

STARK

AI

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ADVANCED IRON

www.advancediron.com

2005.January



Hey Iron Fans!

Heath McKnight here, the new co-Editor-in-Chief of the number one Iron Man fanzine in the world! That's right, there's a new masthead here, and my good friend Vic Holtreman and I have the good fortune (or bad luck) of taking over the magazine from the Invincible Dave Huber and Pat Couture (who were one time writers for AI, like myself, when creator Bill Egan was in charge).

I'll still be handling the movie writing duties both in these issues and on our message board through my column Metal Head, but with Vic, we're now handling editing duties. You can imagine how daunting that is!

A little about me: I'm a filmmaker in Wellington, Florida (outside of West Palm Beach) who happens to love comics and Iron Man in particular (you can see my Shellhead tattoo on the message boards). I have been writing Metal Head with the prodding of contributing writer Mike Kalibabky since the summer of 1995, and I've made a TON of friends who actually love our favorite Armored Avenger!

Vic and I aren't planning on changing much, because things are quite great within AI. But as time goes on, we'll probably change a couple of things here and there. And remember, you're always welcome to contribute articles, stories about Iron Man, art, etc., to the magazine and the message board. Just email us at hmcknight@mac.com (writings) or victor@holtreman.net (art). Now, I'll hand it over to Vic!

See ya, Metal Heads!

Heath

hmcknight@mac.com

Hi guys, Vic here. Heath has summed things up pretty well, so I don't have much to add beyond asking that you all go easy on us for the next couple of issues. ☺ I want to personally thank Jeff for stepping up the plate and getting this issue out the door after the myriad problems that have come up with the publication in the last six months.

I'm no comic book expert or great writer... just a guy whose favorite comic book character has always been Iron Man. I came by this position through my interest in IM and my writing skills as shown in one of my websites, ScreenRant.com. I've just moved to Utah, after 19 years in southern California and I make my living on the internet with a variety of websites.

I just want to take a moment to thank all of you. Without you not only would there be no one to read Advanced Iron, but there wouldn't be any *content*! You're the ones who keep this going through your love of our favorite Armored Avenger.

Best Regards,

Vic Holtreman

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IRON
GUY
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HUBES SHELLHEADISMS PART I

By Dave Huber

Interesting trivia bit: I recently picked up the THUNDERBOLTS: JUSTICE LIKE LIGHTNING TPB. In issue #2, the splash page has the ‘Bolts mopping up the Circus of Crime ... in **Newark, Delaware!!** To the casual reader, this certainly isn’t a big deal. But to native Delawareans, any mention of our state in something with [inter]national distribution is cool stuff! I lived in Delaware all my life and the college where I did my grad and undergrad work, the University of Delaware, is located in Newark. So, why did writer **Kurt Busiek** use rather obscure Newark as the site of a superhero battle? My initial thought: Perhaps it was an homage to IRON MAN greats David Michelinie and Bob Layton who both lived in Newark for much of their first run on IM. I had to know – so I e-mailed Busiek ...

... and, as always, Kurt promptly replied. Nope, it wasn’t about Dave and Bob, but a tip of the hat to **Captain Blue Hen Comics**, northern Delaware’s best comic shop! This was very cool in itself as I used to frequent Capt. Blue Hen during my undergrad days in the early 80s. Back then, the shop was located in a *house* ‘cause it was just starting out. Later, in the 90s, the store opened up a second shop near my house. It’s since closed that one, opting to maintain just the original Newark store, now located in a small strip mall almost directly behind the house of its original locale.

(A **Blue Hen**, by the way, is **Delaware’s state bird**. The Univ. of Delaware football team is known as the “Blue Hens.”)

Speaking of TPBs, I also picked up **SUPERMAN: RED SON** at the same time I nabbed the ‘BOLTS book. I had wanted to get the original copies of RED SON when they came out, but they went faster than sales of Leifeld’s vol. 2 CAPT. AMERICA plummeted! I had expected, well, the worst, since RED SON is the creation of **Mark Millar**. Millar has been more than open about his disdain for various things American, so I gritted my teeth when reading the book’s introduction by **Tom DeSanto**. In it, DeSanto says:

“In the hands of a lesser writer the story would have fallen into cookie cutter, black and white, America good, Soviets bad, feel-good propaganda. Thank God Mark Millar is not a lesser writer. And thank God his favorite color seems to be gray. All that morally questionable gray is captured in what seems to be 1950s Technicolor glory.

RED SON is a sharp social commentary on capitalism vs. communism and current American foreign policy.”

I dug in.

And was pleasantly surprised.

Millar is indisputably “gray” throughout the book, but one must remember this is an “**Elseworlds**” tale. In this “Elseworld,” Superman has landed in the [former] **Soviet Union** instead of the United States. His existence is finally revealed to the world in the 1950s, and the U.S. goes into “high fear” mode. As **President Eisenhower** says, “The Cold War has just evolved into a whole new animal.” The U.S. government then turns to the only man who can devise a counter to the USSR’s “Superman” – ultra-intellect **Lex Luthor!** This Lex does, and his first attempt is the creation of a **Bizarro**-like creation who ultimately sacrifices him[it]self after an American submarine launches a nuclear missile.

Millar delves into a bit of 1980s American nuclear policy here, as we see the US’s “Bizarro” superman being shouted at by Londoners as its battle with Superman moves to the UK. Superman states. “**Your presence here is an aggressive act. This country doesn’t need American protection. The Soviet Union poses *no* threat to the future of Great Britain. You are the monster here. You are the one who needs to be contained. Go home and tell your president to mind his own affairs. Nobody wants you or your weapons here.**”

During the 80s, there were myriad protests when the US placed medium-range nuclear missiles in various NATO countries mainly as a counter to the vastly superior conventional forces of the USSR and the Warsaw Pact. One thing in RED SON, however, that doesn’t make much sense, is on page 41 where Superman states (shortly after Stalin’s death) that “**Their (the US’s) first act was a promise to contain the communist threat by increasing their nuclear stockpiles in the United Kingdom and our various satellite countries.**”

Our satellite countries? How in the world could the US stockpile nukes in **Warsaw Pact countries** in *our* world, let alone a Superman-protected one? It doesn’t make the slightest bit of sense. (Just look at the background map on page 41 and scope the symbols for nuke missiles pointed *at* the USSR in Warsaw Pact nations.)

Still, this is probably the only transparent reference to Millar’s liberalism – that the UK and Western Europe didn’t need the protective [nuclear] US umbrella during the Cold War.

I was wondering why, having the Man of Steel as their ultimate weapon, the USSR did not just go ahead and forcibly take over the planet. The US’s and Europe’s stockpiles of nukes were essentially obsolete (especially back in the 50s when Supes was revealed to the world at large) ‘cause Superman could just deactivate ‘em all if they were launched. Page 13 features TV news footage stating “**Let our enemies beware – there is only one superpower now.**” That’s the Soviet Union talking. We see on the tube Supes flying beside 1950s MiG-15s, and standing beside Josef Stalin on a podium.

It's never made quite clear why the USSR just didn't up and attack. Is it because Millar believes that the old communist regime never *would* have attacked had it a clear tactical military advantage? Does he feel the threat posed by the USSR was never what the US and Western Europe claimed? It *seems* that Stalin and Co. felt they never would have to resort to their might to change the world to a socialist paradise. Superman, despite his red upbringing, helps out people *everywhere*, (like saving New York from destruction by a falling satellite) and hence average people – other countries – wish to be under his “protection” – to be part of what *he's* a part of. (Superman, when *he* eventually takes over for the deceased Stalin, proclaims just this – that he will *not* resort to naked force to conquer the last remaining non-communist hold-out on the planet, the United States.)

But, of course, fear and loathing **of all things communist** is just too strong in the United States for Americans to desire Supes' embrace!

The United States' “big gun” is, again, **Lex Luthor**. Throughout the decades we see the myriad ways in which Luthor fights the Man of Tomorrow. These include the aforementioned Bizarro-like humanoid, convincing the alien **Brainiac** to miniaturize Moscow (but he mistakenly shrinks Stalingrad!), and the dispatching of a “rogues gallery” of creatures against Supes. (We see on page 62 the **Parasite**, **Metallo** and the **Atomic Skull**.)

But probably the most effective plan against Kal-El is where Luthor supplies the Russian-analogue **Batman** with **red sun radiation lamps**, which deprive Supes of his super-powers. Batman pounds Superman in a fist-fight under the lamps, and it is only the timely intervention of **Wonder Woman** that salvages the scuffle for Superman.

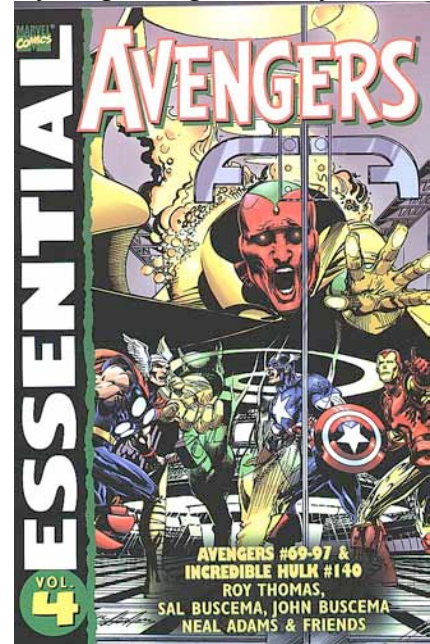
The background story of **Batman**, by the way, is nicely done. It is essentially the same as the one we know, but here Batman's parents were killed by the **KGB**. Bats then becomes an underground operative determined to overthrow the mantle of alien rule over Russia!

Millar also expertly involves yet another DC mainstay character into the mix: **The Green Lantern**. The well-known **Roswell alien incident** is shown to be the crash of the famous Green Lantern Corps ship, and the **power ring** is eventually utilized by Luthor (who else?) in yet another plan to take down Superman. (It takes Luthor 18 years to crack the famous “recharge” code for the ring.) **Hal Jordan** is a former prisoner of war who dons the ring, and he becomes **Code Name Green Light**, leading an entire battalion of ring-bearing soldiers against Superman in the story's climatic battle.

