to finished product. I've included them below, along with Mr. Almond's explanation. Enjoy! (And then hustle your buns to the comic store and score those issues!)

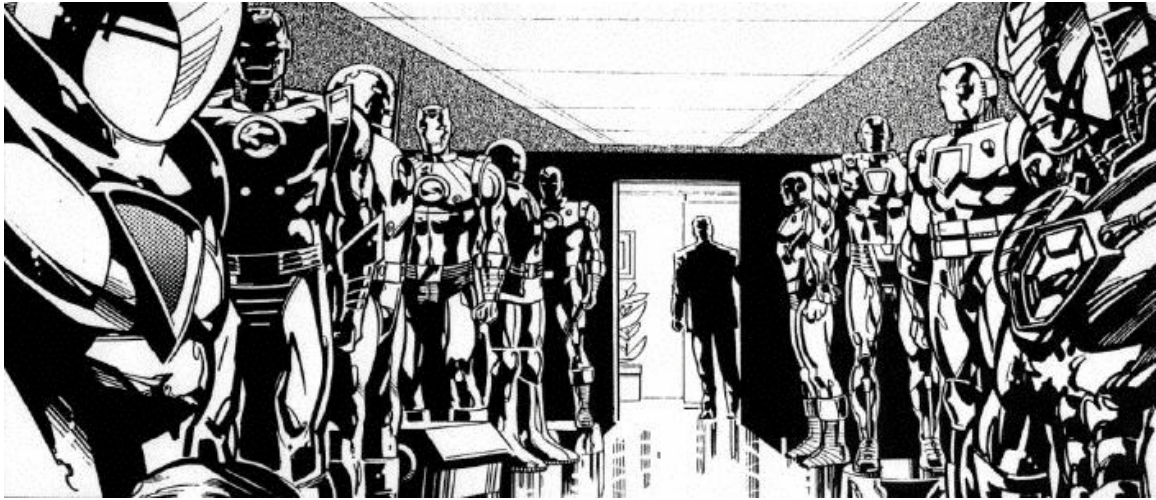
Finally, is a scan of the magnificent Velluto/Almond/Steve Oliff splash page from **BLACK PANTHER #23!**

Now for Bob's inking lesson:

"The first scan shows the layouts Sal rendered for **BLACK PANTHER** issue 44 that **Steve Geiger** then tightened the pencils for and inked. When Sal asked for ref for the armors panel I referred him to the original **HISTORY OF THE MARVEL UNIVERSE** entry where **Layton** drew a bunch of the older armors. After, I found time to look up the actual appearances of these armors and realized that Bob had taken some artistic liberties on the original designs. That is why the armors don't fully match the ones from the third scan, the inked version of page 2 from **BLACK PANTHER #45**. If you look at the pencils, scan 2, you'll notice that I tweaked some of the armors to closer match their printed first appearances. Sal also redid the armor on the far right when I pointed out that he'd erred in his original drawing of it and drew a non-existent one or a copy of another armor, I guess. He inked the new image, scanned it to me and I pasted it on top of that spot. Also, on the armors from issue 44 you'll notice the face-bolt armor but when Sal drew it on page 2 of issue 45 in the back of the row to the left I felt I couldn't get the bolts to be noticeable in that small shot when inked so I instead

changed the face to the infamous nose faceplate hoping that that would be easier to make out. Just barely!"



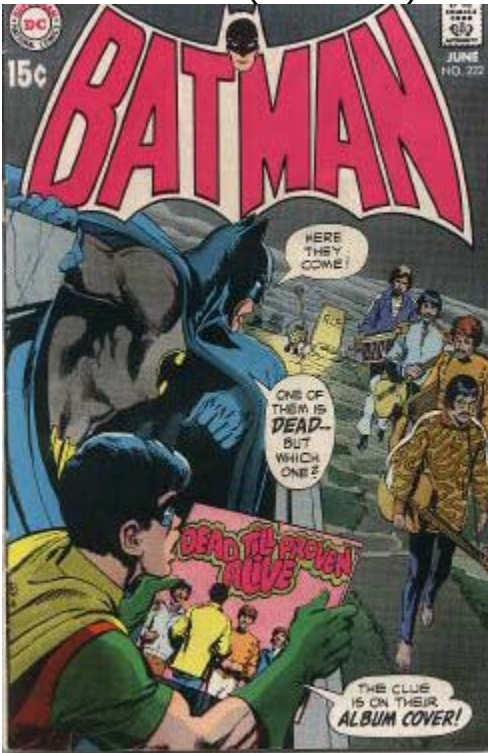




My last column featured a tie-in between **Iron Man** and the **Beatles**, particularly references by **David Michelinie** and **Bob Layton**. Well, I found another interesting one in **BATMAN #222**.

On October 12, 1969, some incredibly shocking news ripped through the world of popular music: **Paul McCartney was dead!** And the evidence was everywhere -- in the Beatles song lyrics, on the band's album covers, and in various, miscellaneous photographs. Fans of the Fab Four were desperate to find new clues confirming McCartney's demise. This latest form of Beatlemania would obsess music fans until at least 1972 -- despite the fact that McCartney himself, along with his family, appeared on the cover of the November 7, 1969, issue of LIFE magazine.

Obviously caught up in the frenzy -- and obviously to make a few bucks -- **BATMAN #222** (June 1970) focused upon a similar scenario: **Saul Cartwright**



(McCartney) of the world-famous **Oliver Twists** (Beatles) had mysteriously vanished and was allegedly replaced by a look-alike imposter. So when the Twists visit Gotham City and become the guests of **Bruce Wayne**, the Dynamic Duo vow to solve the mystery of "Dead Till Proven Alive!"

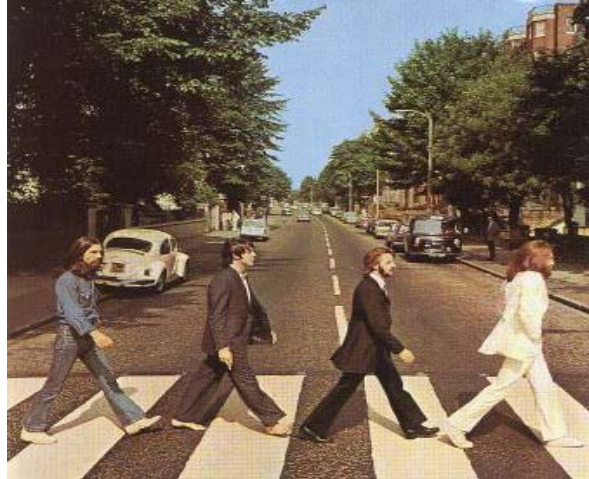


On the cover of this issue, Robin is holding a Twists album sporting a illustration knocked-off from a famous **Sgt. Pepper**

photograph. In addition, one of the Twists -- Glennan (John Lennon), but oddly not Saul -- is seen without shoes, the same way barefoot McCartney was pictured on the Beatles **ABBEY ROAD** album cover.



And here is the tie-in. The story, a quite good one, was written by **Frank**



Robbins, penciled by **Irv Novak** and inked by **DICK GIORDANO**, co-creator of **Future Comics!**

While recently on eBay I encountered a preliminary **Iron Man design illustration** for the current armor by **Mike Grell!** Please allow me to share. The piece sold for \$128.00.



David Michelinie and **Bob Layton**, my two all-time favorite comic book creators, along with comic industry legend Dick Giordano, have recently launched their own company: **Future Comics**. In fact, **FREEMIND #0**, the first offering of their flagship title, was released the last week of August 2002. This issue is basically a preview of the major characters in the Future Comics Universe. Two more titles will be added shortly. **METALLIX**, starring the world's first tag-team armored superhero, debuts in November, while **DEATHMASK**, featuring the mysterious **St. Synn**, goes on sale in April 2003.

FREEMIND is the story of **McKinsey Flint**, a bona fide scientific genius -- and quadriplegic -- who devises a way to transfer his consciousness to an android body, thus giving him mobility and an interface to the world. But unexpectedly the transfer process opens, or "frees," the 90 percent of the human brain that normally lies dormant. So when Mac is in his Edison Wilde persona he has amazing abilities generated by his fully operational brain! The whole concept fascinates me, particularly the idea of a severely handicapped hero using his gray matter to solve superheroic problems.

On the business end, Future Comics has embarked on a revolutionary method of selling its product: retailers and individual buyers must make their purchases directly through the company's website, www.futurecomicsonline.com. This novel approach to marketing circumvents the trials, tribulations, and, most importantly, the politics of dealing with a distribution middleman. The noble attempt in and of itself is newsworthy.

