

from the

ARCHIVES

PO BOX 173 • WALTON-ON-THAMES • KT12 1SS • ENGLAND • TEL: +44 (0)1932 253887 • FAX: 01932 247970 • E-MAIL: Info@microcolour.com

This is one of a series of newsletters from MicroColour International. **From The Archives** is designed to tell you, our customers, about some of the great comics available in our catalogue. If there is a specific title you are interested in, let us know and we'll answer your questions as best we can.

Volume 3, Number 1, 1996

ELECTION YEAR '96 - VOTE THE GOLDEN AGE TICKET !

Yes, it's voting time again, but the candidates we're concerned with here are your choices of what Golden and Silver Age comics you want to see from MicroComics!

The company that made the most prized comics of all available to you at affordable prices is seeking your input as to what series of comic books **you** want from us. After all, we're out here to produce what you want to buy, and our decisions as to what to put on fiche will be shaped by your input.

Our speciality, the Golden Age, still has a lot to be covered. For the moment, more DC, Fawcett, and cannot be microfilmed. Marvel's 1940's Timely books have been heavily covered, but several titles and quite a few issues still remain to be filmed. Also under consideration: more Fiction House (including **Sheena**), Hillman (**Airboy Comics**), MLJ(**Shield-Wizard, Archie**, etc.), Lev Gleason (**Daredevil, Boy Comics, Crime Does Not Pay**), Prize (**Frankenstein**), Street and Smith (**The Shadow, Supersnipe**) and others.

MicroComics is also considering filming early Silver Age comics. Though most of these are available on the open market, skyrocketing prices have driven the availability of key issues beyond the budgets of most collectors. Though Marvel has had an extensive reprint program from the early Sixties onward, some stories still remain

(continue on page 3)

What Microfilming has Meant To ME !

by Lou Mouglin

IN WHICH your humble Author explains the significance of the Microfiche Revolution in one comic fan's life, and possibly, by extension, to yours...

Thirty years ago, in the midst of the Silver Age, I was a comics fan. I bought my first fanzines, including **Rocket's Blast-Comicollector** and **Star-Studded**. I doted on the Justice League / Justice Society's annual team ups and the reprints of Simon and Kirby's Captain America in **Fantasy Masterpieces**. I sought out Jules Feiffer's **Great Comic Book Heroes** at the library and read the reprints of early Plastic Man, Spirit, Flash, Human Torch, Batman, and Sub-Mariner.

All of these things pointed towards an era of super-heroes which had come in the decade before my birth. The older comics fans, now in their thirties and forties, wrote of a time they dubbed "the Golden Age". Thousands of super-hero titles had been published during the time of Roosevelt and Truman, and it was a sure thing that I'd never get my hands on them.

True, the adzines ran dealers' sheets offering some of the books for sale. But who could pony up \$10.00 or more for a single **Sub-Mariner**, at a time when the most expensive comics ran a quarter a pop? Heck, even the \$5.50 somebody was charging for **Fantastic Four #1** was highway robbery!

We knew nothing of Captain Marvel, who had been suppressed the year before my birth. We learned that there was a guy called Daredevil who appeared years before Matt Murdock's debut, but we never read any of his stories. What was Batman's first battle with the Penguin, or Two-Face, like? Were MLJ's heroes **really** like the Mighty Crusaders???

And on it went. As the Seventies dawned, DC began a major reprint program on their Golden Age holdings, when their books expanded to 52-page giants and then to 100-page monsters. We got to read selected stories of Captain Marvel, Kid Eternity, Plastic Man, Blackhawk, Batman, Wonder Woman, Superman, the Boy Commandos, and even--prize of prizes! -- the Justice Society of America.

At about the same time, Alan Light, publisher of **The Buyer's Guide**, and an outfit called Comic Reprints began producing photographic reprints of key issues from the Golden Age. They covered not only DC's and Timelys, but Fawcetts, Qualitys, MLJs, and Lev Gleason comics. Light also put out three issues of the **Special Edition Series**, which brought to light large chunks of classic Captain Marvel, Captain Marvel, Jr., Black Condor, and Ray stories.