The story's ending (which I won't reveal here) caught me *completely* off-guard, which in my book makes this tale even better! The last few pages showcase design sketches of the various characters with selected written commentaries!

**HUBES SHELLHEADISMS
PART 2
By Dave Huber**

ESSENTIAL AVENGERS volume 4 came out in early August. I gotta tell ‘ya, the ESSENTIALS idea has been one of Marvel’s best ideas ever. How else can one collect all those classic adventures at one time without going bankrupt? (Hell, for that matter, how can one even *collect* all those adventures *period*?) I’ve been an avid collector of the ESSENTIALS – I’ve gotten all four AVENGERS volumes, three FANTASTIC FOURS, two X-MENs (the first classic and the first newbie volumes), the two DAREDEVILs, the SILVER SURFER, and of course IRON MAN.



ESSENTIAL AVENGERS #4 includes some classic Earth’s Mightiest tales including the tussle with the **Squadron Sinister**, saving the world of the **Squadron Supreme**, and the phenomenal **Kree-Skrull War**. But several stories not so noted really got my attention. Issues #73 and 74 show how Marvel (specifically, writer **Roy Thomas**) was way ahead of the curve in dealing with the **social issues** of the day. Iron Fans will know how in the 1970s, Iron Man yarns showed how Tony dealt with the repercussions of his munitions business, pollution problems, Vietnam at home and abroad, and unions crises. Thomas, in this AVENGERS book and #73-74 in particular, showcases another big social problem of the late 60s/early 70s – **race relations**.

AVENGERS #73 has the **Black Panther** returning the Avengers’ fold. But on the TV scene, a bigoted talk show host named Dan Dunn has been busy debating one Montague Hale, a black activist. Hale was apparently assaulted by the **Sons of the Serpent**, who’re a bunch of racist goons. Later, the SoS attempt to kidnap Miss Monica Lynne, a black singer who had also appeared on the Dan Dunn Show. But – the Black Panther thwarts her abductors! Miss Lynne is miffed the cops took so long to show up (after the Panther had already nailed the Sons), believing that it is due to her skin color. She agrees to reappear on the Dan Dunn Show (along with Montague Hale) to discuss her attempted kidnapping, and Hale, once again, his. Both sides get heated, seeming to represent the radical ends of their respective positions. The Avengers are watching the big event on



TV, and decide to go after the Serpent dudes – but the Panther quickly butts in and demands *he* be allowed to nab the racist butt-heads alone! (“*Those are MY people that the Serpents have been beating ... killing! And I claim my right to take them ... alone!*”) The Assemblage agree to the Panther’s demand, but only for a short while.

T’challa stalks the city for the Serpents, finds ‘em, and eventually (clandestinely) replaces one. But, he gets discovered – and is taken prisoner! The SoS waste no time in portraying the Panther as a black radical militant in the media, and excoriate the Avengers for attempting to “protect” him. They force T’Challa to view the continued debates between Dan Dunn and Montague Hale, which by this time have reached fevered pitch! Several panels show how the country is becoming “affected” by the highly-rated Dunn-Montague debates: Blacks and whites drawing lines in the sand as tensions rise! One superb scene shows the **Vision** walking down a Manhattan street – one bystander states “*That’s one of the Avengers ... the android one!*” Another replies “*I hear his voice is enough to give you the creeps!*” A young black man then retorts “*He ain’t white ... and he sure ain’t black! Whose side are you on, baby?*”

The Assemblage eventually find the “Panther,” who, in actuality, is just a Serpent goon in disguise. After a brief scuffle, the ersatz Panther manages to escape, but our heroes later find the Serpent hideout – because they couldn’t resist their constant on-air racist yapping (the Avengers traced their transmission, natch!). It’s a bit late, however, as the Serpent dudes haul out [yet another] fake Panther on camera and unmask him, whereupon he utters “*And why shouldn’t I be its [America’s] foe, Serpent? No black American can rest ... while a white American lives!!*” Obviously, this guy ain’t T’Challa!

The Vision secretly has freed the real Panther, and then the Assemblage break up the whole Serpent shebang in one fell swoop. In the melee, **Yellowjacket** unmasks the two main Serpent punks – and they’re revealed to be Dan Dunn and Montague Hale!! The dastardly duo’s racial act was just that – an act! As Hale states, “*Did you truly think we cared for anyone ... any cause ... except power for ourselves??*” But the whole sordid affair does not deter one Monica Lynne. She’s gained a new purpose – as an advocate for her people! The Panther’s (Thomas’) words at the end are excellent: “*Don’t underrate people, Monica! Most of them know that a cause may be right ... though a leader or two be wrong!*”

(In addition, the **Black Panther’s origin story** is told in AVENGERS #87.)

A few issues later in AVENGERS #80-81, Thomas opens up another chapter for those historically underrepresented – “**The Coming of the Red Wolf!**” Will Talltrees is a Native American who was apprehended by the Vision on the streets of Manhattan. Will was garbed as the **Red Wolf**, a hero of Indian



legend, and he was chasing after a one Jason Birch, a lackey of rich bad-guy **Cornelius Van Lunt** (with whom the Avengers had dealings in previous issues). Birch, acting on Van Lunt's orders, had demanded that Talltree's (Red Wolf's) father sell his land, but he of course refused. Birch later assassinates Wolf's dad, and this led to the son becoming the legendary Red Wolf! I won't go into the whole two-issue story (which, overall, is not very engaging), but Thomas treats us to an excellent two-page spread in issue #80 detailing what Native American life is like on their reservations. Again – Thomas impressively delves into social issues which were not all that common in that time period -- issues whose aspects were just beginning to come to widespread light in the growing social activist atmosphere of the late 60s-early 70s! (One minor nit here, though: Thomas refers to the term “Anglo” as meaning “non-Indian.” As A.I. contributor **Pat Couture** will attest, “Anglo” means one of British and/or [white] English-speaking descent. Certainly, black Americans, for example, would not be referred to as “Anglos,” even though they too are “non-Indians.”)

With AVENGERS #83, Roy Thomas covers yet another social issue of the time period – **women's liberation**. The cover of the ish boasts the **Valkyrie** (eventually proved to be the **Enchantress**) and her “Lady Liberators”: **Black Widow, Medusa, Wasp** and **Scarlet Witch**. It's actually sort of a tongue-in-cheek story for the Halloween of that year: The Enchantress assumes the Valkyrie identity and uses her sorcery to “persuade” the various female heroes to join her cause – the downfall of male supremacy! A reader should notice the ridiculousness of such a “cause,” especially one that entices several woman heroes to it! And it's just that. The Enchantress' spell is discovered, and the nasty Asgardian is shunted into another dimension as one of her spells is deflected back upon her. The ish *does* feature some cool action as the male heroes tangle with the new Masters of Evil.



But what about **Iron Man**? Iron Fans *may* be a bit disappointed with the number of Shellhead appearances in this volume. The Assemblage mostly goes into battle without its golden, armored member.

Shellhead *is* one of the featured Avengers in the epic stand-off between the **Squadron Sinister** and Earth's Mightiest, in issues #70-71. He does in **Dr. Spectrum** with his ultra-violet beam, natch!

IM next appears in #76 alongside the entire Assemblage in invading **Arkon's** extradimensional realm. And a *big* role he plays: Just as Arkon is about to annihilate our earth with a massive nuke, Arkon's old vizier appears to inform the barbarian that

Iron Man “devised an engine” that would once again provide life-giving light to their world!

In issue #79, IM makes a brief appearance as the Avengers take on the **Lethal Legion** (the Grim Reaper, Living Laser, Man-Ape, Swordsman and Power Man). Unfortunately, he and Thor go off on a wild goose chase in Greenwich Village while the rest of the team battle it out with the LL!

IM is fruitless again in issue #82 as the **Zodiac** capture him along with Thor, Capt. America and Quicksilver, leaving it to the “usual” Avengers of this time-frame (Vision, Scarlet Witch, Black Panther and Goliath/Hawkeye) to ace **Aries** and his henchmen.

I was hoping the Golden Avenger would be there to duke it out with the **Squadron Supreme** in issues 85-86, but he’s once again “behind the scenes” – operating a dimensional transport device to bring home his fellow Assemblers from Earth-S!

In #88, Iron Man (along with every other Avenger) makes a brief appearance in battling **Hulk** nemesis **Psyklop**. (The continuation of this tale, HULK #140, is included in the volume, but one may wonder precisely why since the Avengers are hardly even in it.)

AVENGERS #89 begins what is perhaps the team’s greatest-ever tale: **The Kree-Skrull War!** Iron Man doesn’t make an appearance until issue #93 (don’t count the last few panels of #92 – those are Skrulls), but until then you can marvel at the machinations of **Ronan the Accuser** and **Kree Sentry 459!**

Speaking of #93, the ultra-phenomenal **Neal Adams** begins art chores, and Hank Pym (as Ant Man) takes a trip into the Vision’s innards! (A clear homage to the then-recent sci-fi flick “**Fantastic Voyage.**”) IM, Thor and Cap later do battle with the Skrulls that first-ever appeared in a Marvel comic (FANTASTIC FOUR #2) in an effort to find their fellow Avengers and Capt. Marvel.

Hey! Issue #94’s finale has Shellhead tackling S.H.I.E.L.D. **Mandroids** ... using his jet-skates! To quote IM himself, “*Wild!*”

AVENGERS #95-97 are the climax of the Kree/Skrull War, quite fitting editions in which to end this magnificent volume. Iron Man plays a significant role in the whole deal (the space battle scenes in #96 are, in a word, “**outtasight!**”), as does stalwart sidekick **Rick Jones!** Jones, as you may (should!) know, was the focal character in **Kurt Busiek’s AVENGERS FOREVER** which intertwined directly with key aspects of the K/S War.