I became a huge **Michelinie and Layton** fan during the late 1970s during the duo's definitive, landmark run on **IRON MAN**. Their innovative work on the title, which has withstood the test of time, became the model (the Iron Manual, so to speak) for future creative teams to follow.

It's now many years later, and after writing and drawing such notable characters as **Superman**, **Batman**, **Spider-Man**, and **Captain America**, Mr. Michelinie and Mr. Layton have decided to embark upon the creation of exciting new characters, compelling stories, and ingenious salesmanship. I wish them the best of luck. In many ways, to me, these guys are more heroic, and gutsy, than any well-muscled, costumed crimefighter.

The FREEMIND regular series begins the last week of October 2002 with issue #1, "**Experiment in Error**." For more information on Future Comics or to place an order, please visit www.futurecomicsonline.com.

A Newsarama.com in-depth interview with Future Comics founders Michelinie, Layton, and Giordano can be found at <http://161.58.84.234/cgi->

bin/ubb/ultimatebb.cgi?ubb=get_topic&f=2&t=000056.

The science of **spintronics** is explained on this Scientific American link:
<http://www.sciam.com/article.cfm?articleID=0007A735-759A-1CDD-B4A8809EC588EEDF>.

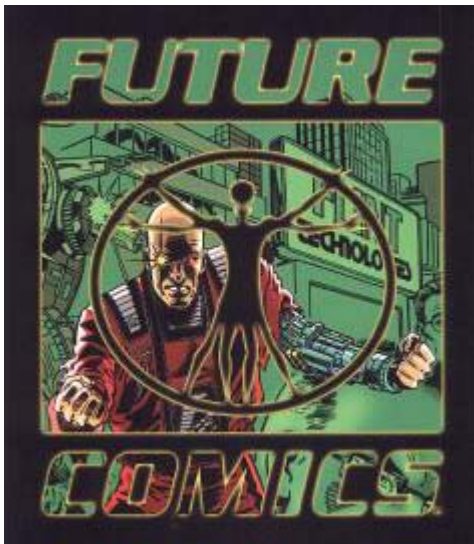
FREEMIND co-creator and writer David Micheline, or Prince David, as I call him, graciously agreed to answer a number of probing questions focusing on this exciting first offering from Future Comics.

MK: Which of the FREEMIND creators -- Bob Layton, Dick Giordano, or you -- coined the word "**Freemind**"?

DM: That was me. Bob's original title was "**Psiborg**," but we thought that might conflict with DC's trademarked character, "**Cyborg**." And since series these days aren't always named for the character or characters inside, I thought it might be intriguing to name the book after the central mechanism of the story: The Freemind Project.

MK: Who created the very exciting **FREEMIND logo** (typeface)?

DM: I came up with the "lightning" idea, and Bob worked out the specific design around that.



MK: Come to think of it, who created the Future Comics logo (a swipe of Leonardo da Vinci's classic illustration "**Human Proportions**," a human body inside of a circle enclosed in a square)?

DM: That was another collaboration between Bob and I. Bob sent me a string of possible logos over a period of time, but none of them quite did the trick for either of us. In one batch he'd included the da Vinci drawing, but I thought that said "old" whereas we were trying to give the impression of "new" with our line. So I said, half-jokingly, "Now if the

guy in the center was an ALIEN, you might have something!" So Bob reworked the sketch with an alien in the middle and we all loved it!

MK: In a way, is the cover illustration for FREEMIND #1 somewhat of a swipe of the cover illo for **IRON MAN 225**?



DM: You'd have to ask Bob about that. Though, personally, I wouldn't call it a "swipe." Having a central figure on a cover, surrounded by color-hold elements from the story inside, has been done for decades. I'd call it a case of putting new characters into a traditional format.



MK: Are some of the science and technology concepts in FREEMIND carryovers from **IRON MAN**? In other words, leftover ideas you and Bob never used during your last run on **IRON MAN** or while producing the **IRON MAN: BAD BLOOD** four-part mini-series?

DM: I'm not aware of any specific holdover ideas. Though the programmable armor in METALLIX started out as a concept we were going to use in the **IRON MAN: THE END** project that evaporated somewhere along the way.

MK: **Spintronics**, the guiding scientific principle in FREEMIND, creates a wormhole (in this case, a communications conduit) through which McKinsey Flint interacts with Edison Wilde's android body. Thinking in terms of a possible future storyline, might this

wormhole, in a sense, be used for **time travel**?

DM: I dunno. Bob's the science detail guy. Though I assume that if we wanted to do a time travel story, the use of a wormhole -- on purpose or through some aberration -- would be a convenient way to bring it about.

MK: Was the basic FREEMIND concept developed first and spintronics added later?

DM: Nope. Bob contacted me with the spintronics/android connection already in place.

MK: You and Bob Layton broke new ground in **IRON MAN** by making Tony Stark a recovering alcoholic, and for this received numerous accolades. Do you think the severely handicapped McKinsey Flint similarly will be viewed as a heroic man striving to overcome personal difficulties?

DM: I think he will initially be viewed as a DRIVEN man struggling to overcome personal difficulties. It's only later, when he's trying to cope with the disappointments of his success, that the heroic elements of his nature become apparent -- both to himself and to the reader.

MK: Who decided on what Flint's particular disability would be?

DM: No one, yet. We don't have a specific affliction, because then we'd have to research it and make sure we got every little detail right and that could limit us in what we want to do with the human character in the future.

MK: Is Flint the type of man who should be admired or feared, due to his compulsion to be "free"?

DM: He should be feared by anyone who stands between him and what he's determined to do, whether that person is friend, foe or employee. He's a tough but fair man, whose people skills are limited by his lack of personal experience. He's compassionate, but has no patience for stupidity or carelessness.

MK: Flint is a brilliant man of science and a master of words, so would it be reasonable to assume that his alter ego's name was derived from Thomas EDISON, another famous scientist, and Oscar WILDE, esteemed author and playwright?

DM: Yup. That was the idea from the start, and he explains the reason for his choice at the end of **FREEMIND #3**.

MK: I would imagine that your sense of humor and subtle yet powerful wit are traits you've given to Flint, whose sole means of communication, other than facial expressions, is synthesized speech via words processed through a computer keyboard.

DM: Ha! That wasn't a question! Next...

MK: Spintronics is an actual scientific discipline, therefore placing FREEMIND in the realm of classic science fiction (such as noted in the works of **Jules Verne**, **H.G. Wells**, and **Arthur C. Clarke**), wherein real-world science is presented to readers through imaginative storytelling. Was the original intent in writing FREEMIND to use real-world science as your backdrop?

DM: That's the intent of the entire Future line, actually. We hope to tie all fantastic ideas, events and characters into science one way or another. Which really isn't that difficult if you apply imagination and the right terminology. For instance, there's a character in DEATHMASK who, for all the world, seems to be a ghost. But, since there's no supernatural in the Future Universe, this guy is actually a "quantum energy signature" of a dead guy. (Boo!)

MK: Will we actually be seeing Flint in his laboratories laboring away at the Edison Wilde android design?

DM: The Wilde android was already in existence in the origin story in **FREEMIND #s 1-3**, developed and built by Mac's inner circle of scientists at FlinTech. But I do hope we'll see him doing actual research and/or design work in upcoming issues. That's part of who he is, and it would be a mistake to ignore it.

MK: **Jim Rhodes** was Tony Stark's pilot and right hand man. Will Flint have a "sidekick" of sorts?

DM: He has an entire staff at the start; he needs lots of folks to do all the things he can't do. But as he begins to personally interact with other people for the first time in his life, he'll find that he needs different kinds of help. Right now it's a fair bet that ex-Israeli commando **Isaac Rachimi**, Mac Flint's physician/bodyguard, will be the kind of advisor -- and friend -- that Edison Wilde will turn to more and more.

MK: During the Edison Wilde construction process, will the readers be treated to the schematics, a la the illustration on the cover of **FREEMIND #0**?

DM: Not the first version, as that's already complete. But Edison Wilde will be a "work in progress," changing as technology and Mac's needs develop. I wouldn't be surprised to see a technical drawing or two crop up in the book from time to time.

MK: As Edison Wilde "evolves" so to speak and becomes less of an "automaton," will the spintronics feedback-feedforward loop (which allows the human brain to access its full potential and in effect evolve) cause Flint's body to, in effect, heal?

DM: That will probably be judged on a case-by-case basis. Bullets (when he doesn't stop them in mid-air, like he did in **FREEMIND #0**) kind of bounce off of him, so being wounded hasn't been a problem yet. I would think, however, that unless the android body is made of **nanites** or other active agents (which, at this point, it's not) repairs would still have to be made from an outside source. Which could be fun. Can you imagine Wilde getting caught in a wheat thresher or something in Kansas and having to go to a local auto mechanic to have his arm temporarily reattached?

