

THE INVINCIBLE ADVANCED IRON



Smith & Johnson
Johnny Craig

ADVANCED IRON

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About the Cover:

Our cover this month is by Filipe Muffoletto. In his own words: "This is my recreation of the artwork on the cover of Iron Man #2. I love this cover!! I mean, what's not to love? ... Johnny Craig art, Janice Cord, uber-futuristic robot, IM in a near death situation!! There is also very "interesting" interaction between IM's right arm and the text box at the bottom of the cover. The text box is an actual part of the scene since, if it is removed, it is painful just how far off the perspective in IM's arm is!! If you ask me though, it makes the cover that much more endearing and corny – something the early runs of Tales of Suspense and Invincible Iron Man was filled to the brim with!! "

Web Site Stats (2004.8.20 to 2006.6.5)

Unique Hosts Served: 63,794 (53,880)

Total Data Transferred 287.64 GB (262.91 gigabytes)

Ave Data Transferred per Day: 450.10 MB (510.08 MB)

Readership:

Issue 68: 5066

Issue 67: 5461 (4572)

Issue 66: 2564 (2462)

Issue 65: 4854 (4708)

Issue 64: 10,199 (10,104)

Issue 63: 7898 (7308)

Issue 62: 753 (626)

Issue 61: 1152 (869)

Issue 60: 774 (681)

Issue 59: 538 (538)

Issue 58: 1513 (1072)

Issue 57: 784 (709)

Issue 56: 957 (684)

Issue 55: 746 (684)

Issue 54: 894 (709)

Issue 53: 21,980 (13,088)

Issue 52: 1020 (861)

Issue 51: 978 (683)

Issue 50: 1511 (1200)

Site Evolution Status:

1) The Zine area. If you are reading this, you should already see the changes. Phase 1 of this section is complete. It is completely database driven. This page also features a chance for you to provide feedback for the issue and rate it. And it gives an overall rating for the issue.

2) The Armory. No developments here.

3) The Back Issues. I am hard at work on an application for Metropolis that will let me link into their ordering system to order issues directly from them.

4) Iron Man Shopping section. This section is still a mess. It just has not fit in yet. I am hoping to bring the new section online before the next issue that will include links that you can use to purchase IM related stuff. If you purchase them through the links, AI will make referral commissions that go directly to the maintaining the site. just think, you will be able to get your Iron Man fix and help support AI at the same time with no money out of your pocket.....you were going to buy all of this stuff anyway, right? No self respecting Iron Man fan would NOT buy these.....so help support AI and use the links!!!!

OF ALTERNATE WORLDS ... OR MAYBE NOT

Dave Huber

Hey! Did you know that Tony Stark invented his very own **dimensional transporter** way back



in the late 1970s? (Yep, way before **Mike Grell** used that way-cheap plot device to have Stark travel back in time some 1,000 years!) Yes he did – and one may wonder (like me!) why Stark/Iron Man hasn't taken advantage of it since. In **WHAT IF?** (volume 1) #9, Iron Man states to his fellow Avengers assembled, "*It's my own version of the dimensional transporter that brought the Squadron Supreme into our world.*" But wait – speaking of the Squadron Supreme, if one takes a gander at **AVENGERS (vol. 1) #85-86** (which is the first appearance in Marvel of the Squadron), Iron Man uses a very similar device of his own making. If this is the same mechanism (and there's a very good chance it is), then *this* would

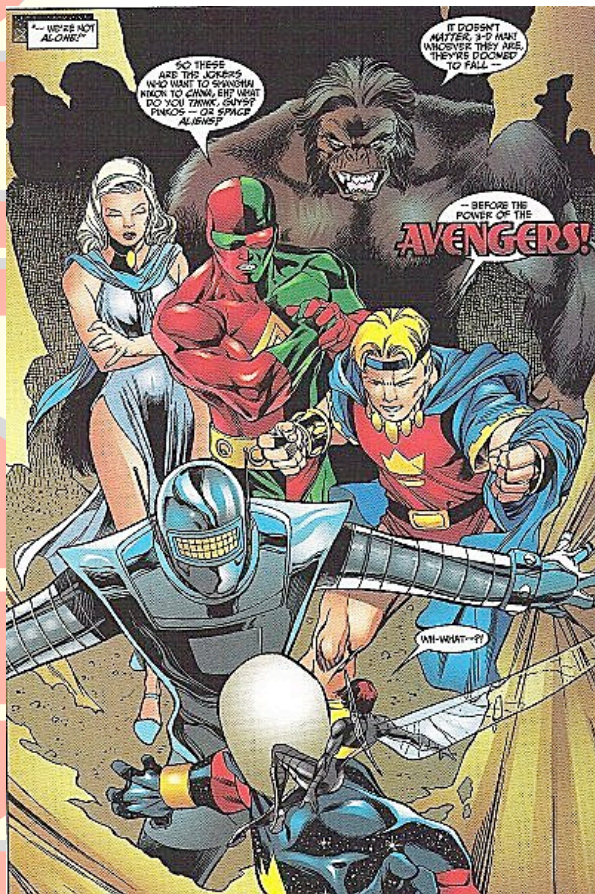
be the first appearance of said dimensional transporter.

(Hey Stark – why didn't you use *this* doohickey to send the Squadron back to their dimension in the 1999 **AVENGERS/SQUADRON SUPREME ANNUAL** instead of relying on that "Nth Projector" you found in **Imus Champion's** cache of exotic items, hmmm? Better yet, you could have used it WAY before that, so that the Squadron didn't have to languish at Project: Pegasus all those years! Of course, this is all contingent upon this device still being in Stark's *possession* at the end of the last century, so maybe an Iron Fan can enlighten me.)

Iron Man uses the device in **WHAT IF?** #9 to show selected Avengers (Cap, Thor, Vision and the Beast) an interesting tidbit from the 1950s – namely, the **1950s AVENGERS!!** This team consisted of **Marvel Boy, Gorilla Man, 3-D Man, The Human Robot and Venus.** Did they really exist, or was this an alternate dimension? It's a legitimate



question as at the end of the issue then-president Ike Eisenhower tells the new “Avengers” that their existence would not be tolerated by the public at large and he asks the team to break up. It could have been on our own earth that this team was formed.



But, the question was finally answered more than twenty years later by none other than **Kurt Busiek** in the beyond phenomenal **AVENGERS FOREVER**. It was, alas, an alternate dimension, and one that was completely excised from the time-stream by **Immortus** in **AVENGERS FOREVER #5**. In AF, Busiek had the 1950s “Avengers” still intact as a team, albeit as a quite clandestine one. AF #5 may be my favorite out of the twelve issues printed; I actually felt remorse witnessing the 1950s Assemblage’s timeline being wiped out of all time at the end of the issue (all the while the Wasp and Capt. Marvel race to stay ahead of Immortus’ destructive time-wave!). (An aside: AF #8 is hard to beat, though; the “Secret History of the Avengers” showcases Busiek’s comics knowledge – and creativity – to a “T.” He neatly “cleans up” loose ends, notably “**The Crossing**” and the open question of the **Vision** and **Original Human Torch** from the Byrne West Coast Avengers era.)

Update to the above paragraph since I wrote

it: Apparently, the 1950s Avengers timeline wasn’t as “excised” as we thought. Get ready for a five-issue limited series starring the team this August! And, this ain’t an alternate reality, folks: Titled *Agents of Atlas*, (named so after the former name of Marvel Comics), the team will operate in the “standard” Marvel timeline. So reports *Wizard* #176. One significant note: **3-D Man** will not be on the team.

I’ve been busily reading some of the latest “encyclopedias” of various Marvel characters, and I’ve noticed that alternate earths have now specific designations – numbers, usually – to denote “universes” where various dimension-spanning stories have taken place. Our own earth is designated “**Earth 616.**” Why 616? [Wikipedia](#) says 616 was first used in **CAPTAIN BRITAIN** in the 1980s by acclaimed writer **Alan Moore**. Merlyn, “Protector of the Multiverse,” so designated our earth with that numeral. I searched frantically for the designation of the 1950s Avengers’ earth; however, thus far, I’ve found nothing. [One resource](#) provides a clue as to why: *The Official Handbook of the Marvel Universe Master Edition* (the most recent edition of the Handbook) **has treated the 1950s Avengers as canonical in the entries covering Marvel Boy [II] and 3-D Man, but current Avengers editor Tom Brevoort has said the 1950s Avengers may not be part of the**

mainstream Marvel timeline since their existence in standard Marvel time has not been confirmed.

Indeed, Brevoort's suspicions seemingly *are* quite valid as Busiek annihilated the team's timeline in AF #5. ([Wikipedia's](#) "What If?" entry says WHAT IF? #9 was treated as an Earth-616 "untold story," but that Busiek and others have "relegated it" it to alternate history.) If the 1950s team started out as canonical, they and that earth obviously had to have split into their own timeline from Earth-616 fairly *early on* for Immortus appeared *in* the late 1950s (1959, to be precise) to obliterate their timeline to satisfy the desires of the **Time Keepers**.

Or did it?

