

ADVANCED ARMOR

#56



**ARMOR
WARS**
EPISODE III

TONY VS. JANGO!

HUBE'S SHELLHEADISMS

WHAT THE HECK....??

Mike Connolly, student of mine and one of our publishers, comes into class one day with some of the most sought after **IRON MAN** books ever – namely, the **ARMOR WARS** issues. Included were **#225, 228** and **231**, as well as other classics like **#215** (return of **Michelinie/Layton**) and **#218** (debut of the Undersea Armor). I said, "Hey, cool! Where d'ja find those?" Mike's reply: "IN A *DOLLAR BIN* AT OUR LOCAL COMIC SHOP"!!!!!!

Say wha-a-a-a-at?? **A DOLLAR bin?** I've seen some of these issues go for over at least \$5.00 on eBay where great bargains are easy to find! What was the comic shop thinking??

HUBE'S TAKE ON SPIDER-MAN: THE MOVIE & EPISODE II

As I'm sure many other Iron Fans are, I'm a **Spidey** aficionado too. I started reading his comics in the 70s, watched his 60s cartoon regularly (y'know – the one with the "*Spider-Man, Spider-Man, does whatever a spider can....*") and this was actually played at the very end of the credits of the **Spidey** flick if you bothered to stick around) and even watched the totally lame live-action late-70s TV show. I dug the **X-Men** movie even though I've never been a big fan, so I was especially looking forward to **Spidey**.



What's wrong with my hair?

It didn't disappoint. The flick indeed stayed quite true to the original premise. About the only major difference was that **Pete's (Parker)** web-shooters were actually a *part* of his body. Big deal – it was well done! **Kirsten Dunst** did a great job as **Mary Jane**, as did the rest of the supporting cast. About the only dissatisfaction was **Uncle Ben's (Cliff Robertson's)** bad toupee! That, and perhaps the final battle sequence would have fared better during the daytime, as was the case in the comic (although here it was **Gwen Stacy** as **Spidey's** love interest and she obviously died).

Hube's Recommendation: 4½ web-shooters (out of 5).

"Attack of the Clones" was likewise pleasing. One should never go into a **Star Wars** flick expecting top-notch dialogue. But, then, who *does*, after all? **[George] Lucas** crafts the second episode (fifth, overall) nicely, setting up a slam-bang final chapter of the series prequel. Now, teenage **Anakin Skywalker** is under the tutelage of **Obi Wan Kenobi**, but is brash, emotional, and hasty (gee, a perfect candidate for the **Dark Side**, don't 'ya think?). Political intrigue is all over the place: **Padmé** (the former queen, now Senator, of Naboo) is the target of assassination; **Chancellor Palpatine** (clandestinely **Sith Lord Sidious**) is expertly maneuvering to become the Emperor by using a **clone army** (hence the movie's title) to "quell" dissent among Republic break-away factions; a former Jedi – **Dooku** – seemingly "recognizes" that the **Dark Side** is infiltrating the Republic's Senate, but is in fact an operative of Sidious.



Palpatine/Lord Sidious

This is what I liked most about the movie: Lucas keeps one guessing as to just what is happening to the political situation. I actually had thought **Dooku** was going to start what would later become "**The Rebellion**" in the original trilogy; however, it becomes apparent that he is merely – expertly – fomenting dissent in the Republic so that **Palpatine/Sidious** can utilize the new clone army to take complete control of the galaxy! Elsewhere, **Jar Jar Binks** reappears – although [thankfully] briefly – but he plays a pivotal part: he recommends the motion in the Senate (in **Padmé's** absence) granting **Chancellor Palpatine** "emergency powers" to use necessary force to quell dissent!

One can easily see the parallels to the original trilogy: the clone army uniforms are the precursors to the **Imperial Storm Trooper** duds, and the ships carrying the clone army at the flick's end are almost replicas of the soon-to-be **Imperial Star Cruisers**. Iron Fans will dig **Jango Fett's** armor's cool gizmos, as well as the very Mandroid-looking **Super battle Droids!**



Super Battle Droid

Hube's Recommendation: 4 light sabres (out of 5).

IRON MAN – CAN SOMEONE HELP THIS TITLE BECOME GREAT AGAIN??

Hey, does anyone remember volume 2 **Iron Man**? I'm not referring to the stories or art here – I'm talking about sales figures. That's right. You may not know this, but volume 2 (or, if you prefer, "**Heroes Reborn**") **Iron Man** was regularly – *regularly* – in the top 10 in total sales of all comics! Certainly, the hype of "Reborn" and the its creative teams played a role with this. But let's be honest – if the title totally sucked, it wouldn't be in the top 10. (Just look at [Rob] Liefeld's volume 2 **Captain America!**).

[Kurt] Busiek's volume 3 **Iron Man** remained in the top 20 in total sales for just about his entire run, if I remember correctly. But what has happened since then? **Iron Man** has vacillated between being in the 30s and 40s of total sales (**IM #53** and **#54** were numbers **41** and **42** respectively according to Diamond Distributors, and **#56** was number **46**. No data could be found on **#55**). Why has the title slipped so?

Volume 2 Iron Man was treated like a **Marvel flagship character** – it was one of the four "Reborn" titles alongside *The Avengers*, *Fantastic Four* and *Captain America*. Of these, *all* of them currently rank ahead of **IM** – *Avengers* was ranked **14** while its analogue *The Ultimates* was an astonishing number **3**; *FF* was number **25**, and *Cap* was number **7**! Take a look at other [non-X-Men and Spidey] Marvel titles that rank ahead of **IM**: *Daredevil* (19), *Marvel Mangaverse* (21), *Punisher* (23), and *Incredible Hulk* (26).

Why has Marvel wasted the great "rise" it got out of **Iron Man** in "**Heroes Reborn?**" Simple – bad storytelling. Busiek started off strong but then ended up making **Tony Stark/Iron Man** a veritable weakling. Current scribe **Mike Grell** seems to be taking this to all new heights. **Joe Quesada** took a cool idea (sentient armor) and did a decent job with it, but then floundered with the wretched "**Sons of Yinsen**" plot. **Frank Tieri** began with weak stories – mainly utilizing villains in a more-than-gratuitous manner – but ended up inventing a very cool suit of armor (by asking for fan input) and weaving together recent plots nicely.

