

FREE COMIC PREVIEW: SOUTHERN KNIGHTS!

LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES!

#16

DUAL DIALOGUES WITH DC'S-
**PAUL LEVITZ &
DAN JURGENS!**

DEADMAN'S
CREATOR--
**ARNOLD
DRAKE**

SPILLS THE STORY
OF HIS OWN
SECRET WARS!

DR. WHO ARTIST
DAVE GIBBONS
ON THE BRITISH COMICS BRAIN DRAIN!

DAVID
ANTHONY
KRAFT'S

COMICS

INTERVIEW

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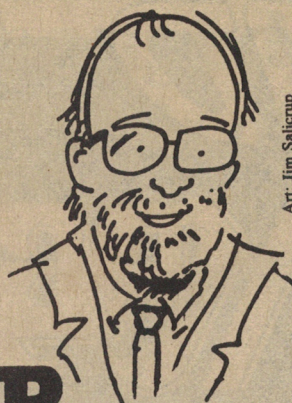
MS. PEEPS

the bitch is back

FLUFFY
feline food disposal unit

David Anthony Kraft's COMICS INTERVIEW #16 October 1984. Published monthly by Fictioneer Books Ltd., Suite 301, 234 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10001. Copyright © 1984 Fictioneer Books Ltd. All rights reserved. SUBSCRIPTIONS: \$24 for twelve issues. CANADA, MEXICO & FOREIGN (U.S. funds only): \$30 for twelve. Any statements made in this magazine, express or implied, are solely those of the individuals being interviewed and do not represent the editorial position of the publisher, who accepts no responsibility for such statements.

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UP FRONT

As our cover banner heralds, this issue includes a comics insert that previews SOUTHERN KNIGHTS #8. For the full story, of course, you'll have to pick up that extravaganza issue, on sale at your favorite comics shop early in 1985. So let me warn you: Once you've read the "teaser" — you will want to know the conclusion!

How can I be so sure of that? Because, at this writing, I have only seen the preview pages — and I know that I sure want to see what happens next!

Why am I so enthusiastic about this independent comics series? Because, starting with issue #8, SOUTHERN KNIGHTS will become a COMICS INTERVIEW publication! There is nothing quite so exciting as being there to watch a new concept taking shape, a new creative team growing and developing into something great right before your eyes.

From its humble beginnings (the earliest SOUTHERN KNIGHTS artist was none other than **Butch Guice**, who has since gone on to make something of a name for himself at Marvel with MICRONAUTS and, most recently, SWASHBUCKLERS) to now, this series has continued to grow and mature. I believe SOUTHERN KNIGHTS may be about to blossom before our very eyes into a beauty of a book.

Check out the preview in this issue of COMICS INTERVIEW. Then go out and demand a copy of SOUTHERN KNIGHTS #8 from your comics shop. It's a double-size special that also includes *all* you need to know from the first seven issues, including a lot of great early **Guice** art, so that you can enjoy the series starting with SOUTHERN KNIGHTS #8.

Get in on a good thing early. Watch a worthwhile comic coming into its own. Have fun reading SOUTHERN KNIGHTS. And, above all — be happy!

~David

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL:
UP FRONT

a rap with *dak*

3

WRITER:
ARNOLD DRAKE

the disputatious daddy of *the doom patrol* and ex-scribe of *the x-men* excoriates dc and marvel — with interviewer *lou mougin* recording the shots!

5

WRITER:
PAUL LEVITZ

the lord of *the legion of super-heroes* discusses his double life at dc!

19

ARTIST:
DAN JURGENS

the exciting new *legion* artist palavers on the perils of pencilling fan faves!

31

ARTIST:
DAVE GIBBONS

doctor who's draftsman gabs about *green lantern* — and more!

50

RETAILER:
THE BOOK NOOK

doug sanford, comic-book store owner, and *brian morris*, salesman and comics expert, report to *darrel boatz* about the hazards of the direct-sales market!

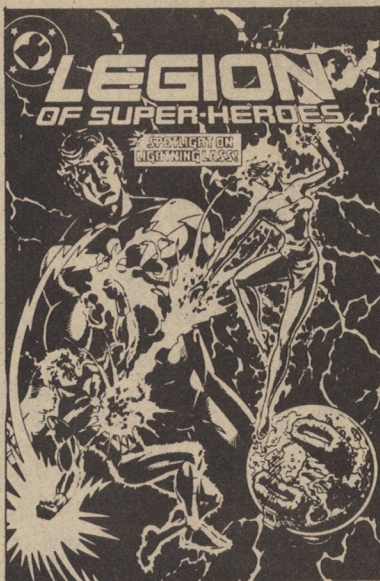
67

LETTERS:
THE LAST WORD

the readers talk back

77

“I can’t keep track of where all the LEGION characters are at any given time.”