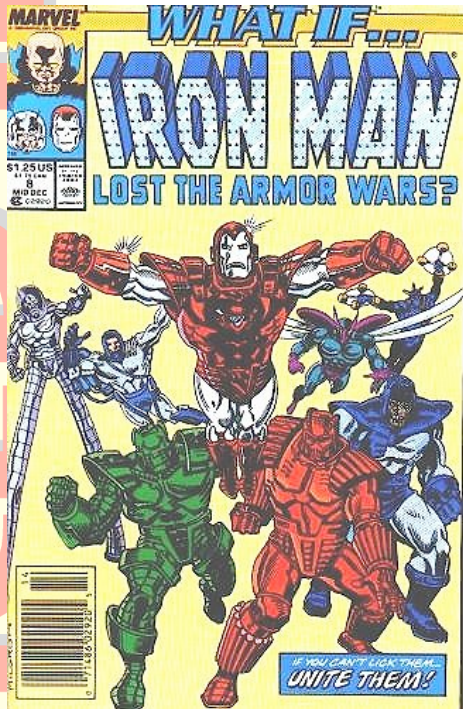
The only thing I can see that prevents the team from having its own earth designation is because all the team's members are (were) originally members of Earth-616. But so? Many other alternate earths have their origins from somewhere (sometime?) in Earth-616. One speculation could be that Immortus' destruction of that timeline actually *began* in our own (Earth-616) timeline, but at some *un glimpsed future* (that we're all unaware of) took a divergent route – and *that* is what was destroyed, sparing our own future timeline.

Yes, you can get a headache thinking about all this.

Checking out all these alternate earths was pretty damn *cool*. Iron Man and many other of my favorite characters are featured on the lists and descriptions. Let's examine a few:

- **Earth-398** is the alternate world to where **Morgan Le Fay** nabbed the recently-returned "Heroes Reborn" Avengers early in volume 3. Iron Man became the "**Iron Knight**."
- **Earth-689** is where the **Scarlet Centurion** instructed that world's Avengers to destroy the time-traveling Earth-616 Avengers in AVENGERS ANNUAL #2.
- **Earth-712** is the home of the **Squadron Supreme**. This is also designated "Earth-S."
- **Earth-939** is the home of the alternate Tony Stark and Jim Rhodes that battled the stranded **Iron Man of 2020** in WHAT IF? #53.
- **Earth-8410**, speaking of **Arno Stark's** alter-ego, is the home universe of the Marvel characters of the year 2020.
- **Earth-947** is the earth where Jim Rhodes, in the War Machine armor, actually offered the **Living Laser** a job at Stark Enterprises. This was told in WHAT IF? (vol. 2) #63 and had a "you choose the ending" feature. Two of the other choices go to **Earth-9470** and **Earth-9471**.
- **Earth-6891** is the earth where Tony Stark was whisked to the future to battle his own creation, **Cerebrus**, in the far-future. This took place in IRON MAN (vol. 1) #5.
- **Earth-7511** is home of the "**Fragmented America**" shown in IRON MAN (vol. 1) #80-81. This was anti-climactic climax of the lame "War of the Super-Villains."
- **Earth-8110** is home of the Avengers team that were once pawns of the Scarlet Centurion, but whom they later defeated. This took place in WHAT IF? #29

- **Earth-9105** is home of the **Egyptian Avengers** shown in **NEW WARRIORS** #11-13 and **AVENGERS FOREVER**'s climactic two final issues. Iron Man is called ... Iron Man! (What, no cool alternate name?)
- **Earth-9602** is home of the “**Amalgam**” universe – where DC and Marvel characters merged into single entities. This is the home of “**Iron Lantern**,” the amalgam of Iron Man and Green Lantern.
- **Earth-9810** is where Tony Stark becomes the “**Sorcerer Supreme**” in one of the more surprising What If? issues (vol. 2 #113).
- **Earth-9997** is home to the “**Earth X**” universe.



- **Earth-89120** is where **Iron Man** lost the “**Armor Wars**.” This offbeat story took place in **WHAT IF?** (vol. 2) #8. **Justin Hammer** gains control of the Iron Man armor and sets about to discredit Stark and the Golden Avenger. Biggest *faux pas* of the entire issue: In the plot-crucial gassing of **Ant Man** inside the Hammer computer system, like *where is the self-contained breathing gear of AM's helmet??* The classic “**Fantastic Voyage**”-like **AVENGERS** issue (vol. 1 #93) where Ant Man journeys inside the android Vision clearly establishes this feature of the uniform. Oops.
- Speaking of the android Avenger, **Earth-90110** is the utopia created by the all-powerful **Vision** (**WHAT IF?** vol. 2 #19). Home of the “**Cosmic Avengers**” team consisting of Thor, Starhawk, Tachyon Torch, Jhen the Gammazon, Commander America, and **Iron Droid** – an “employee of Stark Interplanetary.”
- **Earth-90111** is the second feature of **WHAT IF?** (vol. 2) #19 where the Vision's attempt at world domination leads to a *dystopia*. Earth still manages to take over the galaxy,

amazingly!

Interestingly, two significant **IRON MAN** tales were not among these alternate worlds. One is the truly excellent **WHAT IF IRON MAN SOLD OUT?** (#64) where Tony Stark decides to share his amazing armor technology with the world shortly after his accident in Vietnam – to devastating effect. The other is the special one-shot issue **WHAT IF IRON MAN WAS A TRAITOR?** Drawn by legend **Steve Ditko**, it postulates what would have



occurred had **Wong Chu** burst in upon Stark and **Professor Yinsen** *before* the Iron Man armor was completely ready. Chen Lu (aka the **Radioactive Man** and for whom Wong Chu works) makes Stark his living slave, but, of course, Stark manages to thwart his efforts, natch!

Gads, I was re-reading volume 2 AVENGERS, better known as “**Heroes Reborn**” AVENGERS, and geez – is the “writing” execrable or WHAT?? The premiere issue sets the tone for all the issues that **Rob Liefeld** had a hand in plotting: disastrously weak dialogue accompanied by huge splash page panels that are supposed to “thrill” us.

Puh-lease.

No wonder Marvel got Liefeld off the title after about half the issues.

Former IRON MAN artist **Michael Ryan** took over art chores in vol. 2 AVENGERS after Liefeld and pal **Chap Yaep** departed. The result was simple: extraordinarily better art!

Former *Advanced Iron* head-man **Bill Egan** once did a comparison of the quantity of dialogue on “Heroes Reborn” issues and their immediate (volume 1) predecessors. The results were astonishing: Volume 1 Marvel issues **had significantly more written dialogue**. This usually translates into more *plot* and *character development*, both of which were sorely lacking in “Heroes Reborn,” especially the AVENGERS. I’ll have track down that Egan analysis.

I think this is telling how Marvel (or at least Kurt Busiek) felt about Liefeld’s vol. 2 CAP: In AVENGERS FOREVER #12, when all the “good” Avengers are battling all the “bad” Avengers,

vol. 2 Capt. America is shown to be among the “bad” Assemblers! (Remember that Liefeld’s vol. 2 Cap had an **eagle symbol** on his forehead instead of an “A.”)



ESSENTIAL CLASSIC X-MEN Volume 2 features another Iron Man knock-off I had never heard about, but I believe was recently featured in CIVIL WAR #1 – **Cobalt Man**. (The reason I say “believe” is because he was never shown in costume in CW #1.) Originally published in X-MEN #31, Cobalt Man is actually a former Stark Industries employee Ralph Roberts, who just happens to be the brother of then-semi boyfriend of Jean Grey, Ted Roberts. One of the reasons Ralph left S.I. was because “Stark refused to divulge the secret of Iron Man’s costume”!! (Well, *DUH!*) At any rate, Ralph tells his brother that if the Cobalt Man suit is “worn over two hours, the armor starts producing the deadly radioactive cobalt-60 – and I’d soon turn into a walking C-bomb!”

Oh, is *that* all? Boy, that’s *some* kickin’ invention – a suit of armor that has the potential to wipe out a **significant portion of the entire friggin’ planet!!** For those not familiar with the concept of a cobalt bomb, such a device is the most dangerous weapon ever conceived. Radioactive cobalt-60 would be

“ideal” as a doomsday bomb, according to physicist **Leo Szilard** (first noted back in 1950). That’s because it has a long half-life (5.3 years) enabling it to settle onto the earth’s surface before [radioactive] decay has occurred. Cobalt-60 emits lethal gamma rays, and, well, we know how deadly *they* are (unless you’re Bruce Banner). Many sci-fi writers have used the deadly cobalt bomb as a basis for their stories, including the classic Nevil Shute scribed “**On the Beach**.” The second “**Planet of the Apes**” movie (“Beneath the Planet of the Apes”) ended with the explosion of a cobalt bomb, although viewers may be led to believe this device actually cracked the planet open. This wouldn’t happen; again, it’s the deadly intense radiation that would *slowly* kill off all life on the planet. (In “On the Beach,” survivors of an atomic war were settled in Australia, the last place the killer cobalt-60 particles would be carried by various wind patterns. But it was only a matter of time before these folks too, succumbed.) I recently finished a 1955 novel *Not This August* which postulates a Soviet-Chinese takeover of the United States. The US secretly has one last ace-in-the-hole, though: an orbiting satellite carrying 36 hydrogen bombs and two “specials” – cobalt bombs that would be detonated over the USSR and China (if the 36 H-bombs weren’t sufficient to dissuade the invaders to scam from their conquered territory!).

Sorry about the protracted history, there. Back to Cobalt Man: Of course that “two hour limit” comes into play and the Merry Mutants have to put the kibosh on the armored adventurer! But why did Cobalt Man turn bad? Answer: He suffered a blow to the head in a pole vault accident shortly before he showed his bro the Cobalt Man armor, natch!