But by 1976, it was gone. DC cancelled most of their Forties reprints. Marvel had steadily recycled their Silver Age material from 1965 onward, but had never been big on reprinting their Golden Age offerings. Most of the other companies had not survived, or, if they did, were not publishing super-hero material anymore (Archie and Harvey, for example). (continue on page 2)

What Microfilming

from page 1

So we sat, and were content (after a fashion) with what we had. But we were tantalised by the evidence we saw in Steranko's **History of Comics**, in Lupoff's and Thompson's **All In Color For a Dime**, in Fleisher's three **Encyclopaedias of Comic Book Heroes**, and in the Overstreet **Price Guide**, of an age of comics which, seemingly, would be forever out of our grasp.

And then... **then...** came **microfiche!**

Suddenly, there was an easily available, affordable, usable alternative to the crumbling, hard-to-find Golden Age comic **books** themselves. They were reprints, and more than reprints. With the colour microfiche of Golden Age comics, you got everything... all the stories, the covers, the ads, the indicia, **all** of it! Moreover, some Forties reprints had been censored or redrawn, or just weren't reprinted, period. DC would not reprint any Captain Marvel story containing Billy Batson's black valet, Steamboat; and a **Fantasy Masterpieces** Captain America reprint of "The Phantom Hound of Cardiff Moor" had Cap closing the Hound's jaws with his hands in a redrawn panel-in the original, the Hound darn near bit his arm off!

In the MicroComics originals, you can see it all, as it **really** was. It also opened up a new vista for us comics indexers. Before the mid-Eighties, we were confined (by necessity) mostly to the Sixties and afterward. With MicroComics, we can acquire and catalogue the first super-hero stories to our hearts' content. More than that, it opens a whole new vista to collectors. Before MicroComics, if you collected (for example) Batman or Superman, you were resigned to the fact that there would be at least a hundred issues per title you could forget about ever seeing. Now, with MicroComics extensive offerings, you have a chance of completing the hardest-to-complete comics collections ever!

On top of that, the fiche are easier to store than old comic books. They also don't turn yellow and crumbly, bust apart at the spine, or curl up so badly. The Atom could ride them on a surfboard.

Now, it must be acknowledged that MicroComics fiche probably won't appreciate in monetary value like the original comics do. But, really, who cares? The point of microfilm is the democratisation of the material. Instead of being hoarded in a few collectors' libraries, the Golden Age books are now available to everybody. You don't have to knock over the Federal Reserve Bank to buy Marvel Mystery #1-5 now; you can buy them at reasonable prices from MicroComics.

So, I'm all for the microfiche revolution! And thanks to MicroComics for bringing it all along. I think I'm gonna stay here for awhile.

Here Comes ... DAREDEVIL The Golden Age Version !

Long before the days of Frank Miller, there was a Daredevil who fought gangsters in the grim-n-gritty of the big city. But this Daredevil used a boomerang, not a billy club. And this symmetrically-divided costume was alternatively red-and-blue, with a spiked belt as a caper. When he wasn't bringing crooks to unsavoury (and often graphic) ends, this Daredevil fought Adolf Hitler or that 60 foot tall Asian monstrosity, The Claw.

Lev Gleason's **Daredevil** was actually the inspiration for Marvel's character, who came along eight years after Gleason's Daredevil Comics had been cancelled. He was introduced in Silver Streak #6 in a Jack Binder origin story that described how young Bart Hill had been left mute after being branded with a hot iron by crooks. Since the brand was in the shape of a boomerang, Bart Hill took up the Australian weapon, created a costume, and began a crime-fighting career in his adulthood.

By the next issue of Silver Streak, Jack (Plastic Man) Cole had taken over the feature, and Bart Hill could talk again. The new-model Daredevil began a five-issue war with The Claw, a rousing conflict that is only rivalled by the Torch / Sub-Mariner battles in Marvel Mystery / Human Torch.

Don Rico took over for the last Claw / Daredevil battle issue, and became writer and artist for the rest of DD's Silver Streak appearances.