PAUL LEVITZ

THE LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES occupies a special place in comics.

There are other super-group series, but LSH is one of the most durable, with possibly the largest and most varied cast of characters. Maybe, more than anything else, what makes THE LEGION special is its fans — and there are legions of ‘em — a network of doggedly loyal devotees who comprise almost a world of their own within the United Planets of Fandom.

Out of their ranks, in the early Seventies, came a young LEGION-lover, Paul Levitz, who had a dual interest in both the creative and the business sides of comics. Paul joined DC Comics, and is now not only Vice-President in charge of Operations, but is the writer of two LSH books: the regular comic (called the “softcover” edition) and the new deluxe-format, Baxter-paper “hardcover” edition. Jim Salicrup dropped in on the Vice-Presidential offices to quiz Paul about his double life in comics (although Paul promises to go into much greater detail about his business activities at DC in a separate, future interview); and to learn the truth about the

legendary LEGION scorecards tucked away in Paul’s desk ...

JIM SALICRUP: How did you get interested in comic books?

PAUL LEVITZ: Reading them. A kid up the block had a whole carton of them, and

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Paul Levitz

Born: 21 October 1956 — Brooklyn, NY

Occupation: Writer; and Vice-President in charge of Operations for DC Comics.

Training: The Business School of New York University

Credits: LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES, ADVENTURE, DC COMICS PRESENTS, etc.

I flipped through them and I thought they were just fun. I’ve been involved in the field in one way or another from the time I was fourteen. So after most people usually drop out of comics, I’ve had good reason to keep reading them. I’m not sure how many of them I would read if I weren’t in the business today. I might read *more* of them than I read now, because there’d be more time. **JIM:** How did you get involved in the comics industry?

PAUL: NEWFANGLES, which was the fanzine Don and Maggie Thompson — who now edit COMICS BUYER’S GUIDE — were publishing back then, did something remarkable, which was to announce its death a year in advance so that other fanzines could come in. (Laughter.) Paul Kupperberg and I were friends, and like nice little kids we picked up the phone and called DC, and told them that if they would cooperate, we’d do a new newszine. They did and we did. And ultimately that became THE COMIC READER.

“Young people weren’t welcome in comics. We were okay



Art from the cover of a Warner Communications press kit for DC Comics.

JIM: *I remember I would see you at conventions, when I was a go-fer at Marvel, and you used to come up for news. My impression was that you were adamant about not making a career out of comics.*

PAUL: Not at all. I was intent on working my way through NYU Business School, getting an MBA, and working for IBM or some similar company. But as you remember, Jim, those were days when young people were not particularly welcomed in comics. We were okay as long as we stayed back in our corner near the Xerox machine.

JIM: *Also, everybody said comics wouldn't last for another two years or so — that was about twelve years ago. (Laughter.)*

PAUL: That was certainly part of the popular thinking. But in my case, I just wanted to be a part of something, and there was no opening to be part of the comic-book industry. When **Jenette Kahn** came here, that started to change, radically.

JIM: *What do you do as Vice-President?*

PAUL: I'm responsible for the business side of the company, including marketing and licensing, international rights, and keeping the walls from falling-in. (Laughter.)

JIM: *How did you get involved in the business end of comics?*

PAUL: That's what I always wanted to do. I never particularly wanted to write comics. I have done some competent comic books that have been entertaining, but I don't have any magic. I'm a pretty decent business person, and I've got an education in that area. I'm a rarity in this field, in that I've got a business background, plus an awareness of the creative process and of what our readership cares about.

JIM: *Has that awareness been a plus or minus?*

PAUL: I like to think of it as a plus. I think that in any business you're better off if you understand what the consumer wants.

JIM: *Do you find your work a challenge? How do you approach it?*

PAUL: I find it a load of fun. I enjoy my job as I go from working with television people on an animation deal in the morning, to talking to a licensee about a toy line he'd like to do and, in between, working on how to pitch some new book we'd like to publish, or working to change the technology so that the books will be printed better. There's a wonderfully diverse set of things to do.

JIM: *Do you think you'd be equally happy at IBM?*

PAUL: I never tried it — I never had a real

job! (Laughter.) So I can't tell you. I certainly know that I enjoy what I do here.