I was perusing the ‘Net the other day and discovered a t-shirt website that has an **Iron Man-derivative design!** Check it out:



Included below the t-shirt advertisement was a group of military guys with a similar design on a wall behind them:



No word on whether the shirt design got Marvel’s permission for that image (clearly taken from Iron Man’s Modular Armor from IRON MAN #300)!

The Whacko Saga (AKA West Coast Avengers)

76-102

By Ironman John Comerford



Foreword

Here we have it, after four issues of **ADVANCED IRON** and as many columns later, we near the end of the **West Coast Avengers** (titled "**Avengers West Coast**" as the series goes on) series proper. This series underwent many evolutions in its 101 issue run, almost as many as it did creative teams.

The Series

Issue 76 of **Avengers West Coast** begins the 4 part "Infamous Monsters of Filmland" arc featuring the return of the **Night Shift** in a story that eventually teams the Whacko's up with Dr. Strange. **Iron Man** functions as the **Whacko** chairman (complete with whacko dialogue, i.e., **Spider-Woman** addressing **Iron Man** as "Mr. Chairman" with further conversation resembling something from an old man "Moose" meeting, moose hats and all). The story deals with B-side villains, the Night Shift, acquiring Avenger-level power from a demon named Satannish. **Iron Man** puts on a good showing in issue 77 as he engineers Grave Digger's escape from jail in order to track him to **Night Shift's** headquarters; where he later puts his repulsors to the test against Satannish himself. The issues cliffhanger leaves the reader asking "my goodness, has Wonder Man truly defected over to the Night Shift?" Nahh. ;)

Issue 78 shows **Iron Man** boldly walking into the abode of Dr. Strange, an act which puts **Shellhead** in the unusual position of trying to use his repulsor rays on ghosts. In a fantastic showing of power, **Tatterdemalion** wraps a scarf around **Iron Man's** helmet, which he only escapes from through the aid of the Scarlet Witch –ugh-. The arc wraps up in 79, with the **Whackos** putting an end to the Night Shifts scheme, and freeing Hollywood for the well being of all future B-movies.

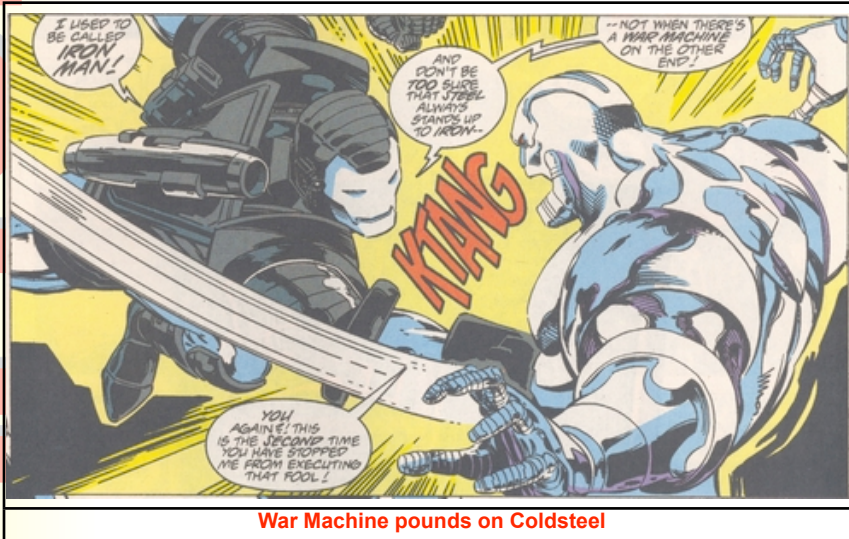


Iron Man suffers from a fashionable scarf attack

Issues 80-82 feature the **Avengers West Coast** contribution to the mega **1992** crossover,

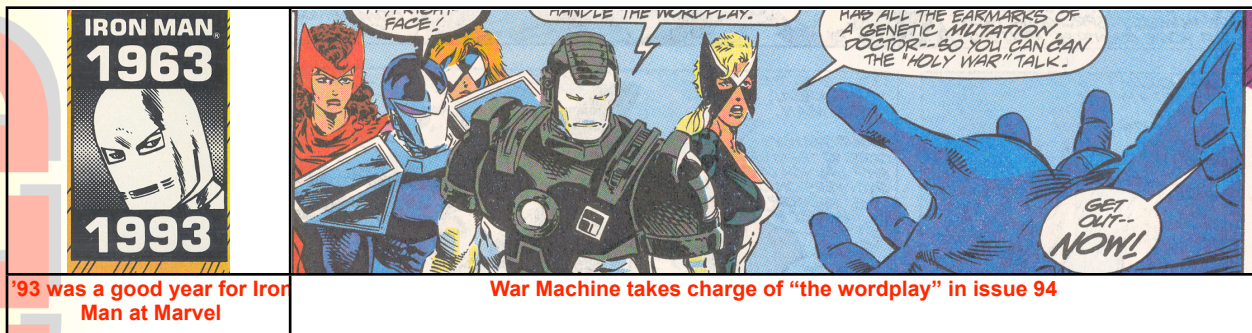
Operation: Galactic Storm (which will be examined in the next issue of **ADVANCED IRON**). Once the galactic dust settles, issue 83 brings the Human Torch to the forefront with a story about the Hyena. This is a self-contained filler issue with "art" by Herb Trimpe and an appearance by Machine Man. Quite possibly the only thing that makes this issue worthwhile is the great Ross pinup at the end of the story (the guy is just an incredible artist).

Issues 84-86 of the **Whacko Saga** are focused on the origin's of **Spider-Woman** (aka Julia Carpenter from the 90's **Iron Man** animated series for those of you who are familiar with her in that incarnation). Issue 85 contains the bulk of the battle scenes, and also pits **Spider-Woman** against **Spider-Man** as they battle amidst the "Death Web", a cadre of spider-powered villains. Of note, issue 86 features the **Avengers** popularity poll in the letters column. **Iron Man** lands in the top 7 of all three categories, but never better than 4. Issue 66 is worthwhile picking up though, simply for a lot of great David Ross panels featuring **Iron Man** in action.



War Machine pounds on Coldsteel

Issues 87 and 88 are a ragged **Wolverine** story and don't even feature **Iron Man** in a single panel. However issue 89 brings **Ultron** back in a decent multi-parter with the Vision. Page 4 has a gruesome scene that is very appropriate for an **Ultron** type attack. This issue also features the **Avengers West Coast** adjustment to what was going on in **Iron Man's** series at the time as it brings **War Machine** to the team! A nod to continu-



'93 was a good year for Iron Man at Marvel

War Machine takes charge of "the wordplay" in issue 94

ity is given in this issue as it references **Tony Stark's** death and the "funeral" from **IM volume 1, #'s 284-286**. The remaining issues of the arc focus on the old "family" aspects typical of an **Ultron** appearance, addressing issues with the Vision and Pym. Issue 90 also features Hawkeye going back to his Goliath days in order to up the power level of the team (who didn't accept **War Machine's** initial bid to get on). 91 features a scene in which **Ultron** smashes Wonderman and Spider-Woman together in a move that should've killed the latter in an instant, but simply becomes a nod to comic book physics at their best. Issue 92 contains a battle of "giant" proportions with old **Whacko** villain, Goliath vs. old **Whacko** whacko, Giant-Hawkeye-Goliath Man.

93 brings Dr. Demonicus back into the tale and also brings **Darkhawk** to the team. This issue also takes place during the events of **Iron Man 290** (pages 11 & 14 are highly relevant to **Iron Man** fans), also setting the stage for **War Machine's** return in the next issue. 94 & 95 feature a good deal of **War Machine** action.

Issues 96 and 97 feature the **Whacko** contribution to the **Infinity Crusade** (the final and dismal chapter in the **Infinity** Trilogy). A disappointing aspect of this part of the **Infinity Crusade** Crossover is that it doesn't touch on the beliefs of the characters, which is a central part of that story. Overall, this was a useless two issues, minus some decent **War Machine** action. Issues 98 & 99 feature the fallout from the "Infamous Monsters..." storyline which leads us into issue **100** of the **Whacko Saga** (the red-chrome, shiny issue nonetheless). This issue also features the death of Mockingbird at the hands of Mephisto (something relatively tragic considering this is a death that Hawkeye can not avenge). The story and art in this issue are generally well done and is worth picking up out of back issue bins. Issue 101 features the **Avengers/X-Men** crossover "**Bloodties**" as well as a generally disappointing battle between **War Machine** and Exodus.

The series culminates in its 102nd issue as the mainstream **Avengers** rally against the **Whacko's**, hence disassembling the team. Captain America remarks at one point that **War Machine** was defeated by Exodus on a spiritual level which is not indicative of an **Avenger**. **Iron Man** shows up to defend the team, which actually leads to the formation of **Force Works** immediately down the road. In the final moments of the **Whacko** saga, **Iron Man** votes to disband the team (to the shock and dismay of the remaining **West Coasters**). This is a move that would shock Iron Fans at the time (much like **Iron Man's** current stance in Civil War), however with time we find that **Stark** has greater motives and a smarter plan than everyone in the room.

The final quarter (or so) issues of the **Whacko Saga** are 27 issues of generally great David Ross art, and decent storylines. This set features the addition of **War Machine** to the team as well as tight continuity ties to the **Iron Man** volume one series. These final issues are also packed with several crossovers including **Operation: Galactic Storm** (so big that it's worthy of its own coverage in the next **ADVANCED IRON**), the Infinity Crusade crossover, and the Bloodties crossover with the X-Men titles of 1993. The final issue features the triumphant return of **Iron Man** and leads directly into the **Force Works** series (a series that would have been great had it not ended in "The Crossing").

