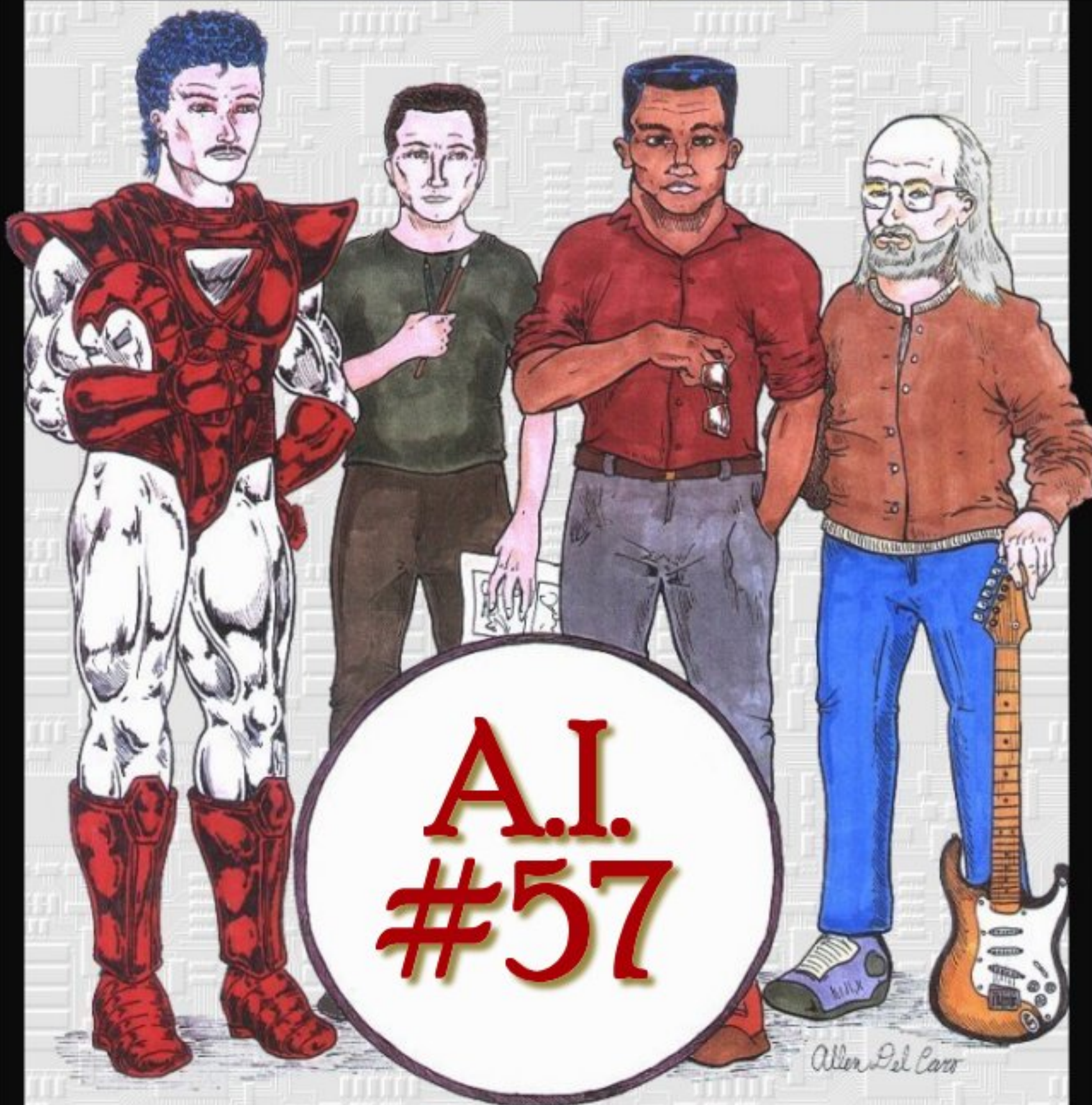


# ADVANCED TROOP



**SGT. SHELLHEAD'S  
SHRAPNELED-HEARTS CLUB BAND**

# HUBE'S SHELLHEADISMS

## IT'S A MATTER OF TASTE

I had an interesting tit-for-tat with **IRON MAN** inker **Sean Parsons** over at the **Iron Man Message Board** (or, as Iron Fans affectionately call it, the **IMMB!**). Sean indicated that he wasn't gonna hang around the IMMB anymore because – in a nutshell – **the amount of negativity was too high**. Sean specifically brought up lines written (or posted) which were quite analogous to what I had written in some of my issue reviews for my **IM Review website**.

Sean seemed particularly perturbed by the line **"...lose Parsons and I think the art will be better."** Yeah, I wrote that in one of my reviews. Now, what would *you* think I am referring to here? Would you infer that I want Sean to be unemployed and go hungry? Or, would you surmise that **I am not particularly fond of Sean's inks, and would prefer someone else to embellish [Michael] Ryan?** (It's the latter if you're stumped.) Sean thought the former. This seems kind of extreme to me. Why would I (or anyone else, for that matter) possibly wish ill of someone just because I am not fond of his inking style? **IT'S A MATTER OF TASTE.**



I loathe country music. (Sorry if I offend the few of you, er, those that *do* like it.) Does this mean I would wish ill fortune on, say, Travis Tritt due to my personal preference? No! C'mon, let's face it – those in the entertainment field have to realize that their work will not appeal to everyone. Sean Parsons' inks just don't appeal to me. I happen to like Michael Ryan's **"Heroes Reborn"** work more, mainly because the inking was not as intense as it is presently.

I pulled out some of Ryan's **"HR" AVENGERS** issues, wanting to see if *his* style had changed significantly in five-six years. (I kinda doubted it....five-six years isn't a whole lot of time to go through that big of a technique change. Heck, even **George Pérez'** approach in **AVENGERS** didn't change much over almost *thirty* years.) It hadn't. But the inks were lighter, finer, and in my opinion more complimentary to his pencils.

Big deal, right? Exactly! It's a matter of taste. I seem to be in the minority *anyway* regarding the art in the current **IM** run. For the record, Ryan isn't even close to being one of my fave artists. He is too cartoony, and although less so (in some cases much less so) than guys like **Keron Grant** and **Mike Weirigo**, Ryan isn't even close to be as "realistic" as dudes like "**Big**" **John Buscema**, **Dave Cockrum**, **Neal Adams** or even **John Byrne**. I like realistic depictions of the human (or super-human) figure in my comic books. It's just a matter of taste. Chill, Sean. (For the record, we asked Sean to comment more on this for this issue of A.I., but his workload was too large.)



Ryan art – current run, #58

## **COMICS AND POLITICS**

Geez, this topic could take up an entire issue of A.I. on its own! But the reason I deal with it here is because last week (as of this writing, that is – the week of Aug. 12) I was perusing the usual comics news sites looking for anything and everything related to **Iron Man**. One of these sites is the great **Comic Book Resources**, or CBR ([www.comicbookresources.com](http://www.comicbookresources.com)). Now look – when I hit comic news sites, I want comic news. What I DON'T want to read is a bunch of proselytizing about spurious political claims, especially when they have no apparent comic connection. It also helps when the writer has a semblance of a clue to what he's talking about.

It's like a sports radio station I listen to regularly, WIP-AM in Philadelphia. The 3:00 pm show features pundits Howard Eskin and Mike Missinelli, who also both have their respective Sunday TV sports shows. They know their sports, are entertaining and controversial at times with their opinions. However, on a slow day, they'll delve into some non-sports related topic – usually politics – and that's where they show the limits of their credibility. And, when I change the radio station.

Back to CBR. One of the contributors, **Steven Grant**, has a column titled "**Permanent Damage.**" On August 14, Grant decided (for whatever reason) to bring up a conspiracy theory dubbed the "**October Surprise.**" "Surprise" supposedly was when officials of the **1980 Ronald Reagan presidential**



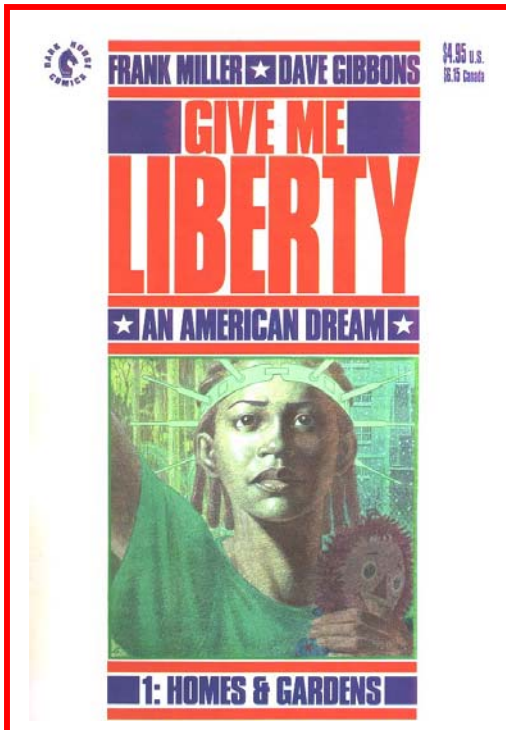
**campaign** secretly met with representatives of the **Iranian government** and agreed to not release 50+ American hostages held by Iran until *after* the 1980 election. This was supposed to “cement” Reagan’s victory since the 400+ day hostage crisis had virtually killed Carter politically.

The “Surprise” conspiracy theory has never been proven (for those old enough: why didn’t the notoriously anti-Reagan New York Times and Washington Post delve into this and expose it? It would have been as big – or bigger – than Watergate!), but you sure wouldn’t know it from reading Grant’s column. In it he states ***“...it was a much touted story, eventually ‘debunked’ by rhetoric more than anything else...”*** “Debunked by rhetoric??” Don’t you think that the onus is on one to go about PROVING such a theory, Steven, not for one to “debunk” a nutty speculation? Grant acts as if the “Surprise” is a given fact and its “opponents” have no case -- when it is indeed just the opposite.

Grant goes on to lament a possible attack on Iraq, and refers to President Bush as **“The Hand Puppet,”** invoking the usual liberal “conventional wisdom” that George W. is a complete moron who needs all his aides to guide him 100% of the time on a daily basis. (Grant would do well to compare GW’s college grades and GPA to Al Gore’s.) **Ronald Reagan** suffered the same fate. So did **Dan Quayle**. Why? It wasn’t for policy differences (which is the very essence of politics, after all). It was because they were caught on tape making slips of the tongue, goofy grammatical errors and the like. Thus, they are “dumb.” Who among you remembers **Dan Quayle’s “potatoe” gaffe?** Who remembers Reagan mumbling his way through his debates with Walter Mondale in ‘84? And, who can recall GW screwing up some phrase recently?

Does this make them “dumb?” Hardly. Anyone remember **Admiral James Stockdale?** He was **Ross Perot’s VP candidate** in 1992. He took on Quayle and Al Gore in a three-way debate prior to the ‘92 election. He sounded like a total and complete buffoon, while Quayle and Gore went to town (mostly on one another). But guess what? **Stockdale has a PhD in Philosophy.** Tell me how many “dumb” people attain such a degree...

