

STARK
AI 63

1993 - 2003
10 YEAR
ANNIVERSARY

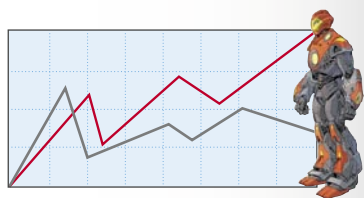
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IRON MAN #76 - Rank 58

IRON MAN AND THE 'X' (THAT'S EARTH X) UNIVERSE

Back in A.I. #47 I wrote about the virtually incomprehensible EARTH X saga – a (hopefully) alternate version of the Marvel Universe set some 30 years in the future. In this future, all of mankind has been mutated (in other words, everyone is now a mutant) thanks to the actions of the Inhuman Black Bolt, who has released what are known as the Terrigen Mists into Earth's atmosphere. (These Terrigen Mists are responsible for the Inhumans' mutations and had been kept under wraps.) Black Bolt's motivation for this act is that he doesn't want his Inhumans to be "outcasts" any longer. Bolt also travels to the Moon and blinds Uatu the Watcher so he can't do anything about it. Whoa.

In the original EARTH X series, Tony Stark is an old man who has constructed the "Iron Avengers" to do battle with evil forces, and a colossal, skyscraper-sized "Iron Man" to battle the coming Celestials – who are actually the whole premise behind the EARTH X saga: Earth (and all habitable planets with life, for that matter) have a "Celestial seed" at its core and the planet's inhabitants are its "protectors" until such time as the seed "germinates." Follow that? Galactus' (remember him?) purpose in all existence is to wipe out these planets before the Celestial seed blooms. Now we know why the Big G goes around devouring all those planets, right? In EARTH X, Galactus had been turned into a star by Reed Richards, so [the virtually omnipotent] Franklin Richards assumes the Big G's role and conquers the Celestials arriving at Earth.

So, I'm at my comic shop a month or so ago dying for some new material to read. I see three TPBs on the shelf titled UNIVERSE X and PARADISE X. They are the continuation of the EARTH X tale! Dare I buy 'em and compound my confusion? Or, will these books unravel the perplexity? Yeah, I bought 'em...

...and I was further confused. BUT – I did begin to understand many things behind this whole "universe."

UNIVERSE X is a two-volume set. Kyle Richmond (Nighthawk) tells most of the tale as he sees past, present and future thanks to a set of "eyes" given to him by Mephisto. Isaac Christians (Gargoyle) writes all of Kyle's yammerings down. Reed Richards has numerous "Human Torches" around the globe burning, to burn off the aforementioned Terrigen Mists which are mutating humanity. While these are going on, creators Jim Krueger Doug Braithwaite, Bill Reinhold and Alex Ross touch on virtually every character and storyline ever in the Marvel Universe. It's a huge undertaking, but this very total inclusiveness makes for massive nebulosity much of the time.

The myriad subplots include massive climate change on Earth, thousands of Wendigos attacking what make up the X-Men and the Black Panther's kingdom of the time, efforts by a group called the Tong of

Creel to reconstruct Crusher Creel, aka the Absorbing Man, who had decimated the Avengers previously by absorbing Ultron, and the “righting” of Earth’s weather problems – and ultimate attack by Creel -- by Iron Maiden! This takes us to...

...the two volume PARADISE X! The second volume has just become available at the time of this writing (end of February, 2004). The new “Watcher,” X-51 – otherwise known as Machine Man – now decides to prevent the Celestial seeds from “germinating” in all the numerous alternate Earths that exist in the multi-verse! The first volume of PARADISE X opens with X-51 gathering “heralds” to journey to various Earths in order to stop the Celestial plan. Included among these heralds are Hyperion of the Squadron Supreme, and Iron Man 2020! Finally, and even though the whole “X” saga is an alternate history in itself, I got answers to lingering questions I had had regarding these two characters. Hyperion was the sole survivor of a nuclear attack against the Squadron by the fascist government of his Earth. This plays nicely off of the last published Squadron adventure (not counting J. Michael Strazynski’s new SUPREME POWER) by Len Kaminski titled “NEW WORLD ORDER.” It’s where the SS make it back to their Earth after their Busiek-written scuffle with the AVENGERS.

As for the Iron Man of 2020, finally – FINALLY!! – there is a reference made about the phenomenal AMAZING SPIDER-MAN ANNUAL #20 story that featured Arno Stark. Volume 2 of PARADISE X has Arno Stark offering his assistance to the Guardians of the Galaxy to mutate the humanity of their future, alternate Earth – by means of radiation. He states he has extensive knowledge of such, and there’s a flashback to where the nuclear

bomb that terrorist Robert Saunders had armed in AS ANNUAL #20 had exploded, and Machine Man shortly thereafter confronts IM 2020 for creating the bomb in the first place!

The major plot behind PARADISE X, though, is that Captain Marvel has defeated Death – but at an incredible price: No one on Earth can now die! People that have been severely injured and crippled are now in perpetual agony! However, Mar-vell has also created “Paradise,” where numerous “dead” Marvel characters now reside, and ‘ol Marv wants to expand this new realm. But there’s a problem with this idea: It will consume the Negative Zone! Follow? No? Don’t worry! Neither do I – much!

Also revealed is the secret behind Asgard. It is all a creation of a man named Donnerson, who had assumed the role of Odin himself, and had then given form to the Golden Realm and all its corresponding citizens, Thor and Loki included. Donnerson was granted his “power” by aliens, oddly enough!

I won’t ruin the ultimate conclusion for you, and before you berate me, I know I’ve skipped some stuff (how could I not in an epic like this?). I’ll just say that if you’re into REALLY big epics, you can’t get much bigger than this “X” series. You’ll find yourself paging back to see what you missed, or to double-check facts – but you may not find ‘em or just be confused as hell!

Tony Stark’s biggest role in PARADISE X is that of one of Mar-vell’s “angels” in his Paradise. Special thanks to Thom Chiaramonte for his awesome pic of this “Stark Angel,” Iron Maiden, and the cover of Iron Man 2020 as well!

THE 100 GREATEST MARVELS OF ALL TIME

I think I touched on this series from a few years ago, but I'll be damned if I can find out just where! (I believe I listed the whole 100 and noted the only IRON MAN issues to make the list.) Published in 2001, Marvel reprinted the top 25 of the "Greatest 100" with four-issue segment collections until numbers five through one – these issues got their own "Greatest Marvels" reprint.

Only four IRON MAN issues made the cut: Coming in at #95 was IRON MAN volume 3 #1; at #73 was IRON MAN #55; at #55 was IRON MAN #225; and then just missing the Top 25 was TALES OF SUSPENSE #39 at the #29 spot.

I personally like three of those four picks. Obviously ToS #39 warrants its spot. IM #225 was the premiere issue of "The Armor Wars," arguably the greatest Shellhead story of all time. IM #55 was the first-ever appearance of the cosmic villain Thanos. But...IM vol. 3 #1? Is that really one of Marvel's "Greatest of All Time"?? I don't think so. First, it's way too new to stand the "test of time." Second, while it did bring 'ol Shellhead back to the Marvel Universe – and back to respectability among Marvel's elite heroes by giving his writing chores to comics' modern master, Kurt Busiek – this "high" didn't last long as Busiek didn't give the title the attention it really deserved (he said so himself) and many fans thought that Iron Man was too weak with frequent stories that reflected this milksoppishness.