Back to Grell. His style seems SO askew from what **Iron Man** is – should be – that in my opinion the title has dropped below Quesada's "SoY" and Tieri's beginning yarns. Indeed, only the "**Teen Tony**" saga remains ahead of Grell's current endeavor as the worst **Iron Man** of all time. Check out my Review site (<http://members.aol.com/ironhube>) for specific reasons why.

"IRON MAN: THE END" BY MICHELINIE/LAYTON!!

In a recent e-mail **David Michelinie** revealed that he and **Bob Layton** were contacted by the **Iron Man office** last year, and asked to submit a plot for an **Iron Man story** for the sporadically-published **THE END series**.

"We were asked to come up with a story that would end the **IRON MAN** series," David said. "That is, if we were still plotting the series and it was cancelled forever, what would we do as a last story? So we talked about it and came up with what we thought was a very strong, character-oriented storyline. *It took place 50 years in the future and centered on an 85-year-old Tony Stark coming to grips with the fact that he simply could not be Iron Man any more.* Despite armor enhancements, surgical upgrades and medical stimulants, he was just too old, with reactions too slow, to be an action hero. His denial and inability to admit this reality formed the central conflict of the story. And his eventual acceptance of his physical deterioration -- along with his realization that everything **Iron Man** has accomplished was actually accomplished by Tony's intelligence and courage, traits that remain constant despite the aging process -- formed the resolution. Along the way, Tony risked everything to prove a radical theory, one that would provide cheap and easy space travel for the human race, and thus leave a final legacy of helping humanity through science. Bob heard back from an assistant editor (after the initial contact no one ever spoke to me directly about the project) and was told that they really liked the plot, but that they wanted something more 'amped up,' something bigger, that would be more memorable as a last story. Well, we had given them exactly what they'd asked for, which was how WE would have ended the series -- *a strongly human story that didn't necessarily involve big explosions or cosmic consequences.* In fact, one of the changes they suggested was a twist in which Tony's final project was sabotaged, and failed. We've always felt that **IRON MAN** should be a positive series, in which Tony Stark meets every challenge -- from alcohol to super villain s-- with determination and bravery, and somehow triumphs over adversity. Having his final efforts end in failure just didn't seem the way to go, and certainly didn't fit how Bob and I would have ended the series. But the editor is always the boss, and is certainly justified in holding out for what he/she thinks is the best for his/her characters. So we came up with another plot, one with more of a jaw-dropping concept, and submitted that in November of 2001. *We never heard back from the Iron Man office.* Bob did call them a couple of months later and was told that since THE END was a series without specific deadlines, it was pretty much a back burner project for them and they'd get around to it when they had the time. And that was it."

So, what does this all mean, Iron Fans? It means we get our collective Iron butts in gear and let Marvel know **WE WANT THIS STORY PUBLISHED!!**

-Hube



Cover swipes are fun. Take, for example, the classic **AVENGERS 4, Volume 1**, cover by **Jack Kirby**, featuring ol' pointy-faceplated **Shellhead** to boot. And what a story behind it! **Captain America** -- after cooling his jets for over 20 years in a chunk of ice -- thaws out his frozen arse and leads the team to victory over **Namor** and his minions, and a displaced alien. Cap's reward? A permanent place on the team's roster. Woo hoo!



And have you noticed in the recent past how many swipes of that cover exist, both on **Marvel and non-Marvel books**? There seem to be a lot of them. I thought it might be fun to run through a few Marvel swipe covers -- especially the number four issues of the various **AVENGERS** runs.

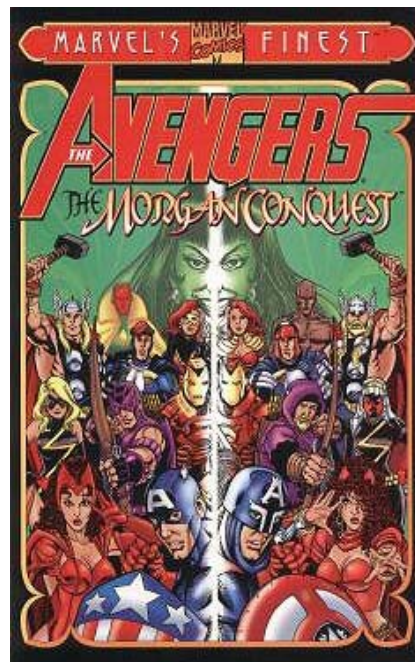
AVENGERS 4, Volume 1: "Captain America Joins the Avengers!" March 1964. The Kirby masterpiece. Nuff said!

AVENGERS SPECIAL 3: Reprints classic **AVENGERS 4** and Cap stories from **TALES OF SUSPENSE**, September 1969. A solid **John Buscema** swipe.

AVENGERS 4, Volume 2: "That Which Gods Have Joined Together!" February 1997. The fourth issue in the "vaunted" **Rob Liefeld "Heroes Reborn"** relaunch. A new **Ant-Man** (in great funky armor) debuts and the **Hulk** shows up.

AVENGERS 1, Volume 3: "Once an Avenger," February 1998. A **George Pérez** masterwork! Writer **Kurt Busiek** assembles every Avenger ever to fight a





growing threat, as he and George kick-off the title's third volume.

AVENGERS 4, Volume 3: *"Too Many Avengers,"* May 1998. A modern day treat served up by Kurt Busiek and George Pérez. The new Avengers team is forged with some surprising member selections. No cover swipe. This issue is repackaged in the **MORGAN CONQUEST** trade paperback.



AVENGERS: THE MORGAN CONQUEST trade paperback: reprints **AVENGERS 1-4 (Volume 3)**, 1998. The cover is another wonderful visual effort by George Pérez!