Tidbit Department: AVENGERS #96 is the first cover to sport the now-classic “Avengers” logo that has the “A” with the horizontal arrow through it containing the word “The” (as in “The Avengers”). And AVENGERS #91 is the first ish to feature the yellow, square word balloons for the Vision’s voice.

Speaking of the **Kree/Skrull War**, yes, there is now a trade paperback available collecting the relevant issues – well worth the buy. However, you may not be aware that Marvel had *already* reprinted key issues of the K/S War back in **1983** in a two-issue “special edition” set! These two editions, unlike the recent TPB, begin with #95,



utilizing original “flashback” sequences to bring the reader up to #95’s



establishment. I especially loved prologue writer **Alan Zelenetz**’ opinion of the K/S War on the inside cover. It’s rather lengthy, but here it is ‘cause it’s so damned cool:

FROM BEYOND THE GALAXY TO WITHIN THESE PAGES

As far-out and fantastic as movies are these days, with extraterrestrials and barbarians walking around any number of outer space worlds, you would think there’s nothing beyond the capabilities of filmmaking. Well, consider what you hold in your hands – Marvel’s **Kree-Skrull War**, originally presented in *The Avengers* a decade ago. It’s an epic so *grand*, only the comics could bring it to you.

I’m serious. Even in this age of megabuck movie-making, the price tag for a production of this magnitude would probably trail its digits from the Milky Way (where Avengers Mansion can be found, by the way) to the Greater Magellanic Cloud (home galaxy of the Kree empire) and back. *Think of it.* Special effects lights years ahead of Skywalker and company – we’re talking the *devolution* of Alaskan ice tundras into savage tropics, a fantastic voyage through the innards of an android, shape-shifting aliens, Omni-Wave Projectors (don’t ask what they do, just savor the ominousness of the name), holograms, gleaming starships of galactic empires, mandroids in titanium-powered

exoskeletons, a Great Refuge of Inhumans, ethercraft armed with nuclear warheads, the clash of intergalactic armadas in the gulfs of outer space. And the *location shots* – from Cape Canaveral to New York City, the Tibetan Himalayas, the Milky Way, the Kree and Skrull galaxies, the Negative Zone. And then, *consider* the number of wardrobe people you’d need to costume all those super heroes. And not just *any* super heroes, mind you, but Earth’s mightiest, the cream of the crop, the *Avengers* – Thor and Iron Man and Captain America, the Vision and Scarlet Witch, all assisted by a then vigorous Captain Marvel (may he rest in peace).

Like I said, there’s not a studio that could touch this property – why, we’re talking maybe jillions here. (Super heroes don’t come at union wages, y’know, not to mention what the SPFX department would be asking for.) But – and say *Amen* to it – there’s no need to budget jillions when your production’s four-color. Simple as that. It just doesn’t cost a bundle to transport cast and crew around the globe and into far-off galaxies when you can cover the distance with the turn of a page. So the only limits are those of the unfettered imagination., and of such artistic license are great things born – like the **Kree-Skrull War** of 1971-72 re-presented here and well-deserving of the reprint honors. For this grand space opera, this sprawling, cracking-good multi-part adventure yarn – whose theme is nothing less than “two galaxies battlin’ it out for the Earth” (to quote spade-callin’ Rick Jones, a key participant therein) – this is comics at its most epic. This is the source. Go on, *look* at these pages. Artists Neal Adams, John Buscema and Tom Palmer at the top of their form, eh? Joined by Roy Thomas whose highly acclaimed eight-year stint on **The Avengers** reaches its peak right here. The original version of this saga took the public by storm, and now a decade later it’s become myth and legend (as well as a tongue-twister of infinite subtlety. I wish I had a silver dollar for every time I’ve called it the “Skree-Krull War”).

Okay, I’ve had my say. Here’s **Avengers #89-97, the Kree-Skrull War** – an epic so *grand*, only the comics could bring it to you!

I nabbed these two mags as a college sophomore!

Also, 1993 saw the printing of a collection titled **THE GREATEST BATTLES OF THE AVENGERS**, which included a reprint of issue #79 – “Lo, The Lethal Legion” – also seen in *ESSENTIAL #4*. Other “greatest battles” included in this TPB are #54-55 (against the **Masters of Evil**), #160 (against **Ultron**, and one of my personal favorite Avengers issues ever), Annual #7 (**Thanos**), and Annual #10 (**Mystique and the Brotherhood of Evil Mutants** ... which is **Rogue’s** first-ever appearance anywhere).

Like **Daredevil**? If even a little, you *have* to pick up **Frank Miller** and **David Mazzucchelli**'s "**Born Again**" saga. I had the original issues way back when (who knows what happened to 'em), but I just picked up the TPB which collects the relevant issues. To me, this is the *best* DD yarn ever, no two bits about it. And lo and behold, I had forgotten that **Iron Man** actually makes an appearance in this tale! When the **Kingpin**-hired **Nuke** tears up the New York neighborhood of Hell's Kitchen, the **Avengers** appear to restore order. Shellhead charges a repulsor and orders the Man Without Fear to back away from Nuke. And, IM is donned in my fave armor, the **Silver Centurion**, natch!

One more item: I caught Miller in an historical falsehood. When **Capt. America** is searching a database for info on Nuke, he ponders what could have been if he hadn't been the only "super soldier": *If only it had gone differently, he thinks. If only the serum and the mind that held it had not been destroyed ... we could have won the war with clean hands – not with millions of innocents murdered by atomic fire* (emphasis mine). Millions? The bombs that destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki both killed less than 100,000 each when they exploded. Tens of thousands more perished soon after from burns and radiation; however, the total dead from the first atom bombs isn't even close to *one million*, let alone *millions*.

Hey, remember those wacky **roller skates** that the original gold armor had? No, not the boot skates – the skates that popped out of the **armor's back and heels??** TALES OF SUSPENSE #44's splash page features it prominently as 'ol Shellhead is "shimmying" 2,000 years into the past to protect **Cleopatra** (of all people) from **The Mad Pharaoh!** Think you've never seen that armor feature again? Well, they *did* reappear, and fairly recently. I was recently rereading some volume 3 AVENGERS, and in #38 page 10, there's IM in his Classic Red and Gold Armor working on a machine that'll warn the Assemblage of any attacks coming from other dimensions. *And there's the roller skates*, just like those in ToS #44!! IM rolls out from the under the device to partake of a Jarvis-brought snack. Is it any wonder that Kurt Busiek made use of this armor tool? Nope...



IT CAME FROM THE DOLLAR BIN: *What If?* (vol. 1) #38, that is! This tri-story alternate *future* issue features a Vision & Scarlet Witch story by **David Michelinie**. It's 50 years in the future (from 1982, that is) and the Scarlet Witch is dying. As she and husband Vision plan her passing, Assembler **Jocasta** has a different idea. More on that in a sec.

Interestingly, the Iron Man on the team of 2032 is **Michael Rhodes** – son, of **Jim Rhodes**! He informs the reader that Tony Stark had died of a



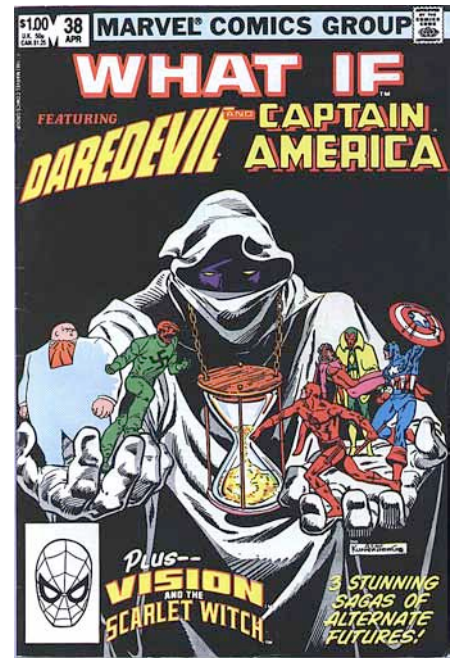
heart attack in this reality, and that his dad was done in by a stroke. Check out that funky IM

armor! I immediately nicknamed it that “Earth X Daredevil armor”!! Pretty shabby for a suit of IM armor 30 years hence, huh?