But fear not, **Whacko** fans, there is more coverage ahead with **Operation: Galactic Storm** coming in the next awesome issue of **ADVANCED IRON**!

Ironman John

06/05/2006

Grand Comic Book Database

Ken Lemons

The Grand Comic-Book Database Charter

We are building a simple database that will be easy to use and understand, easy to add to, and easy for people to contribute to. We will include information on creator credits, story details, and other information useful to the comic book reader and fan. If we are able to take this to its ultimate conclusion, this database will contain data for every comic book ever published. This project is for us, and the people like us. We will use this as a comic-book database which can be searched and sorted. The database will be a resource for fans, hobbyists and collectors, with no commercial objectives.

Objectives and Guidelines:

For content:

- * We intend to catalog key story information, creator information, and other information which is useful to readers, fans, hobbyists, researchers.
- * Our goal is to include all the comic books ever published.
- * We will use a broad definition of Comic Book; a comic book is 50% or more art and/or pictures which tell a story. (If there is a question, that book can be included. This definition eliminates any electronic comics. It includes small print run fanzines & minicomics.)

For structure:

- * It will be simple, but useful.
- * The structure will be designed around computerized tools.
- * It can be used by casual users and doesn't require special knowledge or expert assistance for interpretation.
- * It will be capable of evolving as new needs are found.

For availability:

- * Available in ASCII text formats.
- * Available over the Internet.

For organization of the group:

- * We are a volunteer organization of hobbyists.
- * This is not a commercial endeavor, and will not become one.

Indexing the sum total of all comic books is a huge project. Without heroic effort, it can't be done by one person or even a small number of people. Our operating principles are designed to allow a large number of people to collaborate in a simple and easy way to achieve our ultimate goal. Many hands make light work, and many hands will be required for this.

Since the beginning, we have indexed over 70,000 comic books. When we consider international comic books, it is clear we have a gigantic project ahead of us.

The Grand Comic Book Database is an evolving project which operates as a volunteer organization. It is expected that capabilities, needs and methods will evolve as the project matures and technology moves forward. Decisions on changes will be made by consensus.

Contributing:

The main ways to contribute to the GCD project are to index comics, to submit covers, to submit new title information, and to correct errors in previous comic indexes. In addition, we maintain several email lists for those interested in corresponding with other GCD members.

Indexing comics:

To learn more about online indexing, a tutorial and other information are available at <http://www.comics.org/docs/reserved.html>. After taking a look at that web page, please contact Matthias Hofmann (e-mail gcd@phawo.de) if you are interested in indexing comics. Matthias can explain GCD indexing and set you up with a login for the system.

Submitting Covers:

To submit covers to the GCD, first search for a series of interest from the main GCD page (www.comics.org). When you are on the series page, click on the link at the bottom of the page that says "see the scan matrix for missing covers". From the Scan Matrix, click on the issue number for which you have a scan to submit and fill in the blanks. There are scan guidelines listed on this page, but please contact me or the email list if you have any questions.

Submitting Errors:

The GCD maintains an email list to which errors can be reported (gcd-errors@lists.comics.org). A link to this list is at the bottom of each page of the website, for reporting errors in each specific index.

Submitting New Title Information:

The GCD errors list (gcd-errors@lists.comics.org) is also useful for pointing out omissions, such as missing series or issues. It is only recently that the GCD began including "skeleton" indexes in the database before someone had indexed the issues, so it is still frequently the case that a favorite comic may not be listed in the database. Please include the following information if it is available: Book Name, Publisher, Dates of Publication (e.g. September 1994 - July 1996), Issues Published (e.g. 1 - 16), Country of Origin, Language of the Comic, and Format of Comic (e.g. Color; Saddle-stitched; Newsprint).

Email Lists:

To subscribe to any of the GCD email lists, go to the website http://www.comics.org/mailman/listinfo/*, where * is the email list shown below and follow the instructions included.

The following lists are available:

cdbl - General GCD discussion is conducted on this list and it is a good way to find out what is going on in the organization.

cdbl-chat - General discussion of comics is conducted on this list.

gcd-tech - Technical issues associated with the GCD project are discussed on this list. Historically this is a low-volume list.

CITY OF HEROES MMORPG GAME REVIEW

From an IM Fan Perspective

By The Iron Adolescent

Developer: Cryptic Studios (<http://www.crypticstudios.com/>)

Publisher: NCSoft (<http://www.ncsoft.com/>)

URL: <http://www.cityofheroes.com/>

Detailed Info can be found at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/City_of_Heroes

All right, Iron fans. I am not going to bore you with the mechanics and details of the CITY OF HEROES massively multi-player online role-playing computer game. Course, they aren't necessarily boring but rather exciting for you get to build your own superhero (or supervillain if you have purchased CITY OF VILLAINS). But, eh, you can read the detailed info at Wikipedia or simply search for info online. This game has been out since 2004 so, trust me; there is a ton of material on the game and other game reviews.

What I'd like to tell you about is my experience building and playing an Iron Man-type character in the game. It's meant to just give you a little taste of the pulse beam, bootjetting goodness of the game playing an armored avenger.

WHAT DREW ME TO PLAYING

What drew me in the first place was the ability to create a superhero character and "role-play" with them online with a bunch of other like-individuals. What I found as I first got into the character creation screens was the ability to create a character-type near and dear to my heart and imagination...IRON MAN.

There was a technology attribute that you could pick alongside what type of weapon or power attribute you wanted. I picked the tech attribute due to that was what my IM character would have of course. I couldn't find any plasma or pulse beam powers, but they did offer an energy power (I can't recall exactly what it was called) that would



fit I hoped.

The actual character build, the body, the overgarments and accessories, was the most fun and you could spend many many minutes in this creation mode of game building, and tweaking your character to whatever your heart desired. I chose, first, a red-n-gold armored character, wanting to play an IRON MAN hero-type. You can create your own superhero name though there are character (letter/number) limits, so you can't have a 256-letter character name. You can create multiple characters to play though you can only play them one at a time, and you can't switch (from what I found anyway) mid-game. You need to leave and come back in to start up another character you created.

Also, depending on what you choose for an ARCHETYPE will determine what kind of powers you can acquire and what you can do. A Scrapper or Tanker make cool hulking IM-types, but an archetype called a Blaster is the best choice for your IM-inspired character...as I chose a Blaster type and it worked quite well for my "final" character.

Anyhow, I created my Iron Adolescent avatar and started playing him, then didn't like being a red-n-gold IRON MAN clone, so I deleted the character and created a new one with blue-n-silver armor (the original color scheme of my Iron Adolescent character back in the days when he was published in a small press comic). You will see I created a few different variations of the character and finally settled on one which, keeping and playing him, worked him up to almost Level 20.



WHAT DREW ME EVEN MORE

I didn't realize it until I got to something like 6th level that the HOVER power was offered. Yes! I could fly... sort of. It was cool for a while, but really all I could do was "float" across the landscape. Even adding more enhancements and such, it wouldn't zip me around from point A to point B.



The real awesome "power" came when at around Level 14, I got the option of the FLY power. No, not that my guy could be transformed into a bug-eyed fly, but my character could launch himself off the ground in a cloud of dust and FLY. FLY! Really FLY! There was no more FLOATING to hook up with the rest of the supergroup, watching them all speed away under their enhanced powers while I drifted through the friendly

skies of Paragon City, waving at the pedestrians, hoping I didn't come across a group of super-powered thugs who saw me alone and would start trying to blow me out of the sky.



Yeah, if you wanna live a bootjet-flaring, IM-experience... get the FLY power and roar off on into the wild blue.

HOW IT ALL WENT: THE HIGHS AND LOWS

The minute I got the opportunity to play, I

was playing this very cool MMORG game. The other people playing it were all decent. None of riffraff you usually find online, at least not anything I came across during my tour of duty playing this game. Some people wanted to team up and go on missions which gave you points to gain levels (as all the battles gave you regardless if you were in a group or not). Some people liked to hang out, a team of two or three, and simply run around the city taking out bad guys for points. Some people would (so it seemed) come check you out, you'd try to start a conversation, maybe join them on a crusade, but they'd say nothing and skedaddle. Kind of rude, but...eh.

For the most part, I hung around the city proper locations and battled thugs (street gangs named Hellions and Skulls) and gained points. Regular passersby (non-player characters, or NPC's) would say hello to you or make some other comment about what a great costume you have, or somesuch. You'd typically find the thugs beating up on innocent civs. Sometimes when you'd venture in the lone realms of alleyways and behind abandoned buildings, you'd run across some muscle-bound evildoers. The minute the action started, especially in populated areas, the innocent bystanders would take flight, run away.

If you had a long-range weapon (Blaster archetype) you could knock the thugs away from the civs, which usually brought the thuggies, once back on their feet, either coming after you or turning tail and beating 'crete. Depending on your level, the baddies would either attack or flee, though typically they'd attack and only flee (those who hadn't been pummeled senseless by your blazing fists of glory) if you had trounced enough of their buddies.

Again, those were usually the city proper battles. When you'd go to another area through large gates guarded by the city police; that was another story, and things really got interesting.

The real test of your mettle and metal are in the various zones you can visit once you attain higher levels in the game. I spent a lot of time in Perez Park, a large area bordered by city structures but the central locale was a vast park with all sorts of baddies in it. Here you could find not only the street gangs but other weird groups who could put a hurting on you. I often found myself, while in the park proper, not so afraid of the human creatures there, but once I started stumbling across the undead and other nasty beings; if I wasn't flying, I was running. By your lonesome you are sure to get your clock cleaned.