A-NEXT 4: *"Who Shall Be Worthy?"* January 1999. Okay, not really an AVENGERS 4 swipe -- more like an **AVENGERS 16 (Volume 1)** swipe. But **American Dream**, a female Captain America, comes in and shakes things up. Is she tuff enough?

(Note: A-NEXT features **Stinger** -- otherwise known as **Cassie Lang**, a **David Michelinie** and **Bob Layton** character creation.)

AVENGERS FOREVER 4 (of 12): *"Running Out of Time,"* March 1999. **Killraven** and the **Crimson Dynamo** step in for Cap and Iron Man in this inspiring **Carlos Pacheco** rendering.

AVENGERS: UNITED THEY STAND 4: "Losing Face," February 2000. No cover swipe. **Doc Doom** manhandles the team in an awful story which leaves no doubt why the comic and cartoon it was based upon didn't last all that long. Some of the figures in the toy assortment were cool, however -- I especially liked the Ant-Man/Giant-Man offering -- too bad the type of plastic used to make the neat-o cybernetic helmet stunk like three-day old fish guts and the legs on the piece couldn't bear the figure's weight: faw boom!



THE ULTIMATES 4: "Thunder," June 2002. Presenting the story's final page by **Bryan Hitch**, as the gang prepares to mix it up with the **Hulk**.

Long-time Iron Man fans will notice a number of story elements "borrowed" from Dave and Bob's first run on **IRON MAN** within **THE ULTIMATES** – it's the ONLY reason I buy the book! (Unrelated note. As of this writing, **THE**

ULTIMATES 5 is two weeks late. I took editor **Ralph Macchio** to task over the book's tardiness, and here is what he had to say: *"Mike, there's simply no excuse for a late book. When people go to a Broadway show they don't want some guy to come out from behind the curtain and say that there'll be no performance tonight because the actors couldn't learn their lines in time. That would be an outrage. And I feel the same about late comics. They're periodicals that are supposed to come out monthly. If they don't it's inexcusable. All I can do for you is to tell you I'll work hard to get THE ULTIMATES back on track as soon as I can. Thank you for the patience. Ralph Macchio."*

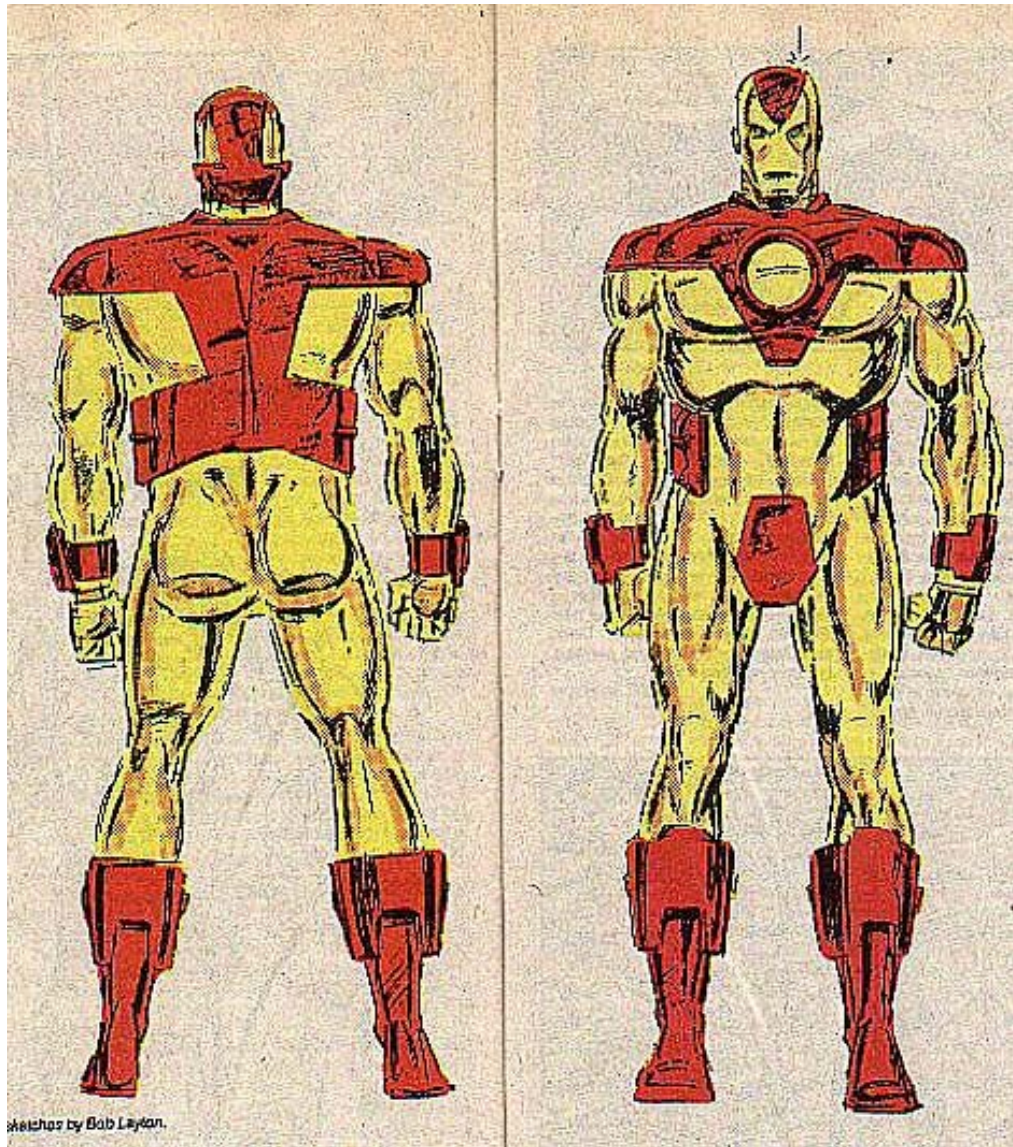


Perhaps in the future, I'll explore **AVENGERS 4** swipes on non-AVENGERS titles and non-Marvel

books as well. If you, kind reader, can think of, or discover, any **AVENGERS 4** cover swipes, e-mail the titles to me and I'll give you full credit for the find!