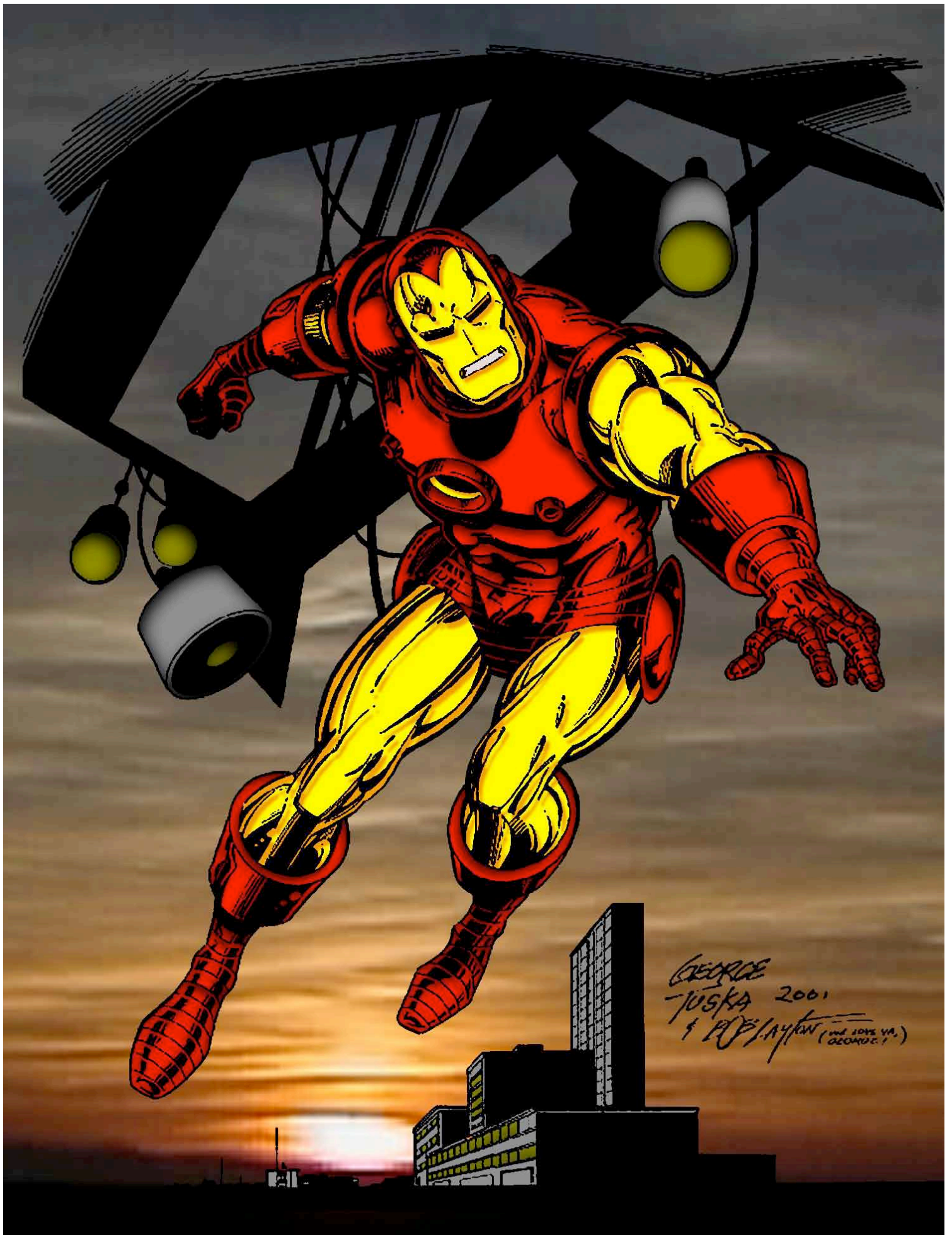
Also neat was Michelinie including Arthur Dearborn on Earth's Mightiest – otherwise known to Shellhead readers as **Sunturion**!

Back to Jocasta: She hatches a plan to switch her mind with Wanda's, thereby allowing the Witch to live on indefinitely – in artificial body love with the Vizh! And guess what? This mind-switch then makes Iron Man the only mortal Avenger on that team!

The other vignettes in the book pretty much suck – a Cap story where he has to rescue his family from the Red Skull's son; and lastly, Matt Murdock serves as an aide to **Vice-President Foggy Nelson**, who's about to greet new Russian premier **Natasha Romanov**. Oh, DD manages to finally “off” the **Kingpin** in this tale.







One of our big time Iron Man fans scored an interview with none other than John Jackson Millar, who brought us the extremely promising, but short-lived “Best Defense” storyline which put Tony Stark in the position of Secretary of Defense of the United States.

AI: Let’s start with the vital stats for John Jackson Miller: age, interests outside comic books, first comic read, currently reading, etc.

JJM: I’m in my thirties, with interests in games (that being the other half of my day job), history, and political geography. I used to joke that I went to grad school to learn to play war games better. And comics, of course, which I’ve been collecting since I’ve been reading. I think my first comic book was a Carl Barks Uncle Scrooge reprint, which is not a bad place to start. I’m not reading as many comics now as I did when I was reviewing them for Comics Buyer’s Guide, but I tend to sample a lot of the stuff that still comes across my desk.

AI: NFL, NBA or NHL?

JJM: Spot for baseball? I’d have to say NFL, these days.

AI: Favorite team?

JJM: This is where the trouble begins. I was a lifelong Dallas Cowboys fan until I moved to Wisconsin and was told by the locals never to wear that sweatshirt again if I valued my safety. I’m much more of a partisan for the college game, where I root for alma maters Tennessee and LSU, which is confusing whenever they play each other...

AI: We know that your first professional work was your Crimson Dynamo submission to Epic. How did you go about scoring the Iron Man writing gig?

JJM: My scripts were circulated there during the Epic process, and Tom Brevoort was in the process of looking at Iron Man’s future. He asked if I had any ideas for taking the character in a new direction – and the storyline that is “The Best Defense” came to mind almost immediately. The storyline has the feel of being a “bold, new direction” of the sort that appeals to newer fans – while, in fact, being a return to a past crossroads to follow a road not taken, which I hope appeals to the longtime readers.

AI: Was Crimson Dynamo your first professional comic work?

JJM: Certainly on this scale. I’ve been active in the small press since high school, both as an artist and writer, and I’ve consulted with friends in the publishing end of thing for a long time. While I hadn’t had much time or energy left over for comics writing since joining Krause Publications, my responsibilities have evolved into more administrative ones, giving me more of a need for a creative outlet.

AI: Why comics?

JJM: Why not? There’s a strong appetite for them, and I don’t expect that to change.

AI: Do you try to reflect current events and hot topics in your writing?

JJM: Current events, yes, although perhaps not “hot topics” – at least, not in the “Law and Order” sense of fictionalizing the headline of the week. The evolution of the military during the war on terror is something that naturally would affect Iron Man’s life, and so I’ve chosen that topic. I have always valued comics that were set in real places and dealt with real issues – as long as they were entertaining. Learning a little something in the process just added to the bargain.

AI: Favorite character?

JJM: Iron Man, and I’m not pandering here. I think the character appealed to the hard-science-fiction fan in me, and I also kind of liked the fact that his corner of the universe was self-contained enough that I had a shot at following it all. There have been more than 2,000 X-Men comics versus maybe 1,000 with Shellhead (if you count Avengers) – that’s easier on the memory.

AI: Villain?

JJM: Crimson Dynamo! Seriously, with villains for some reason it depends a lot more on who’s writing them at any one time.

AI: Team?

JJM: Been a lot of different ones there, too – depends on the year. The Micheline/Layton period was my favorite, though.

AI: Story?

JJM: There’s a loooooong list! Limiting it just to Iron Man, there was my first issue, “Demon in a Bottle,” along with several other Michelinie pieces, including the Suntuirion, Camelot, and Stark Wars stories; there’s a veritable raft of other Lee, O’Neil, Busiek, and others’ stories I could add to that list.

AI: In other interviews, you’ve said you are shooting for a Tom Clancy feel for Iron Man. Tell us a little about this approach to writing. How do you go about coming up with story ideas?

JJM: Some will say that Clancy is just about the details – a “count-the-rivets” approach to describing military hardware that goes into great detail. I think, beyond that, there’s often a “big idea” – stealing a submarine, a Sino-Soviet war, whatever – that makes for a solid springboard. And then he gives us a sizable cast of characters whose lives seem completely unrelated in the beginning, but whose lives all collide in the end. There’s a limit to how well you can do all of those things you can do in a 120-page comics storyline, but I can at least go for a little of that flavor. As for story ideas, some come from current events – but some, too, come from history – things I’ve read about which can be rethought” as fiction. That goes for the title, too: Iron Man #73 draws upon how a recent event – Tony’s revelation that he’s Iron Man – has affected a decision that is now far in the past, his move to get out of munitions.

AI: Does this mean that Tony Stark and his cast will dominate the spotlight, or will his time in the armor be equally divided? If the first installment of “The Best

Defense” is any indication, your stories tend to be very character and plot driven. Will this remain a focus? And how will ferrophiles craving Shellhead in action be sated?

JJM: “The Best Defense” introduces a problem that Tony Stark has created for himself as Iron Man – and how he initially perceives that the only way he can solve it is not as Iron Man, but as Tony Stark. So, yes, we’ll be seeing more of Tony early in this sequence, although there is certainly action of one kind or another all the way through, including an extended, breakneck armor action sequence that really will put the letterer through his sound-effects paces. Beyond that, I would like to suggest that the center of the series has always been Tony Stark, whatever the armor looked like or who was in it. Would such a man would stop with designing one kind of mechanical masterpiece, or would there be other kinds of vehicles he could imagine for his personal arsenal? These are the kinds of questions I’d like to explore. How many ways could a Tony Stark remake his world?

AI: You seem to have a great respect for Iron Man/Marvel’s (past) continuity. Observant readers can spot many nods to Tony /Shellhead’s past if they look. Do you feel you have a solid grasp on Iron Man and his history?

JJM: Well, I’ve read it all, anyway, and while some of that was 20 years ago, now, I have tried to refresh on the key points. There are the occasional questions that defy my research capabilities, though! I can’t for the life of me figure out where Yvette Avril is supposed to have died – Peter Sanderson listed her as deceased in “Iron Man: The Legend.” If any of your readers can find that one, let me know. It took me a week to figure out where Abe Zimmer died, even though I certainly read that one the first time...

AI: How about Iron Man? Many writers see the two as somewhat dichotomous characters.

JJM: Oh, I don’t, at all. Particularly now that the secret identity is out, but it never really seemed before as if Tony was really assuming a separate persona as Iron Man. Their posturing was similar. Bruce Wayne or Clark Kent might have assumed a different manner over the years to put people off the scent, but Tony and Shellhead seemed equally strong-willed. I think Cap was always the same way – the same guy in or out of the suit. There were certainly stories where Tony would wind up looking at that helmet like it was someone else ruining his life, but that never seemed to me to run very deep, psychologically. How can you have the secret, extroverted side of someone who’s already a world-class extrovert?

AI: Let’s play “word association: Tony Stark?”

JJM: Genius. Extrovert. Envied. Paranoid, and smart to be so.

AI: Iron Man?

JJM: Magic; genius realized. The extreme manifestation of both genius and extroversion.

AI: You've made reference to your respect for Tony Stark's supporting cast. Recent writers have returned Happy & Pepper to the fore. Will you continue to make use of them? How about others- who specifically?

JJM: Yes, I'll be hitting a wide range of Tony's history for supporting characters. You'll see names from every period in one way or another. All introduced such that current readers won't have homework to do – but such that I can also present the series to someone who stopped reading 10 years ago, 20 years ago, or 30 years ago – and say, “look, this is an extension of what you remember.” I'm trying to be cautious only to draw on characters in a meaningful way; anyone can simply parade names from a list on stage. I want to be careful to remember how Tony left those relationships with those people. On that score, obviously, recent storylines have strained Tony's relationships with Happy and Pepper. Naturally, we might expect that a little space might be good for them in the near term – though they are certainly a part of my overall scheme of things.