MK: Would Flint Technologies employees say that McKinsey Flint an easy man to work for?

DM: No. Fair, generous, dedicated, protective, brilliant, yes. Easy? Nuh-uh.

MK: In what part of the United States, or state, is Flint Technologies headquartered?

DM: FlinTech's headquarters is in a suburb of **San Diego, California**. However, a portion of the operation moves to Nevada after the events in the origin story. Matter of fact, that's where the truck in #0 was heading when it was hijacked.

MK: Does Flint Technologies have a solid benefits package and 401(k) plan?

DM: The best. (Eat yer heart out, Stark...!)

MK: After Tony Stark was shot and crippled by **Kathy Dare**, he used a hoverchair as his means of personal transportation. On the other hand, Flint's chair still has wheels... so will he be upgrading?

DM: We're trying to be as real world as possible with the Future series. Next-gen technology does exist in the Future Universe, but it's fairly rare, fairly specific, and is generally controlled by a small number of people. We try to be as believable as possible within that context.

MK: Does the Edison Wilde android utilize an anti-gravity means of propulsion for flight?

DM: No, all of Wilde's abilities come from his brain, from psi powers that even he doesn't truly understand. Yet. In fact, when he first flies he panics at the realization that he doesn't know HOW to fly -- and so he crashes.

MK: Will Wilde don a different uniform from his red Flint Technology security garb as the series moves ahead?

DM: What, you got a crystal ball or somethin'? With the partial move to Nevada comes a change in uniform for the entire FlinTech security crew. This will effect Wilde as well, though I believe his uniform will be a hybrid of the old and new, or in some other way differ from the standard guard's garb. This new look can first be seen on the cover of **FREEMIND #4**.

MK: All Future Comics will have **28 pages of entertainment!** Whose idea was it to up the six page ante from the mainstream comics page count?

DM: That was a business decision Bob and Dick made. It's kind of an experiment. We're currently thinking about making DEATHMASK and our fourth, unnamed, series **22 pages of story for a lower price**. If one length/price combo clearly outsells the other, then we'll probably standardize at the format

most readers prefer.

MK: To date, which aspect of FREEMIND are you the most pleased with (the characters, the story, the artwork, etc.)?

DM: It's always the characters. Everything else stems from that, even (these next two words are to be read reverentially) **The Story**. There are so many characters in this series that I really haven't been able to give each the time he/she deserves, and that displeases me. But the characters themselves are solid, I like every one of them, and when I get around to developing them as much as I hope to I'm going to be having one hell of a good time. With luck, that will translate into a good time for the readers as well.

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FERRARO

FILES

Greetings Ferrophiles.... I'm back, after a brief summer hiatus, and have hit the ground running. Though news about our favorite Armored Avenger has been kind of scarce, he will also be making two appearances in the 4 issue *Marvel Double Shots* anthology. It also looks like he is going to play a prominent role in the newest *Avengers* storyline- "World Trust." That being said, we are going to learn a little more about the newest writer to jump on the Marvel bandwagon, and who has assumed the writing duties of "Earth's Mightiest Heroes," Mr. Geoff Johns. Geoff's current credits include *The Flash* and *JSA* for DC Comics, as well as the aforementioned *Avengers* for Marvel. I had the pleasure of talking to Geoff briefly at *Wizard World: East* this year, in Chicago. He graciously agreed to take some time out of his busy schedule for an interview, as well as share some of his thoughts and plans for the *Avengers* and *Shellhead*.



Let's start with the vital stats for Geoff Johns: full name, age, interests outside comic books, first comic read, currently reading, etc.

Geoffrey Marieb Johns

Age: 29

Born: 1/25/73

Hobbies & Interests Include : Film, Football, & Hockey

First comic I really remember reading was *Batman and the Outsiders* #13

Currently I read a TON of comics. Anything Greg Rucka writes, *Catwoman*, *Green Lantern*, Bendis books, *Spider-Man Blue*, *100 Bullets*, *Y: The Last Man*, *Hulk*, *Uncanny X-Men* and dozens of others.

Wanna know more about Geoff, including his film & TV career check out :

<http://www.geoffjohns.com>

How did you go about breaking into the field of comics?

I always have loved comic books. Loved the storytelling and the artwork. My first sale was STARS & S.T.R.I.P.E. at DC Comics. I met several editors in New York while working on the film CONSPIRACY THEORY. They encouraged me to pitch them something so I did. It took about a year and a half but Stars and S.T.R.I.P.E. got up and running. (Note-Geoff worked in Hollywood before breaking into comics and served as a member of Richard Donner's production company.)

Why comics?

They were there. And I found out the pay didn't suck.

Favorite character? Team? Story (personal, as well as by another writer)?

The Flash. Favorite team is tied between the Avengers and the Teen Titans. Those were the books I read growing up. Favorite story I worked on? I think "Crossfire" so far. ("Crossfire"- issues # - in The Flash.)

(Favorite story) (b)y someone else: Tangled Web #4 by Rucka and Risso. A brilliant issue.

As a writer, what is the attraction to superheroes? Team books?

I just like the high-adventure. The drama. Seeing people strive to be the best they can be. Team books are all about interaction. How the characters work and don't work together.

Dream project? Weirdest or most out there project? Future plans?

I'm working on my dream project: The Flash. The strangest project? I have a lot of non-super-hero stuff in my head, but I don't know how weird it is. There's an idea for a book I have called "FAUST AND THE DEVIL" with DC's Blue Devil character. The premise behind it is a bit out there...I doubt that it would get off the ground. Who knows?





Most of your professional work has been for DC Comics, why go to work for Marvel? And why another team book?

I love team books. For me, they're exciting as #@!! to work on. All the different personalities bouncing off each other. As for why Marvel? I like their characters. They asked me if I'd like to do Avengers. Simple as that. It's been fantastic. Tom Brevoort is great to work with.

So far, at least in your JSA & Flash work, you seem to strike a balance between great character driven moments, relationships and the team's interactions with epic confrontations and threats from the characters' past. Will you change this approach for your work on the Avengers?

No. The action will be a little different than the others. A little more grounded after the first arc.

You are also known for updating a hero's/heroes' rogues gallery. Can you share anything about your plans for the Avengers' rogues gallery?

Nope.

What will your foci be when writing the Avengers?

The characters. And evolving relationships between them – either building them up or tearing them down.

Aren't you worried that fans will see this as the JSA with a different name? Why or why not? How do you plan to differentiate the two books, esp. from each other?

Nope. It's all about theme. And the themes are dramatically different.

Tell us a little about your approach to writing. How do you go about coming up with story ideas? Researching characters' history?



I read the first handful of appearances of characters and then focus on that. It's all about boiling the character down to its essence. As for story ideas, I don't know when or how I get them – they just sort of leap out at times.

Do you feel you have a solid grasp on the Avengers and their history?

Yep.

Let's play "word association;" The Avengers?

Earth's Mightiest Heroes.

Supporting cast?

Mysterious.

If you could only use three words to describe the individual members of the Avengers, what would they be? Let's start with Cap:



The All-American Soldier.



Thor?

God of Thunder.

Goliath?

Growing Scientist Avenger.



Wasp?

Confident,
Beautiful
leader.



Scarlet Witch?

Queen of Chaos.





Wonderman?

Hollywood superstar.

Warbird?

The military strategist.

Who is/are your favorite supporting character(s)?

Can't say.



Favorite Avengers/Iron Man villain?

Can't say.



Tony Stark?

Slick.

Iron Man?

Knight in Shining Armor.

Now we will turn our attention to Iron Man and Tony Stark. As a writer/creator, what draws you to the character of Tony Stark? Give us a quick rundown of your take on Tony Stark. What drives him?

You'll see that summed up in my next issue of Avengers.

Why do you think The Avengers have endured for almost 40 years?

Epic storytelling with bigger than life characters. They're Marvel's JLA.

And Iron Man?

A simple concept that works on many levels – including the Knight in Shining Armor.

What kind of contribution to The Avengers mythos do you see yourself making?

Hopefully good ones!

Other than the "World Trust" storyarc, at the beginning of your tenure, any other tantalizing tidbits about your plans for The Avengers you can share exclusively with A.I. readers?

Nope! Sorry. I really want to keep our plans a secret.



Well A.I. readers, that wraps up another installment of Ferro Files. I hope you enjoyed the interview with Geoff Johns and are looking forward to his interpretation of the Avengers and Shellhead... I know I am!

Next issue-
former Iron Man
artist &
current
Marvelle
penciller Mark
"Doc" Bright!
Until then-
peace!