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In my last column I mentioned what I affectionately call the **Iron Man "Ass Armor,"** which was a **Bob Layton** design for a possible post-**Armor Wars** suit.



The "Ass Armor" was presented in **MARVEL AGE 55**. The JPEG for the armor was accidentally left out of my column, so I am proudly presenting it now. The design grabs me because it's SO different.

Many thanks to all of you **Iron Friends** for reading and faithfully supporting **ADVANCED IRON!**



You don't like the idea of Tony Stark revealing his secret identity to the entire world in order to save a puppy? You miss the days when Iron Man was too tough to be defeated by a simple unarmed martial artist? If so, travel with me back in time to better days.

I've got a special treat for you this time! So far, I've never reviewed issues older than 1980, right? Well today I'm going to look at the three oldest comics guest-starring Iron Man that I've got in my collection. Three of what are undoubtedly amongst the oldest wanderings Iron Man has ever made out of his own book ever. So just put some disco music on, it's time to revisit the late 60s and early 70s!

* * *

CAPTAIN MARVEL #14

"When a galaxy beckons..." – June 1969

Story: Groovy Gary Friedrich

Penciler: Fabulous Frank Springer

Inker: Vince Colletta



This book was published back in the good old days when comics only cost 12¢ (what the heck am I talking about, I wasn't even born back then). It is apparently the second part of a trilogy that begins in **Sub-Mariner #14** and ends **Avengers #64**. Our story opens as **Carol Danvers** (yes, the very one destined to eventually become the Avenger **Warbird**) is trying to convince **Cap Marvel** to give himself up to the authorities for a crime he didn't commit.



As this is going on, ten thousand feet overhead, **Tony Stark** is comfortably sitting in an airplane, flirting with a stewardess (this takes place right after **IM #14**). Our hero then suddenly feels **compelled** to go hide in the lavatory and put on his invincible suit of armor. What he doesn't know is that he has become the latest victim of the **Puppet Master**. Unable to resist, **Iron Man** leaves the plane and proceeds to attack **Captain Marvel** who has no idea what's going on.

Carol Danvers is badly injured during the battle, but the fight goes on and on, the two heroes being too evenly matched. Finally, **Stark** suffers from a mild heart attack and falls to the ground. The **Puppet Master** is outraged by his slave's shortcoming and destroys the **IM** puppet, thus releasing his hold on the **Golden Avenger**. But by then, **Cap Marvel** is already halfway back to the Kree galaxy.



This comic has a very historical feel to it. It's here that **Captain Marvel** and **Iron Man** meet for the first time (they would battle side by side on several occasions in the following years and **IM** will even

be present when the Kree hero eventually dies of cancer) and it's also here that the **Golden Avenger** first comes across **Carol Danvers** (whom he will, much later on, help with her alcoholism and her readmission in the Avengers). In other words, the main thing that makes this comic cool is all the stuff we know will happen afterwards.



The story itself is pretty average. The art is poor. To top it off, the artist makes the same mistake on several occasions, omitting to draw one of **IM**'s shoulder rings. The colorist even got the color of

Tony's hair wrong, **he made it brown!** As a result, I didn't even recognise **Stark** in the first panel I saw him.



On the plane, the stewardess responds to Tony's flirting: **"Really, Mr. Stark! You're an even bigger flirt than the gossip columns say you are! But I can't say you don't have your... uh... charms! A girl could be impressed into holding hands... over dinner tonight!"**

* * *

MARVEL FEATURE #12

“The bite of the Blood Brothers!” – November 1973

Story: Mike Friedrich

Artists: Jim Starlin and Joe Sinnott



We are now in **1973**. I was probably about six months old when that comic came out! Feels funny to hold a book in your hands that’s almost exactly as old as you are. Okay, enough with the sentimental stuff and on with the reviewing.

Our story begins with the **Thing** walking across a desert, moaning as usual. He is interrupted in his reminiscing of recent events by the sounds of boot jets, and almost immediately, the invincible **Iron Man** flies over him without acknowledging his presence. **Ben** is quite annoyed by this, to say the least, but **Iron Man** can’t afford to stop. He’s on the tracks of **Thanos** (well-known cosmic madman) and has decided to come back to the very place where they first met (in **IM #55**) in search of some clues. **Shellhead** doesn’t find **Thanos** though, because he’s sitting in his base on the moon of Titan, toying with his newly acquired cosmic cube. What he does find though is trouble, in the persons of **Thanos**’ lieutenants, the **Blood Brothers**. A titanic battle erupts, made even more earth-shaking by the **Thing**’s arrival on the scene. When he gets his hands on the **Blood Brothers**, you just know it’s going to be **CLOBBERIN’ TIME!**



All in all, a very good comic full of non-stop 1973 **Iron Man** action from cover to cover. It’s got a **MAJOR Marvel villain** for a nemesis (**Thanos** takes part in the conflict by communicating

repeatedly with the **Blood Brothers**) and a very cool partner in the ever-loveable blue-eyed **Thing**. The two characters make an awesome duo, and in the end, they combine their strength in a very cool way to defeat the deadly aliens. I like the **Thing**, always have... especially when that awful **Mister Fantastic** isn’t around.

I’m also a big fan of **Jim Starlin**, mainly for his writing but also for his art. For those of you who don’t know him, he’s the guy behind **Warlock**, the death of **Captain Marvel**, the mad **Thanos**, the **Infinity Gauntlet / War / Crusade** (and the upcoming **Infinity Abyss**) stories, etc. So this little episode is in fact one of the very early acts in a long saga of universal repercussions.



During the battle, the Thing tells Iron Man:
**“Yeah, Shellhead – we’ve got ‘em
runnin’ now! But we ain’t gonna put
these purple-people-eaters out less we**

team up your transistors with my muscle!”