Lev Gleason knew he had a winner on his hands and started a new comic to showcase the hero. The first issue was titled **Daredevil Battles Hitler**. It was written (and partially drawn) by Charles Biro, one of the greatest scripters of the Golden Age, who handled DD and his successors the **Little Wise Guys** through their 16-year run. In the first issue, Daredevil and his one-time ally, The Claw. Hitler survived the battle, but some say he was never the same afterward.

Daredevil Comics (as it was titled after #2) continued with Biro's DD tales in front. He was backed up in the early issues by Jerry (Batman) Robinson's **London**, Dick (Frankenstein) Briefer's **Pirate Prince**, Bob (Archie) Montana's **Time Square**, **Pat Patriot**, **Nightro**, **13**, and many others. Issue #5 introduced Sniffer, the long-running villain famed for his super smelling abilities and murderous nature. Sniffer eventually reformed, but his nose stayed the same. As a trial, MicroComics has released the first five issues of Daredevil Comics on microfiche. If response is great enough, further issues will be made available.

The Denizens of DARING MYSTERY

Daring Mystery Comics was one of those wonderfully wacky Timely titles which gave you a new batch of heroes in almost every issue and, as Jim Steranko noted, took six years to publish twelve issues. It was the first follow-up to their successful **Marvel Mystery Comics** (Marvel's first comic book) and showcased a batch -(continue on page 3)

The Denizens

(from page 2)

of new features that indicated publisher Martin Goodman's desire to find a feature that would rival Sub-Mariner and the Human Torch. He didn't find it in **Daring Mystery**, but he came up with a lot of interesting strips.

MicroComics has made the eight issue run available on colour microfiche. Let's sort out the heroic jumble in # 1-5: Joe Simon's **Fiery Mask**, the first strip he ever did for Timely, headlines issues #1 and #5. In between, he was spelled by **The Laughing Mask** (#2) and **The Purple Mask** (#3 and 4). No matter what, Daring was not to be left maskless. **Monako, Monarch of Magicians**, by Larry Antonette, imitated Mandrake and Zatara and cast his spells in #1, 4, and 5. Dr. Strange, look out !

The Falcon, a masked and costumed D.A., made his first appearance in issue #5. He was joined by Bud (Popeye) Sagendorf's **Little Hercules** (#5) and Timely's stalwart spacemen **Whirlwind Carter** (#4, 5), **Zephyr Jones** (#2), and **Breeze Barton** (#3-5). Daring also did a good business in Phantoms, with **The Phantom of the Underworld** (#1), **The Phantom Bullet** (#2), and **The Phantom Reporter** (#3). Regrettably, they never got the chance to reprint **The Phantom** to round things out.

There were a couple of characters known mostly by letters: **Mr. E** (#2) and **K-4** (#4, 5), neither of whom were 4-F. Tarzan's type of adventure was covered by **Trojak the Tigerman** (#2-5), the seagoing life was the department of **Barney Mullen** (#1) and **Captain Strong** (#3), and **Marvex the Super Robot** clunked on-stage for issues #3-5. And even with all of that, we still have a few features left over: **John Steele, the Texas Kid, Flash Foster** (all in #1), **Dale of the FBI** (#3), and **G-man Don Gorman** (#4). So with all of that, it would take an awful lot of space to describe each one of them in detail. Why don't you just order **Daring Mystery** #1-8 and find out about all of them for yourself ?

ELECTION YEAR '96 -

(from page 1)

unavailable, including most of the Ant-Man / Giant-Man run in **Tales To Astonish**. Also, many times Marvel reprint stories have had pages edited out for space considerations, or have been altered in other ways. And in the cases of **Tales To Astonish, Strange Tales, Journey Into Mystery**, and **Tales of Suspense**, the classic backup fantasy stories by the likes of Steve Ditko, Jack Kirby, Don Heck, Stan Lee, Larry Lieber, Matt Fox, and Paul Reinman have not been included in Marvel's reprint packages. With MicroComics, you get everything in the original book... superhero stories, backup tales, ads, editorial pages, and all!