JIM: *What are you involved in now that will affect the comics that get to the newsstand?*

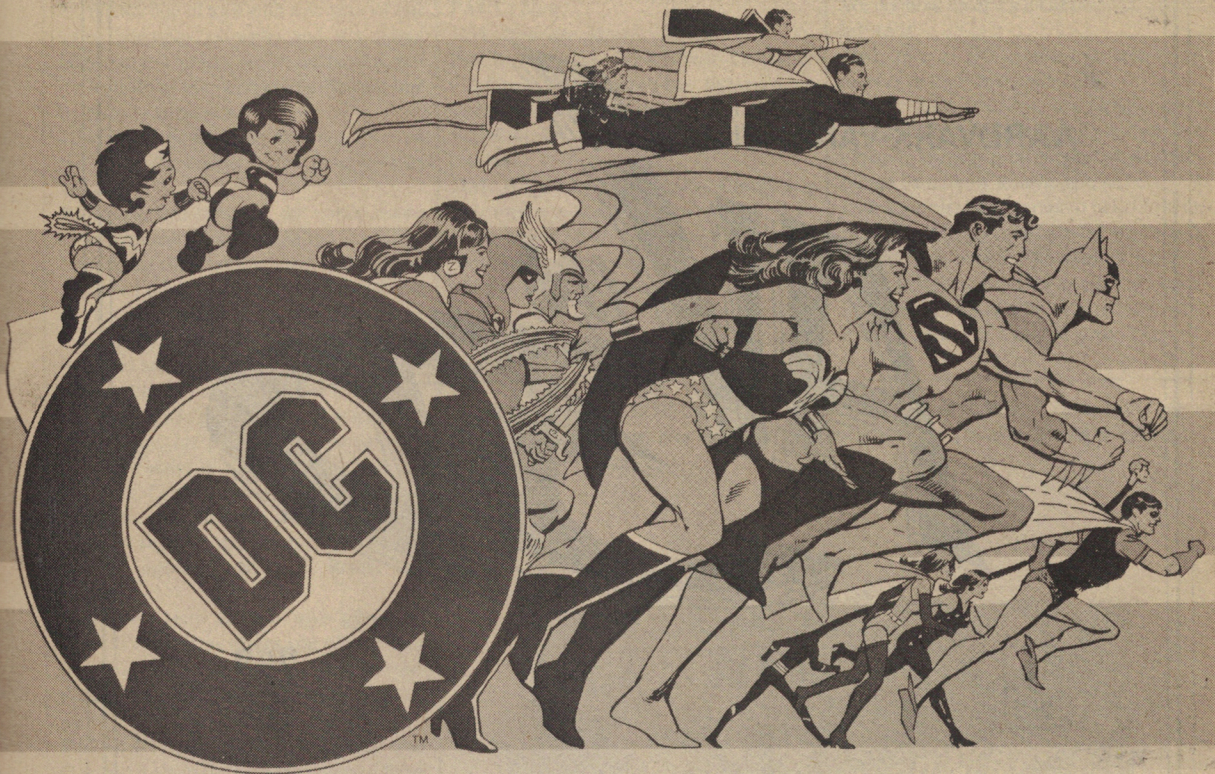
PAUL: I've been very involved with World Color in the new Flexographic printing process.

JIM: *What's that?*

PAUL: It's an upgrade of the traditional letterpress method. Two years ago, World Color couldn't print anything but thirty-pound newsprint. For many years, the publishers just wanted the same price, or a lower price, and we didn't care how much worse the physical product had to be. However, the readers today — especially the reader likely to be reading COMICS INTERVIEW — cares about the quality of the product. He's not reading a disposable product; he's willing to invest a certain amount of money in it. As our readership has changed, our logic has changed as a result, and so we got the printers to find ways to use thirty-pound Mando. Flexographic is a follow-up on that. It's a way of changing the physical press format to get what I think is ultimately a higher quality job. It's still in the test stages. We've published our first book in that process.

JIM: *Which is ...?*

as long as we stayed back near the Xerox machine.”



Paul says: “The hardcore truth is that DC is a successful company and Warner is happy with us.”

PAUL: The direct-sales copies of SPANNER'S GALAXY #1.

JIM: How will this new process change comics?

PAUL: It gives you the potential for more vivid color, better detail, tighter line-screen, to an all-around better printing of the art form.

JIM: Well, a while back when they went from metal plates to plastic plates you could see the fine lines just becoming squiggles.

PAUL: A lot of physical detail was simply lost — just dropped out of the artwork entirely.