I also frequented Steel Canyon which was a huge downtown area with looming buildings so tall the streets were often cast in shadow as if evening were descending. Depending on where you went, you

could either find some challenging opponents or simple high level grunts that'd send you right to the ICU.

Boomtown was another area I really liked though it was rather tough. Boomtown was a downtown area that had been destroyed during a war between the metahumans and an alien race some time in CoH's past. The place was a shattered cityscape of smoking buildings and craters, sections of raised roadway/highway missing chunks or slanting to the charred ground. Needless to say, the lowlifes hung around en masse here and if you were by yourself, yes, expect to be pounded flat as a pancake.



I spent some time trying to win the world by myself as a lone armored avenger. Once I could hover or fly, I could go wherever, and get in and out of trouble as I pleased. Other than duking it out with the thuggery, I enjoyed running or flying around, checking out the scenery. Flying up to the tippy-top of a building then standing on the edge of a skyscraper surveying all around me, with armored gauntlets knuckled on hips, yes, this was what being a superhero was all about...being on guard, patrolling the vista for signs of trouble.



Spending time in the lonely shattered concrete canyons of Boomtown, and after getting my butt handed to me on a blue-n-silver platter (hey! that was my chestplate I was eating off!), I started finding fellow super-friends to hang out with.

And in that, being on a supergroup is one of the funnest parts of the game, and probably the only way to not get sent to the hospital every few minutes of game-play. Team balance is essential and I won't get into its specifics, but obviously you want to be in a group where there is a Tanker or Scrapper, some Blasters for long range effect, some Controllers to keep the enemy at bay, and definitely some Defenders. Defenders have healing powers that you definitely need even if you have a lot of big guns in your group. When you are down for the count, if you don't have anything to revive you, and no members who can

heal you...literally, off to the hospital in the game you go.

(Note: every time you get steam-rolled, clobbered, smacked-down to death, you lose points and gain debt which you have to "pay off" before you can start gaining points to gain levels again. I guess its kind of one of those penalties if you aren't playing heroically, but just plain stupid, and letting yourself get used as a mop by the villains, you should be penalized.)

OVERALL THOUGHTS AND ENDING COMMENTS

City of Heroes is a great computer game, a great online game, a great MMORG. Graphics are very nice. Mechanics are easy to learn and use. If you enjoy playing a superhero-type, and definitely if you want to create an IRON MAN-type character and persona, YES, this game is for you.

I played the game just fine under the creepage of my 56k dial-up modem and network. The only downside was the constant barrage of patches that would load up before your next session. I suppose on a cable modem, or some such, the downloads wouldn't take very long. But when you are sitting there, eager to fire your repulsors into a gang of villains, the constant downloads kind of stunk. However, in a game like this, the folks at the helm want to keep it interesting and bug free, and pumping it full of add-ons and updates. So I could live with the loong update downloads.



And, in the end, I guess paying 15 bucks a month was a slight turn off. I mean, when the wife finally confronted me (from many red-eyed nights of staying up too late playing this very addicting online game) and said, "It's either you quit spending the cash on the game, or quit spending money on IRON MAN comics and collectibles..."

Well, I had to quit the game. Obviously.

Nuff said. Iron Adolescent. Out.

Note: this review and commentary was not paid for or influenced by any entities of the developer or publisher of CoH or CoV.

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(Editors Note: If after reading Peter's review, you want to purchase 'City of Heroes' for yourself, we have set up a purchase link page to Amazon where if you click through and purchase it, AI will get a small referral commission. It's a cool way to support AI while feeding your IM needs. The page is at:

<http://www.advancediron.org/CityofHeroesLinks.php>)

ROCKETS LAST GLARE

By Peter J Welmerink

Part 1
Going Deep



Note from author: This story takes place during the Marvel's HOUSE OF M storyline. (Iron Man House of M ish 1 – 3 Sept 2005 thru November 2005) In this story, Iron Man hasn't saved the day yet, he is still hunted as a terrorist and a rebel, the Vision technology (influenced as it was by Howard Stark in IM: HoM) has infected various computer systems, and due to Iron Man's "anti-mutant actions," sapien quarantine camps are on the rise in Chicago and around the surrounding countryside.

SENTINEL HAS ACQUIRED MISSILE LOCK.

Roaring over the rolling waters of Lake Michigan, not a cloud in the bright blue sky, Heaven was open to me.

"Release countermeasures. Divert low maint system energies to bootjets and exo-shielding. Propulsion systems and exo-shielding to 110%, process immediate. Taking evasive action." I said within my helmet.

AS YOU DESIRE, SIR. Jarvis, my onboard AI returned in its droll, bored-sounding monotone synthetic voice.

Heaven was open, but I didn't plan on visiting today.

I hit an uplink to a satellite hovering above the Tri-state area. Pinpointing my location, I got a birds-eye view of myself and the huge Sentinel about a half mile behind me. I'd had out-of-body experiences before, thanks to my friend Dr. Stephen Strange, but it was always eerie looking down at one's self through a mechanical eye or otherwise.

The Sentinel was a big boy. Three stories of steel and wire, and enough firepower to level a few city blocks; it was nothing to sneeze at. I had heard the House of M was building even larger ones, ones without their own AI due some control issues they'd had (thanks to a bit of sabotage by my father Howard). The new Senti's would be humanly manned with the pilots sitting in the big violet-hued braincase. I wasn't sure what would be worse; an unthinking, unfeeling giant robot crashing through civilization, or one with a human occupant, full of emotion and rage, striking out at his own flesh and blood.

SENTINEL FIRING, Jarvis croaked up.

A huge plume of water erupted before me and I arched around it, nearly snapping my spine in two with the sudden maneuver.

"Back to reality, Tony. These models are just as deadly even without real brains," I said to myself.

This Senti had been after me since our little confrontation in Wisconsin. I had broken up a detention camp in Beloit and Janesville, set the people free, fried (lucky for me) a few of its giant buddies and ruffled the feathers of the local mutant guard. I didn't know the bigger hornet's nest was stationed at Fort McCoy

northwest of the Wisconsin detention camps. They sent an unwelcoming committee to intercept. I had evaded all but one. I couldn't go back to Chicago so I had pointed myself out over Lake Michigan, maybe loop back around once I lost the Senti.

SENTINEL FIRING EMP CANNONS, Jarvis said stately.

"Crud."

A flash of static blue erupted amidst the dark surface of Lake Michigan. The water was displaced, pushed down like a round bowl. The air crackled and hissed in electric static, then burst in a cacophonous roar that shook the heavens.

The Sentinel, coming in too fast and straight, barreled through the electro-magnetic pulse disruption. Its bootjets sputtered. Its body quaked. Jagged lines of white energy zigzagged across its surface before blowing out behind it.

It looked to the left and right. <<Quarry destroyed. Returning to base>> It said aloud in a squelch of electric feedback as its audio circuits cleared themselves of the EM burst.

"Probably shouldn't be running through your own mess," I said as my boots magno-locked to the Senti's back and I crouched with palms to the giant robots violet-hued metal flesh. My back throbbed in pain from doing the tight up-and-over barrel-roll a second before the metal colossus put my system out like a blown candle.

<<Quarry still active. Requesting back-up. Requesting ba...>>

PHA-SHAM!

Twin palm beams with blast apertures tightened to one-inch in diameter went through three layers of metal flesh, small electrical conduits, feed circuitry, and internal processing hubs before exiting through the collar ring of the immense Senti's upper body. The CPU on the new model Sentinel's was built into the pit of the neck to flummox the adversary who always went for the head or the heart. Fortunately, Stark Enterprises helped manufacture part of the new lines for the House of M, so I knew where the sweet spots were.

The Sentinel dipped down towards the water line, still flying straight as a cruise missile but losing altitude. It was time to unhitch from my ride.

"Disengage," I said to the Inboard.

EMP FIELD RESIDUALS NEGATING MAGNO-LOCK FUNCTION, Jarvis said.

With arms at its sides, legs locked together, the Sentinel hit the dark waves head-on throwing up two plumes of water on either side of its rigid body. It bounced and skipped like a massive stone across the lake's surface. With water slowing its forward progress, it began to sink even as it continued onward.

"You're saying..." I struggled to wrench my boots from their attachment to the Sentinel's upper back.

Jarvis broke in. YOU ARE GOING DOWN WITH THE SHIP, I THINK THE CORRECT SAYING IS, SIR.

The Sentinel suddenly pitched to its side, and the big lake swallowed me whole.

#

I didn't move to conserve energy. I flashed the chest unibeam just to see ahead of me but the bottom of the lake was a swirl of dark sediment.

"How much time before I run out of air?" I asked Jarvis.

WE FLUSHED THE PORTS AFTER INTAKE WHICH DRAINED INTERNAL SUPPLIES. YOU HAVE A HALF HOUR MAX BEFORE EXHAUSTION.

I was lying on my side, resting on the back of the downed Sentinel. The Magno-locks had broke free but the EMP residuals had done more damage than I'd expected. The armor was down and taking its own sweet time to re-boot; another passed along misfortune of the EMP blast.

"System re-boot completion time?"

FIFTY-THREE MINUTES, THIRTY-NINE SECONDS.

And if the suit had received any additional circuitry damage not known until all systems were green, I could still end up a piece of treasure for divers to find months or years from now. A skeleton encased in a piece of hi-tech armor.