THE INVINCIBLE
IRON MAN



WELSHCAT © 2000

Demon in a Bottle



A review by JEFF PEARSON

**From Irrational Games' (creators of Freedom Force) Web Site
(www.irrationalgames.com):**

"Set in Patriot City circa 1962, Freedom Force is a tactical RPG that bristles with the over-the-top action of the comic books. It's up to you to form and lead Freedom Force, a team of superheroes capable of standing toe-to-toe against insane villains who are hell bent on crimes that range from bank robbery through to world domination! Will the team you build be able to survive 30 all-out slugfests through rich and varied Patriot City locations while upholding justice and protecting the innocent?"

Growing up with my comics hobby, I had always had the side interest of the games centered on super heroes. As a kid, I bought and played the **Marvel Role Playing Games** as well as most of the others including DC, Champions, and Villains and Vigilantes. With my additional interest in computers, I've always longed for the computer super hero game that just didn't plain suck. I've probably played most of them and found most of them lacking. The few that don't, I still play a game once in a while such as the **Playstation Marvel Super Heroes** fighting game (I'm really having to work at getting better since my 10 year old son starting beating me at this one....).

Now that I have kids of my own, I like nothing better than to be a kid right along with them.....and I'm still looking for the super heroes game that would meet my expectations. So far, **the first edition Marvel Super Heroes Role Playing Game** has been the most successful for my kids. This may now change since I have started playing Freedom Force.

Freedom Force by Irrational Games is an RPG game based on the **Golden Age of Comic Heroes**. You play the role of the heroes out to stop the bad guys from taking over the world. This is just plain an awesome game. The graphics are fantastic as you can see from the screenshots. The sounds are great. The only real complaint I have is that sometimes the controls are herky-jerky. Of course, this may just be because I'm playing it on my laptop. I have not tried it on my desktop system.

Freedom Force is playable as solo as well as multiplayer. You can get some friends

locally to play if you have a network in your home or you can go out on the net to find other players to game with.

If this game stopped there, I would still heartily recommend it to all of you. What kicks this game into overdrive is its customizability. Any game out today worth anything has editing and building options. And Freedom Force has it to spare. Just like Doom/Wolfenstein, and any other first-person shooter today, the game levels are called mods. With the available editor, you can modify or come up with completely new environments for player to play.

As a testament to the extensibility of this game, even before the game was shipping, a character editor was released on the net. Characters are made up of different pieces. Meshes are generic figure geometries for a character. Think of it as the body shape of the character. You can even import character models created in **3D Studio Max** for use. The next thing a character has is a skin. Think of it as a wrapper that covers the geometry of the character that makes a character look like he looks. For example, the characters of **Spiderman** and **Daredevil** may use the same base character model (actually, probably most of the heroes in skin-tight costumes would share this same model). A skin contains the information for the characters look such as his costume. By wrapping a skin that contains the spider costume, you now have **Spiderman**. By wrapping a different skin with Daredevil's costume, you now have **Daredevil**.

The final part of a character is the stats and powers of the character. Again, these are all customizable. Once created, these statistics can be saved into what are called **recipe files**.

The best part of all of this customization is that most of it is done for you already. Want to play as **Spiderman**? All of the information you need is downloadable from the web.

By now I'm sure its obvious what this is doing in **Advanced Iron**. I have found and downloaded the information needed to play in just about every single armor Mark listed on the **Advanced Iron Web Site** including the **Stealth** and **Hulkbuster** armors. There is also a custom MOD specifically for **Iron Man**. So now you can play as our favorite Avenger.

A recent update to Freedom Force now also includes a '**Danger Room**' module. This is my favorite part. You select either one or multiple characters to play. Select the enemies you want to fight and then the environment you want to fight in. It drops you right into the heat of battle. I've spent hours fighting **Sentinels** in the Mark 8 armor.

This game belongs on each and every one of your computer systems. If you have ever

wanted to wear the armor (and who of us have not?) run, don't walk to get this game!

Anyone up for a battle as the **Iron Legion?**

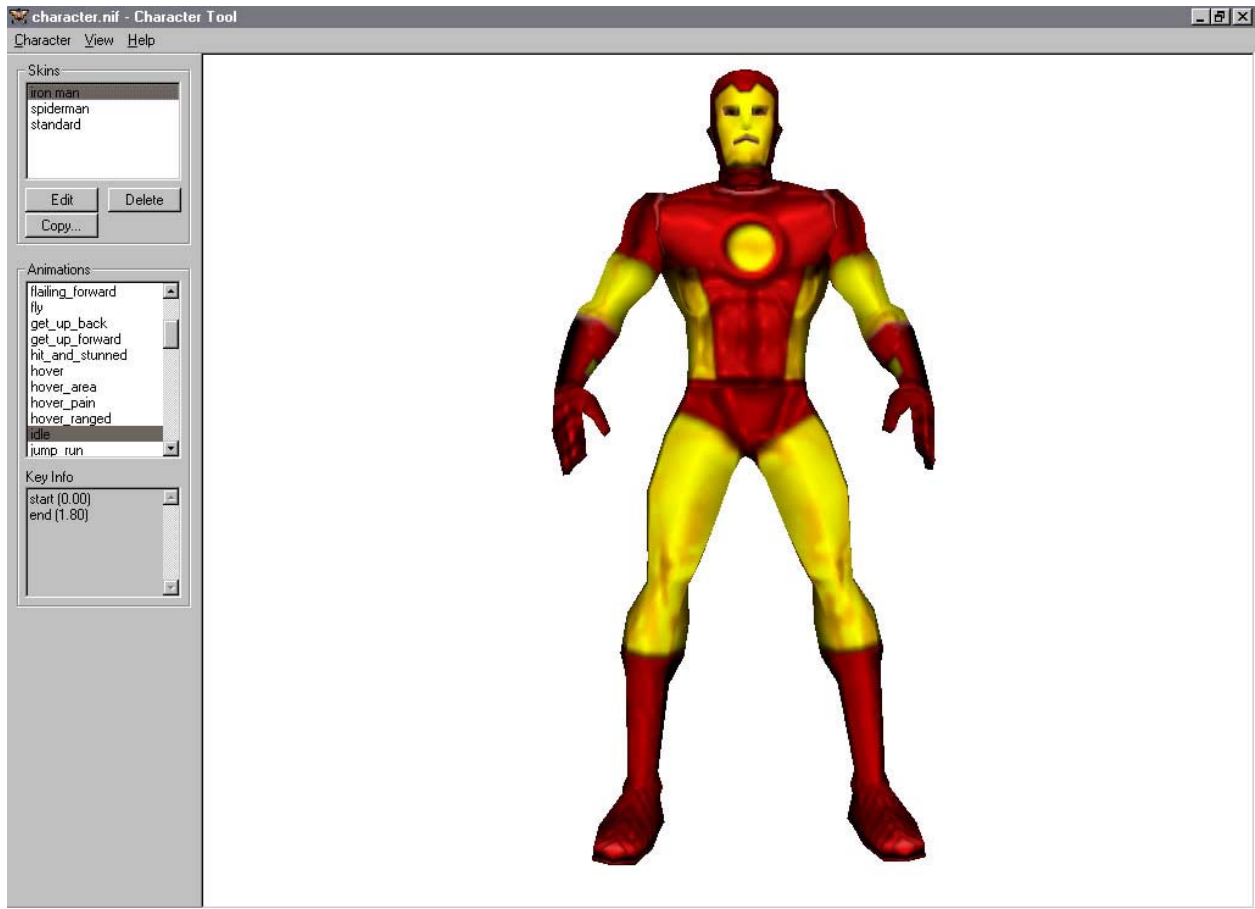
The minimum system requirements to run Freedom Force are:

- * Windows XP, Windows Me, Windows 2000, or Windows 98 (Windows 95 and Windows NT not supported)
- * 300 MHz Intel Pentium II or AMD K6-2 processor
- * 96 MB RAM
- * 4x CD-ROM/DVD-ROM drive
- * 31 MB free hard disk space plus space for saved games (with additional space required for Windows swap-file and DirectX 8.1 installation)
- * 16 MB Direct3D capable video card using the NVIDIA GeForce3, NVIDIA GeForce2, NVIDIA GeForce 256, NVIDIA Riva TNT2, NVIDIA Riva TNT, ATI Radeon 8500, ATI Radeon, ATI Rage 128 Pro, ATI Rage 128, PowerVR3 Kyro II, PowerVR Kyro, Matrox MGA-G450, or Matrox MGA-G400 chipset with DirectX 8.1 compatible driver
- * DirectX 8.1 compatible sound card
- * Keyboard
- * Mouse

The game should run smoothly on this system at lowest settings, but the more powerful your system, the more bells and whistles you can leave running and the nicer Freedom Force will look. The recommended specs for best game performance are:

- * 600 MHz or faster Intel Pentium III or AMD Athlon processor
- * 128 MB or more RAM
- * 16x or faster CD-ROM/DVD-ROM drive
- * 570 MB or more free hard disk space plus space for saved games
- * 32 MB or greater supported Direct3D capable video card with DirectX 8.1 compatible driver
- * Environmental Audio capable sound card





Contact Jeff at:

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IRON MAN

MARVEL COMICS GROUP

30¢ 100
CC JULY

THE INVINCIBLE



Recreation by Nelson White after Jim Starlin - 2602



THE INCREDIBLE IRON SUCK: A brutally honest look at **Iron Man**
since Volume One Issue 301
By Heath McKnight

Warning: This article is in reverse chronological order, much like the great film, MEMENTO.