At any rate, let's take a gander at the issues that DID make the Top 25 cut, and ponder whether any of these are "better" than ToS #39!! I have – or had – most of these issues, so I think I'm fairly qualified to make a reasoned judgment! I've also included an "Iron Man Quotient" at the end of each issue blurb – High, Medium or Low – indicating the level of anything that should appeal to Shellhead fans.

#25 – UNCANNY X-MEN #141. The first of the two-part "Days of Future Past" classic by Chris Claremont and John Byrne. Not only has this spectacular story been imitated left and right, but a decent chunk of the X-Universe includes(ed) aspects of this "alternate" timeline. The first X-Men movie even included large aspects of its plot! In the year 2013, North America is run by the Sentinels and most of "mutanity" has been wiped out. Several of the surviving mutants (Storm, Colossus, Kitty Pryde and Magneto, among others) concoct a plan to "warn" the X-Men of the past about the events which will result in the Sentinel-dominated future. Amazingly, the second part of this yarn didn't make not only the Top 25, but not even the Top 100! Sheesh! **Iron Man Quotient: Medium.** Iron Fans should dig the alternate future aspect, the Sentinels, and the surviving X-Men jerry-rigging some contraband tech to defeat their power inhibitor collars.

#24 – FANTASTIC FOUR #48. The first appearances of Galactus and the Silver Surfer! What else needs to be said? Not much, except that the first part of the issue is a continuation of FF #47 which has little to do with the cosmic significance of the issue's second part. (Also, a neat bit of trivia is how Stan Lee thought it "silly" much later on that Galactus would have a big "G" on the chest of his costume in this first appearance. But this isn't noted in this reprint...I believe it was in the collection "Bring Back the Bad Guys.") **Iron Man Quotient: Medium.** Iron Fans will enjoy the Galactus tech and ponder just how the hell his planet-killing contraption works.

#23 – AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #1. The series Amazing Fantasy was about to be canceled – so writer Stan Lee casually came up with a character for the title's last issue called "Spider-Man." So great was the fan response to Amazing Fantasy #15 that Stan the Man got the go-ahead to feature the Wall-Crawler in his own monthly mag! This premiere ish has two parts: Part one deals primarily with nasty J. Jonah Jameson's new campaign against the teen hero, and this doesn't change even after Spidey rescues Jameson's son from a space capsule accident! Part two features the well-known spectacle of Spidey seeing if he can join the Fantastic Four to earn some extra cash! So classic was this that the very first issue of What If? posited that the FF accepted Spidey's "application!" **Iron Man Quotient: Low.**

#22 – DAREDEVIL #181. If you have this issue and have seen the "Daredevil" movie, then you know what a keeper this is. Heck, some lines in the flick were used verbatim from this issue!! The [artist and writer] Frank Miller classic, this edition showcases the Bullseye "murder" of Daredevil flame Elektra. Spectacular fight scenes, both between Bullseye and Elektra, and then Bullseye and DD. Miller ain't the best artist, but he can do martial arts pretty damned well! **Iron Man Quotient: Low.**

#21 – AVENGERS #1. ‘Nuff said! Well, OK, I will say a few words! Possibly the greatest team book of all time premieres here with Thor, Ant-Man, Wasp and Iron Man (yes!) joining forces to defeat the Hulk thanks to the evil machinations of the evil god, Loki. **Iron Man Quotient: High.** Iron Man is one the key characters, natch! We get to see the original gold armor in action against the Hulk!

#20 – UNCANNY X-MEN #350. The secret of Gambit. Admittedly, not being a fan of overly done mutant mania, I say “Big deal” to this story. If you’re not following all the X-books much of this may be incomprehensible to you. And the art ain’t so hot, either.

#19 – AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #122. If you’ve never read this story but have seen the Spidey movie, then you’ll be vaguely familiar with what happens in the ish. The Green Goblin (Norman Osborn) has killed Peter Parker girlfriend Gwen Stacy, and now Pete is out for BLOOD!! The battle atop the Brooklyn Bridge corresponds to the action in the flick (albeit at daytime) and, of course, the ending is virtually identical (Osborn trying to off Spidey by flying his disabled glider into him from behind, but ends up hare-kare’ing himself instead!). **Iron Man Quotient: Low.**

#18 – CAPTAIN AMERICA #109. Steve Rogers raps with Nick Fury about his origin as Capt. America and the death of Bucky. Nothing we haven’t seen a gazillion times before, but it was one of the very first flashbacks...and it was done by Kirby! **Iron Man Quotient: Low.**

#17 – INCREDIBLE HULK #181. The first FULL issue of probably the most popular current Marvel hero, Wolverine! (His first-ever appearance was in the previous issue on the last splash page.) The Canadian government has dispatched their Weapon X to defeat the Jade Giant, with the Wendigo in the middle! Herb Trimpe’s art is better than usual here, and we’re treated to Wolvie’s original costume (slightly different from his more well-known outfit in GIANT-SIZE X-MEN #1) and battle ferocity! Logan’s dialogue, however, is a bit too, well, “good.” That, and what the -- ? Wolvie’s claws can’t pierce the Hulk’s skin? Since when? **Iron Man Quotient: Low.** Mystical sub-plot featuring Wendigo may turn off technophilic IM aficionados.

#16 – X-MEN #25. Notice the lack of “Uncanny” in the title. This is the 90s title founded by Chris Claremont and Jim Lee. And, although these two bolted the title soon after they began it, this “anniversary” issue highlights a pivotal moment in X-Men and Wolverine lore: Arch-baddie Magneto uses his powers to extract the adamantium from Logan’s body (skeleton)!! Great battle scenes with mutants galore. **Iron Man Quotient: Medium.** A plethora of technology permeates the entire issue, from Maggie messing with Earth’s magnetic field, to the space travel, to Xavier using a Shi-ar “psionically-powered” exoskeleton to lead the X-Men into battle!

#15 – AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #33. Aunt May is dying, and the means to save her is mere feet away – but Spidey is trapped under wreckage thanks to arch-nemesis Doc Ock! This was one of the few stories I hadn’t previously read that made the Top 25, and it’s a darn good one. Spidey is completely worn out from freeing himself from the wreckage, then has to tangle with Ock’s henchmen! This is a tribute to Parker’s/Spidey’s inner resolve in his effort to save his loving aunt. **Iron Man Quotient: Low.**

#14 – SPIDER-MAN #1. Like the X-MEN issue at #16, notice here the lack of the word “Amazing.” This is the Todd McFarlane-initiated Spidey series with him at writing chores as well as art. Personally, I am at a total loss as to how this issue made the Top 25 or even the Top 100! McFarlane’s script is cliché and predictable, and for a premiere ish the back and forth between Parker’s civilian action and the Lizard tearing people up is pretty weak. **Iron Man Quotient: Low.**

#13 – THE INCREDIBLE HULK #1. What else can be said about the origin of Jade Jaws? Not much. Great origin premiere ish with classic Jack Kirby art. Cold War Alert: If you chuckle at some of Iron Man’s Tales of Suspense communist clichés, you’ll dig the Soviet Union’s Gremlin here! **Iron Man Quotient: Low-Medium.** Techno-babble appears here and there in the ish that’ll delight Iron Fans.

#12 – ULTIMATE X-MEN #1. I’m sorry, but does it, um, offend anyone besides me that an issue barely three years old can be classified as the twelfth greatest Marvel of all-time? I can only assume that the insane popularity of Marvel’s mutants led to the ridiculous selection of this #12. Basically, this is a “new take” on the X-Folk, starring blood-lusting Sentinels, the Beast, Cyclops, Jean Grey, Colossus and Storm. Oh yeah – Magneto and Chuck Xavier make appearances. And did I mention a guy named Wolverine? **Iron Man Quotient: Low.** Some Sentinel action, but without much tech-talk.