"How far from shore am I?" I asked. I had seen the eastern shore in the distance before my exciting but ill-outcome ride bore my full attention.

TWO MILES.

There was little choice in the matter.

"Any unfriendlies in the area?"

BOTH LONG RANGE AND SHORT RANGE SCANNERS DOWN, SIR.

Again, there was little choice to be made. Drowning was not an option.

"Disengage all seals except the neck and head gear," I said, exhaling then inhaling deeply. My next words came out stunted. "We're going swimming."

#

The waves rolled and I struggled through every dip, every trough. If the lake were calmer, the swim wouldn't be so difficult. I took many rests between as many strokes, and in that time, that short two mile swimming-clawing action, the sun dipped away to the west. The eastern shore, close as it was, became a dark backdrop to the encroaching evening. The sky even clouded up, promising inclement weather at some point sooner or later. I suspected I might drown out here anyway, become some washed-out flotsam on the shores of Michigan.

It was about when I was ready to give up hope, my arms feeling like iron, that my toes hit bottom. Beneath the armor I'd worn the usual black bodysuit. It did a fine job of keeping the cool water out though I'd left the boot-fills behind with the rest of the armor.

Bobbing like a fishing bobber, I fought the rising waves as the shallows drew up. I removed the helmet, holding it tightly clasped in hand to keep from loosing it. A wave slammed me from behind, twisting me around. I went under but pushed myself to my feet again. I spit water. I wiped it from my eyes. I could hardly see before me the night had come on so dark.

A wave tossed me and I somersaulted, almost getting sucked back out in a tremendous undertow. But I collided with something hard and metallic and cold as a giant ice cube. I grabbed at it with one hand. My raking fingers latched onto a seam, and I glanced upward as the water drew away.

And my heart stopped in my chest.

Outlined against the hovering clouds, jutting like a dark monolith, stood my anchor; a Sentinel standing in the shallows.

I instantly released my grip and slid around its ankle. I was waist deep now and pumped my legs to make it through the fighting surf. When my legs broke the surface, I took long and high strides to distance myself from the looming colossus, then fell onto the cool sand when the lake stirred away from me.

Rolling to my backside, I sat with quivering arms propping me up. I waited for the Senti to respond to my presence but it did nothing. Strange. It was then that I glanced down the beach, and further down to the southern shoreline, I noticed another Sentinel, and further down, shadowy in the dark distance, another one. Looking northward, another Sentinel stood silently facing the expansive lake, peering westward without a groan from its metal limbs.

“What’s going on here?” I said aloud to the crashing surf. I laid the helmet by my side and took a deep breath of the cool night air.

“I was about to ask you the same thing,” a voice said from behind.

I turned to see a man-shaped form standing a few feet away; man-shaped with a glowing blue metallic right hand that hummed with an electric pulse and lit up the surrounding beach; man-shaped and encased in a suit of metal mesh armor.

#

“Who are you and what are you doing on my beach?” the voice, male and somewhat muffled beneath the armor helmet, asked. I couldn’t read the emotion behind the words, but there was a slight tone of menace. It made me realize how ominous I must sound to regular civilians. His left hand, the one not glowing, held a faint red pulse muffled within the folds of a fist. This guy was ready to strike if I gave him reason. Michiganders must not take too kindly of other people stepping on their sand.

I was in no position not to be upfront with whoever this person was.

I raised my hands in a sign of surrender.

“I am Anthony Stark, of Stark Enterprises. I, uh, had a little boating accident, and...”

“Tony Stark? The r-real Tony Stark?” the armored form stuttered. The palm beam died instantly to a low blue light and I wasn’t sure the person was going to remain standing for he teetered some. His voice seemed to fade.

“That’s me,” I responded.

“Iron Man.”

It was time for me to lose my tongue. I was a made-man sitting here without my armor. If this guy was some old foe, or a new enemy...

There was a long moment of silence.

The glowing gauntlet dimmed completely and hands went to the helmeted head. Seals hissed as they were undone. The helmet, which had a large visor above the nose area and an audio pod with antenna on the left side, came off and I laid eyes upon a young man's astonished features. His skin glowed pale even in the darkness.

"I am Paul Wetterink, the Iron Adolescent, part of what used to be the Grand Rapids Area Avengers. I, uh, welcome you to my beachfront home." A hand went out to help me to my feet. "And don't worry about the Sentinels. The Vision Virus has them all down for the count, and guarding what used to be Free Michigan."

Things just kept getting more interesting.

#

The situation was grim for Michigan. So absorbed with events in Chicago, I hadn't even recognized what I had unleashed, actually moreso of what my father had unleashed. The Vision Protocol, a system I had been contracted to work on for the House of M so they could build an android army to take the place of the aged Sentinels, had gone horribly wrong. I knew my father, Howard, had sabotaged the new AI system but, according to Paul, it had infected every stand-alone computer system in the tri-state area. In Michigan they were having their own tech wars. Detroit had been turned from producing automobiles to churning out Sentinels, and then, with the virus, creating an army of synthetic men. The virus had corrupted a super-computer in the nearby city of Grand Rapids and imprisoned the populace there and in the surrounding West Michigan area.

"For the most part the Synth-men leave us alone, but the super-computer, RAS, is making the enslaved populace do its bidding. It's having the people make some huge structure that my sources tell me will be some sort of transmitter tower strong enough to ensnare all the Sentinels and any other computer-controlled robot or robotics." Paul explained as we sat in his small A-frame cottage that overlooked Lake Michigan. It sat on a sandy bluff with a view of the big lake, and the Sentinel I'd washed up against. The thought of that big killing machine made me shiver despite the warm cider Paul had fixed for us.

His home was a secret base of operations of sorts. He too was an armored defender of the people, but he said he was starting to loose hope. The House of M had taken their sights off Michigan's plight for the time being, bigger things were taking place in Australia, and New York, and other places around the world.

"I heard there was a group calling themselves The Great Lakes Avengers. Do you have any affiliation with them? Can they help you?" I asked, recalling a news article a few months ago about a superteam based out of Cleveland.

Paul stated they had been in communication until the Vision Virus and RAS took control of the region.

"You seem capable enough to fight," I said looking at the armor suit in Paul's employ. The suit looked rather dated compared to the stuff I was putting out. It was blue and silver, and was a bulky model. I glanced over the helmet, with my own in my lap as I sat before a small fire my host had gotten started. Just by the look of the audio pod on the outside of the helm, I could tell it had none of the newer circuitry that I had in the gladiator suits or my own.

"I am, but not for the long haul," Paul simply said. "The RAS Synth army grows larger. I've found I can't even get close to the city without them sensing me. I've got family and friends in that town, working like pyramid slaves erecting a huge transmitter tower. It's almost complete. I fear when it's done, RAS won't need the people and simply exterminate them. They wiped out thousands of innocents in Lansing on their way from Detroit. These people are just fodder."

I recalled reading something about this in the Chicago Tribune, at least about the holocaust in the Lansing area and something about the Sentinel factories in Detroit.

I felt a churning in my gut, a guilty feeling. I felt like some of this may have been my fault. If I wasn't having so much fun being a gladiator, focusing my attentions on the events in Chicago, trying to play hero to the local sect. There were bigger things a-brewing here; things I shouldn't be taking sitting down.

"Does your armor have underwater capability?" I asked Paul.

"No," he answered.

"Get me a laptop and however you sync into the armor's circuitry, and I'll show you how to tighten the mesh weave and linkage to make the suit stronger and water-tight," I said finishing off my hot cider.

"Sounds good," Paul said heading across the room, and disappearing into another. He stepped back out with a laptop, a phone cord and an old external harddrive set-up.

I didn't say much about the technology but went straight to work on the programming and upgrading of his armor system and suit.

"When I'm done, we're going to do a little offshore fishing for something I lost," I told Paul. "And then we're going to make a little surprise visit to this RAS computer system."

#

We stood on a high bluff overlooking a long stretch of roadway that rolled and weaved along a hilly valley. The tops of trees bushed and bristled like a sea of choppy green. The view was spectacular; a vista of woodland as far as the eye could see with the dotting stands of the man-made: cell and electrical towers jutting like skeletal forms.

Below us, winding like a dark glistening snake, disappearing and then re-appearing within the forest line, was a wide river; the Grand River as stated by Paul Wetterink, the Iron Adolescent, and confirmed by my onboard, Jarvis. A two-lane highway bridge spanned the waterway. The steep hill we stood upon sloped down to it, then across, and, a mile eastward, the roadway sloped upward again to another high ridge.

"I've scanned ahead about five miles to the outskirts of Standale, a little suburb 3 miles west of downtown Grand Rapids. I'm tracking small groups of the RAS's synth-men but no human civilians. That's about it for my systems long range scan capabilities," the Iron Adolescent said lowering his arm which he had slowly moved before him, fingers splayed, palm vertical to the sky. His other gauntleted hand rested against the audio receptor on his helmet and he moved a small dial like he was carefully dialing in a tumbler on a safe. "You got anything?"

My armored companion, his armor, was nothing like mine. I can't necessarily say his suit was some antiquated piece of hardware, but it surely wasn't the stream-lined suit of my design. The Iron Adolescent's armored body was bulky in spots. Boot calf and wrist/forearm pieces were large and cylindrical. The processing unit for the suit was divided into upper and lower segments, encased in those pieces above foot and hand. I couldn't get the vision out of my mind of a guy walking around with 30-gallon drums hanging off his arms and legs.