Another possible area for microfilming: artist sets. Many of the most famed artists in comics such as Jack Kirby, Wally Wood, Al Williamson, Reed Crandall, Frank Frazetta, and Walt Kelly worked extensively in the comics field during the Forties through the early Sixties, and much of their work from those years remains unseen by modern-day comics buffs. Titles such as **Space Detective, Young Romance, Headline Comics, Bullseye, Pogo Possum**, the Avon science fiction one-shots, **Buster Brown Comic Book**, and various Atlas titles (many of which featured work by EC artists) can be sought out and filmed, if enough interest is indicated.

Genres other than super-heroes could be microfilmed, if enough consumer interest is indicated. ACG's early horror titles (**Adventures Into the Unknown**, etc.), DC's pioneering 1950's war comics, the crime comics of Charles Biro and Simon & Kirby, romance comics, Westerns (including ME's **Ghost Rider**), "good girl art" titles, and humour comics such as Sheldon Mayer's early **Sugar and Spike** could be filmed.

So... your duty, friends of MicroComics, is to write us at once with a list of what YOU want to see, and **would buy**, from MicroComics! Remember, we have to produce what you would be willing to order from us. If you'll buy it, we'll try to fiche it.

Cast your votes now, citizens. It's your right as a comic book fan!

THOSE WHO INDEX

Beginning very soon, you'll be able to obtain indexes of the books available on fiche from MicroComics.

Produced under the auspices of the Grand Comics Database, the on-line comics indexing project, these indexes cover the books from various Golden Age publishers, with artists' credits, character notes, page counts, and other tidbits of info to increase your pleasure and comics knowledge.

Indexes are already available covering MicroComics's Fawcett and Quality titles and several Timely series (including **Captain America, Human Torch, Sub-Mariner**, and **Marvel Mystery**). In preparation are indexes covering **Superman** and the Fiction House books in MicroComics's inventory.

These indexes will be available either in printed form from MicroComics or can be downloaded when they are posted to our Web page. Check 'em out... you'll love 'em!

Bad Guys We Have Known And Loved:

DR. SIVANA

by Lou Mougin

The facts in the case of Dr. Sivana:

His real name is Thaddeus Bodog Sivana. His birth date is uncertain, but it cannot be much later than 1900, and may be as early as 1880. He was born in Europe, to parents whose identities have never been revealed. Originally, he had black hair and a moustache. But his most important attribute was his mind.

(continue on page 4)

DR. SIVANA

from page 3

Thaddeus Sivana was one of the most brilliant scientists of his time, "Bursting with ideas to improve the lot of mankind," as his daughter once put it. But the industrialists of the early 20th Century were uninterested in radical improvements upon their existing methods. They branded Sivana a fake and a crackpot. He travelled from country to country, but no nation, in Europe or Russia, would give him anything but a kick in the pants.

By the end of the First World War, Sivana, now white-haired, had enough of the world, its insane wars, and its rejections. He had married and fathered a son, who was probably six years old by now, and a daughter, still an infant. What happened to Mrs. Sivana will never be revealed. It is possible that her husband's obsession and anger over his defeat simply drove her away shortly after Beautia's birth. But Sivana, though defeated, was still a powerful man.

He had somehow managed to assemble a working rocket ship which the world of 1918 had laughed at as "another crazy invention", and used it to take himself, his son Magnificus, and his daughter Beautia to the planet Venus. This Venus, unlike our own, was a planet of tropical jungles. For the next 22 years, Dr. Sivana and his two children "battled almost overwhelming dangers" from the hostile wildlife and the forbidding, unfamiliar fauna, until he had carved himself out a kingdom of his own.

But Earth was never far from his mind. And Dr. Sivana swore that someday he would conquer the world that had rejected him, and run it as it should be run... according to his science.

All this we know from a short biography related by Beautia, his daughter, in Whiz Comics #15. Other aspects of the Sivana Legend must be deduced from given facts. First, during his "exile" to Venus, Sivana made periodic trips back to Earth. During these trips, he married, or at least mated, again, and produced

offspring more like him mentally and physically: Thaddeus Bodog Sivana, Jr., and Georgia Sivana. They were probably left on Earth, possibly with their mother. When Beautia and Magnificus spurned his ambitions and became allies of Captain Marvel, he forsook them and made Sivana, Jr. and Georgia his new partners in crime. Beautia may have been one of the most beautiful women on Earth or Venus, and Magnificus one of the strongest, but neither had the intellect or capacity for evil that his later offspring possessed.