* * *

MARVEL TEAM-UP #29

“Beware the coming of Infinitus!” – January 1974

Story: Gerry Conway

Penciler: Jim Mooney

Inkers: Vince Colletta

Most of you will be familiar with this particular series that usually featured **Spider-Man** teaming up with other Marvel heroes. But in these early issues, **Spidey** was not always part of the equation. This particular comic features Iron Man teaming up with... **Johnny Storm, the Human Torch!**



Our story begins with the **Human Torch** flying to Detroit to answer a mayday that was sent to the **FF** by **Tony Stark**. **Torchie** meets **IM** and... well... to say that the two heroes don’t get along great together would be a gross understatement. Once

inside the plant and after a quick change of clothes, **Stark** begins to explain the emergency. Apparently, a strange unknown man has been causing machinery to go haywire all over town, which resulted in several deaths. His latest attempt endangered **Stark**’s own life. **Iron Man**’s subsequent efforts to stop the mysterious saboteur was thwarted by a powerful heat ray capable of melting his armor. But before leaving the scene of his latest crime, the perpetrator explained that he is called **Infinitus**, the reincarnated king of Egypt Amenemhet III. The two characters are very reluctant to work together and actually spend more time bickering than anything else, but in the end, they will make like **Scooby Doo** and unmask the crook... who would have gotten away with it if it wasn’t for those pesky super-heroes ;-).





It's a fun comic with an entertaining if a bit simple plot. I couldn't help using the Scooby Doo analogy because this is what this little mystery reminds me of. Even though in the end the bad guy is not at all what he pretended to be, the whole **Infinitus** façade

is fun and intriguing while it lasts. As for the two main characters, what can I say... the **Torch** and **Shellhead** never did get along and I guess they never will. Their common antipathy makes for an interesting interaction between the two characters. On top of all that, you'll get to see **Iron Man** go in action wearing his helmet-with-a-nose! Ha!



Surprised to see the arrival of the lone Torch, Iron Man says: **"If you're the only member of the Fantastic Four who's answering Tony Stark's mayday! Stark expected Reed Richards – not a half-grown teenager!"**

Reed Richards – not a half-grown teenager!"

* * *

UPCOMING WANDERINGS:

In my next column, I will be taking a look at Iron Man's relationship with one of his oldest allies: **Captain America**. These two characters may be good friends these days, but they've been at odds on numerous occasions, and that's what makes their relationship so interesting. That's coming up in the pages of **Advanced Iron #57!!** As for current Wanderings, I highly recommend **The Ultimates**. You'll also be happy to note that IM is back as an active Avenger after too long an absence.

I hope these reviews will be **useful tips** to you. If you have any questions, comments, suggestions of issues you'd like to see reviewed, arguments or even if you just want to say **bonjour**, send me message at cousture@yahoo.com. And while I'm at it, I cordially invite you to visit **my very own Iron Man web site** (yes, this is the usual shameless plug you all know and love) at the following address:

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

Don't forget to check out my **"Wanderings of Iron Man" section**, where you'll be able to access all of my past columns for A.I. as well as **some new and exclusive reviews** of Iron Man's coolest (and not-so-cool) guest-stars in the pages of other Marvel mags.

Hope to hear from you and bonne lecture!

THE INVINCIBLE
IRON MAN



THE MELTER, BLIZZARD & WHIPLASH:
TOGETHER AGAINST THE ARMORED AVENGER!

CASINO FATALE



METAL HEAD

Hi everyone, another edition of **Metal Head** here. This time out, I talk about the four years of genre entertainment we have to look forward to, that started last fall, 2001.

But first, since **Joss Whedon** is working on his new show, Fox's **FIREFLY**, he's off **Iron Man**. It's slipping further into development heck, everyone...

GENRE ENTERTAINMENT, 2001 - 2005

I'm going to list this by year (release dates can change, most movies are already in production or will be by 2004):

2001

We had **HARRY POTTER** and **LORD OF THE RINGS: THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING**.



2002

We've already seen **BLADE 2**, **SPIDER-MAN** and the cool **STAR WARS: EPISODE 2 - ATTACK OF THE CLONES**. How about **RESIDENT EVIL**? It was cool. The rest of the year will see **LILO AND STITCH**, an animated movie from Disney with sci-fi elements; **MEN IN BLACK 2** in time for the 4th of July, like the last one; Steven Spielberg and Tom Cruise's **MINORITY REPORT** hits June 21. Later on, the second **HARRY POTTER** and **LORD OF THE RINGS**. We even have a **STAR TREK (X: NEMESIS)** opening with a **Bond** film (**DIE ANOTHER DAY**). I remember enjoying, every other year, a Star Trek film (1994, 96, 98) and a Bond film (95, 97, 99); then both stopped for a little while. Now they're BOTH coming out the same year. And the fact that a Trek film and a Spielberg film are opening the same year as a Star Wars film is pretty cool. I just read **SCOOBY DOO** made \$56 million. Wow, another genre franchise has been born! (I thought it was going to bomb...) Oh, and **Austin Powers** strikes a third time with **GOLDMEMBER** (sounds like a porno name for a Bond rip-off).

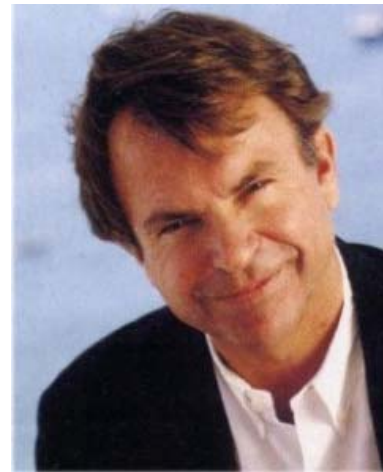
2003

On February 14th, **DAREDEVIL** with **Ben Affleck** opens; May 2 sees **X2** (as in

squared -- **X-MEN 2**); June 20 we get to watch **THE HULK** in all his 15 foot tall CGI glory; also in May we have **THE MATRIX RELOADED**; in July **TERMINATOR 3** battles a female **Terminatrix** (it seems like a \$170 million re-make of T2); Harry Potter skips a year because Warner Bros. has too many franchises coming out this year (**MATRIX 2 & 3**, **T3**, and **LORD OF THE RINGS**). In its place we have the final **LORD OF THE RINGS** and **THE MATRIX REVOLUTIONS** opening in the fall.