#11 – DAREDEVIL #227. Part of the classic Frank Miller/David Mazzucchelli effort from 1990. Old Matt Murdock flame Karen Page divulges DD’s secret ID to support her drug habit, and guess who gets the info? Yep, the Kingpin! The nasty Mr. Fisk then sets in motion a chain of events that brings down the entire world of Matt Murdock. I highly recommend the other issues of this series as it’s easily one of the all-time best in DD history. Mazzucchelli’s art is phenomenal. **Iron Man Quotient: Low.**

#10 – WOLVERINE #75. The continuation of #16, X-MEN #25. The X-Dudes are returning to Earth after battling Magneto, and Wolverine's body is trying to deal with the vast damage of Maggie extracting the adamantium from his body! We also learn here that Logan was born with his claws as he "pops" claws of bone late in the issue. **Iron Man Quotient: Low-Medium.** Some decent tech-talk as the mutants are attempting to land safely back on Earth.

#9 – ULTIMATE SPIDER-MAN #1. See my first sentence of my ULTIMATE X-MEN blurb. Not only is it way to soon for this to make a Top 100 (it made the Top 10!), but it's not even a very different story! Sheesh. A mildly new angle on the Web-Spinner that has a lot in common with the Spider-man movie's script. **Iron Man Quotient: Low.**

#8 – X-MEN (volume 1) #1. Before the "Uncanny" was added, yes. This is the very classic Lee/Kirby effort from 1964 featuring the very first appearance of Marvel's mutants and laid the foundation for Marvel's most successful franchise. Of course, Magneto is the villain – who else? **Iron Man Quotient: Low-Medium.** As Maggie attacks the military base, there's some decent tech-action.

#7 – AVENGERS (volume 1) #4. The first modern appearance of Captain America! 'Nuff said? Maybe, but let me say that this ish is well-deserved in the top ten. Cap is one of Marvel's biggest draws, and Stan the Man and Jack Kirby's plan to bring him back was pure genius. Small virtually unknown trivia fact: The alien Cap unmasks is of the race that is wiped out by Dark Phoenix in Uncanny X-Men #135! **Iron Man Quotient: Medium.** Hey, he's one of the Avengers, after all, and gets his share of action.

#6 – AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #121. The death of Gwen Stacy! The first part of #19 of the Marvel Top 100. Possibly will bring a tear to your eye at issue's end – and also a big thirst for VENGEANCE! **Iron Man Quotient: Low.**

#5 – X-MEN #1. 1991's relaunch of the mighty mutants by Chris Claremont and Jim Lee. The X Franchise was growing by leaps and bounds, and correspondingly, so did the number of X titles! Magneto (well, duh!) is [re]established as the primary X-villain, but to a more brutal degree. **Iron Man Quotient: Medium.** IM fans should dig the high amount of tech throughout this ish.

#4 – GIANT-SIZE X-MEN #1. The [new] beginning of Marvel's most successful franchise! The first appearances of Colossus, Storm, Nightcrawler and famous reappearance of that adamantium-clawed Canadian, Wolverine! The story itself is awesome, as is Dave Cockrum's ultra-realistic artwork. **Iron Man Quotient: Low.**

#3 – UNCANNY X-MEN #137. The conclusion of the Dark Phoenix saga! Possibly the greatest single issue ever, in my opinion. Chris Claremont and John Byrne outdo themselves here, with the X-Men taking on the Shi'ar Imperial Guard for the fate of Jean Grey. Byrne's art is superb as always, the action is fantastic, and the ending – although it's not what Claremont and Byrne wanted (Jim Shooter demanded the ending we see) – is one of the best ever in comics. **Iron Man Quotient: Medium.** Lots of Shi'ar tech and the X-Men/I.G. battle is on the Blue Area of the moon.

#2 – FANTASTIC FOUR #1. Really needs no description. Paved the way for modern Marvel. And only cost a dime, back then. **Iron Man Quotient: Low-medium.** Space flight and Mole Man tech could please.

#1 – AMAZING FANTASY #15. Again, what can be said? The title was dying until Stan Lee penned this now-classic, of course which is the basis of the mega-popular major motion picture. You may not be aware that this ish contained three additional shorts in it – "The Bell Ringer," "Man in the Mummy Case" and "There are Martians Among Us," as well as the 4th panel of the Spidey story's last page: Spidey has eye-balls! **Iron Man Quotient: Low.**



WELSHCAT CUSTOMS

Here are my first few customs of the cast of Iron Man, in scale with the Marvel Legends Iron Man action figure.

I always wanted an action figure of Bethany Cabe and Justin Hammer, but figured that Toy Biz would probably never produce either of those two, or even if they did, they wouldn't look like the characters as I remember them from the classic Iron Man issues. Furthermore, non-super-powered characters generally don't sell particularly well and end up warming pegs in a shop. I therefore decided to make my own renditions of them.

JUSTIN HAMMER



Justin Hammer is made from a X-Men movie Magneto figure. I removed the cloak and cut down his tunic garment so that it didn't come so far down to his knees, and then used the excess piece to create the other half of Hammer's dressing gown. I created the cravat, shirt, trousers and creases in the gown from Milliput, as well as the gown cuffs. The black trimming on the edges of the gown are made from painted toothpaste tubes cut to size. The belt is made from a shoe lace. I also carved and hollowed out the cheeks of movie Magneto's face so that he didn't look so much like Ian McKellan, and also to give him an appearance more similar to Peter Cushing.

Unfortunately, the resolution isn't very high on my digital camera, so you can't see the detail on the figures as well as I'd like, but at least you can get an idea. Hopefully, these should be the first of many custom Iron Man

- WelshCat

BETHANY CABE

Bethany is made from a Spider-Man movie Mary Jane figure (the arms, legs and dress) and a Tekken Anna Williams figure (the head, body and shoulders). I used Milliput to remould her hairstyle and give her the distinctive kiss curls by the sides of her cheeks. I also had to alter her features so that she didn't look so Japanese, and then repainted all of the parts where skin was showing. Bethany is seen here in the aqua chiffon dress from Casino Fatale, seen in the picture. The sash is a piece of blue ribbon I had lying around. Her skirt actually comes off so that you can have the lovely Ms Cabe in her underwear, but I haven't photographed her like that here.





METAL HEAD

Special Edition!

By Heath McKnight

Hey Iron Fans! This edition of Metal Head is to commemorate the 10th Anniversary of Advanced Iron (and to think back on the better days of ol' Shellhead). I've been with AI since I first started reading in the early part of 1995, when I was working on my first screenplay, I was in the second semester of my Freshman year at Palm Beach Community College, and I was successfully getting over a really BAD relationship from the year before.

Life was great back then: Iron Man had toys, four comics (IM, War Machine, Force Works and the IM cartoon comic), and a not-so-good TV show. Heck, to me, the comics weren't so good, and apparently everyone else thought so, too, because Len Kaminski was booted off both Iron Man and War Machine by the fall!