The rest of the suit design was close to mine. The chestplate housed a uni-beam with its outside aperture-casing in the form of the letter 'A'. His waist was encircled with a wide belt with many metal duro-skin pouches. About his shoulder joints, large circular disc-shaped, well, discs jutted and ended just above the armpits. I could not fathom their use other than possibly housing some electronics array or

shielding for his neck and head. The helmet, again, was of simple mean: a roundish dome with a wide visor, some vertical perforations around the mouth area, and the singular audio receptor on the side of his head. I could see Paul's eyes and bridge of his nose within the visor. The visor seemed to darken and lighten as he turned in and out of any glaring light.

"You don't think my suit is as capable as yours," Paul said as he caught me looking at him.

His statement caught me off guard. "Uh, I...no..."

"I've watched your gladiator fights. You guys tear through armor like its nothing, then come out with some re-fashioned, re-designed hyper-suits. You play your games while the rest of us are out here fighting for our lives," Paul said stepping from the spot we stood, going from the embankment to the roadway. There'd been no real traffic on the stretch of highway for quite sometime. Tufts of grass and weeds grew tall amongst the cracks and potholes.

"That's not true. We've been fighting our own war behind the scenes. You don't know the craziness that goes on in the big cities," I responded.

"We could have used some help here before things got as bad as they have," IA said. There was tension in his voice as he looked eastward to where his city lay. His fingers clenched and unclenched within those huge awkward-looking gauntlets. "I could have used the fire power."

I opened my mouth to reply.

INCOMING, Jarvis droned within my helmet.

A chunk of asphalt erupted to the right of the Iron Adolescent.

Bootjets flaring, I launched myself into the air. A locator chart overlaid the upper right quadrant of my helmet's visor with a dozen marks showing red; each one an individual threat. If they were unarmed, normal civilians, the dots would have been green.

I raised my arms, fingers pointing vertically, palms out, and fired two streams of high-intensity plasma beams. A section of the bridge spanning the river disappeared in a gout of blasted debris along with four of the bogies.

"Wait! Don't destroy the bridge. It's one the only means for people to cross this far west of the city," IA said suddenly by my side. "Follow me. We need to take this up close and personal."

A red-yellow stroke of jagged solid energy blew a goodly-sized tree in half below and to the left of us. One of the bogies down the hill, at the foot of the bridge on the other side of the river, blinked red on the visor display from its firing position.

"Are you sure?" I said though the Iron Adolescent was already roaring down upon the half dozen or more foes.

Synth-men, the RAS's attack bots. They could have passed as armored men like us except for certain body parts that obviously could not be human. Their glimmering exo-skeletons were of sky-blue metal flesh with bands of white which almost looked a soft camouflage design. Their heads were a smooth oval-shape with one central "eye" and no other distinguishing facial feature. The head was supported by a thin neckstalk. The chest area was of man-sized but tapered down to the width of a paint can. The arms seemed oversized but the reason was easily apparent with the weaponry that formed and fired from those thick appendages. The legs were thin and knobby and the feet were oversized and flat.

Extending his arms out as if he were going to give the band of killer robots a hug, IA swept in and through the group of Synth-men who stood close together with weaponry raised and firing at their speeding target. Three of the Synth's were snatched off their feet and IA arched up, letting them drop thirty feet back to the hard-surfaced roadway. One landed on its braincase, threw a shower of sparks, and rose no more. The other two landed on their sides, awkwardly climbed to their feet and turned their singular eye skyward.

The Iron Adolescent unleashed a salvo of small rockets and particle beams upon them.

Seeing the blue-and-silver metal-meshed figure above them unleashing such a ferocity of fire-power upon their brethren, the remaining Synth's focused on IA. I came down, landing on the ruddy roadway behind them.

The nearest Synth unit turned to regard me. I blew a hole the size of a watermelon in its chest cavity. The plasti and metal casing of its upper body dripped like candle wax and its head swiveled to regard its gaping wound, and then it fell over.

The other Synth's—three in total now—jerked, and wheels appeared on the undersides of their oversized foot pods. Their arms flailed, shooting wildly at both myself and the sky bound Iron Adolescent.

A solid shot rang off my shoulder joint and nearly spun me around and I launched myself sidelong to avoid another dazzling energy beam. A slab of asphalt blew into black pebbles where I'd just stood.

"Argh!" I heard Paul scream as he took a shot to one of those cylindrical wrist-pieces. He tilted and dropped with a loud *kachang* to the roadway, and rolled into the grassy ditch; his shattered wrist gauntlet smoking and sparking.

The three Synth's converged on the downed man. They stopped before him, standing toe-to-toe with him. He emitted a loud snarl. His back arched like he'd been punched from behind and his chestbeam flared so brilliantly my optical lenses dimmed to almost black to protect my eyes.

An explosion knocked me to the ground.

"Paul!" I bellowed, climbing to my feet.

A rolling plume of black smoke and dust rolled and blew around me. A dark form emerged, silhouetted in the midst of the strewn dirt and smoke. A green dot coalesced on my visor display.

"I'm here," IA said brushing himself off. "Those grunts were packed with demolitions. Probably were going to try and blow up the bridge." He brought his shattered gauntlet up to visor level and examined it. "Damn things almost set off the munitions in my arm casing."

"They seem to mean business," I said looking at the mess around us. The bridge was still intact but the beginning span of the west bound lane had a large jagged hole in it. It was still traversable by car or on foot.

"They have the fire power to put a hurting on you," Paul said peeling a section of plating off the damaged gauntlet and laying it over the still smoking tear. He pressed his index finger to the edge of the plate piece and welded it closed.

"And I see you do too. Guess I may have underestimated you and your suit."

THERE IS MUCH ACTIVITY IN THE CITY PROPER, Jarvis said as I initiated a long range sweep to the east where lay the city of Grand Rapids, Michigan, and where the RAS super computer was located.

“We better get going. I think the Synth units communicated their predicament to their friends in town,” I said.

IA said nothing, and we both flew off eastward.

#

The downtown area of Grand Rapids was encompassed on the north, west and south sides by hills and lengths of expressway/highway upon the rimming hills. The city proper sat in a bowl-shaped depression with the Grand River cutting through it going north-south. The eastern edge of the city was lined with buildings, climbing up the gentle valley slope before spreading and dipping with more hills and a large residential region behind it. The downtown section stood on the east side of the wide river. Another residential section stood on the west side of the river all the way up to where it met the western rise from the valley and the span of roadway. Where there should have been houses, there were only burned out husks. A large contingent of grubby, ragged garbed people shambled about the place.

On the eastern leading edge of what IA said was the Pearl Street Bridge, what had at one time held a towering hotel building, now stood a tall skeletal framework of steel and glass. At its top throbbled a brilliant red beacon and hundreds of satellite dishes pointing in all directions.

“This is it, and that tower over there is the transmitter RAS has erected with the toil of the remaining citizens,” IA said as we stood upon another tall hillock to the west of the highway. Tall trees surrounded us except for our forward facing view. It was amazing to me; so close to the city we were yet there was so much green and woodland. I guess I never much checked out Michigan before.

The tower beacon pulsed bright even in the daylight like a beam of laser light. I watched a thick straight streamer lance westward beyond and behind us.

“If that thing is operational, who knows how far it could transmit, or what kind of message it could transmit,” IA said. “Lord knows if it somehow communicates all humanity as a threat...”

SENTINELS, SIR. Jarvis alerted me.

I think I knew the message.

“What? Where?” I said looking around as if the colossal things should suddenly be standing next to me.

A DOZEN OF THEM HAVE BEEN LAUNCHED FROM THE LAKE MICHIGAN SHORELINE FROM WHERE WE HAD ARRIVED EARLIER. BEARING EAST, STRAIGHT IN OUR DIRECTION.

“Paul, I have something to tell you,” I said turning back to the Iron Adolescent.

“I know. I see them,” Paul said lifting one of those heavy arms, and pointed down towards the viaduct that ran underneath a span of highway about a quarter mile from where we stood.

Both clear visual and visor display showed a swarm of Synth-men flowing up the hill like a river of blue liquid steel. The visor display was one big, long, thick red line; the numbers of the encroaching foe too numerous to count. There could be hundreds in the group that approached and rolled up the hill towards us.

I had a sinking feeling I was going to soon be fertilizer for the greenery of this beautiful Michigan landscape.

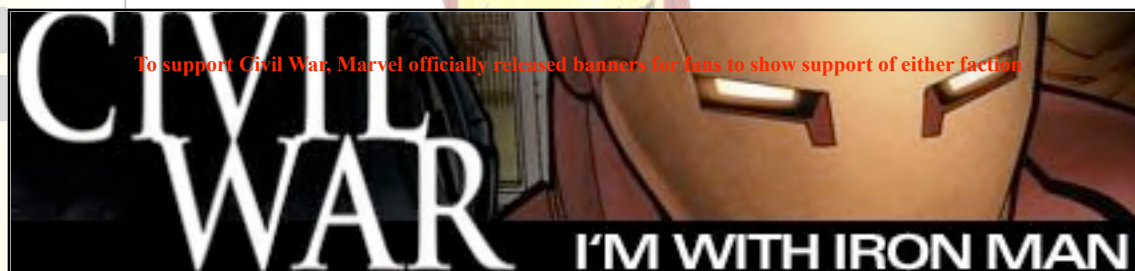
NEXT: BRIGHT LIGHTS, DEAD CITY

Advanced Iron Issue # 69

The Stark Market Report

By: Ironman John B. Comerford

With the recent developments (well... as recent as six issues in over a year can be) in the *Iron Man* Extremis arc, *Iron Man*'s heavy hitter role in *New Avengers*, one of the big two in *Civil War*, a newly announced director for his upcoming movie, and several *Iron Man* action figures due out soon; it appears that *Iron Man* is once again becoming a cannon character in the *Marvel Universe*.