2004

On May 7, **SPIDER-MAN 2** swings in. And, so you know, **Sam Neill** is listed as **Doc Ock**... More movies could perhaps be opening this year, but nothing solid as of yet. **IRON MAN** was supposed to open this year....**HARRY POTTER 3** should be out, with a new director, as yet unknown of this writing. More comic book properties could be opening this year, but I'm not sure since nothing is set in stone until 2003 hits.



Cool! I'm Doc Ock??

2005

Lucas has a one-two punch with the highly anticipated rise-of-Vader-death-of-Jedi-everywhere **STAR WARS EPISODE 3** in late May and **INDIANA JONES 4** (yes, you read that right) probably on July 4th with Spielberg at the helm. Rad.

And that is, essentially around 4 years of genre entertainment. COOL! But, what happens after that? More franchises will be born, more sequels (**Jurassic Park 4** seems to be a go, according to Spielberg) and more original cool movies like **THE MATRIX** was!

Spider-Man was so cool, it appealed to men and women above and below the age of 25. WOW! It was the coolest 2 weeks of films between **Spidey** and **Clones**, I have to admit.

Well, that's it for now. More later.

I am and shall always be,

Heath McKnight
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IRON FAN'S RESPONSE

By Alex Juki

(Note: Alex said the editors could feel free to add any responses along the way!)

Making Sense of IM #55

Mike Grell left a lot of unanswered questions in **IM#55**. By playing devil's advocate, maybe **IM #55** won't be *that* bad.

1.) The capped sailor on the front page doesn't seem to be entirely "there." Keep this in mind for later.

2.) The **Iron Man** and **Ayisha** fight, for all of the page and a half or so that it lasted, wasn't all that bad...I still want to see a big take-down, drag-out fight, though. The fight later on in this issue doesn't qualify.

3.) How DID **Temugin** snatch Stark out of the armor? Let's consider all possibilities. It seems pretty tough to grasp that some monks got Stark out of it themselves. But, what if magic were involved? Or EMPs? I don't know what safeguards Stark had in place before, but a well-placed EMP? Or what about the disintegration beam that the **Mandarin** used in **IM #311**? Is it possible **Temugin** used it, and had the rest of the armor repaired by the monks? They've got plenty of technology, as we've already seen.

4.) **IM** v. **Temugin**: most of you are saying, "What the hell???" Take a moment, and look at how **Temugin** moves; look at how Ryan drew it all; look at the odd "shadow" that **Temugin** leaves behind him. Not even **Spider-Man** can move at the point where he leaves a "wake-shadow" like that. True, maybe this is just Ryan's weird way of drawing **Temugin** moving fast, but once again, do we rule out some kind of magic enchantation? Or the fact that if **Temugin's** monks really did use a disintegration beam, then repaired the armor, that they purposefully repaired it badly without **Temugin** knowing? Po, at least, has already demonstrated that he doesn't always agree with **Temugin**...is it possible that the fight was rigged so that **Iron Man** would have a weakened armor? Before the fight, Stark NEVER acknowledges that **Temugin** recharges the armor or that it's even in good working condition...he doesn't do the opposite, but still. Also, notice how **Temugin** goes for the "central power unit" more than anything else?

The most plausible explanation is a fixed fight, in which **Temugin's** fighting was enhanced with magic.

5.) **IM's** armor wasn't removed by the sailors; NOWHERE does it say that, but it IS implied that Stark had enough steam left to tell them about his heart ("like jump-starting a car.") Oh, and remember that "capped sailor" I mentioned in Point #1? He says he "pounded out a few of the dents...spot-welded here and there." This is the same guy that was drunk in the beginning and would've sold his mother for a picture of the abominable snow-man. How reliable IS this dummy's word? (*Editor's response:* *I don't see how it can be claimed definitively that the armor wasn't removed by the sailors. Talk about "implied" – if anything was, THIS sure was. As for the "drunk dummy," why is he "dumb?" What he sighted – an upright Ayisha in white fur – sure LOOKED like a legendary yeti, and when you sight something like that – and then no one believes you – why wouldn't one partake in a bit of alcoholic assistance, especially in the brutal cold of the Arctic? And how can you be sure it's the same "drunken" sailor from the beginning who then "pounded out the armor dents?" The hat is a different color and he ain't wearing a turtleneck. I mean, if we're going to REAL sticklers here...!)*

But, I'll play Devil's Advocate. In the "**HANDS OF THE MANDARIN**" story by **Len Kaminski**, didn't Rhodey do something similar at a RURAL forgery? I'm not going to hunt the issue out of my stack right now, but if I remember, he said that it was repaired a little bit but augmented with the new "warrior-ish" additions. This isn't the first time a Stark armor has been repaired by less-than-futuristic means. (*The Editor clarifies:* *Rhodey's War Machine armor was NOT "repaired" in the sense of "hammering out dents" or any such thing. WAR MACHINE vol. 1 #9 shows that Century, along with some Chinese peasants, worked on forging ancient Chinese warrior armor to put over top of the WM armor, thus inhibiting the Mandarin's anti-technology field. In short, the actual WM armor wasn't tinkered with at all.*)

6.) This is an EXTREMELY annoying inconsistency...THE **IRON MAN ARMOR** IS DIFFERENT. For the love of God, I can understand parts missing, but this is a DIFFERENT ARMOR. But, at least Grell's human art is better than Ryan's...I miss the **SKIN armor**, but I like Ryan's new armor...

7.) Hoo-boy. Here's the kicker; "**IM** REVEALS HIS IDENTITY TO SAVE A PUPPY??" Wrong. He saves the puppy to make the boy happy. He reveals his identity for a CHILD, to make a CHILD happy.

In a twisted way, abandoning years of **Iron Man** history, this can make sense. Forget everything else and all the other people that've died as a result of Stark's secret; I'm explaining how Grell could have even COME UP with this notion of outing Stark.