AI: Any chance a non-powered Rhodey will return in a supporting role, despite his status in Christopher Priest's The Crew?

JJM: Anything's possible.

AI: You've hinted around, in several other interviews, that you hold the Micheline/Layton issues in high regard, as well as the old Tales of Suspense stories. How will this “flavor” your run on the book?

JJM: Clearly “The Best Defense” is the “Stark Wars” – later called the Armor Wars – dilemma, seen through a different prism and with much different results. Iron Man can steal back his technology from the Russians and from S.H.I.E.L.D. – but what if it's his own country's military, currently engaged in life-or-death battles around the globe? Is that a problem that Tony Stark has to solve as Tony Stark? It could be. Or maybe not – you'll have to read to find out!

AI: How do you, as well as Marvel, feel fan response has been in regards to "Best Defense"? Artistically? Your take on Tony, et al?

JJM: The response has been very favorable – particularly to the way we've blended the character's history with current events. It's been a tricky balancing act. You can't acknowledge everything that's ever happened to Tony Stark – I've read it all and am still fuzzy on whole years – but you can find enough material for answering the question, “If Tony Stark really existed and went up for this job, what might happen?” It was always intended that this man was taken very seriously while out of uniform. He's huge; he's on the speed-dial for presidents and CEOs alike. The dynamics of “Best Defense” – wherein, for official Washington to take him seriously, he'd have to stay in the three-piece suit for a while – really gave us the chance to showcase that part of the character. He's a towering figure as a civilian as well as an action hero, and if anything this storyline bulks up that part of the character.

AI: Any truth to the rumor that a showdown with the Titanium Man is looming? What about other Iron Man villains/staples?

JJM: Ah, the mysterious Titanium Man. The new one didn't say much, last time, did he? Look for him where Tony least expects him – which will be in #83 this May. We'll get to hear what he has to say this time! Both before and after that, there'll be two characters returning that will be of special significance to Iron Man's longtime readers.

AI: General comments on artist who is filling-in for Jorge?

JJM: Phillip Tan is doing "The Deep End," a four-parter running biweekly through April and May. And we'll probably see Adi Granov, who's been doing the covers, taking a shot at interiors somewhere along the way.

AI: Any hints on future storylines for Iron Man? Crimson Dynamo?

JJM: Nothing new on Dynamo, though he does come up in #79 – putting the Epic series once and for all in Marvel continuity. The best hint I can give on Iron Man is to read #78 when it comes out – the last issue of "The Best Defense" – and consider all the different possibilities it opens up. There are some obvious ones – and some less obvious ones – and I'm going to address several of them. That really was always the plan: Come up with a new spin on the Armored Avenger – and see where it goes from there.

AI: Many fans think that the past several authors have not portrayed the armor at its peak. What is your opinion? What is your take on the armor's power level?

JJM: I have to admit that recent armors have displayed abilities that I haven't entirely understood or remembered, and I worry that some readers feel like they're in the same boat. With Spider-Man, it's pretty simple: Sticks to walls, web-shooters, spider-sense, strength – check. With Iron Man, the ability list is so long few can catch them all. As, again, a fan of hard science fiction, what I would like to do is try to describe the armor and its abilities in compelling ways such that the list sticks with people. I also worry that some bits, like the armor leaping on his body, look so fanciful that they break the mood a little. I have him use that in some typical, everyday situations, and it simply looks like it's from Mars. Now, that's OK – he should look a little alien and beyond the rest of us, that's the whole idea- But there's always the question of how much is too much. I don't want to invoke Clarke's Law or comic-book physics for everything. So, yes, I'd like to move towards an arsenal where the abilities are more spelled out, and at least consistent with each other in terms of level of technology. If some of his tech is 22nd Century and some of its 32nd Century, I think that's a reason to take another look.

AI: Why do you think Iron Man has endured as a character, with such a die-hard fan base, for almost 40 years?

JJM: Armor-All. It protects against rust. Seriously, good stories plus a strong character who, unlike some super-heroes, actually could happen. That's a strong combination.

AI: What's your take and/or comment(s) on the whole "losing the secret identity" thing that seems to be in vogue at Marvel?

JJM: I'll admit that Tony's secret identity seemed to be a forced issue to me at times, over the years; he built it – who doubted that he might have, himself, tried it out? I have to assume that the public response to his revelation was something less than shock. I have to assume even the people who were in the crowd the day Tony trotted out the Life Model Decoy of himself still thought this guy must put his own armor on once in a while. I mean, if it's really as safe as he says it is, wouldn't you? Some have said Tony's secret helped to protect his businesses financially – such that Wall Street wouldn't spasm every time he went off into space. While that's logical, the step of keeping Iron Man around as bodyguard completely defeats that purpose. It simply doubled the number of lunatics gunning for Stark or his assets. It's not just Kathy Dare and the Spymaster breaking in, it's guys from "Acts of Vengeance," too.

So reading a lot of those old stories, I have to think that whenever both Tony and Iron Man were in town, that Stark stock was a "sell" and insurance companies were a "buy"! While fans will be debating the move for years (just as we debate everything else), I do have to say that the loss of Tony's secret identity has provided me with some springboards I wouldn't otherwise have had. I appreciate having the chance to explore them.

AI: It seems that the entertainment industry, as a whole, is becoming more networked, some would even say incestuous, (i.e. comic and video game related television series, movies, mass market paperback tie-ins, etc.) what is your short-term and long-term take on this conglomeration?

JJM: While I certainly understand the financial interests involved, I've long written that the comics MUST be seen to remain the creative engine that they've always been– the center of the universe for these properties. The comic book shouldn't feel like one more licensing appendage of any character – what happens there has to be important. It is OK for the media version to be out of step with the comics version in the details, even such big details as whether Superman is married – so long as they capture the essence of the character in question. Publishers understand very well that comics shouldn't shadow that trails behind the wider-circulation version, I'm glad to say. We may see comics' logos changing to match the familiar version – and we may see special alternate versions of characters for the uninitiated. But then we initiate those people into a world that, while not identical, has been rewarding to the rest of us for years.

AI: It seems that all things comic related are ripe for development as television and/or movie deals, including our own favorite Armored Avenger. Do you think this is a healthy trend?

JJM: If it helps us bring those uninitiated people I mentioned into the fold – if it helps make the comic book affordable to readers and profitable to publish– absolutely. As Norm Peterson said, "If it doesn't raise the price of beer, what do we care?"

AI: Dream project? Future plans?

JJM: I'm on one now, and I hope to be at it for a while. Thanks for the chance to talk about it!

AI: Any final words for the ferrophiles?

JJM: While I've been broadening my writing horizons the past couple of years, it was a thrill not just to be asked to provide my take on one of my favorite comics characters, but to get such a warm reception from so many fellow longtime fans. I do have a busy schedule ahead of me (I can't get into detail, but just how busy will be apparent in the coming weeks), so readers can definitely expect to see more of my work in the future. I'll keep in touch -- and thanks to all of Shellhead's fans for their support!

Best, John Jackson Miller.

AI: Thanks to you, J.J. We appreciate your obvious love & reverence for Shellhead. We'll, I'm outta here ferrophiles. I've got track down this Mark Rickett's guy and see what he has in store for Shellhead.

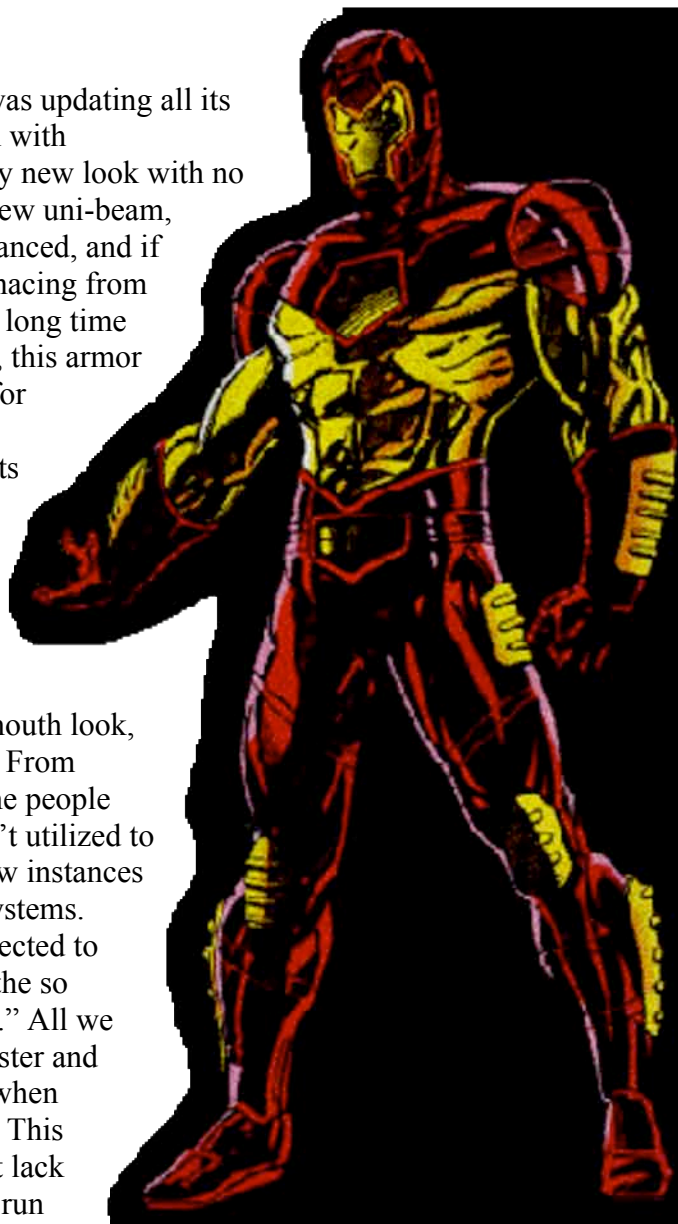
OPENING THE VAULT: ARMOR REVIEWS

by Chaos
(aka, Jordan Weigler)

Armor: Modular Armor
Designer: Kevin Hopgood
Debut: Volume 1 #300

The Good:

At a time when Marvel was updating all its characters, Iron Man got his turn with the Modular armor. A completely new look with no mouth piece and “pants” and a new uni-beam, this new design looks pretty advanced, and if drawn the by the right artist, menacing from the lack of mouth. Instead of the long time fully integrated weapon systems, this armor can be swapped piece for piece for different sub systems, adding a unique twist to the design and lots of potential. The design was portrayed as pretty powerful, definitely a step up from the telepresence even.