To Marvel Comics, **Iron Man** creators, **Iron Fans**, and mere passersby:

This is a letter to everyone who either works on **Iron Man**, the long-running comic book published by Marvel Comics, and to the passionate (and the curious) reader of the **Invincible One**, the **Golden Avenger**, ol' **Shellhead** himself. My opinions are, of course, my own, and not that of Advanced Iron, and may blow any chance I have at ever writing the comic and/or working on the planned **New Line/Angry Films** movie. Which, sorry to say, is STILL stuck in development hell.

My problems are with the comic, not the fans, not the movie, not the cartoons (well, season two in 1995 was pretty cool), and not with the movie, though I heard a rumor red and gold would be out (right, that'll work, let's go with black!). Now, onto my complaints:

IRON MAN HAS SUCKED SINCE LATE 1993/EARLY 1994 WHEN ISSUE 301, VOLUME ONE CAME OUT! Okay, so that's not entirely true; there were sucky times before that. I, for one, enjoyed **Armor Wars 2**, but for consistency I'd have to say that the last nine years have been one slide after another. The last issues I bought were when new creators **Mike Grell** and **Michael Ryan** jumped on board. I think I bought two issues, and guess what, I hated it. It isn't **Iron Man**. The guy before it, **Frank Tieri** wasn't good at all; **Joe Quesada**, the brilliant **Iron Man** cover artist, was able to shock me with his little run, but that was it. No other substance, and a confusing ending (why did Tony suddenly feel bad for **Iron Man???** Wasn't this a bit too much like **IRON MAN: CRASH**, an awesome comic?).

Now look, Quesada is a great artist and so far, a pretty decent Editor-In-Chief; what they did with **Spidey** was great, though I wasn't too hip on everything **J. Michael Straczynski** did, but **Paul Jenkins** is a fantastic writer), along with

the **Punisher** mini-series and the new **Bruce Jones Hulk**. I just think Joe has to put someone strong on **Iron Man**, who, well, read on.



Heath can't believe what he's reading in **IRON MAN**.

By the way, the highlight, of course, was **David [Michelinie]** and **Bob [Layton]** returning to old glory! Tony and Rhodey hanging out, building stuff in the basement! **[Justin] Hammer**, still the perfect villain for Tony (screw the **Mandarin** -- he's cool, but not that cool). And meeting David in March 2000 at the **Orlando Megacon** was AWESOME! You da man! (Incidentally, this was my last big **Iron Man** peak, as I bought 95% of the **Iron Man** collectibles through eBay. Late 1999 - early 2000.) Let's go back in time, as

I'm doing already, to the re-re-re-launch of **Iron Man**, with Volume 3. **Kurt (MARVELS, Iron Man fan) Busiek** was writing and though I wasn't too fond of **Sean Chen's** art at first, he got a LOT better. How exciting, **Iron Man** written by one of the greatest writers I've ever had the luck to read! And, as an added bonus, the premiere of my two student films (chock full of **Iron Man** references) **PEAK OF FIRE** and **Conversations...** happened that night, December 13, 1997 (I think it's that day). I bought the issue, and immediately, the "forgiveness factor" kicked in. The forgiveness factor is when you look forward to something, be it a new comic, show, movie, album, whatever, by someone you really dig, and it sucks. So, in keeping with your passion for the creator, you "forgive it" for sucking.

Well, I've outgrown that finally, but not back then. By issue 10 or so, I was so pissed that Busiek has **Shellhead** getting his ass kicked by a Girl Scout (isn't this the armored hero who can bench press, like, 900 tons?!) and solving problems on page 20 that could have been solved on page 10 -- ie, **Iron Man** used his unibeam to go through the volcano on issue 20 instead of using his magnificent brain and solving the problem earlier. Yeah, yeah, drama and all that B.S., but c'mon, Stark doesn't operate that way. Even when **Bob (The Man) Layton** came back, he was stuck creating what others did in issue 25, vol. 3. (Oh, and Bob, love `ya, man, but you make **Iron Man's** forehead look too big -- I know you're going for the head down/sinister look, but it ain't working like it did with J.R. Jr.) So, that was my third re-launch disappointment (I think there's been, like, 30 more re-launches of the comic). Let's go back to 1996, when Marvel sub-let the rights to **Iron Man** and others to **Image** to boost lagging sales. It was to be called **Heroes Reborn**. (And it was a damn shame since **Captain America** under **Mark Waid** and **Ron Garney** was incredible --unfortunately,

aside for issue 2, volume 3, they couldn't re-capture the magic--thanks, Marvel.) What we got was a strange **Iron Man/Hulk** thing with people who looked like musclebound Skeletors (seriously); but I appreciate and respect what **Whilce Portacio** went through to get where he was then and now.

Godspeed, Whilce! This comic wasn't great after about 4 issues, and it shamed me to even buy into it. What was I thinking, to quote the band 311! I never read issue number 13, volume 2...It was that bad. Oh, and by the way, when Marvel was planning this re-re-launch of **Iron Man** (and others), they were just starting their intriguing and blasphemous re-launch of **Iron Man** through **The Crossing**. Oh, and **Harlan Ellison** predicted in late 1995 that Marvel, while leasing out their characters to Image, would file for bankruptcy. They did, almost a year later; how prophetic, more than even Harlan could ever know. **Iron Man**, the creatively bankrupt character and comic.

Let's go back to early 1995, when a former AI-er revealed to me that **Mark Waid** hated **Iron Man** and wanted to kill him. **Len Kaminski**, once great **Iron Man** writer and **War Machine** creator, balked, as did the rest of us. Too late, Marvel's subdivision of Editors-in-Chief agreed, and hired **Joe (can't finish a job) Maduiera** to re-design **Iron Man's** armor for the upcoming **The Crossing!** (Cue scary, foreshadowing music here.) I liked that little **Iron Man** evil face he drew, and promptly stole it for my column (see old issues). I even met ol' Joe at an **Orlando Megacon** with my then girlfriend in March 1996; he was surprised to see the photocopies of his **Iron Man** designs, asked where I got them, then signed them and told me how he came up with it: old **Japanimation**. Since I don't watch that, I just nodded my head and acted like I did. So, the re-launch of **Iron Man** began with a whimper, as **Tom Morgan** drew his last issue. He even drew in subliminal things that told Marvel to take a hike (the nice way of saying it) and which comic he was going to. The final shot of Stark's strained face, reflected in the mask, was pure emotion. **The Crossing** wasn't too bad, actually, especially if it wasn't called **Iron Man** and the **Avengers**.

The problem was it was blasphemy to say Stark was an alcoholic due to the possession of **Kang**, and I know some other creators weren't too happy with it. *(Heath may not be familiar with **AVENGERS FOREVER #8** where **Kurt Busiek** revealed that **The Crossing** was all the doings of **Immortus** and his army of **Space Phantoms**, not **Kang**. – Hube)* But the thing is, had Marvel indicated which comic followed which (figuring out what order it was proved difficult, but I think I got it), the art stayed consistent, books shipped on time, and it wasn't about **Iron Man**, it would've been a cool comic. (Combining all the characters and the **X-Men** later sucked worse, thus paving the way for **Heroes Reborn**.) But, for a time, especially in October and November of 1995, I was at the comic shop EVERY Wednesday, dying to read the latest issue, even if it was 3 weeks late, and I knew the ending. I liked the art of one **Hector Oliveira**, but his helmet kinda

sucked. And when the 19 year old Tony came around, I was excited (I was 19 then), until I read the comic. And it sucked. But, I had great memories of that time, in late 1995, around Christmas, reading **The Crossing** again while listening to the Smashing Pumpkins' MELANCHOLY album (I still think of that time when I hear that album), I was in film school, I worked as a film projectionist at a now-defunct movie theatre. It was a great time, regardless!