Basically: Stark is lonely. He's hitting what might be considered a "mid-life crisis," I suppose...how old is he now? 30s? In Grell's eyes, he lost his chance with Pepper, but, settled for the next best thing -- to be her best friend. Ayisha suddenly reminded Tony of how alone he could be by almost killing Pepper and

burdening Tony with the secret of her baby. (What Grell DOESN'T get is that by Stark revealing his identity, he's endangering EVERYONE close to him, and that by outing himself, there may be a hundred more incidents like Ayisha and Pep). More than anything else, though, Tony is alone. He's doing something with his life, and it's something good, and he knows that, but even in issue #50 (395), Stark says that Pepper and Happy have "the wonderful sense of being ordinary." (Of course, that's all out the window now as Pep and Hap are probably going to be turned into celebrities as **"IRON MAN'S BEST FRIENDS"** ...)

Tony can't settle down with a girl because of **Iron Man**. His secret is what separates him and, at times, that's been exactly what it was. Look at **Veronica Benning (IM #291-309)**. Or **Rumiko Fujikawa**. They broke from Tony because he had a secret life and because they couldn't really KNOW him. Well, now, out of his desperation, Tony wants everyone to know that he's **Iron Man**; he wants attention, *like a child*.

Tony saves the dog to make the child happy. Maybe he's trying to amend for being the reason Pep's baby died. Maybe he wants to give the child the happiness he never had (**IMs #284-289**).

Or, maybe it's because Tony really just wants to have more of a normal life. Police officers have normal lives outside their duties; is it not possible that Tony wants to settle down just a little bit? The problem is, Mr. Grell, Tony KNOWS he'll never have a normal life, and times before, he's come to accept this... (By the way, I think Hap captured all of our sentiments when he says, "Oh, crap.")

8.) I REFUSE to believe Stark and Pep had an affair. The fetus was nine-weeks old; this was before even **issue #50** was released, I believe (I may be mistaken). NOWHERE does it suggest that Pep and Tony had an affair that the baby was Tony's; look at what Pepper says: "Why hurt him? It was a miracle I got pregnant in the first place." Tony even admits in the first few pages of the issue that the baby wasn't his; "No...but it might have been." Stark is trying to rationalize with Ayisha about how important the baby would have been to him and how much she hurt him.

Stark and Pep did not have an affair. Hap finally managed to get Pep pregnant but Pep decides "[not to] hurt him," with the knowledge of 'we could've had this, but now we won't.' As for Pepper asking Tony, "Where were you?", I am NOT surprised. **IM #201**: Pepper: "[Happy]...shut up." Then, in the early days of **Vol. 3**, we find out that Hap and Pep got a divorce, that they lost their kids. Pepper and Happy haven't been the happiest couple, and it seems as though that's coming into focus now even more.

Anyway, that's my huge, long spiel. I've read that **issues 59-61** or whatever will be set in the 11th century. Still think magic is out of the question? I think it's becoming a more viable possibility.

What do I think about this issue? Revolutionary? Undoubtedly. Surprising? YAH. Well done? No. No no no no No. Grell left too many questions to be asked, from my perspective, anyway. Too many "How the --???"s and "What the --???"s. I'm convinced that if Grell had taken more time to develop this plot idea, maybe even set it back some more issues...have Tony announce to his friends that he's going to reveal his identity, or have **Temugin** somehow threaten Tony into retiring...basically, if Grell had done things differently, this would have come out much better.

Anyway...any responses?

The executives lining the sides of the table stare at him a moment, as if waiting for more. When it doesn't come, they turn in unison to stare at the far end of the table:

JEREMY BLAND stands at the other end, looking speechless. A busy collection of SALES GRAPHS, MARKET EXTRAPOLATIONS, AND PRODUCT SPECS for the proposed military battle armor surround him. Stopped in the middle of his presentation.

BLAND

Excuse me?

And now the executives turn their heads back toward Tony. He is not yelling or raising his voice. Just being firm.

TONY

I built the Redeemer as a rescue device, not as a weapon. And it will never become a weapon. Not as long as I live and breathe...

Short pause. Tony smiles, briefly. Interestingly enough it is only within the smile that his anger shows through:

TONY

...and own 55% of this company.

Bland does not look threatened, so much as dumbfounded.

BLAND

To be honest, I'm dumbfounded by your attitude, Tony. This armor will be the biggest thing since the Stark Smart Bomb--

TONY

(interrupting)

Jeremy. I realize that pursuing this line of development is your job, and because you do your job so well I'm willing to repeat myself one more time--but only one more time.

The executives split their furtive glances between Tony and Bland, with the kind of morbid fascination that makes for good water-cooler gossip. But one executive at the table seems different: PEPPER POTTS adjusts the glasses on her face, and just watches Tony, as if evaluating him.

He stares over the room with a look that signals the end.

TONY

No.

INT--ARMOR HOLDING FACILITY--DAY

The facility looks like some high-tech jail cell with its barren metal walls. The ELECTRONIC COCOON IN THE CENTER OF THE ROOM is open revealing the REDEEMER RESCUE ARMOR stored inside, dramatically backlit by the lights within.

TONY is alone in the facility staring up at his creation. No sound but the HUMMMMMMMMMM from the armor. And then:

PEPPER (O.S.)

Mr. Stark?

Tony turns a bit, and sees PEPPER POTTS at the entrance. He looks like he doesn't want to be disturbed right now.

TONY

(a bit flat)

Ms. Potts, what can I do for you?

Pepper takes a step inside. Stares at his back a moment.

PEPPER

I wanted to tell you that this is not going to be easy.

Tony frowns and turns completely around, as if surprised.

TONY

Excuse me?

PEPPER

No one is going to understand why the top manufacturer of advanced weapon systems no longer wants to make weapons. No one is going to want to understand your reasoning.

TONY

(intrigued)

And, why are you telling me this?

PEPPER

Because I've worked here for three years, putting in my time, cashing my paycheck and frankly not giving a damn about Stark Industries, other than what it could do for my career.

TONY

And now?

PEPPER

Now, I might have a reason to care.