The Bad:

Some don't like the no-mouth look, or the over all feel of the design. From certain angles I can see how some people see it as a boring design. It wasn't utilized to it's potential, and outside of a few instances we never really saw a swap of systems. Frankly, through the series I expected to see different gauntlets or boots, the so called “mission specific systems.” All we really ever saw was the Hulk Buster and two shoulder mounted cannons when Vor/Tex took over Tony's body. This armor could have been great, but lack of utilization paired with a short run never gave it the chance.

Personal Thoughts:

Tied for my favorite armor. I love the pants (I hate the “underwear” look) and no mouth as I felt it gave the design a very advanced looked. I loved the idea of being able to attach weapons or new systems, so it had the potential to be a War Machine suit if needed (which sadly it never was). This armor really deserved more than 12

issues (Force Works or not), and in my opinion, should have been around for a long time. I was very disheartened that this suit wasn't in it for the long run like it should have been, and my stomach curled when I saw it's replacement.

Chaos' Personal Ratings:

Originality: 8/10 no mouth and pants, plus the return of a triangular uni-beam

Style: 10/10 different but you can still tell its Iron Man, very modern and streamlined

Over All: 10/10

Armor: Grell Armor

Designer: Mike Grell

Debut: Volume 3 #50

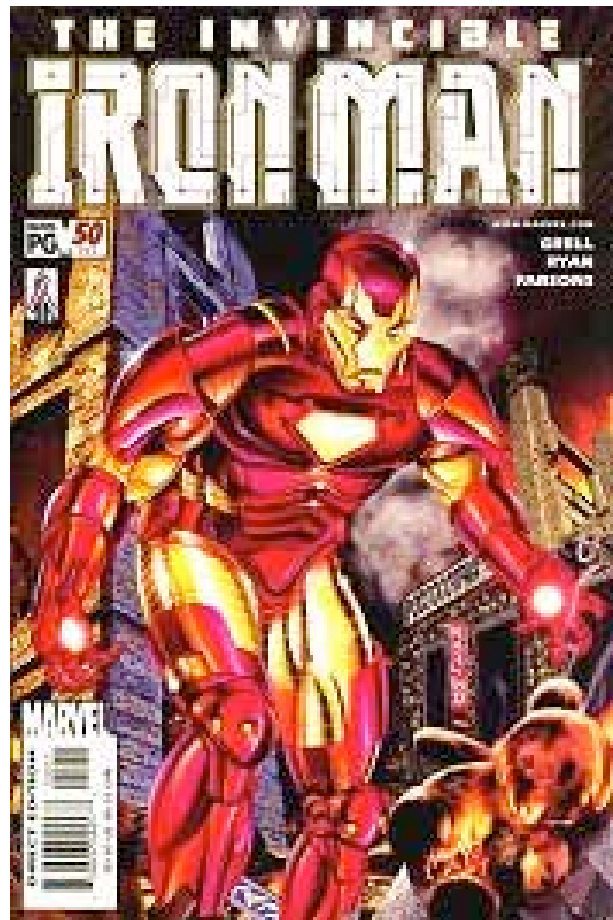
The Good:

This armor is one of the few that has the "complicated" look going for it, and Grell and Ryan made it work. It is able to stay along the lines of the past armors, while changing enough to make sure it's not just a rehash of a past suit. The updated version that had the smooth thighs instead of the tubes from the Reborn armor definitely helped, as the original version seemed indecisive. I think this suit fit into Ryan's style very well.

The Bad:

At points it almost seems like a snap together armor; with the overlapping pieces more like attachments rather than an actual part of the armor. The original mix of tubes/smooth section detracted from the design until it went to just smooth. Unfortunately, Grell never portrayed this armor as powerful, at times making it about as advanced as the original red and golds (a building on fire too hot for the armor?! Just 45 issues ago he was near a volcano!) Put simply, the armor's biggest problem was the writers who felt the need to make sure the "Invincible" tag no longer applies to Iron Man.

Personal Thoughts:



All in all, I would say this (the tubeless version) is my third favorite armor (behind War Machine and Modular). I really like this complicated look, and I think the shoulders, legs, helmet and torso was done very nicely. It has some elements of older armors (such as the gauntlets and hip power packs) that make sure the armor isn't way out there like the Prometheus. I thought this armor could have been used in a much better manner. (Note: the Lucas version will be reviewed later).

Chaos' Personal Ratings:

Originality: 8 first armor with a full complicated look

Style: 9 has an advanced feel, nice change of pace with shoulders and boots

Over All: 9/10 (non-tube version)

Armor: Jorge Lucas Armor

Designer: Jorge Lucas

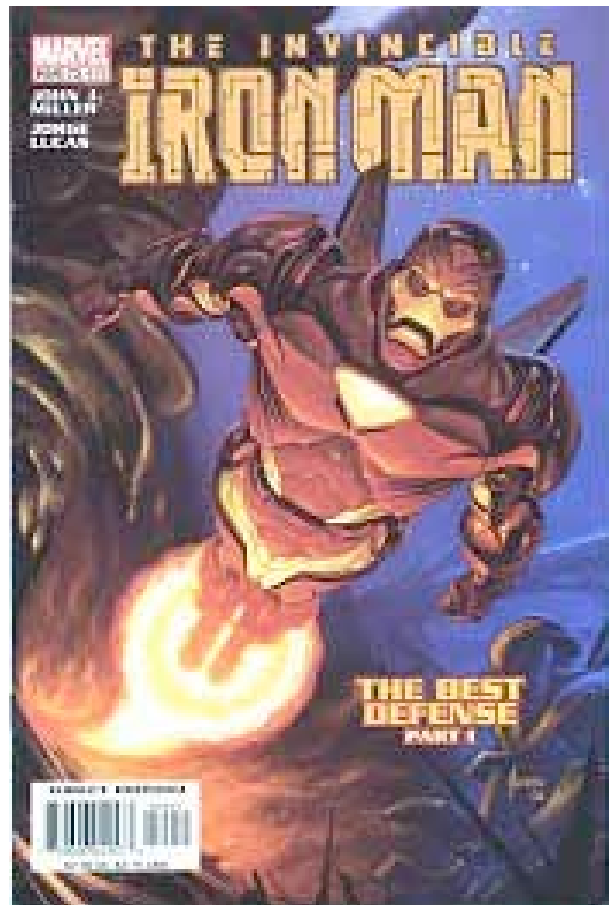
First Appearance: Volume 3 #73

The Good:

Probably the best thing about this armor is the realistic feel it has. The "plated" look of overlapping pieces gives a lower technology feel, but one that seems more plausible than the standard flexible mesh of the past armors. It also gains a more streamlined look and only the shoulders and face masks looked as if they are attachments.

The Bad:

Its strength also seems to be its weakness. The suit doesn't look very advanced at all, more like a mix between knight's armor and IM. Looking at past armors, it doesn't seem like something Tony would really design in my opinion. The eyes (at least the way Adi Granov draws them), look out of place, even like small screens at points. It's reminiscent of classic sci-fi.



Personal Thoughts:

I really don't like this version of the armor. I don't care for the plated look, and the way artists have drawn it makes the armor look "fat" (the exception the cover by Pat Lee for issue #86). I think the face looks too terminator-ish, and I just don't care for anything about it really. A lot probably has to do with me not liking the style of any of the artists since Ryan on the book. And I admit, if the armor was drawn constantly like Lee did, I would love it.

Originality: n/a (redesign of Grell)