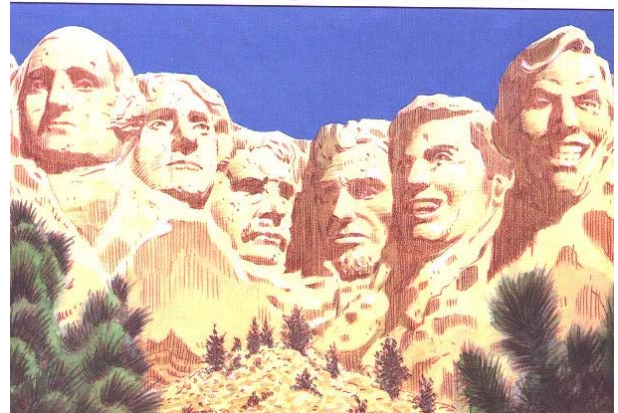
Familiar with a comic writer/artist by the name of **Frank Miller?** LOL...of course you are. Frank is quite political in his stories, usually taking a left-of-center point of view. But unlike Grant, who talked about politics for its own sake in a comics forum, Miller weaves his politics into the essence of his comics. I may not always agree – or like – what Miller has to say (and if I *really* don’t like it, I just don’t buy it!), but he does it so thoughtfully and tastefully that the overall product is superb. Take his **GIVE ME LIBERTY.** This 1990 four-issue limited series



features the adventures of **Martha Washington**, a poor black girl who joins the military and works her way up despite overwhelming odds. (Art was done by the awesome **Dave Gibbons** of **WATCHMEN** fame.) Patently absurd at times, with rebel groups like the “Aryan Thrust” (gay Nazis) and an “international fast food consortium” that has their own military force, Miller still takes the usual swipes at the Right in farcical ways. (Does he mean it or not? Probably.) The back of issue 3 has a pic of **Mount Rushmore** – with a bust of **Dan Quayle** and current (rightist) **President Rexall**. As if. And in the first issue, it’s more than clearly implied that the policies of the conservative Rexall have led to the poor (who rely on welfare) to be *forcibly* housed in housing projects – in essence a

city block-sized jail. While this is hardly a feasible foreshadow, Miller ignores the argument that it is the very policies of liberals who have led to poor “imprisonment” – the creation of a permanent underclass due to bare subsistence welfare payments. You would also think Miller would have done his civics homework. In issue 1, we see a young Martha in class taking a computer [civics/history] test. One question asks **“Which president repealed the 22<sup>nd</sup> amendment to the Constitution?”** (The 22<sup>nd</sup> amendment limits a president to two terms in office.) Doesn’t Miller know that an amendment can only be repealed the same way one is passed? That is, two-thirds of both houses of Congress must approve of it, and then three-quarters of state legislatures must approve it! (Ever wonder why there are only 27 amendments in the US’s 226 year history? The difficult process is why!) But, Miller just wants the reader to know about the “devious” and “dictatorial” conservative president!

**Washington. Jefferson. Lincoln. Roosevelt. Quayle. Rexall. These are names eternally etched in the heart of every true American.**



Despite these pieces of dogma, the story is thoroughly enjoyable and will have you rooting for Martha all the way through to the very end of the fourth book. **GIVE ME LIBERTY**, a **Dark Horse** series, is also available in trade paperback.

Hey, did I just say “‘devious’ and ‘dictatorial’ conservative president?” Many are clamoring about how the **Bush administration** has been “curtailing” our civil rights. Other than the jailing of suspects (many of whom are non-citizens) for long periods and perhaps without charge (which several judges, after considering the circumstances of their plight, are still pondering), what loss of civil rights have been experienced in this country? Are we not at “war?” Is it not the most unconventional war we have ever fought? Before you answer, consider the following historical examples:

- During World War II, **Franklin Roosevelt** had Japanese-Americans rounded up – forcibly removed from their homes – and interned in camps away from the western US coast (Canada did this too – did you know that?). FDR was liberal.
- **Abraham Lincoln** BY HIMSELF suspended *habeas corpus* (that is, in essence, institution of martial law) during the **Civil War** (or, for you Southerners out there, The War Between the States). He had political opponents jailed left and right *just for speaking out against the war* (**Clement Vallandigham** being the most famous of these)! By the way, only CONGRESS can suspend civil rights, in case you’re wondering. Lincoln was liberal, too.

Just keep those two tidbits in mind whenever you hear the Left’s usual “conservative/fascist/dictator” line. (And, for the record, I *oppose* jailing without charge and without time limit, as well as the newly instituted TIPS program.)

**Update.** I had most of this column written when Steven Grant opined again on CBR on **Aug. 21**. Here we go again. Well, not entirely. At least *this* time Grant made a connection to a sci-fi *movie*, “**Wild in the Streets.**” Oh yeah, and ‘ol Stevie prefaced his real world connection to the flick with “*This isn’t paranoia on my part...*” Uh-huh. That should set off some red flags right there. But, I digress.

Grant quotes an article that says **Attorney General John Ashcroft** wants to build camps to intern American citizens who the government (or just President Bush – the “Hand Puppet” as Grant calls him) deems “enemy combatants.” Now, as I stated above, I am against measures that hold Americans indefinitely and without a formal charge. One of the primary reasons for this (being the strict constitutional constructionist that I am) is that the United States *has not officially declared war (on terrorism)*. But what if it did – officially?

As mentioned above, **Franklin Roosevelt** interned Japanese-Americans during WW II. **The Supreme Court** Justices disagreed (with a *minority* objecting) on the constitutionality of this internment, but they **"also realized the problem of invalidating an executive program that the commander-in-chief had said was vital to the war effort"** (from *The Oxford Companion to the Supreme Court of the United States*). **Most of the Court agreed to uphold FDR's wartime policies reasoning that it should not impede the war effort.** Only when the tide of battle turned in the US's favor did the Court begin to re-evaluate some of the gov.'s strategies. (But consider – if the Japanese or Germans had been much more successful in their war efforts, would the US internments currently be viewed in such disfavor?)

**The Supreme Court also upheld the trying of eight captured German saboteurs** (six of whom were later executed) **in military courts**, even though civilian courts were available and seven of the accused (who were dressed as civilians during their crimes) filed petitions for *habeas corpus*. Why? The Court said that **"a military trial was justified by a combination of the president's power as commander-in-chief and valid congressional legislation authorizing military trials of those accused of committing offenses against the law of war."** (Again, from the *Oxford Companion*.)

The instances of wartime civil rights limitations are exceedingly numerous, and I won't bore you by delving into more of them. But look at what Grant states in his Aug. 21:

It has become cliché to refer to those you don't like as Nazis, but this is a Nazi vision rarely imagined outside some Hollywood reversal film, let alone by someone willing and capable of turning such a fantasy real. Prior to this, the Hand Puppet's administration, even Herr Ashcroft, has been arguably repellent, but with enough leeway for interpretation, so that you could make an argument, if you chose, for being pretty much anywhere on the political spectrum. But Ashcroft's new proposal has made them flat out dangerous. Ashcroft, who promised before taking the job that his *only* concern would be the law of the land, is *truly* scary now, and, I'm sorry, but there's no way *anyone* can support John Ashcroft and claim in any way to support liberty or American values. He needs to be removed from office right now.

This is truly laughable. Grant's true colors as a far-leftist have come out. *"I'm sorry, but there's no way anyone can support John Ashcroft..."*? Ah, that's right – *anyone who disagrees with Grant is some right-wing lunatic who cares not for freedom!* First, Grant obviously hasn't seen enough movies that have employed *real* Nazi-like visions on societies. To think that current America rivals that of **"THX 1138," "Fahrenheit 451"** (the book's way better, by the way) or even the lame **"Conquest of the Planet of the Apes"** is nothing short of delusional. Once again, if the US formally declared war, *Ashcroft would be merely acting on legal and constitutional precedents.* But declaring war formally has been out of

style, so that the Korean "War" and Vietnam "War" aren't officially such! Perhaps it's time to **actually invoke the Constitution** this time, and have Congress officially declare war. Would this make Grant happy? No way. Would this make the government's policies "right?" Not always, of course.

The bottom line is that NO right-of-center government official will make thick-domes like Grant satisfied, no matter WHAT they do. One thing I find facetious is how liberals claim that the **Constitution should be a "living document...to adapt to changing times"** (abortion rights "found" in the 14<sup>th</sup> amendment, 2<sup>nd</sup> amendment gun rights are an anachronism, just to name two). Sure, except when *conservatives* use that same argument, then it's "Nazi-like." Yawn.

Free societies have always debated the **delicate balance between freedom and civil rights, especially in times of conflict**. The extremes on both sides are just that – extremes (like Grant on the left) – and thankfully rarely get their views implemented. Grant believes Ashcroft to take the security extreme, while Grant himself takes the complete opposite. Both are ridiculous. If Grant has his way, we might as well surrender to al Qaeda and their allies now. Even the most utopian of societies – the **United Federation of Planets of Star Trek fame** – had a "secret police/intelligence force" (**Section 32** featured in **Star Trek: Deep Space Nine**) to insure the continued existence of the UFP. Go figure. If it ever came down to it, what do you think people would ultimately choose – their rights or their *very existence*?

But hey! Grant, at the end of this section of his column, states "*But liberals can get scary too.*" He posts the URL of a website that discusses gov. surveillance on computers and that lists several Democratic congressmen that should be contacted about it. Wow. Hey Steve – if you're reading, just check out my two bulleted fact sheets above about FDR and Lincoln. Oh, and don't forget Woodrow Wilson during WW I, too. These LIBERALS went way beyond what "Herr Ashcroft" is doing.

## **IRON MAN AND POLITICS**

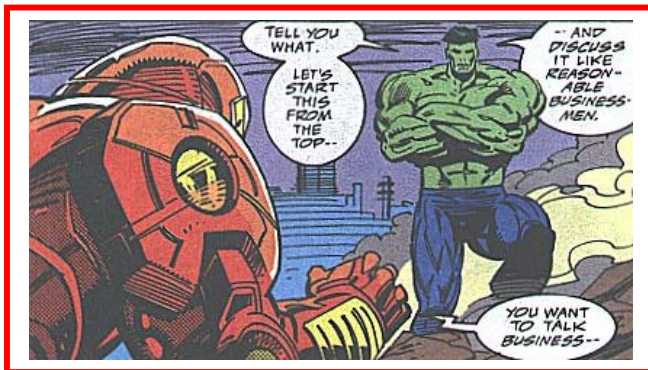
When was I getting to this! Yeesh! It certainly is a valid argument that **IM** has been a political title over the years. If you look at **Stan Lee's** early **TALES OF SUSPENSE** stuff you'll note that Stark and his alter ego were on the side of "good" (ie, the US) against the communist threat during the Cold War. One need go no further than the **Mandarin** (communist Chinese), the **Crimson Dynamo** and **Titanium Man** (Soviets) and even the **Crusher** (Cuban).

As the **Vietnam War** dragged on and American public opinion about the conflict waned, **Iron Man** responded. He began to switch from the manufacture of munitions to those of peaceful endeavors. Many mid-1970s issues dealt with this,



including my favorite **IM** issue of all, #78, "**Long Time Gone**" (recently reprinted in the "monster" issue vol. 3 #46). Stark even took on his union and government officials over the "rightness" of sharing various technologies with East Bloc countries, such as in the **Mandarin** battle of issues #57-58. Figures like **Roxie Gilbert** played key (and sometimes silly) roles in Tony's "change of heart," as did villains like **Firebrand**.