Tony looks Pepper over. Not like the way you look over someone you know. As if meeting her for the first time.

TONY

I see. Well thank you...Virginia, isn't it?

PEPPER

Pepper. Everyone calls me Pepper.

Tony nods, a little, as Pepper turns and starts for the door. But before she gets there, Tony calls out to her:

TONY

I'm curious, Pepper. Do you think you understand my reasons?

Pepper stops inside the doorway. She looks back, with:

PEPPER

Well, I just assumed you'd like to be remembered for making something that actually saved lives--instead of taking them--for a change.

...and Pepper leaves. Tony stands there for a moment, staring at the empty doorway, with some sadness in his expression. Then he takes one last look up at the armor.

Tony walks to the door. Places his hand on a TOUCH PAD:

TONY

Secure the facility.

ARTIFICIAL VOICE

Good-bye, Mr. Stark.

Tony leaves. The AUTOMATIC DOOR SLIDES SHUT behind him, and the Redeemer cocoon in the center of the room CLOSES. A moment later, a MAZE OF DEADLY FLOOR-TO-CEILING LASER BEAMS appear sealing off the armor. The lasers HUMMMMM.

INT--JEREMY BLAND'S OFFICE--DAY

JEREMY BLAND storms into his office and immediately SLAMS the door. Then he just stands there, right inside of the door, enraged. He seethes a while before storming across the office floor and SLAMMING HIS BRIEFCASE down on the desktop. He leans over the desk. Stares down. Furious.

VOICE

Are you feeling...unappreciated, Missster Bland?

Bland stares at the desk for a moment, like he's not sure he heard it. Then he stands up straight and immediately turns around as if expecting someone to be here with him.

The office is empty. The voice is a RASPING HORROR. It sounds like somebody speaking with a hole in his throat:

VOICE

Why don't you ssssssit down?

Bland looks around, all around. And above him. Then he tentatively moves around the side of the desk, and sits. But at the edge of the chair. Nervous. Staring ahead.

Suddenly, his COMPUTER BLIPS ON. Bland jerks a little, and watches his screen CASCADE WITH IMAGES OF THE BATTLE ARMOR he showed the generals. Bland watches the screen.

VOICE

Turning the Redeemer Rescue Armor into a weapon of destruction is a morally unconscionable act. Only an amoral man who is engaged in an endless pursuit of wealth at the expense of his own humanity would even entertain such an idea...let alone pursue it with vigor.

Bland sits there. As if afraid to move. He just waits.

VOICE

I like the way you think, Jeremy.

BLAND

(uncomfortable)

Uh...thank you.

There is a TELEVISION SCREEN across the room. The screen BLIPS ON, and casts an EERIE GLOW across the room. We don't see the picture though it's clear that Bland does.

VOICE

You are welcome. But we have a ~~mutual~~ mutual problem, don't we?

BLAND

A...problem?

Bland stares at the television. As if repulsed. Still, we don't see the image. Shadows flicker across his face.

VOICE

Yes, Mr. Bland. A problem. His name iszzzzz Anthony Stark.

EXT--OUTSIDE STARK INDUSTRIES--NIGHT

A LIMOUSINE pulls up in front of Stark Industries, as if pulling up to the Academy Awards. A RED CARPET is lined on either side by a densely-packed CROWD being held back by ropes and SECURITY TEAMS. SIGNS are swaying above the crowd: "STARK BURN IN HELL!" next to "WE LOVE YOU TONY!"

A grim SECURITY MAN looks around, brings one hand to his earpiece and listens a moment, then opens the limo door:

TONY STARK steps out with a smile and waves to the crowd.

INT--STARK INDUSTRIES LOBBY--NIGHT

A TELEVISION REPORTER holds a MICROPHONE near her face as she smiles into the camera. TONY is entering behind her.

JOURNALIST 1

Behind me is Anthony Stark himself: inventor; billionaire; founder and CEO of Stark Industries; voted for a fifth consecutive year one of our "top ten" most eligible bachelors; a man as comfortable locked inside of a laboratory as he is strolling the manicured lawn of an exclusive country-club.

Tony walks down a CORRIDOR OF SCREAMING WOMEN barely held back by the ropes, and looks to be enjoying every step of the way. Suddenly PEPPER POTTS angles beside him looking concerned. Tony leans close as Pepper begins whispering:

PEPPER

The media is hitting us hard, boss, saying this marks the beginning of the end for Stark Industries.

Tony smiles, and nods, as if she just told him something simply lovely. Pepper immediately slips away, and Tony enters an area with REPORTERS thrusting out MICROPHONES:

JOURNALIST 2

Your critics, Mr. Stark, label you an amoral industrialist making his fortune selling high-tech weaponry. Is that behind the changes going on here at Stark Industries? Is Tony Stark trying to clean-up his image with the new Redeemer Rescue Armor?

Tony nods, a little. As if he appreciates this question.

TONY

Well it's true that Stark Industries profited--greatly--from the military applications of its technology. But I'm not prepared to offer an apology. This country was involved in a "cold war"--and it is entirely correct for a society to protect itself.

JOURNALIST 3

And now that the cold war is over?

TONY

And now, ethical thinking dictates constraints on the development of high-tech weaponry, once that weaponry no longer serves the purpose of defending oneself, one's family, or one's country.

Tony starts to move down the row, but stops as he hears:

JOURNALIST 2

So, this is about ethics, afterall.

TONY

"Ethics" and good business are not incompatible--that's a concept you folks in the media often find very convenient to overlook, yes?

JOURNALIST 4

The Redeemer Armor is an interesting choice of name: doesn't redeem mean to "save from a state of sinfulness?"

Tony steps close to this reporter. As if quite friendly.

TONY

There you go trying to characterize me as some kind of repentant sinner, like your colleague back there.

Tony starts to walk off, and his smile fades, just a bit.

TONY

Another definition of redeem simply is "to rescue"--and hence, the name.

JOURNALIST 5

Wouldn't you make more money selling "Redeemers" to the military complex?

Tony stops at the new reporter. Microphones in his face.