Style: 4

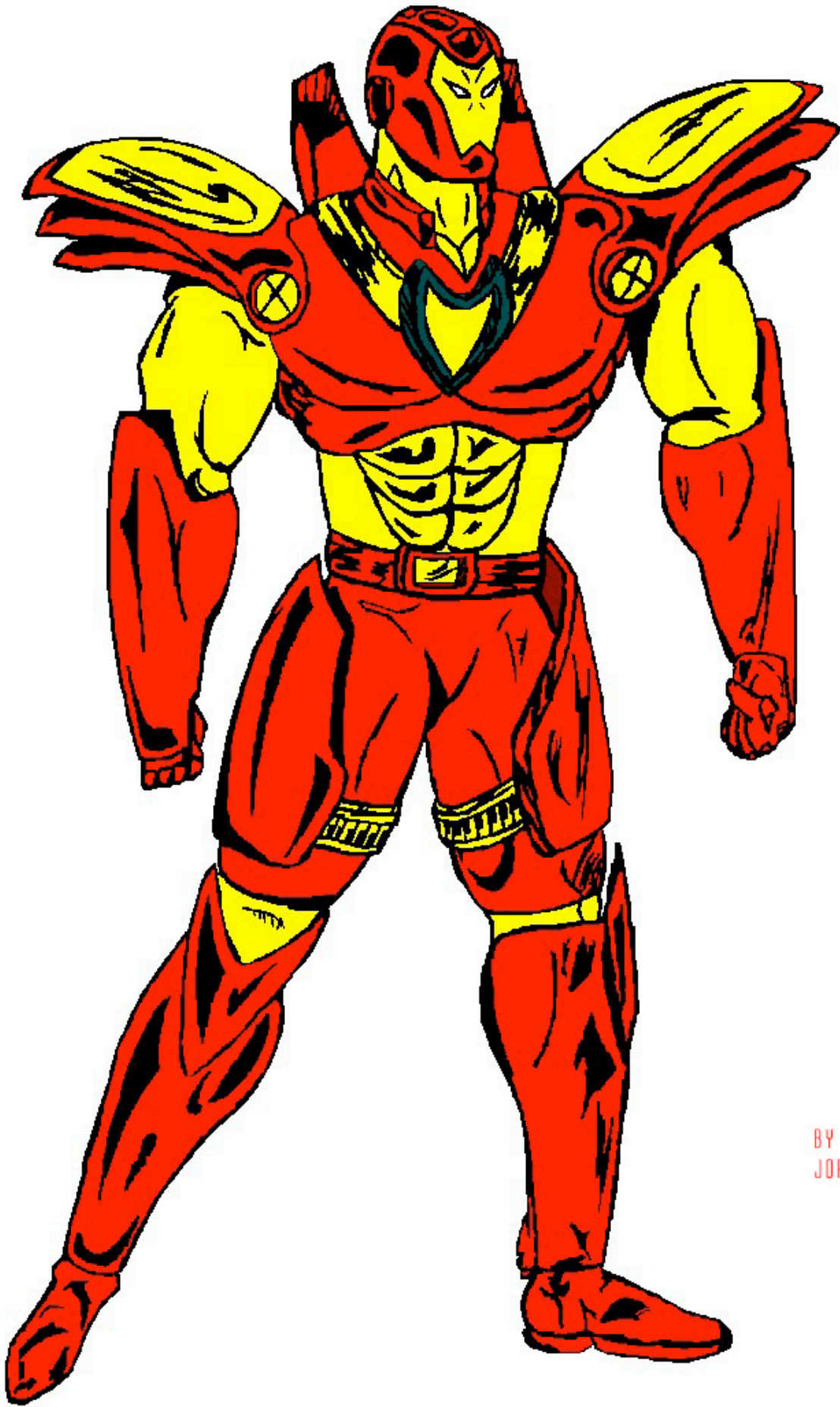
Over All Rating: 4/10 (Lee version 8/10)

About the Ratings:

Originality: how original is the design? Is it completely new, or just a rehash of a past suit? Are any of the reused parts redone/upgraded?

Style: did the armor look good? Sleek and stylish or bulky and thrown together?

Over All: my over all rating and how highly I think of the design, which is not an average of the other two scores, but based on them.



BY
JORDAN WEIGLER

METAL HEAD
Movie, TV, Video and Gaming News
By Heath McKnight

This issue's Metal Head will be brief, but I want to stress that I post up movie, TV, video and gaming news almost daily at the Iron Man forums (<http://www.invincibleironman.com/forums/>), so stay up to date there!

As many of you now know, Marvel, Angry Films (who produced "From Hell" and other films) and New Line Cinema announced that Nick Cassavetes (son of legendary actor and director John Cassavetes) will re-write the current script by David Hayter (X-Men) and Alfred Gough and Miles Millar (Smallville) and direct the film.

Aside from extreme rage and jealousy that it isn't me, I feel Cassavetes may do a good job, but his most recent film is the atrocious "The Notebook" that my fiancée read the book to (she hated it) and we both saw the movie (against my wishes, of course. <grin>).

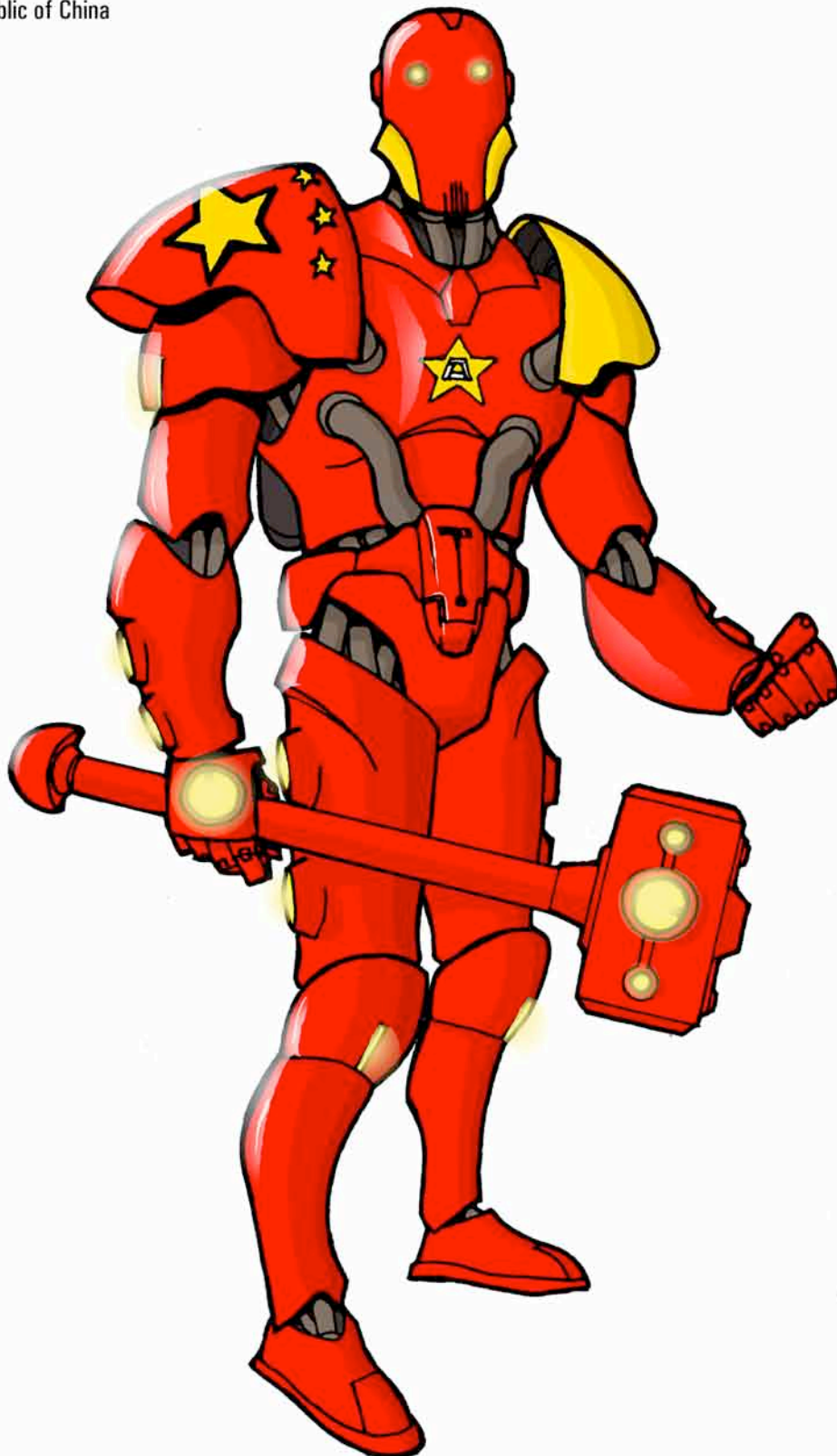
Let's just stay optimistic and hope for the best! It's really up to the casting, but we'll keep you up-to-date on the latest, and become the leading source for Iron Man movie news! Already on our boards, an actor is hoping to get a reading to play Tony Stark and Iron Man!

Also, a recent search on www.imdb.com (the Internet Movie Database) came up with a two screenwriters who used the names Anthony Stark and Tony Stark, respectively, when being credited on films. And of course, their nicknames are Iron Man!

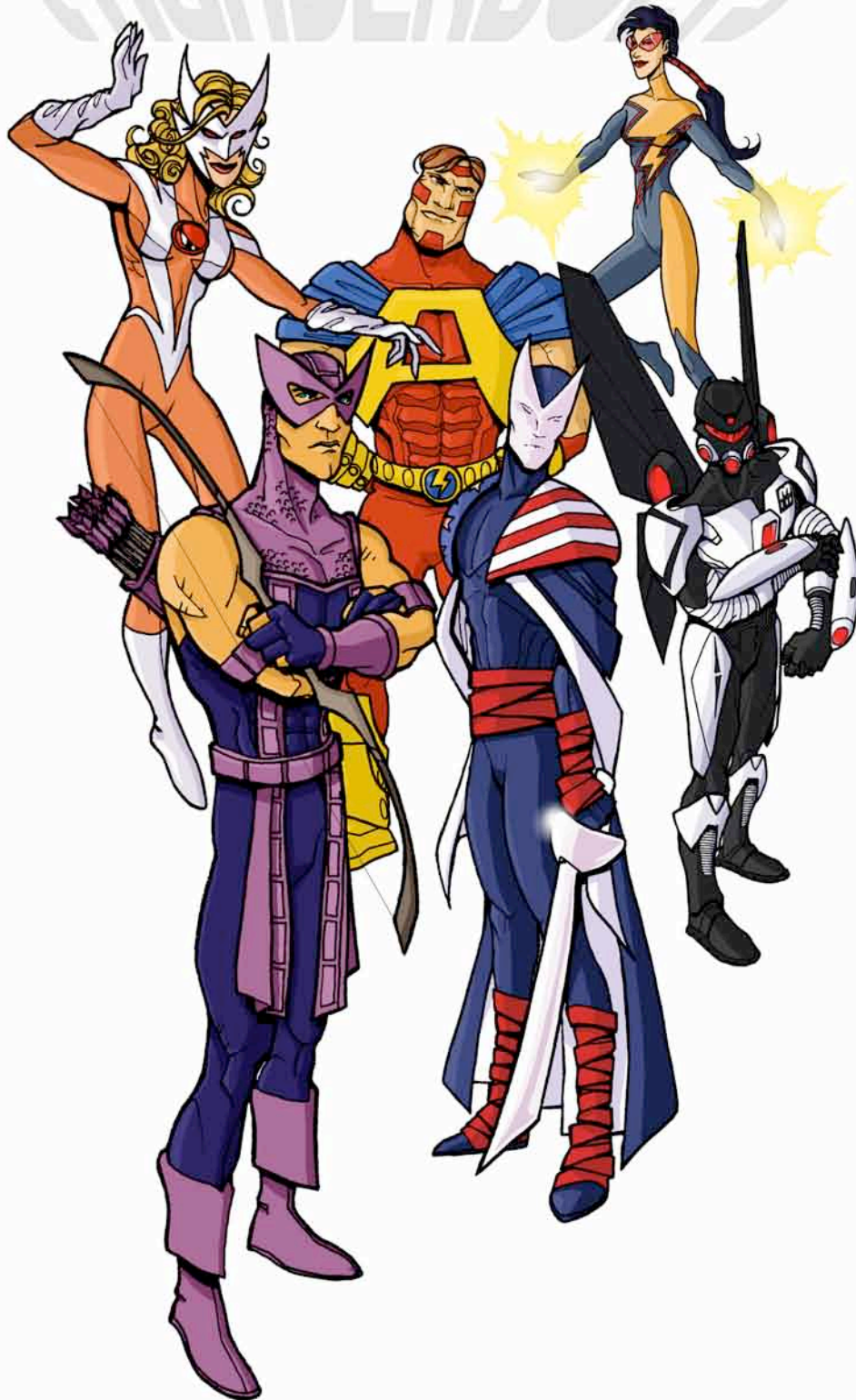
See ya next time!