Sivana spent some time prior to 1940 organising a criminal gang to implement his aims on Earth. Finally, in 1940, he surfaced in Fawcett City, with an invention that silenced all radio broadcasts, and demanded a huge amount of money in return for allowing communications to resume.

But Billy Batson had become the mighty Captain Marvel only a day before, and used his incredible powers and intellect to track down the evil scientist, round up his gang, and destroy his invention. Peering at his foe for the first time, through a television screen, Sivana vowed, "We shall meet again, Captain Marvel!" A second later, the Captain demolished the TV set.

And meet again they did, in the very next issue of Whiz Comics, and over and over again after that. Not a year went by from 1940 to 1953 without Dr. Sivana pitting his wits and scientific intellect against Captain Marvel, in Whiz, Captain Marvel Adventures, America's Greatest Comics, Captain Marvel Story Book, and other titles. He was a regular nemesis of Captain Marvel, Jr. in the latter's own strip, until the advent of Sivana, Jr. Georgia Sivana fought Mary Marvel in the Mary Marvel title, and all three Sivanas teamed up regularly in Marvel Family to fight their three heroic archenemies en masse.

With Sivana and Captain Marvel, it was always a classic battle of brain versus brawn. Sivana couldn't have held his own in a physical fight with anybody save Billy Batson. But he was an

inventor unparalleled, and could whip up any number of hyper scientific gimmicks to give the Big Red Cheese (as Sivana dubbed him) fits.

In his time, Sivana achieved time and space travel, discovered a new metal (Sivanium), made a machine that could bring back the dead, learned how to make himself immaterial, invented a device that turned rocks into food, and almost compressed Christmas into a 10-minute period. His greatest achievement, though, may have been the Suspendium gimmick which put him, his children, the Marvel Family, Fawcett's other super-heroes, and most of Captain Marvel's supporting cast in suspended animation from 1953 until 1973, when they all came back in Shazam! #1.

In Whiz Comics #109, we learned of "Sivana's Family Tree". Sivana's ancestry included Great Grandpappy Sivana, Black Sivana, Simon Sivana, Sivana the Sorcerer, and Sir Sivana, all of them blackguards except one Black Sheep Sivana, who was called that because, shamefully enough, he was a good guy! Black Sheep helped a time-travelling Captain Marvel capture his notorious descendant.

The original Dr. Sivana made his final appearance in DC's Crisis On Infinite Earths #10. Since then, on the New DC Earth, he's been replaced by a Dr. Sivana who plagues the latest Captain Marvel with a power even his forebears didn't wield--money!

But no true Golden Age fan will ever forget the original Dr. Sivana, the little genius in the lab coat with the perpetual cackle, the nasty-but-nice disposition, and always one more sure-fire plan to defeat Captain Marvel. Dr. Sivana appears in these comics available from MicroComics: America's Greatest Comics #3, 4 Captain Marvel Adventures #1-5, 11 Whiz Comics #1-4, 6, 10, 13-15, 20, 21, 26, 31

JUNGLE COMICS #1-20

by Lou Mougin

There aren't many stories in comics in which you'll see a villain turned into a potato.

But you'll see that, and a lot more, in the first twenty issues of Fiction House's Jungle Comics!

Fiction House, a major pulp publisher from the Thirties through the Fifties, was also a major publisher of comics in the Golden Age. Most of their early comics, except Jumbo, were converted from their pulp titles. Wings Stories became Wings Comics. Planet Stories begot Planet Comics. And Jungle Stories fathered Jungle Comics.