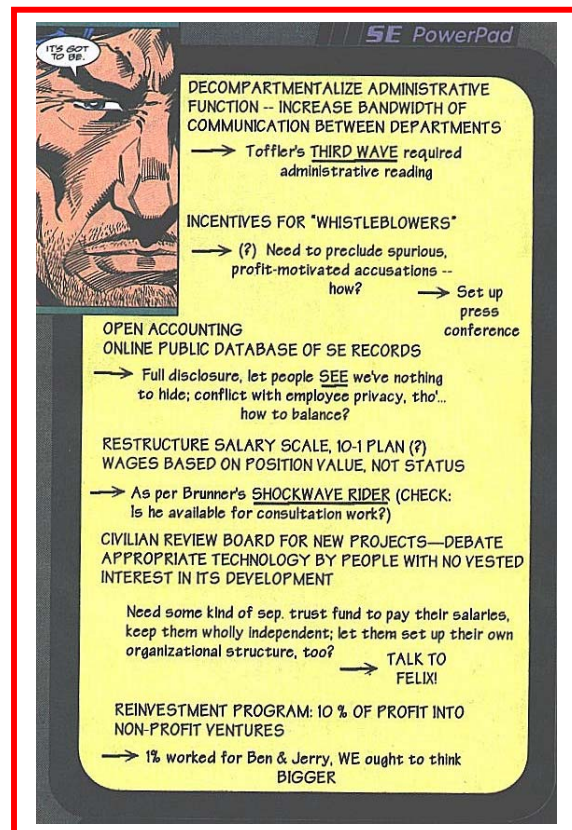
Tony's peaceful ways weren't seen in a friendly light by many government officials, including even the *international* spy agency **SHIELD**. One of **Michelinie, Layton** and **Romita Jr.'s** early yarns had **Nick Fury** informing Stark that Stark International was the target of a hostile stock takeover – with Fury leading the charge!



Unless I'm mistaken, **IM** was fairly apolitical through most of the next 200 issues. Sure, there was smattering of issues that had a political tint (such as #148 and some early #200s featuring **AIM**), but it wasn't until **Len Kaminski** took over that we saw more overt ideological smatterings. Len's third issue of

**IM**, #280, dealt with the race known as "**The Stark**" – a whole breed of humanoids whose society was changed by Tony's space-launched **IM** technology. In the issue, their society was threatened by pollution, genetic drift, and a class of barbarians that reviled the intellectual class.

Len continued by making Stark the most accountable corporate executive the world has ever seen (#306) after the travails of the "**Crash and Burn**" storyline. "Crash and Burn" featured **IM vs. Venom**, where **Eddie Brock** wanted Stark's hide for his "corporate killing of innocents" (#302), and **IM vs. the Hulk**, where the **Jade Giant** was after a Stane/Stark owned factory that had the potential to produce gamma weapons (#305). The title of



this ish was even titled "**Green Politics.**" #306 is a terrific issue which I wholeheartedly recommend. There's virtually no battle action, but the page layouts are intriguing as Stark completely revamps how his company does business. (It's also artist **Kevin Hopgood's** last **IM** issue.)

In volume 3, **Kurt Busiek** took up a controversial environmental issue in the pages of **Shellhead** – that of the effects of **power lines** on surrounding populations. Based on this principle, Tony Stark's health was suffering because the **Iron Man** armor's power generation had eroded Tony's immune system over the years. This was certainly an interesting premise (and yet another notch for Busiek in making **IM** a "weak" hero), although Kurt obviously had never further researched the topic which concluded that there is no convincing evidence for any negative health effects by living adjacent to power lines. (Hey, he's a busy guy, after all!)

### **OK, SO WHERE AM I GOING?**

Where am I going with all this political yapping? Cripes, I don't rightly know! No, seriously...being the politics aficionado I am, I'm saying I love comics that have "something to say." (Before I forget, make sure you're reading **THE ULTIMATES**. **Thor** as a Green Party-type looks to be good!) Even though I may not agree with the message, if it's a good story, you've won me. What I DON'T want – like when I'm combing the internet for comics tidbits – is for nuisances like Steven Grant to chatter about goofy conspiracy hypotheses *for their own sake*. Who is he trying to impress, after all? If I want to read about "October Surprise," I'll simply head over to National Review Online or The Nation Online. After all, they'll certainly have more to say about it than Grant, and they'll offer differing views on it. If Grant had been smart, he'd have made a connection to some "surprising" event in comics lore to at least make the topic *relevant*.

Stay tuned right here to "**Shellheadisms**" for your quarterly refutation of the Grants of this world, when appropriate!

### **WHAT ELSE IS THERE?**

**ITEM!** **Frank Tieri** (remember him?) revealed on the **X-Fan message boards** that it was originally *his* idea for Stark to have his **secret ID revealed**. No, Stark wouldn't have done it himself as Grell scripted; instead, **Ty Stone** would have done it on national TV after learning the news in **DreamVision**. The editors, Frank said, nixed the idea at the time. (Thanks to Brad Lyons for nabbing this tidbit and putting it on the IMMB!)

**ITEM!** **David Michelinie's** and **Bob Layton's FUTURE COMICS** is underway with the launch of **FREEMIND #0**. It goes for \$2.50, but the regular issues (#1



on up) will go for \$3.50 for 28 pages. #1 comes out in October; **METALLIX** debuts in December (also for \$3.50).

**ITEM!** A.I.'s own sleuth supreme, **Chris Frye**, is absent this issue, but wait until next ish! His "**Ferro Files**" has an interview with incoming AVENGERS scribe **Geoff Johns**, as well as former **IRON MAN** penciller extraordinaire **Mark "Doc" Bright!** Woo-hoo!

### **ON TAP THIS ISSUE:**

- Cover – "**SGT. SHELLHEAD'S SHRAPNELED-HEARTS CLUB BAND**" by **Allen Del Caro** (w/embellishments by **Pat Couture**)!
- **THE MONACO PRELUDE** CGI art by **Welshcat!**
- **ULTIMATE IRON MAN COLOR SCHEMES** art by **Michael Kaiser!**
- "**STARK REMARKS AND IRON TANGENTS**" by **Mike Kalibabky!**
- **ANIMATIONS.COM IRON MAN** art discovered by **Jeff Pearson!**
- "**WANDERINGS OF THE INVINCIBLE IRON MAN**" by **Pat Couture!**
- **IRON MAN PENCIL** art by **Chris Frye!**
- **TIP OF THE HAT TO TUSKA & LAYTON** art by **Mike Connolly!**
- "**PAT'S RAP**" by **Pat Couture!**
- **IRON MAN ART** spread by **Jeff Szklennik!**



**"Drunk" Iron Man bids adieu.**

(Modified – from "Abbott & Costello Meet the Bride of Hembek," 1980.)

THE INVINCIBLE  
**IRON MAN**



FRAMED FOR MURDER AND STRIPPED OF HIS ARMOR,  
TONY STARK MUST FIGHT TO CLEAR IRON MAN'S NAME!