Okay, so let's go WAYYYYYYYY back to issue 280, volume 1, when Len's third issue came out and **Kevin (The Man) Hopgood** came aboard with **Bob (Also The Man) Wiacek** inking. Man, those were the days! It was a dark period in my life then: My parents had divorced, my best friend kept going after girls I dated, I was listening to heavy metal and dressing in black (but didn't drink, smoke or do drugs, I'm happy to say). But **Iron Man** then, when Tony died and Rhodey took over, was AWESOME. Issues 280-300 are my personal favorite runs EVER (tied, of course, with **David/Bob/MD Bright's** run in the late 1980s -- which I read when I was growing up back then), it was dark in 1992, but became light in 1993 when Tony came back to life and wore the **Telepresence suit** (even though the inks sucked). Funny how in 1993, when the book went light again, my life did, as well. Ahhh, memories...Len seemed to peak with issue 300, as did the book and possibly the character, though with the right creators, **Iron Man** will be just as invincible as ever.

Issues 301 to, I think 306, had some interesting structure to it, almost like PULP FICTION, but the book sucked. In late 1994, I was an **Iron Fan** in heaven: Four **Iron Man** books (**IM**, the too-PC *War Machine*, *Force Works* -- which ruled with the solo issue of **US Agent**, and the **Iron Man** cartoon comic, which ruled better than the other comics), a (crappy) cartoon (which I "forgave") and some neat, but two months late, toys. But, the comics were weak, even with the potentially cool **HANDS OF THE MANDARIN**, it still sucked. Thank God **Kevin Hopgood** and **Bob Wiacek** returned for *War Machine* covers, otherwise, a big disappointment for a guy who had just started college. Len, you had a great run on **Iron Man**, but 301 until 318 wasn't great stuff. The first issue **Tom Morgan** did, the controversial **IM** fan and artist, was great, but his art slipped afterward. I like Tom, and hope he's working hard! The same with Len, Scott, Kev, Bob W. and others. Oh, and by the way, they published in a late 1994 **IM** family of comics, **Bill (Iron Fan) Egan's** address, so in early 1995, I became a subscriber, Iron Fan and column writer (movie news). (By the way, this was one of my **Iron Man** peaks, having some collectibles, but mostly the comics and cartoon -- late 1994 to 1995.) Whew, I think that about covers the reverse timeline of suckage. Now, onto bridge-building, after I burnt it down, London Bridge-style!

What do I think can make the comic good again?

1. Ignore what Hollywood and Marvel think, hire older writers! I'm young, but I bet I'd suck at **Iron Man** (though, we'll never know unless I try, hint-hint), so go with old-school who can do it new-school! Ie., bring back David and Bob, and throw a cool "new" or "old" penciler with them.
2. Screw *Ultimates*.
3. Talk to **Len Kaminski** and see what he has to offer; another run at **Iron Man** could be great. We all have our peaks and troughs, but Len is a GIFTED writer (like David and Bob) and can bounce back quickly.
4. Hire an editor who CARES about the book! DAMMIT!
5. If the movie is ever made (and whether or not my dream of directing it happens), do it right! Hire the best **IM** creators to help out in design and story! Keep it true, but make it cool! It's not **James Bond/Howard Hughes**, it's Tony Stark, the **Invincible Iron Man!**

That's all it takes to make **Iron Man** good: Passion for the character. Even if you hire a new writer, like they did with Len, make sure the person LOVES the character. Then again, so did Busiek, and look how it turned out...(I would've loved to read his explanation comic of **The Crossing.**) (**AVENGERS FOREVER #8, man! – Hube**)

One last note, in NO WAY does this reflect how I think of any of the creators mentioned above as people, or even their other work. Kurt's **Avengers** stuff was good (and **Marvels** is still one of the greatest comics of the 1990s), Joe Mad. has KILLER art but has problems with deadlines (famously lampooned in Wizard Magazine in 1999 as a Blair Witch-style spoof). I wonder whatever happened to Mr. H. Oliveira and, more importantly, Kevin Hopgood... My dream team would be David and Bob plotting and inking over Hopgood's art. Or Len writing with Kev and Bob W. handling the art chores.

Okay, send your comments and complaints to

heath@mpsdigital.com

I'm interested in hearing what you all have to say.

To a better Iron Man comic,

Heath McKnight

www.mpsdigital.com



Bonjour and welcome to the future. The year is **2020** and although this era does have its own Iron Man, he is NOT Tony Stark. He's not even a hero! Who is he? Figuring that out is half the fun and only by reading the comics below can you hope to understand what makes this character tick.

In this issue, I'll be looking at the appearances of **Arno Stark, the Iron Man of 2020**. Unless I am mistaking, the comics below (along with three other reviews you can only access on my site) make up a complete checklist of all the meaningful issues that have guest-starred this futuristic character. On my web site, you can also read reviews of Avengers West Coast #61 and his most recent appearances in the pages of «Heralds» and (very soon) «Paradise X». So join me for a trip to the future, won't you?

* * *

MACHINE MAN #1 to 4

“He lives again!”

Story: Tom DeFalco

Breakdowns: Herb Trimpe

Finishes and color: Barry Winsor-Smith



When you read what follows, you will undoubtedly be reminded of a certain **Iron Man annual #11** from 1990 and of some excellent and more recent **Kurt Busiek** stories involving a certain **Sunset Bain**. Interestingly enough, all these comics came out later and this mini-series is the source of their inspiration.

Machine Man wakes up. He soon realizes that he has been lying **disassembled in a crate** for the past 40 years. He's just been put back together by a bunch of kids calling themselves the «**Midnight Wreckers**», thieves who live in hiding inside an old abandoned McDonald's. The year is now **2020** and it is a world far different from the one



he once knew. Dominated by an all-powerful high-tech company called **Baintronics**, the Wreckers make a living by stealing scraps of technology from the Baintronics dumps to sell off on the black market.

At the head of this multinational empire, **Sunset Bain** is old and no longer beautiful. Her eyes in particular, reveal her true age and she is forced to wear dark glasses when she's around people. Her personal robot is a character we know well: **Jocasta**. Sunset is soon made aware that **Machine Man** is operational once more. For some undisclosed reason, this plunges her and a certain elderly **ambassador Brickman** into a state of utter panic. All their resources are deployed to retrieve the robot, but to no avail. To attain their goal, they'll have to hire a **professional, a mercenary without principles** who will gladly do their bidding for the right price: **Arno Stark, the Iron Man of 2020**. After a long chase, it will be **Machine Man against Man Machine** and to the victor, go the spoils.



Wow... what a story. I don't know how much acclaim this

limited series got back when it was first published, but if I had been one of those first lucky people to get their hands on it, I would have been blown away, unable to blink for fear of missing something. The story is **great**, it paints the picture of a world so vile and yet, so realistic and plausible that you can't help but believe in it. Keep in mind that 2020 isn't all that far away anymore, but back then, **it was the far future!**

When I first read this story, my only criticism was that **it seemed to have no roots in the present**. We had never heard of a **Sunset Bain** after all... but now that she has been introduced in the Iron Man mythos, along with Machine Man and Jocasta... it makes all the difference.

As for the art, well... it's **Barry Windsor-Smith**, silly, what else do I need to say? Those of you who have read **IM # 232** (undoubtedly one of the most off-beat

and visually staggering IM tales ever told) or **IM #243**, will be familiar with his style. **He's awesome**. His art is just **beyond my ability to describe**, it simply has to be seen to be believed. The atmosphere of this comic is incomparable, **dark and oppressive**. It's one of those worlds in which the rebels are actually the good guys and you can feel the character's despair and disgust to live in such a world. The final issue in particular, in which Windsor-Smith gets to handle the entire art chores and can finally **cut loose**, is jaw-dropping. When **Machine Man** and **Iron Man** battle in hand to hand combat, their metal bodies slowly coming apart, exposing the circuits below their outer shells... **wow**.

I have no idea what these comics might be worth on the market these days, but be aware that **they were reprinted in 1994 in two issues entitled «Machine Man 2020»**. The reprint was intended to accompany the **Iron Man 2020 graphic novel**... although, in my modest opinion, all that did is make the latter pale greatly in comparison.