My first experience writing for AI was the April Fools' issue. I wrote an article on what happened to the various Iron Man movies in development. I didn't like the title ("Why there is no Iron Man movie"), so let me officially change the title to this: "Iron Man: The Movie That Almost Was." Much better. That spring I became great friends with Mike Kalibabky, Bill Egan (now a Dad!), and Jason Stephens. Yes, THAT Jason Stephens, the official cover artist and HUGE article writer. He even gave ol' Huber a break! :-)

I think I even had the first official meeting of Iron Fans when I flew out to St. Louis (after my Grandparents' 50th Anniversary in the Colorado Rockies) May 1995, highly anticipating a bunch of movies coming out (I'm a film nut, filmmaker and at the time, a film projectionist at the now-defunct United Artists), hanging out with my family, and meeting Jason Stephens. He and I hung out around comic shops and in general all over St. Louis, talking about Shellhead, AI, Iron Fan, and girls. It was cool, I must admit.

By 1996, I was drawing a lot on my articles with my then-girlfriend, Kathy. She's since been married, I think in the spring of 1996. For some weird reason, I left AI once or twice. I'm not really sure, to be honest...But while I was gone, I always missed it, so I came back. I think I came back permanently in 1998 or 1999. I can't remember, but I'm sure Huber does.

Advanced Iron has really become my movie news passion; when Angelo and Huber teamed up to bring Advanced Iron and the Invincible Iron Man site/boards, I asked Angelo if I could do the movie news. Angelo was cool enough to

re-name the movie news METAL HEAD (the title I came up with when I became a regular writer in July 1995, thanks to Bill Egan, Mike Kalibabky, etc.) and put me in as moderator. How sweet! I post quite a bit these days, surfing the web looking at news. Heck, I remember when all my movie news came from magazines, and to a degree the newspaper and TV!

Some highlights for me include my casting of the Iron Man movie (Ralph Fiennes as Tony!!!!) and the fact that I had to cut pictures of the actors out and glue them to paper (this was early 1996!!! I didn't know graphics, nor did I have a good Apple to do it on!); my cool drawing of "dark Stark" that made the early 1996 issue; the cover Kathy and I did of the Heroes Reborn Iron Man in the spring of 1996; my big scoop in 1998 that Tom Cruise WASN'T going to play Tony Stark; and more that I can't totally remember... And of course, how could I forget, becoming friends with David Michelinie the summer of 1995, when I asked him advice on how to write comics, specifically Iron Man. I'm still not writing comics or Iron Man, by the way! :-)

AI saw my life change as my film career re-started in early 1995 (I began in 1989 at the age of 13, then lost interest to music in high school, but it came back late 1994/early 1995); my entrance into film school and Mike Kalibabky watching most of my short films; my ups and downs in relationships (one of which became a movie called SKYE FALLING, another that happened in 1994 became a short film called "Conversations..." that I believe Mike K. liked); as I moved from Wellington/West Palm Beach, Florida to Orlando, then to Denver, then back to Wellington, all in a year!...My film career really start to take off (in addition to my TV news career, which I'm more than ready to leave six years later)...And more...I've seen my AI friends get engaged, get married, have kids, take over the civilized world and more!

Okay, I'm rambling all over the place in this article, but I mostly just want to say that I'm happy AI has hit 10 years! Even if I've been with it only around nine of those years! It's more than just a fan-made magazine and website(s), it's a brother- and sisterhood!

Thanks, and keep reading the mag and sites!

Heath

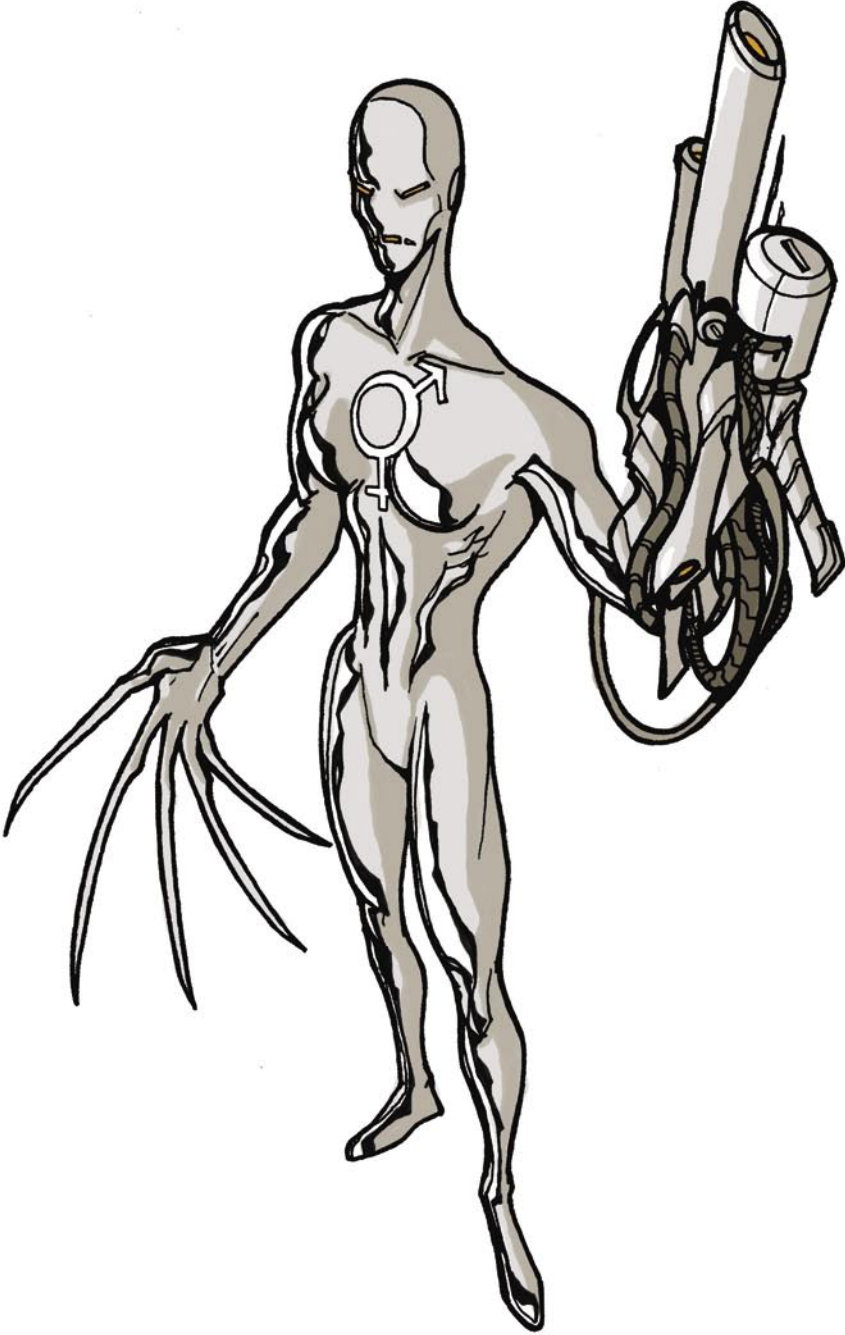
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PinUp: **THIRD RAIL DESIGN LAB**
IRON MAIDEN



PinUp: **THIRD RAIL DESIGN LAB**
ANGEL STARK



Time Nutures all Wounds

by Christian Ruelle

CHAPTER FIVE

The two men inside the vault stared at each other like duelists. Brendon raised his hand and pointed an accusatory finger at Tony. "What are you doing here? You're supposed to be in Moscow with those other glory hunters!"

"I've been here all day, Brendon," Tony said. "I've got a business to run."

"No! You're not Stark! Just a hologram. Stark has the technology to create an image that could look and sound like him!"

Tony laughed. "Why don't you use that technology and scan me for life signs?"