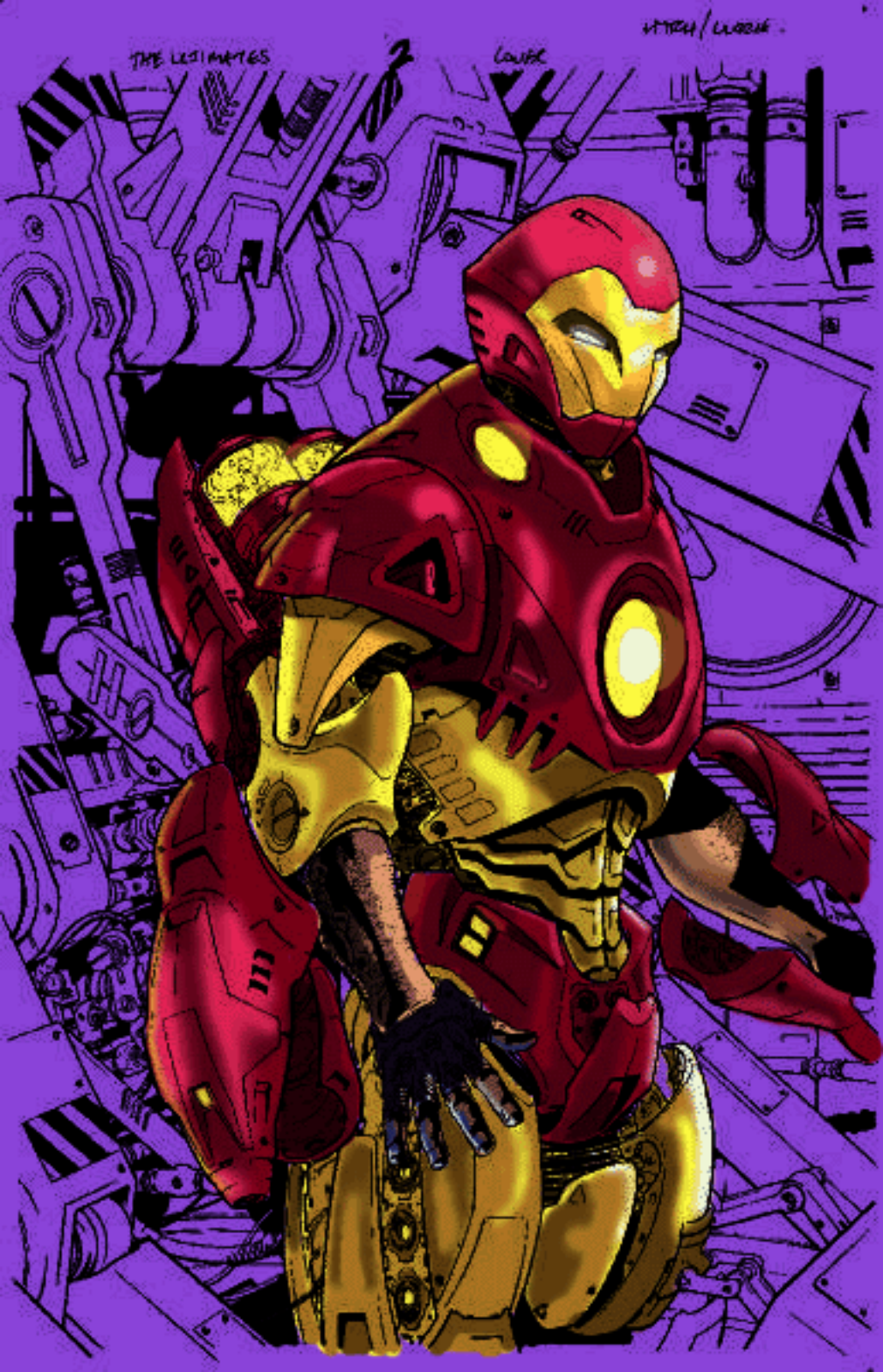
**THE MONACO PRELUDE**

WELSH CAT © 2002

THE LESIMATES

LOUFE

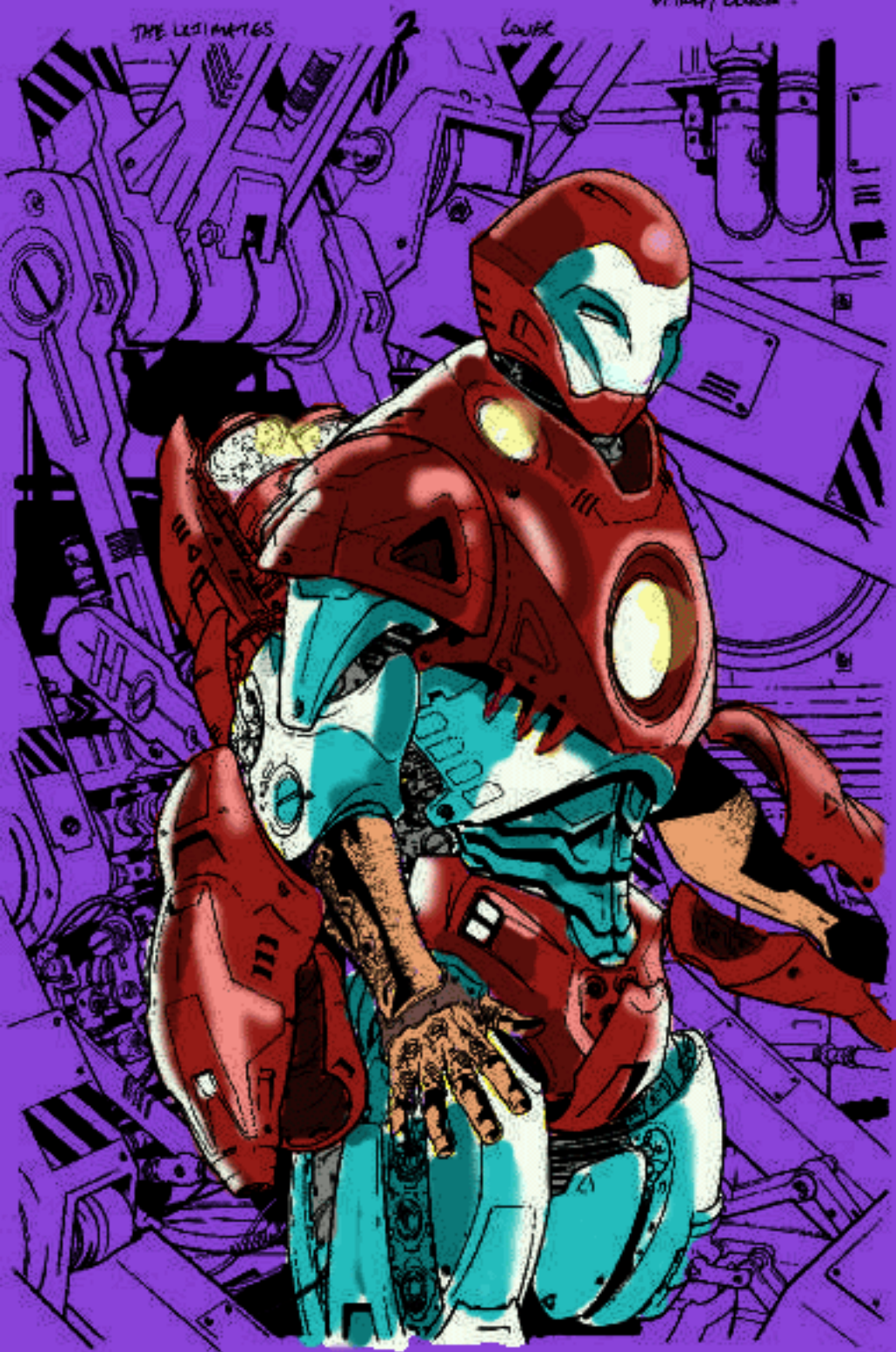
HTTCH / LUGRAH



THE LESIMAGES

LOUPE

HTTEH / L'ARTISTE





In my youth, I was never a **Beatles fan**. Sure, I enjoyed their songs, particularly the early tunes, and, yes, I was thrilled by the Fab Four's first appearance on **THE ED SULLIVAN SHOW** in 1964 (who wasn't!), but I was never a fan -- in fact, I didn't own any of their records or any **Beatlemania** stuff. Nope, I didn't care all that much for those world-famous lovable mop-tops from Liverpool...



...Until November 2000, when ABC-TV aired **THE BEATLES ANTHOLOGY**, a program focusing upon the Beatles' lives and career. Ignorant of their backstory,

I was absolutely glued to the set, sitting in silent awe. Then came footage of their final public concert on August 29, 1966, in Candlestick Park, San Francisco, California. The boys were tired of the road, hotels, and screaming fans. They feared for both their personal safety and the quality of their art.

For almost three months, **John, Paul, George,** and **Ringo** dropped out of sight, then rejoined forces on November 24 to begin recording one of the top rock albums of all time: **SGT. PEPPER'S LONELY HEARTS CLUB BAND.** I instantly became totally enamored with both the music and the making of this landmark album. For over a year, I studied the Beatles and their songwriting, reading over a dozen books and re-listening to hastily purchased albums. I began collecting various swipes of the **SGT. PEPPER** album cover photograph.

And then I began noticing slight **Iron Man** tie-ins...

In **IRON MAN #133** by **Michelinie, Bingham,** and **Layton,** Ant-Man (Scott Lang) had to reboot **Shellhead's** armor from the inside after the **Golden**



**Avenger's** rumble with the **Hulk.** Afterwards, **Iron Man** noted, "**I think I'll be fine...thanks to a little help from a friend.**" Ant-Man replied with, "**Don't you mean 'thanks to help from a little friend?'**" Both comments were inspired by the song "**With a Little Help from My Friends,**" sung by Ringo, off **SGT. PEPPER.**

As it turns out, **David Michelinie** is a HUGE Beatles fan and made several comments to me concerning his fond affection for the group:

"I've played guitar since I was 15, and was active in regional rock bands when the Beatles were in their prime. So I was more than casually interested in what kind of instruments they played. Matter of fact, I included an in-joke/tip-of-the-hat to the Fab Four when I was writing **The Unknown Soldier** series at DC in



the mid-70s. In a story called **"The Cure"** in **STAR SPANGLED WAR STORIES 202**, I named German characters **Rickenbacher** (after John's guitar), **Gretsch** (from George's), **Hofner** (Paul's bass) and **Ludwig** (Ringo's drums). No one ever picked up on it (well, it *was* kinda subtle), but I got a bit of a smile from writing it."



I really dig time travel stories so I was attracted to **Bob Layton's DOCTOR TOMORROW** series from Valiant. In the series' second issue, the good Doctor passes time prior to the bombing of **Pearl Harbor** while listening to music from the future -- including a song entitled **"A Day in the Life,"** which, too, appeared on SGT. PEPPER.

Another **Iron Man**-related Beatles nod found its way into the 1996 animated **"Armor Wars"** two-parter from **THE MARVEL ACTION HOUR**. In **IRON MAN 227** ("Armor Wars," Chapter 3), ol' **Tin Britches** took down the **Beetle** with

the greatest of ease. Ditto in the cartoon -- however, in the process, **Iron Man** remarked, **"Beetle, you're in for a hard day's night!"** The comment recalls the Fabulous Foursome's first motion picture, **"A Hard Day's Night,"** from 1964.

And now, a direct tie-in, if ever there was one!

Prior to the first L.A. concert during the 1975 **"Wings Over America Tour,"** former Beatle and Wings frontman **Paul McCartney** personally thanked **Jack Kirby** for "keeping him from going bonkers" while the band was busy recording **VENUS AND MARS**, their newly released album, in Jamaica. There was little to do on the island and the McCartneys needed to keep their busy youngsters entertained. Fortunately, there was a local store that sold comic books. Paul made numerous trips to buy copies of all the latest issues...including many Marvels. The comics would obviously make a big

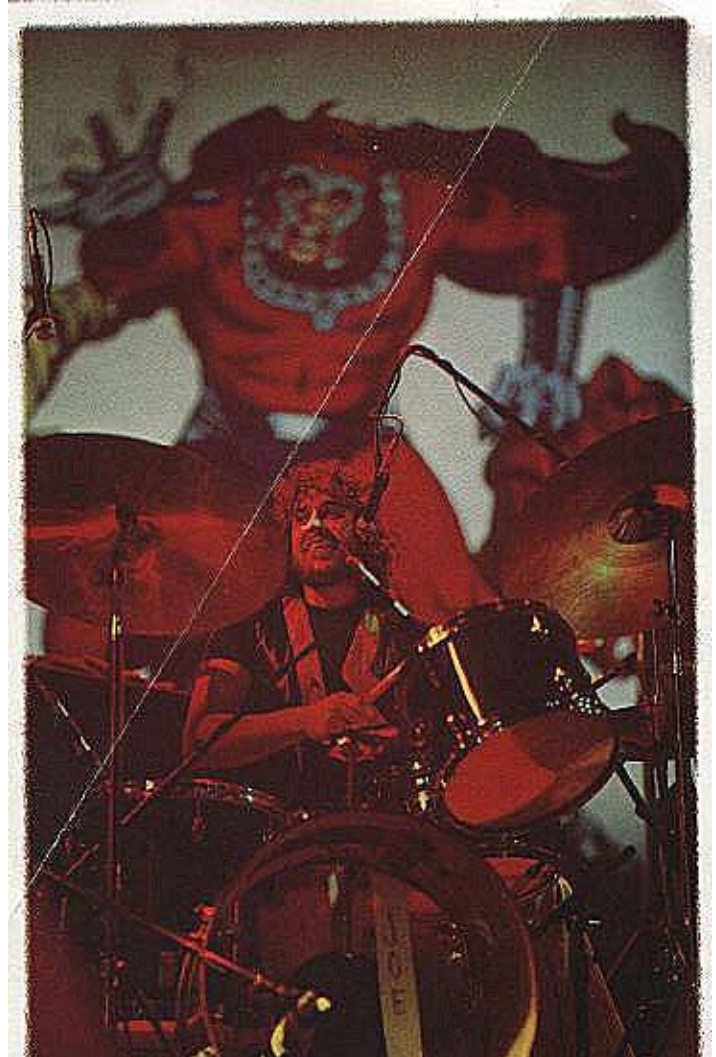


impression on McCartney because one evening, he recalled, "the song 'Magneto and Titanium Man' just popped into my head."

## **MAGNETO AND TITANIUM MAN**

By Paul McCartney and Wings

Well I was talking last night  
**Magneto** and **Titanium Man** . . .  
We were talking about you, babe,  
Ooh -- they said --  
You were involved in a robbery  
That was due to happen  
At a quarter to three  
In the main street.  
I didn't believe them  
**Magneto** and **Titanium Man** . . .  
But when the **Crimson Dynamo**  
Finally assured me, well, I knew  
You were involved in a robbery  
That was due to happen  
At a quarter to three  
In the main street.  
So we went out  
**Magneto** and **Titanium Man** . . .  
And the **Crimson Dynamo**  
Came along for the Ride  
We went to town with the library  
And we swung all over that  
Long tall bank in the main street  
Well, there she was and to my despair  
She's a five-star criminal  
Breaking the code  
**Magneto** said, "Now the time's come  
To gather our forces and run!"  
Oh, no...  
This can't be so...  
And then it occurred to me!  
You couldn't be bad  
**Magneto** was mad!  
**Titanium** too!  
And the **Crimson Dynamo**  
Just couldn't cut it no more  
You were the law...