Pouring himself a glass of liquor, Arno reveals: **“I am Arno Stark – the Iron Man of 2020! You may have heard of me... I purchased the exclusive rights to the name and this armor after the original Iron Man's tragic death!”**

* * *

AMAZING SPIDER-MAN ANNUAL #20

“Man of the year” –1986

Story: Fred Schiller, Ken McDonald

Pencils: Mark Beachum

Inks: Bob Wiacek

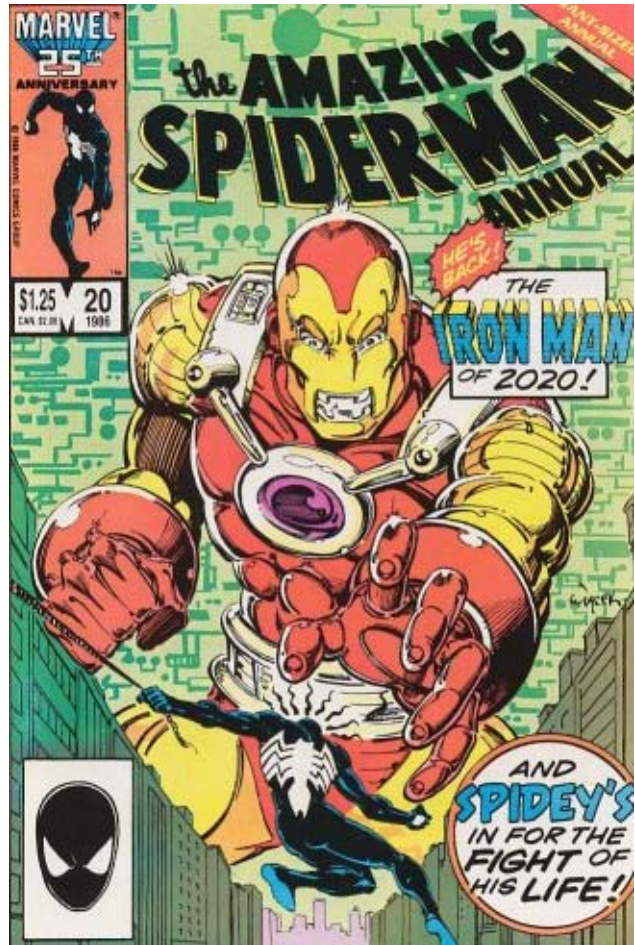


Although this comic was published **after** the Machine Man mini-series, it chronicles events that occurred **earlier in Arno Stark's career**. The year is **2015** and **Arno Stark** is a **billionaire, a brilliant inventor and the owner of Stark Enterprises**. He's also Time magazine's front runner in the **«Man of the year» award**. On top of that, **Arno** is also a family man; he has a wife and son. This is before things go sour for him, when he was still at the top. By the time this story ends, his life will have changed forever... and for the worse.

Arno's latest invention is **«the first workable time displacement device»**... a fully operational **time machine!** But to fund his research, he has also been designing and building a gigantic bomb for the U.S. government: the **«Planet Buster»**. He doesn't like doing it, but he needs the big bucks he gets from those government contracts. This

fruitful association however, has made him a target for **Robert Saunders**, the leader of an **anti-war faction** that has somehow learned about the immensely devastating weapon. **Saunders** manages to break unto the premises and **sets off the bomb's timer**.

The only way to stop the bomb and save **Stark's** company (along with his wife and his son) is to use **Robert Saunders'** retina patterns to disarm the bomb. There's one small problem though: **Saunders** is blown to bits by **Iron Man** during their battle. **Arno** thus decides to use his time machine and embarks on a trip to the past, where he hopes to find **Saunders** as a kid and record his retina patterns. But this futuristic **Iron Man** isn't counting on meeting two very special individuals on this trip: the first is **the Blizzard** and the second is **the amazing Spider-Man**.



This is a great comic. The story is awesome, the art's cool, it's just wall to wall action and drama from start to finish. On top of getting a very interesting glimpse into **Arno Stark's** life before he became a ruthless mercenary, you will also be treated to the last moments in the life of the original **Blizzard**, one of **our Iron Man's** earliest arch-enemies. As for **Spidey**, he is still wearing **the black alien symbiote costume** he got in the **Secret Wars**, so he is stronger than ever, a match even for **Arno Stark's** powerful suit of armor. At the end of the comic, in the very last panel, you will finally be able to say that you understand a little bit the source of **Arno's** anger and ruthlessness.



Arno thinks to himself: **“Investing my father's fortune in Stark's designs was the best move I've ever made. It's given my life meaning... made me whole. Now, with my time machine, I can finally step out of Stark's shadow and establish a reputation of my own.”**

* * *



DEATH'S HEAD #10

“The cast iron contract” – September 1989

Story: Simon Furman

Art: Bryan Hitch



This is **New York**, in the year **2020**. The time-travelling futuristic bounty hunter **Death's Head** finds himself temporarily stranded in this era on his way back to the year **8162**. He has been accepting jobs in the hope to soon have enough money to rebuild his spaceship. Little does he know that he has become the latest pawn in the twisted game of the man called **Chance**.

Chance is a member of a group of very rich men who have **way too much free**

time on their hands. They enjoy hiring mercenaries and pitting them one against the other, betting on the outcome. In this particular game, **Death's Head** has been hired to assassinate foreign «terrorists»... men who are under the protection of one **Arno Stark**, the **Iron Man of 2020**!



Very cool comic with a fun story and a final twist that should catch you pretty much off-guard. The art is most excellent, **Arno's** armor has rarely looked **THIS** good! The battle between the

armored mercenary and the robot bounty hunter is very cool, these guys bust each other up real good! At some stage, **IM** even **rips the robot's head clean off**! Sadly for him, it takes more than that to stop him! My only criticism would be that **Arno** seems slightly out of character here. He's not as ruthless and immoral as portrayed in other comics, he actually seems to care about the men he's protecting, even saying at some stage: «**I won't**

let you butcher innocent people.» Apparently, the man isn't as shallow and rotten as I initially thought.



Chance's manservant, **Athey**, introduces IM 2020 to his boss in these words: **“The gentleman in the armor is none other than its chairman (of Stark Enterprises), Arno Stark. I understand he inherited the armor from his predecessor and... ah, updated it (...) I believe sir (accepting mercenary contracts) is how he gets his kicks.”**

* * *

WHAT IF... vol. 2 #53

“What if the Iron Man of 2020 had been stranded in the past?” –

September 1993

Story: Simon Furman

Penciler: Manny Galan

Inker: Jim Amash



Although this is the shortest **Arno Stark** tale ever told, it is probably **the most revealing one of all**. Based on the events that unfold in **the Amazing Spider-Man annual** I reviewed above, this book tells the tale of an alternate reality in which **Spider-Man** damages **Arno's** armor to the extent of **keeping him from returning to the future**. Stranded in the past, **Stark** is arrested and serves **six years in jail**. He then hooks up with **Tony's** cousin, **Morgan Stark**, and helps him frame **Rhodey** for the murder of **Tony Stark** in his scheme to take control of **Stark Enterprises**.



When **Rhodey** shows up in his **War Machine armor**, he is easily defeated by **Arno's** futuristic technology. More than just the battle, **Rhodey** actually loses his life. But the victorious co-plotters are then taken by surprise by **Tony Stark's** return to life! When **Iron Man** attacks his futuristic counterpart in shining armor, the battle takes an unexpected turn and **Arno** is accidentally killed, **his true identity remaining a secret to all**. As for **Morgan**, he exiles himself to **Central America**. Reduced to the state of a poor, bitter and violent alcoholic, he takes his anger out on his wife and their son... a little boy by the name of... **Arno Stark!**



This is cooler than cool! How could it be any other way? **Iron Man 2020** versus **War Machine!** **Iron Man 2020** versus **Iron Man!** Add to that the surprise ending that **FINALLY** reveals to us who

Arno Stark really is: **the son of Morgan!** Great stuff! And even though this story reveals to us who fathered **Arno**, we are left wondering what is the character's origin in **this reality** and how he came to take control of **Stark Enterprises**. In other words, it answers one question and brings up a hundred more, don't you love it? ;-)

The story is great, truly **one of the coolest What If tales I've been privy to read**. It's a damn shame it doesn't last longer! The battles should have lasted a lot longer, this tale deserved **more than 12 pages**. As for the art, it's very good. The artists demonstrate a good knowledge of the various armors. And you'll just love the last few panels!



With Rhodey at his feet, Arno boasts: **"The War Machine technology is well known to me... almost redundant! I know its systems as intimately as I knew the codes**

that allowed me access to this office – AND Tony's Iron Man workshops!"

* * *

Before closing, a warning. Do not confuse the **Iron Man of 2020** with the **several other futuristic Iron Men who wear similar if not identical armor** and who popped up all over the place over the years. There was the **Iron Man of 2093, Andros Stark**, a possible relation of **Tony** or **Arno** (from the pages of **IM #250**). There was also **Iron Droid** of the **Cosmic Avengers** (from the pages of **What If vol.2 #19-36-38-39**). Finally, hundreds of **Iron Men from the year 2020** were glimpsed flying over New York City (in the pages of **Doom 2099 #25**, page 12). Whether or not **Arno** was one of them has not yet been revealed.