Brendon placed his hand against his helmet's temple and pressed several buttons. From inside the helmet came beeps and it's visor glowed a bright red.

"Heartbeat...circulatory system...weight...skeleton...you aren't a hologram." Brendon said with astonishment. "You are Tony Stark."

"That's what the journalists tell me. Now do you have an explanation as to why you've placed a virus in my security system and wearing the Mauler Armor? Let me guess: It's all a security prank."

"Shut up!" Brendon shouted as he clenched his fists. "Who is he? Who is Iron Man?"

"I can't tell you that."

"You will! I want the name of the man who wore that tin suit and threw me in prison!"

"You're the man who did that, Brendon. Now be silent and listen to what I have..."

"No! Ever since the day you revealed yourself as Iron Man, I was the joke of the bloody prison. Well, Rhodey said you weren't the one in the armor when I gave up. So if I'm going to even the score, I'll halve to settle for the one in Moscow!"

Tony raised an arm in a pausing gesture. "Brendon. I understand you had it rough in Ryker's. But you're only walking down that road again if you use that armor."

"I'm never going back to Ryker's!" Brendon shouted. "I'm not going to make the same mistake. First I'll kill your new Iron Man, and then I'll kill you."

"This is all unnecessary," Tony said. "If you remove that armor, I give you my word that I won't turn you over to the police. You don't half to worry about the guard. I was going to fire him after he whistled at Ms. Fujikawa."

"No deal, Stark," Brendon grumbled as the weapons systems of the Mauler Armor powered up. "I'm going to take some target practice on this family enterprise of yours. That'll bring out your tin hero and the news cameras. I want the world to watch as I kill the two of you!"

"Don't use that armor, Brendon!" Tony shouted.

Brendon raised his right arm to the ceiling and a laser blast shot out of the cannon attached to the gauntlet. Debris reigned down into the vault and Tony leapt into the hallway, narrowly escaping being crushed by the debris. As the dust cloud drifted over him, Tony heard the sound of boot jets igniting and Brendon flying out of the vault through his makeshift exit.

Rumiko stared out of her office window and angrily tapped her foot. The time was now 1:20 and the technicians still hadn't cleared the security system of the mysterious virus. Of more personal interest to Rumiko, Pepper hadn't arrived for their arranged meeting.

There was a slight knock at the door and Rumiko turned profile. "Yes?"

"Ms. Fujikawa," The secretary said. "Ms. Potts is here to see you."

"Thank you. Send her in."

Pepper walked inside the office and stood in its center. Rumiko folded her arms and glared at her.

"You're twenty minutes late," Rumiko said. "Are you always this tardy for meetings?"

"I doubt you're aware of it," Pepper said. "But Tony's security system has caught a virus. I've been supervising the efforts to make sure it doesn't spread."

"Tony's security system?" Rumiko asked with a smirk. "I think you mean our security system. Fujikawa is the minority shareholder of what was once Stark International."

"Only because Tony's a fool for a pretty face," Pepper said.

Rumiko's fist slammed the top of her desk. "Shut up! I've tolerated your insults for Tony's sake, but my patience has its limits. If you do it once more I won't think twice about breaking your jaw."

"For Tony's sake?" Pepper asked as if she hadn't listened to the rest of Rumiko's statement. "Do you actually expect me to believe that you care about Tony?"

"I not only care about Tony," Rumiko said. "I love him."

"Then why were you cheating on him with that megalomaniac Ty Stone?"

"I was upset because Tony wasn't opening up to me," Rumiko explained as she walked over to Pepper. "Stone saw his chance to humiliate Tony and he took it. If I could take away the pain I caused Tony I would, but if he had been honest with me about his life none of it would've happened."

"Tony kept his identity as Iron Man a secret for a reason," Pepper said. "He didn't combine the two because he knew it wasn't a game. He thought it would keep his friends safe, and you go and shatter his trust."

Rumiko was silent for a moment. "Are you in love with Tony?"

Pepper's complexion turned red and her eyes went wide. "That's absurd!"

"Pep," Rumiko said softly. "You've been with Tony almost since the day he took control of this company. I suppose all the time you've spent with him created more than just concern for his welfare."

"Don't change the subject!" Pepper shouted. "I care about Tony, but I don't want him for myself. I have...I had Happy. We were married for a long time."

"And Happy Hogan's a good man. But he's not Tony, is he?"

Pepper turned around and wiped a hand across her eyes. "You're wrong. Things didn't work out for us. Tony had nothing to do with it."

"Then why don't you take some time and find out where you both went wrong," Rumiko suggested. "I love Tony. I always have. I won't hurt him like I did before."

Trembling, Pepper looked at Rumiko with watery eyes. "Oh, you'd like that wouldn't you? Get me out of the way so you can cheat on Tony while his back's turned. Maybe this time you'll steal the entire company just to show your family that you have what it takes to succeed in the business world. Well, you're right about one thing, Rumiko: I have been with Tony since day one, and I'll be here until he says otherwise!"

An explosion outside shook the office window and a faint cloud of smoke appeared in the horizon. Rumiko and Pepper immediately ran to the window to see what had happened.

"That explosion came from the warehouse!" Pepper shouted.

Rumiko grabbed her cordless phone from her desk and began dialing. "I'm calling our emergency crews!"

"What on Earth is that?" Pepper asked.

Rumiko looked back at the window to the sight of a blue and silver armored figure flying over the factory and bombarding its roof with laser blasts.

"These machines seem to be working properly," Rhodey said as he left the factory's assembly line.

"I thought this virus was just in the security system," The foreman said.

"It is, but we don't want it to spread. These technicians will be moving along to the factory's north wing, so tell your people not to get in the way."

"Sure, Rhodey," The foreman said with a grin. "Never a dull moment in this business, huh?"

"Yeah, but the benefits make up for it."

"Are we going to have benefits if Tony keeps sticking his neck out? Sometimes we joke that if Tony ever improves his golf game, he can quit the superhero biz."

"Maybe, but the corporate world's just as risky," Rhodey said. "Tony has to face bad guys in tailored suits and leather briefcases."

"Big difference," the foreman grinned.

"You could've been a comedian, pal," Rhodey said as he walked towards the door. "How'd you ever wind up here?"

An explosion outside was barely audible with the factory's machinery running. Rhodey stopped, and looked at the shaking windows.

"Hey! Rhodey shouted to the foreman. "Did you hear something?"

"Huh?" the foreman asked as he removed his ear plugs.

A second explosion shook the factory and bits of the ceiling fell amongst the machinery and workers. Rhodey hit the alarm and an electric bell rang throughout the factory. More explosions followed as the workers rushed out of the factory. Rhodey was the last one to leave and joined the others at the factory parking lot.

"Rhodey! Are you all right?" The foreman shouted.

"I'm fine," Rhodey coughed. "Did everyone get out?"

"Looks like it. Now what's going on here?"

Rhodey turned and looked at the factory's roof, which was now on fire. "I don't know..."

Rhodey's eyes went wide as he saw a man in the Mauler Armor hovering over the factory.

"No. Please, God, No."

The Avenger's Quinjet cruised over the Atlantic Ocean on its flight back to New York City. It would have been a quiet flight home, but Thor was boasting about his actions in battle against Ultron's robot army.

"Aye, I stood mine ground and smote the vile automatons with mine hammer, Mjolnir! They, as did the Frost Giants of Asgard, fell at the feet of Thor!"

"I vote we let Thor handle the press conference," The Scarlet Witch quipped.

"Fat chance," Warbird said from the cockpit. "Thor's vocabulary is far above the heads of your standard reporter."