...And, suddenly, two of **Shellhead's** deadliest foes were immortalized in song!

With **Kirby** and his family as McCartney's guests at that fateful 1975 concert, Paul prefaced the band's performance of "Magneto" by introducing **The King:**

**"In the audience tonight,"** announced McCartney, **"we have the creator of Magneto and numerous other comic characters, and I'd like to dedicate this song to Jack Kirby."** The audience, no doubt populated with numerous comicbook fans, gave a roar of approval.

**Jack Kirby**, as we all know, was the co-creator of **Iron Man**.

A huge stage banner sporting impressive images of **Magneto**, **Titanium Man**, and the **Crimson Dynamo** accompanied Wings during their 1975 tour. The photo reproduced here (next to the "Magneto" lyrics on previous page) is from a poster included with the **WINGS OVER AMERICA** triple (vinyl) album. Behind Wings' drummer Joe English, Magneto can be plainly seen; however, the Titanium Man's arm is barely visible at the left and only the Crimson Dynamo's head and shoulders appear on the right.

The **WINGSPAN DVD**, a 2001 historical overview of the band, offers a superb look at the banner during a lengthy interview with Paul and Linda McCartney.

I got to thinking that the music world had a Fab Four... but so did **IRON MAN: Tony Stark, Jim Rhodes, David Michelinie, and Bob Layton!** (In my opinion, David and Bob are **IM's** Lennon and McCartney.) I immediately called my pal and former Iron Artist **Allen Del Caro** and asked him if he could whip up a Sgt. Pepper swipe of the **Iron Four** to lead off this edition of "Stark Remarks." He agreed, but stated he couldn't get to it for several weeks, if at all, and it perhaps it would be better if I found another willing artist. "But," he said, "I'll do it if no one else will."

As it turned out, no one else would. And with good reason: nobody wanted to surround the Iron Four with friends and foes created by Bob and Dave. (At times I thought it would be cool to have the faces of the **ADVANCED IRON** staff in the background!) Allen agreed to do the illustration IF he could render just the Iron Four. Fair enough. I gave him the basic idea and directions as to the Foursomes' order of placement. Then I had to secure permission to use David's and Bob's images. No problem with David. "Just don't make me look like Ringo," was his only requirement. Likewise with Bob, who cautioned, "Please don't do any funny stuff." Translation: "NO band uniforms." Fair enough!

Allen got to work and finished the illustration – “**Sgt. Shellhead’s Shrapneled-Hearts Club Band**” -- in record time. One problem though... he colored David’s hair yellow, which in Al’s defense, was a “best guess.” Luckily, Dave and Pat, A.I.’s editorial duo, made the (digital) save.

Interestingly, and ironically, Al armed David with a **Fender Stratocaster**, one of THE classic rock guitars. David enjoyed his depiction and offered this feedback...

“Picturing me with a Strat on the Sgt. Shellhead illustration is fine. I don’t play plugged-in much these days; in fact, I recently traded the bulk of my electric arsenal for a new Taylor nylon-string acoustic. But I kept my Strat. Some things were just meant to be...”



IRONICALLY, the transition to the next portion of this column is an unpublished alternate cover image to **BLACK PANTHER #43** by **Sal Velluto** and **Bob Almond** -- a swipe of the famous “**Meet the Beatles**” photograph -- featuring, top row, left to right, **T’Challa** (the Black Panther), **Tony Stark** (Iron Man), and **Logan** (Wolverine). Guess you might call it “Meet the Shellheads.”

\* \* \*

For die-hard **Michelinie and Layton Iron Man** fans, **BLACK PANTHER #s 41-45** were an absolute but exhausting treat. This five-issue arc – “**Enemy of the State II**” -- featured a fighting-mad Tony Stark enmeshed in a hostile business takeover, corporate intrigue, a time-travel mystery, and another Armor War of sorts. Wily wordslinger (**Christopher J. Priest**, peerless penciler **Sal Velluto**, and incomparable inker **Bob Almond** produced this highly complex and satisfying story, which also co-starred **Wolverine** and, oh yeah -- the **Black Panther**.

**Bob Almond** -- whose star burns brightly in the **Iron Man** firmament alongside those of several other famous Iron Bobs, notably **Layton, Hall, and McLeod** -- graciously agreed to answer a few questions concerning his impressive contribution to this high-recommended and soon-to-be-classic Iron Man saga:

**MK:** You’ve admitted to being a big **Bob Layton** fan. How much of an impact has his **Iron Man** work made on yours?



**BA:** I'm a HUGE **David Michelinie** and **Bob Layton Iron Man** fan. I was there just before their first run began -- at the age of nine my first **IM** issue was 98, and I collected **IM** until just about the end of Vol. 1 (and the first 2 years of Vol. 3). David, Bob and all the artists involved (**[Butch] Guice**, **[Jerry] Bingham**, **[Mark] Bright**, and especially **JRJR**, etc.) brought so many aspects to the title and characters that readers hadn't really seen before such as: a well-developed and diverse supporting cast that felt like real people, **Iron Man** became "shiny" and ever more "invincible," a fascinating new rogues gallery and nice updates to some classics (**Justin Hammer**, **Whitney Frost**, **Whiplash**, **Spymaster**, **Ghost**, **Sunturion**, **Titanium Man**, **Living**

**Laser**, etc.), and a brilliant yet complex Tony Stark whose agendas and interests would at times bring him to the brink of recklessness and the strain of it all to alcoholism.

While **Scott Williams** has attributed **Klaus Janson** as being his influence for his inking style, often labeled the "west coast" or "Image" style of inking, I always felt that Bob's use of thick and thin lines and angular strokes made him a more fitting "father" for these new-age inkers who developed around ten years ago. And, along with **Terry Austin**, **Joe Rubenstein**, and Janson among some others, in my opinion they created and/or utilized fantastic approaches to textures and their use of special effects (color holds, zip-a-tone, smudging, spatter, crayon, etc.) so as to make the work so much more exciting and to set a standard for how it was done in the years to come. I not only studied Bob's work over time but his achievements really inspired me in that he showed that an inker, often invisible or in anonymity, could expand his horizons and soon master penciling, co-plotting, writing, editing and even acting as editor-in-chief and publisher! I've met Bob on three or four occasions now since I'd broken into the biz and he's always been a Class-A



gentleman, respectful and a real professional.

**MK:** It's a fanboy's dream! In issue 42, **Wolverine** and **Iron Man** battle hand to hand. For years, fandom had offered numerous conjectures on how such a conflict would end. So how satisfying was it for you to help depict that slugfest, which featured some nasty slicing of ol' **Shellhead's** armor?

**BA:** It was satisfying in that we knew that this was one skirmish that was going to create some buzz, pro or con. It wasn't that standard clash where debris flies around and punches are thrown but nothing really comes of it all. This one was going to get some attention and we were excited to be at the center of it. But we also found ourselves at the center of a bulls-eye to some rabid **Iron Man** fans. Comes with the territory, though.

**MK:** Priest demands a lot from readers during "**Enemy of the State II.**" The storyline is extremely intricate. How difficult was it for you and Sal to capture his intentions in graphic form?

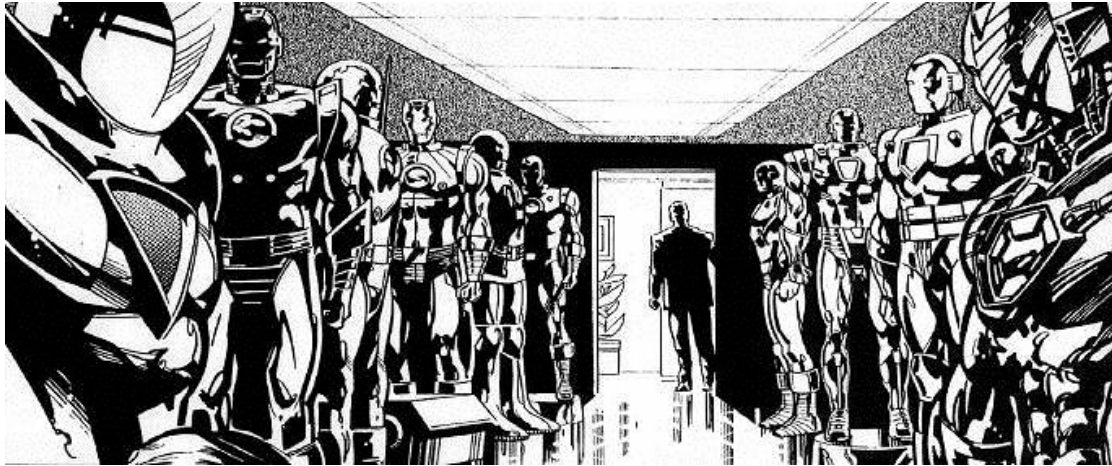


**BA:** Not too difficult in that Sal and I'd been working from Priest's scripts for over two years at that point so we were fairly in synch with him long before then. But at the same time we realized that he was really trying to shake things up and do an epic so ambitious as to outdo his fondly remembered and

equally ambitious epic "**Sturm Und Drang**" from issues 26-29. There was a lot of ground and characters to cover and we did our best to give everything the clarity and intensity such a saga deserved.

**MK:** Truth be told, the main reason I picked up the "**Enemy of the State II**" arc was solely for your and Sal's artwork, and the breathtaking **new stealth armor**. And then when the **negator pack** was revealed, I was in **Armor Wars** heaven! There were SO MANY Bob-and-Dave nods in the story, I knew SOMEBODY on the creative team was a bona fide Iron Fan. And that somebody was you...





**BA:** Bah, I can't take ALL the credit. Priest obviously wrote the story with the negator pack idea and other stuff, such as requesting us to show off **Stark's armors in the script**. All three of us are Dave and Bob **IM** fans but I relished in doing the legwork and ecstatically researched material for Sal. When it comes to playing continuity cop and remembering Marvel minutiae, Im the detail go-to guy. I knew what to look for and where in my **IM** collection -- that was half the fun of it all! I even tried to get the editors to run a lettercol trivia contest for fans to guess the various armors shown, but that never happened. I did, however, run it on the Comicboards **IM** message board for kicks.

We labored hard to please, with ALL the characters, and it's nice to know that SOMEONE recognized the love and details we included in the work. But while Priest has utilized some of my ideas/requests during our Panther run, unlike Layton was known for, I wasn't acting as co-plotter. Ah, maybe one day...

**MK:** There is A LOT of Stark technology floating around in "**Enemy of the State II.**" Did you make any tech-use suggestions to Priest, and did you notice any obvious tech-use errors in Priest's stories that you brought to his attention?