Like most of Fiction House's early line, the first few issues of Jungle were overseen by Will (The Spirit) Eisner, listed as editor of issues #1-3. (Eisner may have written some of the stories in these issues.) Most of the book was produced by the Eisner-Iger comic book shop, with personnel that included Lou Fine, George Tuska, Toni Blum, Alex Blum, and Bob Powell. This was the same crew Eisner immortalised in his graphic novel, *The Dreamer*. After Will left to do the Spirit Section (and, later, got drafted), S. M. Iger's shop, with comics writer Ruth Roche as Iger's partner and chief writer, turned out Fiction House material through most of the company's existence.

Jungle was a set of variations on a theme of jungle adventure. First, they had a Tarzan clone, Ka'a'nga, derived mostly from Jungle Stories' hero Ki-Gor. Ka'a'nga was a standard jungle swashbuckler-and-swing-in-a-loincloth, but he lucked out and gained a pretty, bikini-clad companion named Ann. Their partnership made them the Burns and Allen of the jungle. Even though Ann was perpetually endangered on the covers of Jungle, her picture was usually a lot bigger than Ka'a'nga's. Nobody much objected. The Ka'a'nga series boasted some truly gorgeous art,

and spun off into its own comic a few years down the line.

Then there was a jungle wizard, Tabu by name. This Dr. Strange-of-the-veldt sported swimming trunks and a red cape for a uniform. As far as mystic powers went, he was right up with Dr. Fate's league, and could do just about anything he wanted when it came to battling poachers, ivory thieves, invading tribes, and plain no-goodniks.

But Tabu was outdone in weirdness by Fantomah, a sorceress who could have been the model for Michael Fleisher's *Spectre!* Fantomah had enough magical might to make Tabu a piker, and, when somebody got on her bad side, she turned her face into a skull and transformed her opponents into various strange objects and left them that way! Even in 1996, Fantomah comes off as a very weird strip.

Then there was Camilla, Queen of the Lost Empire. In later issues, she was a bikini-clad Sheena clone, but her early adventures were nothing like that. Camilla owes a lot to H. Rider Haggard's *She*, and was the beautiful empress of a city of lost Europeans in Africa (possibly Romans or Norsemen). In the first few issues, Camilla is a villainous, but becomes a heroine before long and leads her people in sword-swinging defence against tribes of attacking whites or evil sorcerers in a Prince Valiant-like milieu. And yes, in one issue, her partner does use his magic sword to turn a bad-guy wizard into the "lowliest" of all life-forms, a potato. (Unfortunately, they did not bake him, mash him, and eat him with salt and butter afterwards.)

Jungle also boasted a super-hero, the Red Panther, a costumed, super-swift guardian of jungle justice. This Flash-of-the-forest ran (literally) through most of the first 26 issues.

Captain Terry Thunder played it for laughs in the early Jungles, with a Foreign Legionnaire for a title hero, but the real action being carried by a little guy called Anderson the Arab and his precocious pets Vincent the Vulture and Kismet the Camel. The threesome

shared billing with Terry and got into and out of trouble for most of Thunder's early run, drawn primarily by Bill Bossert.

Nor can we forget Simba, a strip with a lion as the lead character (don't laugh, it ran 129 issues), Wambi, a Sabu-like jungle boy who could communicate with animals and eventually got his own comic, hunter-and-guide Roy Lance, and short-lived strips such as "Drums of the Leopard Men" (#1) and "White Hunters of the African Safari" (#1). And we can't leave out mentioning other artistic talent in the Jungle reserve: Charles Sultan, Robert Webb, Nick Cardy, Dan Zolnerowich, Rafael Astarita, John Celardo, C. A. Winter, Dick Briefer, Joe Doolin, and an ark load of others.

Jungle Comics may not have gotten the publicity of an Action, or a Marvel Mystery, or even of Planet Comics. But it's definitely worth your while, if you're in the market for good art, great-looking Fiction House femmes, and lightweight-but-fun stories.

VISIT OUR WEB SITE :

- **COMICS**
- **NEWSLETTERS**
- **COMICS PHONE CARDS**
- **MAPS ON MICROFICHE**
- **GLOBAL TIMEPIECE**
- **UK CD-ROM MAPS**
- **MICROFICHE VIEWERS**
- **OTHER PDF PUBLICATIONS**

click on the above web links