One thing's for sure, **Arno Stark** is one cool character with a ton of unexploited potential, and I for one **really hope we haven't seen the last of him.**

* * *

UPCOMING WANDERINGS:

Iron fans should keep an eye on the ongoing PARADISE X mini-series. Not only does it feature Tony Stark (as a guardian angel of Paradise X), it also features **Iron Man 2020.**

By the way, has anyone here been reading the **Marvel Mangaverse series? Iron Man** appears on the cover of the sixth issue and I'd be curious to know more about the story. If you've read it, **drop me a mail!**



As for my next column, I will be looking at some of Iron Man's most interesting guest-stars in the pages of the legendary FANTASTIC FOUR! That's coming soon in **Advanced Iron #59!!**

That's it for now. I hope these reviews are **useful tips** to you. If you have any questions, comments, suggestions of issues you'd like to see reviewed, arguments or even if you just want to say **bonjour**, send me a message at cousture@yahoo.com and while I'm at it, I cordially invite you to visit **my Iron Man web site** (yes, this is my inevitable and always shameless plug) at the following address:

<http://membres.lycos.fr/cousture>

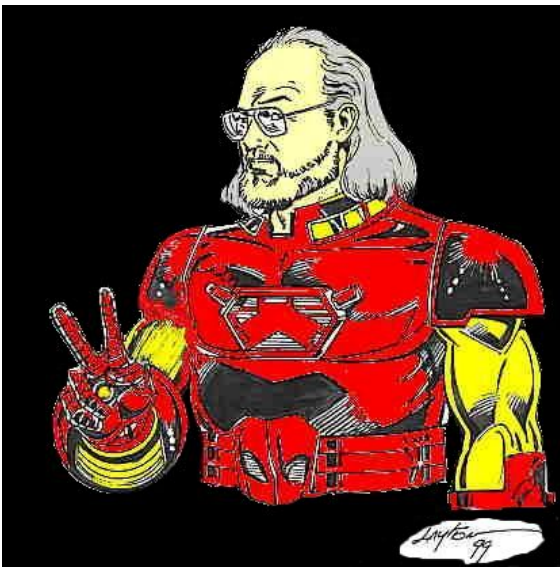
And check out my "**Wanderings of Iron Man**" page, where you'll be able to access all of my past columns for A.I. as well as **some new and exclusive reviews** of some of Iron Man's coolest appearances as a guest-star in the pages of other Marvel mags.

Hope to hear from you and **bonne lecture!**

My Day with Dave

By MIKE CONNOLLY

I know what you're wondering, which Dave am I talking about? Our great Editor-in-Chief **Dave Huber**? The ever-talented musician **Dave Matthews**? Heck no, I'm talking about thee definitive **Iron Man** scribe, **DAVID MICHELINIE!!** OK, I didn't spend a whole day with the guy, but I spent a good 15 minutes with him! Allow me to explain my meeting with Mr. Michelinie:



The date was September 29, 2002. The time was about three p.m. The place was the **Aetna Fire Hall in Newark, Delaware**. I had just walked into the medium sized room with arm's full of free stuff from the door (I scored some cool posters from DK2 and the Birds of Prey TV show). I, having never actually seen a picture of Mr. Michelinie, scanned the name cards of the numerous artists and writers that were present. I finally found him sitting next to a very lonely **Greg Cox** (no one was at his table all day, I felt bad for him). David was already engaged in a

conversation with another con patron, so I shopped the different tables for a few minutes (I manage to pick up a variant copy of **IRON MAN vol. 3 #1** for \$2.00!). Eventually I got tired of waiting and just went and stood in front of his table with my copy of **FREEMIND #0** out. He reached out to take my book and sign it when I mentioned to him that I'm Advanced Iron's publisher. He stood up, shook my hand and asked if I had anything else for him to sign. I pulled out a small stack of **Iron Man** comics ranging from "Demon in a Bottle" to the "Armor Wars," and he was happy to sign every comic I had.

David Michelinie is an extremely witty guy. I told him how I must have read "Demon in a Bottle" a thousand times and he said, "That's great, I only wrote it once!" Then I mentioned to someone next to me about how in **IRON MAN**

#133, Iron Man knocks out the **Hulk** and I said, "How many characters can do that!" Whereupon David said, "We [him and **Bob Layton**] didn't until we wrote it!" If you look at the pictures, you can see that he really did sign every one of my comics; he was even asking me for more to sign. Now, issue number 134 came up in our conversation and we started talking about **Scott Lang (Ant-Man)** and David told me a pretty funny story about how Bob Layton accidentally named him.

David and Bob were having lunch at the Glass Mug Restaurant in Wilmington, Delaware (Dave Huber's and my hometown) when David started telling Bob about his idea for the new Ant-Man. David said jokingly about naming the new Ant-Man **Scott Land** (Scotland, get it?). Well, Bob misheard him and thought he said Scott *Lang*. Bob thought that it was a great name, so the rest I guess is history!

So, in closing of my article, I would say go out and meet David Michelinie if you haven't already. I'm sure him, Bob, and **Dick Giordano** will be traveling to the many comicons around the country to support **Future Comics**, so go out and see him. Tell him **Advanced Iron** sent you!







"A WHAT?!?" The incredulous voice thundered. It came from a tall, fit looking man with a cigar clenched between his teeth. He was sitting before a large desk cluttered with papers. On the other side of the desk, sat a nervous looking teenager with a camera. He was holding in his hand several black and white photographs.

"A Man in Iron Armor, JJ." The freelance photographer pushed forward the photographs. The man with the cigar leant forward, picked

them up and flicked through them, grunting as he did so. The cigar moved from one side of his mouth to the other underneath his small, Hitler-style moustache. He put down the pictures and pulled the cigar from his mouth with his right hand and moved it between his fingers, before stubbing it into the ashtray. "Iron Armour? Listen Parker, It's bad enough you bring pictures of that wall crawling nuisance in here for me, now you want me to bring pictures of something from science fiction. I'll take 'em but don't come back unless you have real photos for a real story. Betty'll give you the money. Now get out." J Jonah Jameson picked up his cigar and started to chew on it again.

Peter Parker pushed his chair back and stood up.

"Thanks JJ."

Jameson grunted in reply and buried the photos in the piles of newspaper copy on his desk. Parker left the room closing the door. He stopped at Betty Brant's desk. A thin, striking, dark haired girl looked up from her monitor.

"That was quick," Peter said.

"He buy them?" she asked.

"Yeah, he was actually civil about it too."

"I thought I only heard him yell once." Betty hit a key on her keyboard and a voucher printed rolled off of her printer. She picked it up and handed it over to the freelancer.

"That was fast," said Peter.

"Yes. The new line of StarkWare is very impressive. It's just a shame all their repairmen don't look like him." Betty pointed her finger towards a man in a black business suit heading their way.

Peter Parker was amazed. "Tony Stark."

"Yeah, the one and only. He's here to discuss something with Jonah."

Peter was stuck for words. Tony Stark, one of the brightest men on the planet along with Reed Richards and Hank Pym, was walking up to them, flanked by his executive assistant, his chauffeur and his chief of security.

The party stopped in front of Betty Brant's desk. Peter took a step back. "Hello Miss Brant. I'm here to see Jonah." The voice was deep, smooth and full of charm.

"Certainly Mister Stark." Betty stood up from behind her desk. "If you'd just follow me?"

Betty nudged past Peter. Peter woke up from his hero worship and thrust out his hand.

"My name is Peter Parker, Mister Stark." Before Peter knew it and tall muscled man was standing between them, arms folded against his chest and looking very much like he could fold the thin, Mister Parker in half with very little effort.

"And my name is James Rhodes, Mister Parker. Mister Stark's bodyguard." The look he was giving Peter made him suddenly feel very vulnerable.

The smooth voice sounded again. "It's okay Rhodey."

Tony grasped Peter's still outstretched hand and shook it warmly. "I've seen Mister Parker's name come up on ESU's honour's list.

"You have ?" Peter replied, remembering to let go of Tony Stark's hand before it became an issue.

"Yes. In my business, it pays to keep an eye out for promising minds." He gave a wink. "It's the only way I can snatch them away from Bill Gates." Peter smiled.

"Mr Stark," his assistant motioned slightly toward the waiting Betty.

"Pepper?"

"The meeting, sir."

"Oh, a moment won't hurt Pepper. Jonah's probably not ready for us yet anyway. The hassles of running a metropolitan newspaper and all that. Still..."

He faced Peter again and shook his hand once more. "Nice to meet you, Mister Parker. Keep up the good work."

"Yes sir, I mean thank you sir." Peter watched as Betty led the party off to the board room. He clutched his voucher in his hand.

"Wow. Wait'll I tell Aunt May."