Beside Warbird, Captain America adjusted the frequency of his headset. "Quiet. I'm getting an emergency broadcast. Sounds like trouble at your factory, Tony."

"What sort of trouble?" Iron Man asked.

"There's too much distortion," Cap said while trying a new frequency. "But it sounds serious."

The Scarlet Witch grabbed the remote control and turned on the overhead TV. "Let's see if its on the news."

On screen was a aerial shot from a CNN helicopter of the Stark/Fujikawa factory under attack from a hovering armored figure.

"The Stark security force has been firing at this individual without much success," the reporter said. "We don't know what instigated this attack, or what the demands of this man are, but we do know that he's an old adversary of Iron Man known as the Mauler. Many of our viewers may remember that Tony Stark, during a press conference, revealed himself to be Iron Man to apprehend the perpetrators of

a nearby bank robbery.”

“It doesn’t sound good at all, Tony,” Cap said. “I’m changing our course. We’ll be at your factory in fifteen minutes.”

“I appreciate the offer, Cap,” Iron Man said as he stood out of his seat. “But this is my fight.”

The panel on the Quinjet’s ceiling slid open and Iron Man flew out at full speed.

Brendon was indifferent to the bullets that bounced off his armor. He flew over the north side of the factory and shot a stream of flame into its shattered windows with the torch cannon attached to his left gauntlet. When Brendon hovered back to admire his work a familiar voice shouted at him.

“Stand down, marine!”

Looking down at the crowd, Brendon saw Rhodey. He was the only guard unarmed.

“I’m through taking orders,” Brendon said. “I quit.”

“What the hell are you doing? Do you realize you’re throwing your life away?”

“I did that years ago. Now I’m taking it back.”

Rhodey blinked. “You’re talking about Tony, aren’t you?”

Brendon nodded. “We all want a second chance and you gave it to me. Thanks, Rhodey.”

Rhodey stepped out of the crowd, his hands in the air. “Brendon. Stop this before somebody gets hurt.”

“People are going to get hurt,” Brendon said as he aimed at Rhodey. “Unless you get them out of the way.”

A blast was fired. But it came from another individual in the sky. The blast hit Brendon in the back and sent him crashing inside the factory. Struggling to his feet, Brendon glared at the red and golden avenger.

“You took your time getting here.”

Iron Man set foot on the floor and crossed his arms. “So the wolf has cast off his disguise.”

“I could’ve said the same for you,” Brendon said. “But it turns out you’re not the poster boy for G.Q.”

“Mr. Stark said that he told you the real truth about the Iron Man identity. Looks like it didn’t stop you from pursuing your vendetta.”

“That bastard also refused to tell me who you really are.”

“I don’t think you want to know who I am,” Iron Man said. “I think you want to know if I’m the one you surrendered too all those years ago.”

“Are you?” Brendon demanded.

Iron Man shifted his posture as if he were bracing for a strike. “Yeah.”

A laser blast sent Iron Man outside and onto the pavement below. The crowd of security guards, fire fighters, camera crews and employees ran for cover. Igniting his boot jets, Brendon flew out of the factory and slammed feet first into the prone Iron Man.

“Feel any better?” Iron Man asked.

Brendon adjusted the power level on his laser cannon and aimed at Iron Man’s helmet. “I’ll feel splendid after I’ve killed you.”

Iron Man responded by firing a unibeam from his chestplate. The blast threw Brendon several yards.

“Don’t expect any mood swings today,” Iron Man said as he rose to his feet.

Smoldering from the blast, Brendon fired wildly at Iron Man. Most of the blasts hit the factory, and the few that struck Iron Man were neutralized by his armor’s force field. Iron Man charged, firing repulsor blasts from the palms of his gauntlets.

The two armored combatants locked hands in struggle. Iron Man grabbed Brendon’s left arm and threw him over the shoulder. Brendon swept kicked and knocked Iron Man off his feet.

Launching into the sky, Brendon fired dozens of laser blasts on Iron Man before he disappeared into the clouds.

Iron Man activated his radar. Within seconds he detected an object traveling at great speed from the west. Activating his boot jets, Iron Man flew into the sky. Once again Brendon fired lasers at Iron Man, who countered with repulsors. The two collided with the force of storm clouds, forcing the news helicopters to back away or risk getting in the middle of the struggle.

"I'm not as supportive as my boss," Iron Man said as he gripped Brendon's shoulder. "So I'm only asking you once: give up."

Brendon struck Iron Man with a fist. "Not this time!"

Iron Man hovered back and Brendon swung at him again. Iron Man dodged the punch, grabbed Brendon's arm, and caught him in a headlock.

"You bloody coward!" Brendon shouted.

"That's a bold statement coming from a former mercenary," Iron Man said.

Iron Man's boot jets ignited at full power and with Brendon struggling to break the headlock, crashed into the roof of the warehouse. They crashed through the upper levels and came to a stop at sublevel 2.

Brendon struggled to his feet, broke the headlock, and threw Iron Man into a wall. Iron Man fired a repulsor blast that sent Brendon crashing into some engineering marvels that were antiques by Tony Stark's standards.

"What's the idea?" Brendon asked. "Planning to earn your bodyguard salary? I left that snake in here."

"I'm just making sure no one else besides you gets hurt." Iron Man said.

Brendon leapt at Iron Man, but a punch sent him backwards.

"You can't win," Iron Man said.

"The hell I can," Brendon said. "Hey, Stark! I hope you're watching this. Because after I've grinded the blood out of your knight, I'm coming after you!"

An electrical current suddenly burst out over the Mauler Armor. Brendon screamed in pain, unable to move or use the armor. As sudden as it happened, the electric disturbance ended and Brendon fell to the floor unconscious.

"Are you sure he's all right?" Rhodey asked.

"He's just unconscious," Tony said as they walked out of the warehouse. "Probably wake up any second."

"That's the reason why you gentlemen should stand back," Iron Man said as he carried Brendon over his shoulder. "Just because we removed the Mauler Armor doesn't mean Doyle isn't dangerous."

Police officers, TV cameras and reporters crowded them.

"This the skel that was blowing up the place?" A sergeant asked.

"Yes, officer," Iron Man said as he turned Brendon over to two EMS workers. Brendon was placed on a gurney, handcuffed to it, and taken to a nearby ambulance.

"Mr. Stark!" A reporter shouted, "You're not wearing the Iron Man armor!"

"Yeah," Tony grinned. "I prefer Armani suits."

"But...you're Iron Man. Right?" Another reporter asked.

"Wrong." Tony said.

"Excuse me, Mr. Stark," a third reporter said, pushing through the crowd. "You admitted to being Iron Man for years. You said the bodyguard hiring was a cover!"

"Do I hear a 'say it ain't so, Tony' coming on?" Tony asked with a hand cupped to his ear.

The reporters turned from Tony to Iron Man. "Iron Man," a reporter said, "Can you tell us who you are."

"I can't," Iron Man said. "It's in the contract."

"Mr. Stark," the first reporter said. "Can you explain your reasons for this charade?"

"Charade?" Tony said surprised. "Big word for a reporter. You must be freelancing."

"Mr. Stark..."

"I'd be more than happy to talk to you all at a press conference that will be announced at a later date," Tony Stark said. "But right now I'd like to see if my employees are all right and inspect the damage to my factory. Now if you all would excuse me I must be going."

Tony walked over to a waiting Stark/Fujikawa security car. The cameras and photographers snapped pictures until Iron Man stood in their way and the car drove towards the smoldering factory.