Alternative Universe:
Iron Man
Peoples Republic of China



THE THUNDERBOLTS



THE WANDERINGS OF THE INVINCIBLE IRON MAN #17

By Cousture

Bonjour y'all and welcome one more time to my little corner of A.I.! If you're new to this fanzine, simply know that this column is dedicated to the many appearances of Iron Man in comics other than his own.

This time around, I'll be looking at Hulk comics featuring our beloved armored Avenger. For your information, know that IM was also seen in issues 278-279 of the Hulk series, along with just about everybody else in the Marvel universe. Since IM was just one of a zillion guest-stars in that story, I decided to not review them. Now that you know, let's hop to it.

* * *

THE INCREDIBLE HULK #283-284

“FOLLOW THE LEADER!” – May & June 1983

Story: Bill Mantlo

Art: Sal Buscema & Joe Sinnott

THE STORY:

The Hulk and the Avengers have teamed-up to locate the nefarious Leader. This is not the stupid savage Hulk by the way, it is rather Banner's intellect and personality in complete control of the Hulk's strength. So forget the whole «Hulk smash!» routine because there's none of that here.

Aboard an Avengers quinjet, the heroes locate the Leader's base orbiting the Earth: an enormous ship that was hidden to the world by the Leader's advanced technology. The Avengers proceed to board the ship only to discover that the Leader is nowhere to be found, but the heroes are greeted by the ship's computer: Omnivac. The artificial intelligence being begins to explain that the Leader has gone back in time to irradiate a young prehistoric humanity with gamma rays in order to create a world of slaves. The Avengers are then dispatched through time themselves.



But as they are sent through time, all memory of their true identity is erased. Iron Man finds himself at the head of an army of medieval knights in XIIth century England. The Hulk and the She-Hulk, unaffected by the Leader's trap, must travel through time to retrieve their comrades and stop the Leader before it's too late.

WHAT'S COOL:

If your brain has an OFF switch, you'll have fun reading this story. It's generally entertaining in a silly corny 80s kinda way. It's cool to see the Hulk reunited with the team he helped to found, even if it's just for a brief mission. The art is all right, typical of what early 80s Marvel comics generally looked like.

WHAT'S BAAAAAAD:

If your brain doesn't have the aforementioned OFF switch, you're not gonna like this one. If you actually try to make sense of the story, you will soon come to the conclusion that there is not much sense to be made of it. The Avengers have forgotten who they are but a couple of punches miraculously bring their memory back? Hawkeye thinks he's Robin Hood and all his followers buy it, even though he looks and sounds nothing at all like the real deal? Why does the Leader need to irradiate prehistoric humans with gamma rays in order to control them? No gamma-irradiated being in existence has shown greater obedience because of it, whether it be the Abomination, Doc Samson, Jennifer Walters or the Hulk himself! Silly. Not only is it a bunch of nonsense, the dialogues are also incredibly corny.

QUOTE:

Omnivac explains: **“And so the Leader departed; back through the ages to an era when a just-born Earth lays cradled in the cosmos. There, he intends to filter out all extraterrestrial sources of radiation EXCEPT gamma rays... and thus spawn a new breed of mankind over which his awesome intellect will reign supreme!”** (Thank Heavens they stopped making those insipid time-travel stories a long time ago.)

* * *

THE INCREDIBLE HULK #316

“BATTLEGROUND” – February 1986

Script, pencils, inks: John Byrne

Additional inks: Keith Williams

THE STORY:

Doc Samson has succeeded to separate Bruce Banner from the Hulk. Both beings now exist simultaneously in two different bodies. But while Banner lies in a comatose state in the hospital, the Hulk, completely devoid of humanity or reason, is on an incredibly destructive and mindless rampage through New Mexico.

Two familiar figures soon appear in the sky, determined to put an end to this madness: Iron Man (in his Silver Centurion armor) and Wonder Man. They attack the green goliath with everything they've got, but the beast keeps coming back for more. They are soon joined by Hercules and Namor but before the heroes can truly start to kick green butt, they are interrupted by Doc Samson. He asks the Avengers to let him take care of the situation since the Hulk is his patient and also because he is partly responsible for this crisis. Iron Man agrees, but before leaving, he warns Samson that the Avengers will keep a close eye on him, and that they will return in full force if he fails.

They do eventually return in issue 322 by the way, both East Coast and West Coast teams... but the issue was not particularly impressive, both story and art-wise, and since IM was just one of a very large group of guest-stars, I decided to skip it. Just know that it exists.

WHAT'S GOOD:

Great comic, great story, great art... John Byrne is truly an extraordinary comic book creator. The action is awesome, the suspense gripping and to top it all off, IM is wearing the coolest armor that was ever designed for him. An absolute must.

WHAT'S BAAAAAD:

As I have said before, I am a great fan of Byrne's work, but I don't like his depiction of the Silver Centurion armor. The domed helmet with no neck looks stiff, like R2-D2's head. When IM is flying, he can't even look where he's going!

QUOTE:

During the fight, IM tells Wondy: **“We've been pulling our punches, as we would if Bruce Banner were still trapped inside the Hulk. But that's no longer the case. There's nothing even remotely human in there anymore. NOTHING AT ALL!”**

* * *

THE INCREDIBLE HULK #361

«IRON TEARS» November 1989

Writer: Peter David

Penciler: Jeff Purves

Inker: Marie Severin

THE STORY:

The Hulk and Iron Man team-up against the Maggia! The Hulk's in it for the money, IM wants to know who is the «new» Madame Masque and who murdered Withney Frost! But things don't go as planned when Hydra and A.I.M. also crash the party to eliminate the competition!

WHAT'S GOOD:

Wow! Great book! Awesome story that perfectly fits with the war against the Maggia that was going on at the time in the pages of IM, great dialogues, delicious character interaction, tons of action, lots of twists and surprises... who would expect any less from the great Peter David?

WHAT'S BAAAAAAD:

The art is definitely not bad, but it's not great either. If only McFarlane or Keown had been around to draw this story... wow... that would've really been something.

QUOTE:

Banner says: **“You don't remember me, Mrs. Arbogast?”** She replies: **“Out of the thousands I've met on this job? No. Although most of them have been wearing shoes.”**

* * *

Well, that's it for now and for a while, folks. Not only am I no longer the assistant editor of this marvelous fanzine, but other engagements also force me to put this column on ice for the foreseeable future. Before I ride off into the sunset though, I just wanted to take this opportunity to say that working with Dave Huber for these past 5 years has been a wonderful and fun experience. Dave has been the heart and soul of A.I. for years, investing innumerable hours and megatons of energy in this fanzine and I thank him for that, for his friendship and for giving me the opportunity to offer my humble contribution. I would also like to congratulate and thank Heath and Vic, the new captains of this ship, for taking over and not letting this baby go the way of the dodo. Thanks also to all the IM fans that contributed over the years and made this fanzine so great.

As for me, well, I remain a faithful reader but I will be quiet for a while. I hope that all my little reviews have been **useful tips** to you. Know that my Wanderings of Iron Man web page will remain on-line and that contributor Scott Zachry and myself will be adding reviews from time to time so check it out at this address:

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

[d](#)

Bonne lecture!

ADVANCED IRON



Announcing:
The Comic Preservation Project
featuring Iron Man

What is it?

The CPP (Comic Preservation Project) is a true archival repository to keep alive the adventures of our favorite armored hero and to give access to the issues that most of us don't have any way of ever seeing.

What is it not?

This is NOT a 'pirate site' where people can just not buy this month's issue but just download it here. If you want the latest issue, support your local comic shop and go buy it. This is enforced in a few ways.

First, any issues posted must be at least a year old or older. For example, if it is now 2004, nothing published after Jan of 2003 would be posted. In this way, neither Marvel nor your local comic shop would feel absolutely ANY business impact at all.

Second, any issues made available will be viewable on screen only. All of them will be locked so you are unable to print.

Third, even if the print lock-out is broken, the resolution of every issue that is publicly available is will be suitable for viewing on your screen only.

What is the goal of this repository?

My hope is that once this repository is live, that it might spur even more sales of both current issues and past issues as well. A reader might read an issue online and decide that he must add it to his collection.

What if I want to contribute to the effort?

If you want to help in our preservation effort, we are always looking for individuals with a scanner, some issues featuring Iron Man, and a broadband connection to the 'net. Contact me at pmscpp@sbcglobal.net for details on how you can contribute.

Where will I find the CPP?

The CPP will be an added section to the already unparalleled Advanced Iron web site (<http://www.advancediron.com/>). The addition of this section will take the site light years beyond any other fan site on the web. Keep an eye on our web site for more information and announcements of when you can expect the project to come on line. Iron Man and other characters mentioned are copyrighted intellectual properties of Marvel Comics.