**BA:** No. Actually at the start of the arc Priest asked me in an e-mail if I was savvy on the present workings of **IM's** armor at that time and I let him know that I honestly wasn't. I believe with the kind assistance of **Tom Brevoort** and a couple of other associates/**IM** fans he was able to take that info and adeptly put it to good use as



well as create all the cool techno-babble that was used.

**MK:** I get the impression that the Priest/Velluto/Almond team is a tightly-knit group. So how, as a group, did you produce this storyarc? How did you work? How did you communicate?

**BA:** Yes, we are a fairly tight-knit team. Priest solely conceives of where the book and characters will be going but through e-mail correspondence he frequently uses elements brought up in such discussions between us. I've also occasionally pointed out to my editor and/or Priest when I've noticed a minor continuity flub in the story so it can be adjusted. I'm no **Peter Sanderson** but I've retained my share of useless Marvel trivia over time. So while Sal and I had no contribution to ENEMY2 in the actual script stage, Priest has publicly acknowledged, for example, that the **Black Panther doppelganger** who debuted in issue 35 and then 40, affectionately referred to as "**Happy Pants Panther,**" was inspired by my almost constant requests for Panther nostalgia.



Upon reading the script, Sal and I will sometimes talk about how to approach some elements. While he generally calls all the shots visually as pencil artist in terms of cover content and interior art storytelling, Sal, my art partner and friend for five years now, is always open to any ideas I can share with him on these matters in our weekly phone conversations. Often Sal will actually use these ideas or will improve upon the basic thought I originally offered. I also will usually supply any visual reference through scans or, in some cases, I'll mail him some comics of mine. As inker my job is then, upon direct-delivery via Fed-Ex from Sal, to take his work and, while being very faithful to every artistic effort he puts down in his pencils, try to actually enhance the work and make it more excitable for printing. Maybe I'll

need to occasionally tweak something or Sal may sometimes forget a small detail and he'll ask me to take care of it. I usually call him if I have any technical questions but since we've collaborated for a while now we usually know what's in the other artist's head and I can often figure things out on my own. Upon completion of inking the pages I then e-mail colornotes Sal and I have to color artist Jennifer Schellinger so specific details are clear and we may also suggest



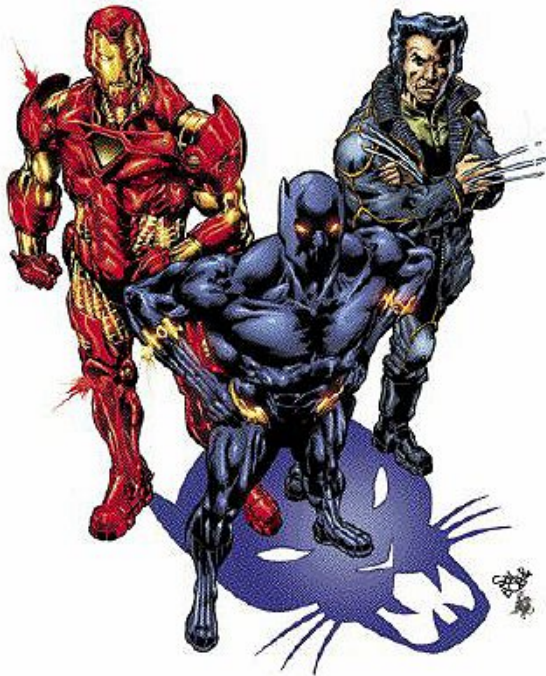
color approaches to certain elements in the art. Then I send the work off to my editor.

**MK:** How much feedback on your work/contributions did you get from Priest and Velluto?

**BA:** Sal and Priest have welcomed my contributions all along, and after seeing the final work in print they've been quite happy with the results (or at least that's what they *tell* me. 😊)

**MK:** Overall, it must have been quite a rush for you to ink the REAL **Iron Man/Tony Stark** -- the one with teeth and fully-charged repulsors, not, in my opinion, like the **Iron Milksoop** he's being depicted as lately. You fellows brought back Tony Stark's dignity! Thank you!

**BA:** Yeah, many fans on the **IM Message Board** stated that **Iron Man** and Tony Stark were portrayed better in Black Panther's book than he had been in his own mag for years! I was pretty pumped to read that.



**MK:** On the cover of issue 41, you used zipatone inside of **Iron Man's** unibeam. I don't recall seeing "zip" used much these days.

**BA:** Again, this is another nod to guys like **Bob Layton**. Bob started using zip regularly on **Iron Man** way back when so whenever Sal and I got to do **Iron Man** he'd let me have some fun and drop some zip in. Generally, Sal prefers that I not use much zip on his work and when I do he prefers it to be more textural, less mechanical. But Sal's **Iron Man** renderings tend to be

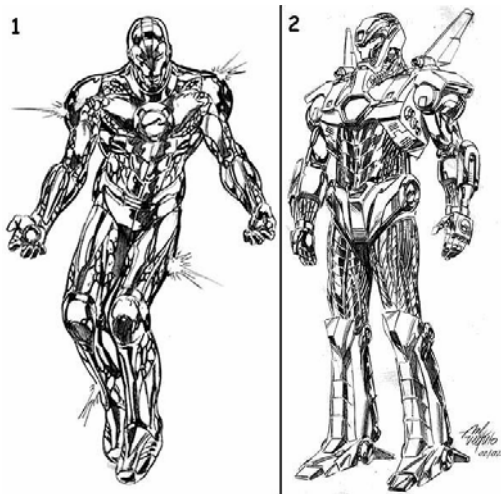
fairly meticulous in the first place so I find that I usually don't need to use it without it being gratuitous. I think I only added it on like five **IM** shots total from BP issues 23, 41-43 and 45 where he appeared.

**MK:** I don't much care for the current red-and-gold **Iron Man armor**, but you and Sal have legitimized it for me. I can accept it now. What was the approach in presenting your and Sal's version of it? And, the mouth-port on the faceplate

seems as if it can open and close. Whose idea was that? And, the “eyes” make **Iron Man** look a bit sinister and threatening. I get the overall impression that this **Priest/Velluto/Almond Iron Man** doesn’t just look like he’ll put a boot up your ass -- he WILL put a boot up your ass. I like that a lot! Real Iron Balls.

**BA:** You can credit ALL the **Iron Man** visual ideas to Sal. He took the ref the office sent him of the **Michael Ryan** design but gave it the Velluto touch. He’ll be happy to know you liked it so much.

**MK:** The new **Stealth Armor**, featured fully in issue 45, is an absolute masterpiece! (The original stealth armor was developed by **Layton**. In fact, Mr. Layton has stated publicly that the stealth rig was his all-time favorite armor.) How much design input did you have in the creation of this new stealth armor, and where did the ideas come from?

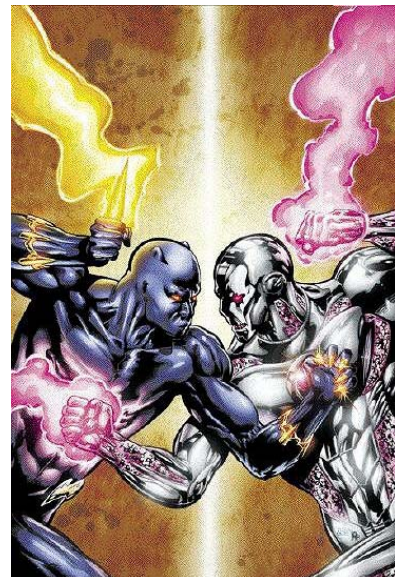


**BA:** Sal was asked to design the new stealth armor. I don’t believe he was given any input and I don’t recall if he was even given ref from us for the previous stealth armor models. If my memory serves me well, his first design was rejected as being not recognizable enough as **IM** and perhaps too clunky. Then he did the more organic one you saw in print and that was approved. He came up with the color scheme of grey with magenta that you saw but the office wanted it to be blue to match

the first two stealth armors. Sal expressed that he was afraid that **Iron Man** would be visually mixed up with Panther in their close-quarter combat by the readers, and the office relented. So, basically, other than doing my expected inking job with the new armor I had no input with this.

**MK:** Colorist **Jennifer Schellinger** did an astonishing job throughout “**Enemy of the State II.**” Never before has **Iron Man’s** armor looked so metallic. Even better, in my opinion, her efforts made your work shine!

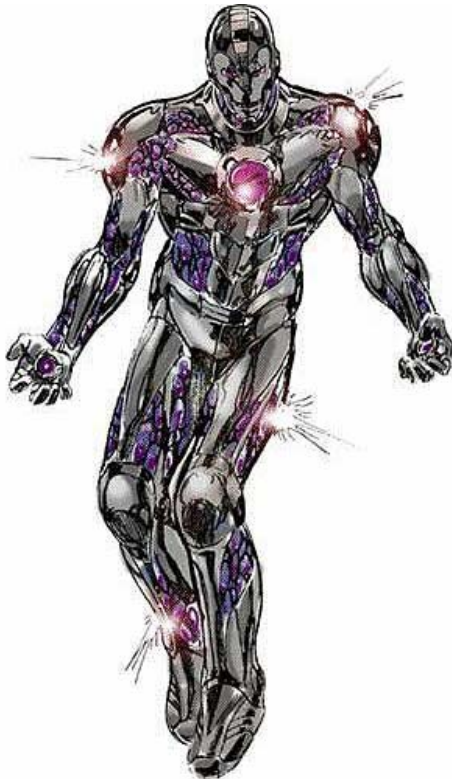
**BA:** We’ve been saying that ourselves since she came aboard under her own name by issue 37 (she used to work with the VLM studio in BP issues 30-36). Her attention to detail is inhuman and her efforts in following our colornotes and making everything come



out as well as it does is a testament to her professionalism and talent. We definitely have a mutual synergy going on here.

**MK:** Near the bottom of the cover of BP 41, next to the "Sal & Bob" logo, is a little monkey icon. Does that designate that Jennifer colored the cover; therefore, is it her icon?

**BA:** All the covers to the "**Enemy of the State II**" issues (as well as BP issues 34-37) were colored by **Tom Chu**. The icon is his.



**MK:** How exciting is it to see the finished product -- your work published in the actual comic?

**BA:** Y'know, I don't think that excitement ever truly diminishes IMO. Especially in this case where we have such a critically acclaimed title with **BLACK PANTHER** and a creative team always striving to excel and outdo our previous efforts.

**MK:** Why, in your opinion, would any of the Iron Faithful enjoy "**Enemy of the State II**"?

**BA:** Corporate manipulation! Head games! A rich cast and exciting guest stars with different agendas! Betrayal! Mystery! Sexy Bond-type girls with guns! Ultimate poker! George Dubya prowling the sewers! Surprising cameos! Priest's famous trademarked humor!

A dose of **Jack Kirby** kookiness! A version of Stark and **Iron Man** you haven't seen in a while! A pinch of cool **IM** armor tech-talk! An all-out brawl between Panther and **IM's** new stealth armor! And it's all wrapped up in that tasty morsel known as Sal and Bob's perdy picers!

**MK:** Sal mentioned that you and he and Priest share a mutual dream in working on an **Iron Man** project in the future. The Marvel Universe needs the original, **Invincible Iron Man** back for good. I, for one, hope you get your shot.