Sitting in the den of the penthouse atop Stark Tower, Tony, Rumiko and Pepper browsed through the hundreds of newspapers and magazines piled atop the coffee table.

"Here's a good one," Pepper said as she read the headline of The New York Times, " 'Stark's Greatest Swindle' ."

"Hey, I'm an honest guy...mostly," Tony grinned.

"Time Magazine is more accurate" Rumiko said. " 'Wall Street's Super-Hero' ."

Pepper almost giggled when she read aloud USA Today's headline, " 'The Publicity Stunt of The Century. ' "

"How about the Chicago Sun-Times?" Tony asked. " 'The Emperor Has No Armor.' "

"Funny," Pepper said. "But the Daily Bugle takes the Hack Prize: 'Tony Stark: The Financial Menace' . "

"Jonah Jameson should stick too vilifying Spider-Man," Tony said as he tossed a news magazine onto the coffee table.

"All right, Tony" Rumiko said. "I've got to know how you pulled this scheme of yours off."

"It's all elementary, Ru," Tony said as he rose from his chair. "When I entered my personal laboratory, I activated a robotic version of the current Iron Man Armor to join the Avengers on their flight to Russia. It took me a week to program my vocal patterns for hundreds of possible speech scenarios, but it fooled them. And when it comes to fooling the Avengers it isn't easy."

"Then what about the fight with Doyle?"

"I knew his lunch break would be the best time for Doyle to steal the armor, so I kept my current armor amongst the older models. He probably ran past it and never noticed."

"So what happens now, Tony?" Pepper asked.

"All the politicians and the talking heads will condemn me for lying to the American people, but that will fade in a week or two. What counts is that the public doesn't believe that I'm Iron Man anymore."

"You've only got yourself to blame, Tony" Rumiko said. "I'm glad you told me the truth, but did you have to let the whole world in on it too? Next time let the police handle the bank robbers."

"Yes, dear," Tony grinned.

"You were running a big risk when you allowed Doyle to get the Mauler Armor," Pepper said.

"I figured Doyle would just do some minor property damage," Tony said. "And I only had the armor powered for five minutes. So if the robot Iron Man didn't return from Russia in time, the Mauler still would've shut down."

"Congratulations, Tony," Pepper after she rose from her chair. "But now that you're done confessing, it's time for me to do the same."

"What do you mean, Pep?" Tony asked.

"Yes, what..." Rumiko began.

"Rumiko," Pepper interrupted with a smile, "let me finish what we started this afternoon. I've been a thorn in your side for the longest time, and it's true that I didn't like you, but mostly the reason why I've treated you so harshly is because... Happy's become an alcoholic."

Tony gasped in shock. "Hap...an alcoholic?"

"I'm afraid so," Pepper said. "Ever since my miscarriage I've distanced myself from Happy. The lug thought I was tired with him so he's crawled into a bottle. That's why I've been so protective of Tony -- he's the one man who doesn't fall to pieces when I'm around. Ru, if this counts for anything...I'm sorry."

Rumiko stood up and hugged Pepper. "It's all right, Pep. I only hold a grudge with my family."

"I still attend weekly AA meetings," Tony said. "I'll ask Hap to attend one with me. I hope he doesn't take offense. That boxer still has a mean left hook."

Pepper smiled and wiped away tears. "Thank you. The both of you."

"Well, why are we standing here?" Rumiko asked. "Let's go to Les Halles and grab something to eat."

"Good idea, Ru." Tony said as he grabbed his coat. "Maybe I can still use my super-hero discount."

The electric buzzer sounded and Rhodey stepped into the visitors' room at Rykers. He walked over to the same chair that he occupied when he was here last. Another buzzer sounded and Brendon shuffled inside. A guard followed, lead him to the chair opposite Rhodey, sat Brendon on it, and returned to the wall. The two marines stared at each other for a few minutes, and then Rhodey slowly took the receiver, Brendon did the same.

"Hey, Brendon," Rhodey said.

"Hey, Rhodey." Brendon said.

"You could've killed those people in that factory."

"I know. I didn't want to do that, but I know."

"So was it worth it? Trying to kill Tony? He isn't even Iron Man."

Brendon was silent again. "Yeah. It was."

"How do you figure that?"

"I didn't kill Stark or Iron Man, but I got what I wanted in the long run: My respect. And when you're caged in a hell like this you need that more than you need brawn."

Rhodey leaned forward in his chair. "Then it's good you have something to hold on to in here, because you've lost my friendship."

Brendon blinked. "What are you talking about?"

"We were marines. Semper Fi. And you, Brendon. You broke that oath."

"So then this is a farewell visit?"

"You're damn right. You had a chance to live a good life, and you threw it away so these lifers would look you in the eye."

"If I ever get out of here, and I will," Brendon said. "I might just try again. Stark's got a lot of enemies with deep pockets."

"Try again and this time you'll find me standing in the way. And next time you'd better shoot because I intend to."

Brendon grinned. "I look forward to seeing you again, Rhodey."

"Same here, Brendon."

Rhodey hung up the receiver and walked out of the visitor's room. Brendon kept his eyes on the door until his guard walked over to take him back to his cell.

THE END.

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#16 THE WANDERINGS OF THE INVINCIBLE IRON MAN *by cousture*



Bonjour Iron fanatics! Welcome to the sixteenth edition of my lil' corner of A.I. Sweet sixteen already! How quickly time flies when you're having fun! If you're new to this fanzine, simply know that this column is dedicated to the many appearances of Iron Man in mags other than his own.

Of all the past 15 columns that I have written for A.I. so far, none has received more acclaim and generated more feedback than the one I dedicated to the wanderings of War Machine. Hey, who am I to argue with my faithful readers?

So here we go again people, three more adventures of War Machine that might have slipped your attention.



MIGHTY THOR #484

THE STORY

It's so simple, it's almost painful.

Loki wants to attack Thor (what else is new, talk about a guy who never learns). The aforementioned thunder god is sitting in a restaurant with Lady Sif when he is suddenly and unexpectedly attacked by War Machine. Of course, Rhodey's not in control of himself, Loki is. After trashing each other around for a while, Rhodey begins to struggle to regain control of his body. Thor uses the opportunity to whack War Machine with Mjolnir, which causes the armor's systems to stall. Loki discards his now useless weapon and flies away.

WHAT'S BAAAAD?

When this book came out, it was my ambition to possess all the comics featuring War Machine that were being published. Even if I had read somewhere that the book sucked, I still would've bought it. I know the same can be said of some of you out there. You're probably telling yourself: «Hey, it's War Machine versus Thor, how bad can it be?» Sadly, it can be very bad. Don't say I didn't warn ya!

It saddens me to tell you this, but this book stinks. First of all, there's the art. Don't be fooled by the cool Steve Epting cover! The inside art is terrible. It reminds me of Herb Trimpe, and I am definitely NOT a fan of his stuff. Thor's chest is so gigantic, it makes him look deformed. The good news is that, since his face is hidden by his helmet, WM is the best looking character in there. All the other characters look awful. It also doesn't help that this book features Thor in the goofiest and stupidest costume ever designed for him in his entire history.

As for the story, well, it's simply terrible. It's nothing but a gratuitous, unnecessary and boring fight, filled with unbearably long and corny dialogues. I'd be able to excuse this if the book had been published in the 60s or 70s, but we're talking about less than ten years ago for crying out loud!