Iron Man's silver age titles are in full demand, with eBay sales of *T.O.S. #39* always getting bids and commanding high prices (a NM, CGC'd copy of the issue is now valued at over \$10,000 according to *ComicsPriceGuide.com*). As of May 13, 2006 issues with an estimated grade of 4.0 are averaging \$700.00 on eBay. According to *CPG.com*, *Iron Man Vol. 1, #1* is commanding \$600.00 as a 9.4, although I would expect an example truly in that condition to go for more. Unslabbed examples may sell for that much, but most likely only through brick 'n mortar stores rather than eBay; where buyers are weary of conditions they can't examine firsthand. Note that at least in regards to *Iron Man*, it appears that CGC issues command more aftermarket value than PGX on eBay (I make no assumptions regarding other non-IM related titles where I haven't examined the market). This may be a result in market confidence of CGC, or the fact that CGC has had more *Iron Man* submissions than PGX, therefore it is more likely that sellers are moving premium CGC back issues.



Iron Man is also one of the highest priced *Marvel Legends*, commanding an average of \$60.00 (deviating by \$20 between auctions) for the rare *Stealth Armor* variant, while other representations such as the **SC** armor and the **Hulkbuster** armor steady

sellers, although they are packed in relatively newer waves. Future waves will include a **Thorbuster** armor, a **Modular Armor** (two pack with the Mandarin), **1st Appearance IM**, a M.O.D.O.K. build a figure and a 12" release of the **Modern Armor**.

The state of the **Iron Man** comic itself seems to have improved as well. The new storyline has been well promoted by **Marvel**, featured three covers (standard cover by Granov, a **1:15** Bryan Hitch Variant and a rarer **1:40** sketch variant of the Hitch cover), and the new creative team has begun their arc featuring... wait for it.... Super villains in a comic!! Also, by the time you read this the great **Iron Man** mini, *The Inevitable*, should have wrapped up its run. Although the artwork on the series has been met with mixed reviews, it appears that the majority agree that the story itself was great, and brought three of **Iron Man**'s older villains back into the fold.

Recently, the *X-Men* portion (or should I say *half*) of the **Marvel Universe** has been touched by aspects of **Iron Man** as well. The **Sentinel Squad O.N.E.** mini series (using **Stark** like armor as Sentinels) and recent issues of *X-Men* (circa issue 186) using a **War Machine** styled Sentinel in its pages. The **Marvel Mangaverse** (which left something to be desired during its first incarnation) is coming back featuring an **Iron Man/Silver Samurai** eruption....



With all of this great iron-advancement, it appears that the **Stark Market** is in a growth period. With a movie on the way, the future Hollywood support can only help the character reach new heights in the **Marvel Universe**. Keep an eye on the **Silver Age** issues to heat up even more as the movie nears, and watch out for **Marvel Legends** (both **Iron Man** and the toy series in general) to increase in demand as **Toy Biz** nears the end of its **Marvel** production run (although the latter may be fueled by speculation).

Until next time **Iron Fans**, thanks for reading!

Ironman John

05/13/2006

IMAGINE: Ironman @ The Movies



By Ironman John Comerford

As I stated in the first IMAGINE column (back in AI 67), we've all waited long and hard for the **Armored Avenger** to make his appearance on the silver screen... and now we finally get to see this great movie realized. Recently, **Jon Favreau** has been tapped to helm the **Iron Man** movie, and he is doing so with the fans in mind.

To date, the most relevant area appearing on **Favreau's Iron Man Movie** group page of MySpace (<http://groups.myspace.com/ironmanmovie>) is the "Questions for Jon" thread. In this, **Favreau** has set up a spot where he interacts with **Iron Man s** fanbase on a regular basis. It is here that we get the most relevant information on the movie, and its planned direction. Below are some highlights from the man himself, as presented on the **Iron Man** movie group, giving us some idea as to what we'll be seeing in this potentially great movie.

Statements on May 7, 2006

- Early on, **Jon Favreau** dispels rumors that Howard Stark will be the villain in the upcoming movie
- States his favorite artistic take on the character is Granov's
- The film will be set in present day
- Undecided as to the use of a circular unibeam, or a triangular one
- Villain will likely NOT be the **Mandarin** as he is too vested in the realm of magic (*authors note: true Iron Fans everywhere know that the **Mandarin** is not really a supernatural villain, however the public perception of a mystical character may lend to a bad juxtaposition within the framework of the movie, which might be problematic. Therefore Fav's statement makes good business sense.*)
- The armor will be a combination of CG and an actual, real armor worn by the actor. There will be "much cgi in this movie"

Statements on May 8, 2006

- No **War Machine** in the first movie, however **Jim Rhodes** does have a place in the film
- Tentative release date of 2008
- Shooting is planned to take place in California

• Fav's favors a "weapon's designer, tech fiend in armor" approach to *Stark*
Statements on May 9, 2006

- People are presently working on artwork and designs for the movie
 - Currently the plan is to have more than one armor in the movie
 - To coincide with the CG element, both real life and green screen will be shot
- Statements on May 10, 2006

- The script focuses both on personal issues with *Stark* as well as a villain
 - The movie falls somewhere between a dark movie and lighthearted one
- Statements on May 12, 2006

• **Favreau** believes *Tony* to actually be a suave, womanizing millionaire whereas a character such as Bruce Wayne is only acting the part

Statements on May 15, 2006

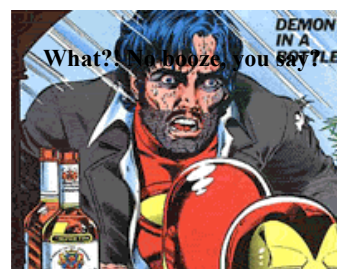
- We will see some version of the **silver clunker armor**
- The armor is metal and not organic (*authors note: whew!*)
- Fav's states he prefers the traditional stories to Marvel's Ultimate U
- The origin story will stick with the themes of the early TOS issues, however the origin as depicted in *Extremis* may be more attractive to film for modern audiences

No Faceplate?!

There has also been talk that *Iron Man's* faceplate interferes with the ability to see the actors face, and some posters on the movie group have suggested a "half mask" of some kind. I was worried for a short time regarding these statements; however I believe that **Favreau** wouldn't deviate from the source in such a ludicrous fashion. Instead, he may be focusing on ways to get the camera inside the helmet in a fashion that may resemble Byrne's run on IM as depicted by Ryan or JR JR. (*Author's note: -sigh of relief-*). This is supported by **Favreau's** May 15 comment where he states "no to the Judge Dredd mask syndrome."

Statements on May 16, 2006

- It is suspected that *Stark* will be cast at over age 30
- Alcoholism shouldn't play a large role in this early origin film
- No **Extremis** serum in the movie



Statements on May 19, 2006

- The movie will be a "close ended" movie without leading into a sequel

Statements on May 22, 2006

- Favreau states he is watching *Robocop*, *The Golem*, *Appleseed*, *Ghost in the Shell*, *Rocketeer* and *Batman Begins* as preparation for *Iron Man*

Statements on May 23, 2006

- Iron Man's identity will be a secret in the movie

Statements on May 28, 2006

- States he'd prefer the movie clocks in at under two hours

Statements on May 30, 2006

- Favreau states that repulsor technology is a big part of the script

Statements on June 1, 2006

- Iron Man will wear the armor as soon as act 1 of the movie
- As in the original origin, the suit will be initially engineered for life support

Also note that on several occasions, Favreau has commented that Iron Man is a global hero who won't be flying around New York City, but will be relevant on a larger, geopolitical basis.

It appears that the *Iron Man* movie is in good hands, with a director that is taking the fan-based approach that Sam Raimi has with the super successful *Spider-Man* movies.

Expect **ADVANCED IRON** to stay up to date with the *Iron Man* movie news, as well as active on the MySpace *Iron Man* movie group. We also give a big thank you to **Mr. Jon Favreau** who is very graciously interacting with the fans on this great project.

Thanks for reading and I'll see you on the boards,

Ironman John

June 3, 2006

(Author's Note: As we went to press, A.I. has learned that Favreau has cemented down the movies release day, stating it will be on May 2, 2008)

Help Support Advanced Iron

Advanced Iron is an all-volunteer effort. Many people graciously donate their time and effort to bringing you the best information about our favorite armored avenger. Any expenses incurred in bringing you Advanced Iron has been completely absorbed by those same volunteers. In an effort to keep Advanced Iron the leading Iron man fan site, Advanced Iron is now accepting donations.

Recent Donators were:

- Louis Argyrakis
- Joe Singleton
- Vic Holtreman

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If you don't want to send liquid money, we would certainly accept hardware/software to support us. Currently I am looking to add:

- Firewire to IDE Bridge Cards (http://www.granitedigital.com/catalog/pg42_fw800bridgeboards.htm)
- 2 300GB IDE Hard Drives (to add mirrored external storage).
- Formac Studio TVR (http://www.formac.com/p_bin/?cid=solutions_converters_studiodvtv)--We would love to be able to start streaming some Iron Man video but need to be able to get it into the machine.....

Thanks.

Jeff Pearson

WebMaster and Publisher