**BA:** As an **AVENGERS** fan since birth I was so psyched to play with Panther but **Iron Man** is even closer to my heart. Anyone who knows me knows that I'm quite the Marvel zombie and it would be a dream project to work alongside my friend and partner Sal on **Iron Man** (and that Priest guy, too, I guess). ☺

**MK:** A while ago I mentioned in an e-mail to **Bob Layton** that the new original armor designs he posts on his site ARE my **Iron Man** comic since there hasn't, in my opinion, been any REAL **Iron Man** stories to come along since **IM: BAD BLOOD**. However, that has changed with **BP: EOTS II**. Issue 45 especially will be stocked with my **ARMOR WARS I ("Stark Wars")** run, where it belongs.

**BA:** Cool. I'm honored to be a creator who worked on a significant and respected **Iron Man** story to its many fans. Even cooler if it's remembered well over time.

**MK:** How does it feel to have taken your place among some other famous artist Bobs of **Iron Man** -- **Bob Layton**, **Bob Hall**, and **Bob McLeod**?

**BA:** The Brotherhood of Bob, we are legion!  
☺

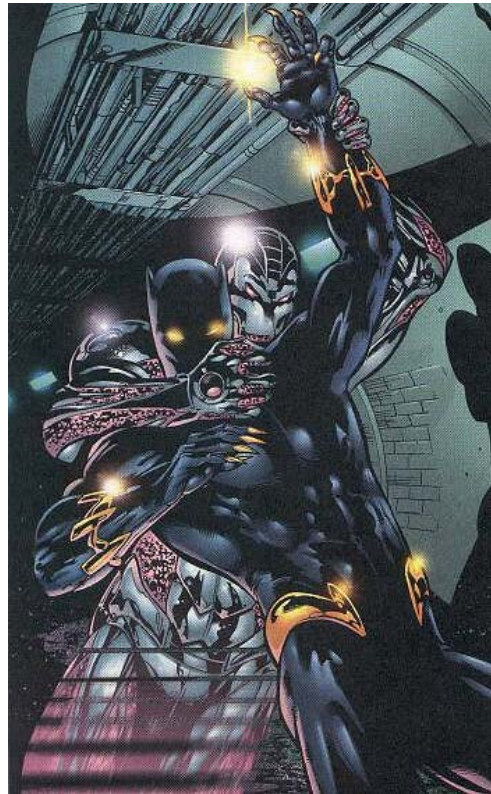
I'd actually be the "baby Bob" of the group. But I'd always be proud to be part of such legendary and talented company. And wouldn't **Bob Brown's** '70s work and **Bob Wiacek's** recent inks over Perez -- both on the **AVENGERS** with **Iron Man** as an active member -- count to allow them membership status? If not, we need to write up a new charter. ☺ *"Bob's Assemble!"*

**MK:** What other work have you done that might be of interest to **Iron Man** fans?

**BA:** To **Iron Man** fans I unfortunately don't have anything to offer at this time. But to fans of Sal and Bob's work in general you can expect some upcoming updates to eventually circulate pertaining to our awesome secret DC assignment, along with **David Goyer** and **Geoff Johns**, expected to ship around the summer of 2003 as well as another developing brand-spanking new project at another very popular publisher. All hush-hush for now!

For much more on the life, times, and inking derring-do of **Iron Bob Almond**, please visit these sites:

[www.almondink.com](http://www.almondink.com)



[www.cgriffen.com/blackpanther/interview/almond/](http://www.cgriffen.com/blackpanther/interview/almond/)  
[www.comicboards.com/interviews/almond.html](http://www.comicboards.com/interviews/almond.html)  
[www.larrydempsey.com/inking/answers/artists/a/almond.html](http://www.larrydempsey.com/inking/answers/artists/a/almond.html)  
[www.taskmastersite.com/Interviews/Almond.html](http://www.taskmastersite.com/Interviews/Almond.html)

It's well worth the trip to artist **Sal Velluto's** remarkable homepage:  
**[www.velluto.com](http://www.velluto.com)**.

**Christopher J. Priest** is a multi-talented man. Read all about him and his pursuits at **[www.digital-priest.com](http://www.digital-priest.com)**.

Thanks for reading this issue of **ADVANCED IRON** – “We hope you have enjoyed the show!”

*Handwritten signature*



IRON MAN









Bonjour and welcome once more to my humble column. This one's got a special twist for ya! I'm going to take a look at three Iron Man guest-appearances that helped define the very interesting relationship between the armored Avenger and one of his oldest friends and allies, Captain America.

Cap and Shellhead have had a rocky friendship over the years. When IM was chairman of the Avengers in the late 70s, Cap went ballistic, blaming IM for all the team's shortcomings. Cap also disapproved of Stark's relationship with the Wasp after her break-up with Pym. Then in the late 80s, the two heroes came to blows during the Armor Wars. Finally, in the early 90s, Cap and IM were at odds again during Operation: Galactic Storm.

But through it all, the two heroes have never lost their respect for each other and their friendship has endured. A rocky relationship is an interesting one in comics, so here are some cool IM / Cap interaction issues.

\* \* \*

## **CAPTAIN AMERICA #341**

**"Break-in"** – May 1988

**Story:** Mark Gruenwald

**Penciler:** Kieron Dwyer

**Inkers:** Al Milgrom



We all remember **the Cap / Iron Man fight in IM #229**, right? I mean, how could we forget? That comic is now an immortal classic. In the middle of the **Armor Wars**, Tony went after the federal **Guardsmen**, thus allowing for several inmates to escape from **the Vault**. **Cap** was there, putting himself between the vengeful armored Avenger and those poor **Guardsmen** who never really stood a chance. This issue of **Cap** is the direct aftermath.



When **Stark** comes home with his gorgeous lady of the evening, he's not getting the private moment he had hoped for. Waiting for him in the apartment is the man now known as **The Captain** (at this point, **Steve Rodgers** had given up the

role of **Captain America**). Hastily pushing the lady out of the room, **Stark** now faces his old friend. **Cap** has decided to take **Stark** in for his involvement in the Vault breakout. But he soon finds out that **Tony** has no intention of going quietly. **Tony** manages to slip away to put on something more comfortable in a situation like this: his **Silver Centurion armor**. Neither man is willing to compromise on this one and a battle soon erupts. In the end, the real victim will be an old friendship between two disagreeing heroes.



**Excellent comic.** The art is great, the story's awesome, who said a good comic needs a supervillain? Let's face it Iron fans, the **Armor Wars** is truly one of the greatest storylines in the history of

the armored Avenger, and this is directly tied to it! How can you even live without this comic? Every **Iron Man** collection should include a copy of this.



My only criticism would be that this story does not include only one story or even two for that matter... it has **THREE** distinct and separate stories! The second story is pretty cool, it features

the new **Captain America, John Walker**, addressing the nation. The events that follow this issue lead to the assassination of his family and the birth of the **U.S. Agent**. The third story isn't great, it's about the **Serpent Society**. I just feel that this already excellent **Cap-IM** story could have lasted a bit longer.

Another thing that really sucked was the colour error on the cover... the blue has mixed with the yellow to give **Iron Man**... a green face? Sheeesh... I bet it's the last time **Tony** has the oysters ;-)



During the fight, Iron Man says: **"I have to admire your courage, Captain -- but there's NO WAY on Earth you're going to win this one!!"**

\* \* \*

## CAPTAIN AMERICA #401

“After the storm” – June 1992

Story: Mark Gruenwald

Pencils: Rik Levins

Inks: Danny Bulanadi



The «**Storm**» that is being referred to in the title is actually **Operation: Galactic Storm**, this great Avengers storyline during which Earth’s mightiest heroes found themselves in the middle of an

intergalactic war between the **Kree** and **Shi’ar** empires. During that event, **Iron Man** surrendered the team to the enemy without consulting with **Cap** and later he broke rank to pursue his own plan (**IM #279** and **Cap #399**). Finally, **IM** was part of the Avengers group who, despite **Cap**’s protest, endeavoured to terminate the **Supreme Intelligence**’s existence to keep it from causing further harm (**Avengers #347**). Let’s face it, those two guys have quite a history and most of it hasn’t been good recently.

**Cap** is totally depressed. The **Black Widow** is afraid he might be heading for a burnout. She convinces **Hawkeye** to take him out of the mansion so he can get his mind off his worries and have a man to man talk. **Clint** manages to convince **Steve** to follow him out (it requires a bit of arm-twisting). If Steve had known where Barton was taking him, he would’ve required a lot more convincing! **A bar...** and as the man to man conversation goes on, our two Avengers receive the visit of a third and unexpected member: **Tony Stark** (seeing **Stark** in a bar of all places is not lost on Rodgers).

The two heroes proceed to talk about their past differences. They can’t pretend to agree on everything, but at least they can finally understand the other one’s point of view. And in the end, **their respect for each other is renewed.**



Now don’t get me wrong, this is an excellent, well-written and very well-drawn comic. A thoroughly enjoyable read. **But don’t expect to see a lot of super-hero action** in here because you’ll be very disappointed! **Iron Man** is only wearing armor in a very small number of panels, most of the time he’s just good ol’ **Tony Stark**. But is that a bad thing? I don’t think so.

If, for you, respect of continuity is important and if you enjoy evolving relationships between characters and character development, then you'll love this comic. **Gruenwald** takes the time to sit **Tony** and **Steve** at a table to get them to finally talk about where they're coming from and what they want to see happen next. That makes these fantastic characters **incredibly realistic and human**, and that's why we love them.

Another very cool thing about this comic is the occupants of the bar in question. If you take the time to look carefully in the background, you'll recognise a lot of people. In fact, you'll probably recognise even more people than me because I'm not an American. Many characters of American comics' early days are there like **Dick Tracy**, **Popeye** and the **Yellow Kid**. You'll also recognise old actors like **Humphrey Bogart** and many others. Heck, even **Albert Einstein** is there! Next time I'm in New York, I gotta stop for a drink at the *Laughing Morse* ;-).



The writer seems to be unaware of the fact that **Stark** was very weak and on the verge of death at that point in time because he seems just fine in this comic.



Entering the bar, Clint says: **"I'll tell ya my theory. There's three kinds a' bars – yuppie bars, lowlife bars an' old men bars."** Steve asks: **"And what's this?"** Clint replies: **"A lowlife bar, of course! They're the most fun!"**

\* \* \*

## **TALES OF SUSPENSE vol.2 #1**

"Men and Machines" – January 1995

Story: James Robinson

Art: Colin MacNiel



They used to share the spotlight in the first volume of **Tales of Suspense**, and in this special one-shot issue, they are back together: **Iron Man** and **Captain America**!

The two heroes are recruited by **SHIELD** to investigate a new terrorist organisation called **D.A.N.T.E.**, mainly composed of ex-members of the East German secret police. Both heroes seem to have a connection to this group. The leader, **Emil Stein**, is a man that **Cap** failed to arrest during WW2. The group also appears to be using **armors**

inspired from Stark technology, and we all know how much **Tony** hates it when that happens.