Finally, the author's use of War Machine's weaponry is extremely disappointing. All he basically does (aside from his initial dive-bomb on Thor) is shoot some silly looking energy beams around for the whole duration of the battle. Yawn. I am absolutely certain that any Iron fan reading this column right now, even without the slightest amount of experience writing comics, would have been able to come up with a more exciting fight.

The God in the War Machine

Aug 1995

Story: Roy Thomas

Art: Sandu Florea

QUOTE

Here's a good example of corny dialogue that completely ruins the rhythm of the story. During the fight, in an instant that should only last one or two seconds logically, Loki finds the time to over-explain the scene by declaring (wake me up when he finally shuts up):

"I cannot catch your uru hammer — no god or man can do that, save only Odin — and I know full well that it must ever return to you! Very well, then! But in deflecting it, I can add this armor's power to its own with dire consequences for you!"

(Zzzzzz....)



SECRET DEFENDERS #9-10

THE STORY

Nebula is in the process of recruiting an entire army of galactic cut-throats on the distant Martian moon of Phobos. The Silver Surfer knows it, but he can't go after her alone. That's what Nebula is expecting, so he needs allies if he hopes to catch her ill-prepared.

The Surfer heads for Dr. Strange's sanctum to seek the help of Earth heroes, but not just anybody. He needs heroes who were not present during the Infinity Gauntlet saga, because Nebula would then be too familiar with them. So Dr. Strange calls upon newcomers War Machine and Thunderstrike to help the Surfer in his endeavour! Norrin's not too sure about the good doctor's choice at first, but his two new allies will most definitely not disappoint him.

WHAT'S COOL?

Wow, what a story! Cool characters, awesome villains, an entire army of monstrous alien monsters for WM and Thunderstrike to battle side by side, a gigantic bomb that threatens to blow up Titan to space dust... great stuff!

Since there are not too many heroes in this story, the writer has more time to give each one an important part to play. You'll be happy to know that War Machine is definitely the one with the most important role here! I won't tell you what he does exactly, that would be ruining the surprise, I'll just say that it's very cool and that it's Rhodey at his best!

I thought the art was great, but many people would probably disagree with me on that one. It's not the style we're used to for WM or the Silver Surfer. Grindberg's art is reminiscent of one of my all-time favourite comic-book artists: Mike Mignola (of Hellboy fame). It's not a blatant and clumsy attempt at plagiarism either, it's just a very strong Mignola influence in his work. I don't know who this Grindberg guy is, what he did before or since, but I like his work in this book. Some people would probably hate it and argue that the proportions all look off or something like that... it's a matter of taste.

I should probably mention that, unbeknownst to you, my faithful readers, I happen to be a pretty big Silver Surfer fan. At the time this was published, I was buying the title regularly, so I was very familiar with Nebula, what she can do and her important role in Surfer continuity. I don't know if someone who is unfamiliar with her would appreciate the story quite as much as I did. I am also a big fan of Ron Marz, a writer whose great talent would have been deserving of bigger and more well-known Marvel series.

WHAT'S BAAAAD?

As much as I like the art, I must admit that Thunderstrike looks a little bit weird. Also, at the end of the story, the writer runs out of space and skips a scene that I would have LOVED to see: WM riding with the Surfer on his board. I would've really liked to see that, that would have been true eye candy. Sadly, it was cut and it's a real shame.

Revenge

November/December 1993

Writter: Ron Marz

Pencils: Tom Grindberg

Inks: Don Hudson

QUOTE

When Thunderstrike asks:

**"So you can deal with it?
The Iron Man thing and all?"**

War Machine replies:

**"I don't care what people think when
they see me. I know I'm not just an
imitation. If you're in this to do some
good, doesn't matter who you look like.
Long as you get the job done. Remember
that, Thunderstrike, and everything falls
into place."**





November/December 1993

**Avengers #368, X-Men #26,
AWC #101, Uncanny X-Men #307,
Avengers #369**

Writers: Bob Harras, Fabian Nicieza,
Roy Thomas, Scott Lodbell

Pencilers: Steve Epting, Andy Kubert,
Dave Ross, John Romita Jr.

Inkers: Matt Ryan, Tim Dzon, Dan Green

QUOTE

When Exodus says:

“Some species, like some races, are born to be masters – and others, slaves! Accept your inferiority, Avenger.”

War Machine replies:

“That’s IT! You’re going DOWN, mister!”

UPCOMING WANDERINGS

Iron fans should keep an eye out for the Avengers / Thunderbolts mini-series coming up in March. It’s written by Kurt Busiek so it might have quite a bit of potential. As for me, I am working on a column that will talk about IM’s guest-stars in the pages of the Hulk! Stay tuned!

I hope these reviews are useful. Any questions, comments, suggestions of issues you’d like to see reviewed, arguments or even to just say bonjour, send me a message at cousture@yahoo.com and while I’m at it, I cordially invite you to visit my comics web site (yes, this is my inevitable and always shameless plug) at the following address:

<http://www.republiquelibre.org/cousture/bd>

Check out my “Wanderings of Iron Man” page to access all of my past columns for A.I. as well as some new and exclusive reviews. Hope to hear from you and **bonne lecture!**

BLOODYTIES

THE STORY

To celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of both teams, Marvel decided to bring the X-Men and the Avengers together for this big crossover. Civil war has erupted in Genosha between the recently liberated mutants and their ex-oppressors. The self-proclaimed leader of Genosha, Fabian Cortez, has kidnapped young Luna, Crystal and Quicksilver’s daughter. This drags both X-Men and Avengers into the conflict. While U.S. Agent and the Beast escort Professor Xavier on an official diplomatic mission, the Avengers defy a U.N. order and illegally penetrate Genosha’s borders. To make things worse, another man enters the bloody conflict, an immensely powerful man. His name is Exodus, he is Magneto’s chosen messiah, and he wants to kill every human in Genosha (oh yeah, and Cortez too, whom he considers a traitor to his cause). Cortez’s only chance is to use Luna as a hostage and a human shield to force the two groups to attack Exodus.

WHAT’S COOL?

Since War Machine was a member of the Avengers West Coast at the time, he took part in this conflict. I must admit that all the artists involved did a very good job at drawing him. John Romita Jr. especially.

Also, the fight between War Machine and Exodus (in the AWC issue) is pretty cool. Exodus’ racist remarks really get under Jim’s skin and make the battle a very interesting one.

WHAT’S BAAAAD?

I found this crossover extremely disappointing. This could have been such a cool, momentous event... and all we got was this lousy story.

First of all, Wolverine’s absent. If I remember well, Magneto had just ripped the adamantium right off his bones, so he was on a leave of absence... but still, what a disappointment. The Avengers meet the X-Men and the latter team’s most interesting character is nowhere to be seen.

But even Wolverine’s presence would not have saved the story, because the interaction between the two teams is minimal. I was hoping to see the two teams fight side by side a lot, but alas no, nothing. Heck, they only actually meet in the last issue! Aside from one small scene in which he briefly interacts with Storm (and makes a complete arse of himself), War Machine is mostly there as background decoration and rarely speaks.

The story keeps jumping from place to place, from group to group, from sub-plot to sub-plot and that makes the whole thing extremely hard to follow. At times, there are things happening in FIVE different places, all at the same time! Sheesh! The dialogues are overly long and uninteresting and keep dragging on and on, endlessly. Sometimes, the continuity between issues is dubious. One issue ends with the characters in a particular situation, and when the following issue begins, they’re in a completely different situation with barely an explanation! Not a great example of collaboration between authors!

This is a very unmemorable story that is quickly forgotten.