The two heroes will have to leave all their old differences behind to work efficiently on this case. The relationship between the two men is explored in a superb manner. The reader soon discovers that, mixed with the respect they both feel for each other, **there is a little bit of envy!** **Steve Rodgers**, a man from the 40s plucked out of his time, is envious of **Tony Stark**, this modern man who **masters all the newest technologies this era has to offer**. As for **Stark**, safely protected by his invincible armor, he envies the courage of this man who fearlessly takes on the most powerful enemies **with nothing but a union suit and a shield**.



Before they succeed, **both men will have to face their insecurities**, **Rodgers** attacking an enemy using high technology weaponry and **Stark** facing a foe with nothing but his fists and his wit. In the end, the two heroes will realise **they are more alike than they ever suspected**.



Face it people, this one has it all! A **great story** with **excellent character development** and don't get me started on **the art!**

The 64-page book is fully painted by **MacNeil** and let me tell ya... the man has talent! It also features computer-generated high-end color separations. The results are staggering by their high level of quality. One of the best looking comics I have ever read. So here you have a comic featuring **Iron Man** and **Captain America** in an awesome story with breath-taking graphics. What else could you ask for?



Tony thinks: **"I feel like a snail or a tortoise, lumbering along in my shell, whenever I'm with Steve. So clumsy and so safe, next to his grace and daring."**

\* \* \*

## UPCOMING WANDERINGS:

Iron fans should keep an eye on the ongoing PARADISE X mini-series. Not only does it feature Tony Stark (as a guardian angel of Paradise X), it also features **Iron Man 2020**, a fascinating character for sure.

Speaking of **IM 2020**, my next column will put the spotlight on mister **Arno Stark** himself! I'll review **FOUR** awesome comics that you simply cannot ignore if you wish to understand who is this great character and what makes him tick. That's all coming soon in **Advanced Iron #58!!**

**That's it for now.** 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 a message at [cousture@yahoo.com](mailto:cousture@yahoo.com) and while I'm at it, I cordially invite you to visit **my Iron Man web site** (yes, this is my inevitable and always shameless plug) at the following address:

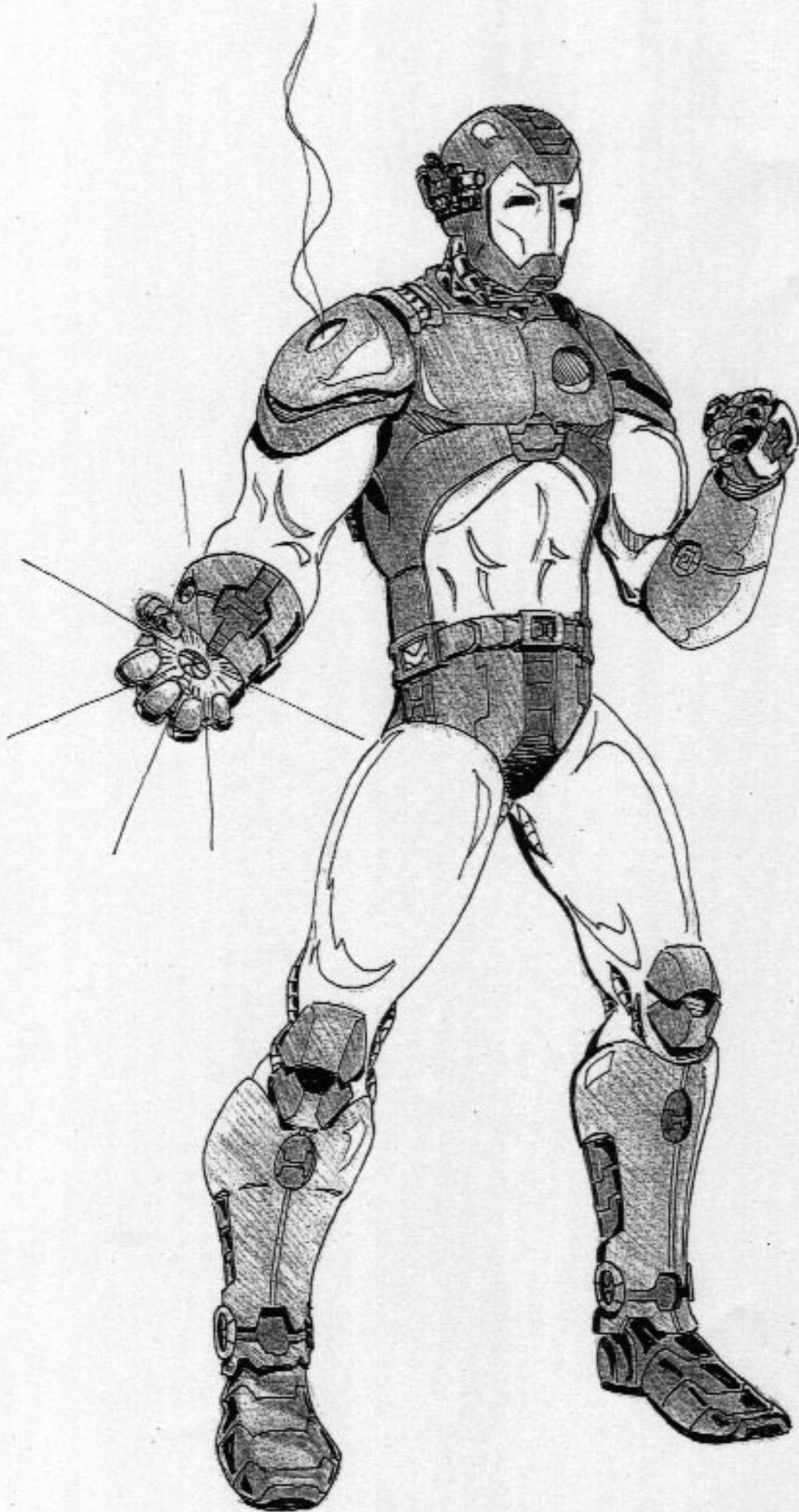
<http://membres.lycos.fr/cousture>

And check out my "**Wanderings of Iron Man**" page, where you'll be able to access all of my past columns for A.I. as well as **some new and exclusive reviews** of some of Iron Man's coolest appearances as a guest-star in the pages of other Marvel mags.

Hope to hear from you and **bonne lecture!**



[www.alexrossart.com](http://www.alexrossart.com)









# PAT'S RAP

by your beloved assistant-  
editor, Patrick Couture

OK, let's face it people... **Iron Man fans like to whine and complain.** I mean, let's be honest about it; we moan a lot! And I'm certainly no exception: the last two times I wrote to Marvel was to complain. I wrote after the **Teen Tony debacle** to vehemently complain and inform them I was dropping the title, and I wrote again after reading **IM #400** to express my disagreement with the entire issue and to inform them that I was very close to dropping the title. On top of that, the last time I wrote a column in these pages (outside of my regular *Wanderings* and the occasional *Best of the Best*), it was to complain about a **Frank Tieri** story.

Now don't get me wrong, this is in no way a *Mea Culpa* exercise. I actually think that we have some **DAMN good reasons** to complain. But just this once, I'm going to try something different because I think somebody really deserves to be praised. That person is IM's current artist, **Michael Ryan**.

Although I am aware that many fans will disagree with me on this one, I think Mr. Ryan is an incredible artist. I think that he's the best artist to be assigned to this book since **Sean Chen**. In fact, I would not hesitate to put him way up there in the list of **TOP FIVE all-time best IM artists**, along with **Chen, Bright, Layton** and **Romita Jr.**

In every issue he has drawn so far, there was always **at least one** panel that just made me go: «*Whoa! Awesome*». Just take the latest issue, **IM #57** for example. Aside from the cover that is absolutely beautiful (even though it's got nothing to do with what actually occurs inside the comic... oops, here I go whining again), I was simply thrown off my chair on more than one occasion.

The very first page, **the candlelight spa scene**... as far as the art is involved, is beautifully rendered. The expressions of warmth and passion on the characters' faces are gorgeous. The drawing conveys perfectly well the mood of the scene, the faces are not stiff or wrong in any way and the eyes are incredibly expressive. Now, I don't like what's going on here, but the art **is** incredible.

Also, on **pages 6 and 7** (not counting adds), the whole decor surrounding **Stone** (Oh no! Not him again) is absolutely beautiful. I must have stared at these columns for **long minutes**, they're awesome! I love the one on the right with a face staring out of the skull's mouth. **Pages 14 and 15**, with Iron Man being punched across the room, deserves to be framed on a museum wall! The level of detail is staggering. It must take the man days to draw something like that! Heck, it'd take me weeks to draw something with half that much detail, let alone an entire comic! Wow!

Finally, the second and third panels of **pages 20 and 21** are superb, in my opinion. The scene features Iron Man, bending his knees and placing his feet against his giant opponent's chest and then activating his boot jets while pushing his legs forward to throw the robot through a concrete wall. Awesome. **One of the best Iron Man action scenes ever.**

I don't know if you read **Advanced Iron** Mr. Ryan, but if you do, I'd like to congratulate you on your **spectacular work**. If it wasn't for you, I would have dropped the book by now. Your amazing art makes me want to hang on for a while longer. I hope that one day, you get to illustrate Iron Man stories that are worthy of your talent.

### IN RESPONSE TO ALEX JUKL

As much as I want to keep the whining to a minimum in this column (a hard task considering the poor quality of the insipid stories we've been force-fed every month for the past 2 years), I want to accept **Alex Jukl's** invitation (at the end of his column we published last issue) and respond to some of his comments.

First of all, thank you Alex for sharing your point of view with us. I respect your opinion, but frankly, we can grasp at straws all we want, I think **IM #400** was dreadful, any way you look at it. I mean, this is the 400<sup>th</sup> issue for crying out loud! Issues **100, 200 and 300** are among some of **the very best IM comics ever made**, and now compare those with... **this**. It would be a bad issue regardless of the number stamped on the cover, the fact it's the 400<sup>th</sup> one **hurts even more**.

I think we deserved better than IM fighting and then being defeated by **an unarmed monk**. Throw in all the invisible magic you want to try to make sense of it, it's still an awful story.

And the identity revealing thing? You say that it's not to save a puppy, but **to make a child happy**? And that is supposed to make it any better? I think it still sucks. Can you imagine **Bruce Wayne** compromising his secret identity to save a dog and in so doing, making a child happy? Would **Superman** put all his loved ones at risk to save a kid's dog? Come on... that would **never** happen! Some writers have too much respect for the character they're writing to allow anything like that. Would these heroes do it to save a child's life? Yeah, sure... but to save a **DOG**? To make a kid **HAPPY**? No bloody way...

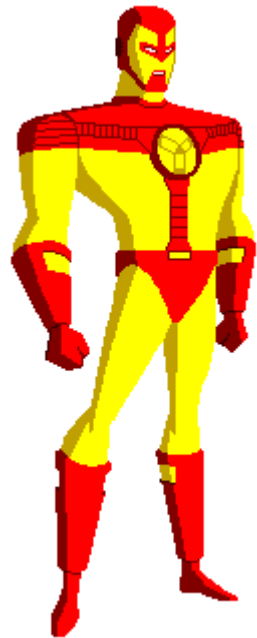
As a closing comment, I think **Stan Lee** said it best, back in **1965**, in **Tales of Suspense #66** when he wrote:



Amen to that, Stan!



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**BASED ON WB SUPERHEROES – BY JEFF SZKLENNIK**