JIM: Now comics seem to be going in the other direction, moving to better methods of reproduction.

PAUL: We're trying.

JIM: You mentioned that the readership has changed. In what ways?

PAUL: We seem to have a lot more older readers, who, as I said, will go for a more expensive, more quality-oriented product.

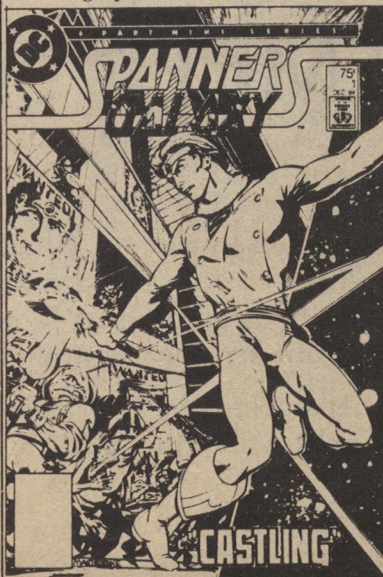
JIM: How did you find this out?

PAUL: The comic-book business has never been the best on demographics, so I can't say precisely, but the best information we have indicates that that's the case.

JIM: How has that changed DC?

PAUL: We've introduced books with more mature themes and adult content, and have

higher-quality production standards. I like the broader range of what's creatively possible in comics today. It used to be that the comics business was devoted to finding out SPANNER'S GALAXY #1 was printed in the new Flexographic process. Paul has been very involved in introducing Flexographics to the DC line.



the one trend that was hot, whether it was war or super-heroes or mystery, and publishing all that was possible of that one genre, while barely keeping the other genres alive. Now we're experimenting with a number of different genres. Perhaps not a tremendous number of readers are interested in them, but hopefully there are enough to support diverse approaches to doing comics.

JIM: How involved are you, in your capacity as Vice-President, with the creative side?

PAUL: A lot less than I used to be.

JIM: Is that your personal preference?

PAUL: Well, you can't be everywhere at once. Here, I think, I make a more singular contribution.

JIM: You mentioned more mature formats. That's a controversial issue in itself. SWAMP THING is no longer going to have the Comics Code seal on it. Were you involved in that decision?

PAUL: No. We made a general strategic decision a couple of years ago, that it was up to Dick Giordano whether or not he wanted a comic not to go through the Code. It was an editorial problem, not a business problem.

JIM: And licensing? How's that working?

PAUL: I'm very excited about that. Kenner, Parker Brothers and Fun Dimensions, in a coordinated program, did the SUPER

“DC is a happy, healthy, profitable little company.”

POWERS line of toys with a number of our other licensees as well, and it's doing fabulously. The best report we have is that it's outselling the comparable Marvel line by about two-to-one.

JIM: Does the licensing have any effect on the comics themselves, or is it the other way around?

PAUL: In this instance, the comic books have tremendous impact on the licensing. I think that the characters are really being portrayed properly for the first time. When a kid plays with an action figure, he traditionally holds it by its hips, as he flies it around and moves it. The gimmick of the Kenner line is that if you hold it that way and exert a little pressure, the character will demonstrate his power — Superman will punch, Wonder Woman will do bullets and bracelets, Green Lantern will thrust out his ring in the equivalent of a power blast, Flash will start running, Aquaman swims, Hawkman's wings beat, and so on. Really well devised.

JIM: Well, how do the toys affect the comics? One of the things you always hear is, “You can't change the characters because it would affect the licensing.” Is that true?

PAUL: No, not really. Licensing has changed a lot in the past few years. I think that remark came mostly from an era when the two sides of the business never talked to each other. It was a case of, “the licensing people down the hall don't want to hear about changing the characters.” But now we have a real dialogue back and forth.

JIM: One of those rumors that go through the business every now and then is that DC is in trouble. So how's DC doing?

PAUL: Happy, healthy — a very profitable little company. We're very proud of DC.

JIM: I think that what started it was the newspapers were carrying the sale of Atari.

PAUL: I suspect. The real problems Warner had with Atari have led to a great deal of unfounded speculation about other parts of the corporation. But DC has been very solid. We've got nothing but consistent support from the parent corporation.

JIM: I think the old rumor used to be that Warner was very successful and could afford to carry things like DC. But that doesn't seem to be the case.

PAUL: Never has been a matter of “carrying.” We've been making a really positive contribution to the corporation for a number of years. The hardcore truth is that we are a successful company and Warner is happy with us. Warner has been behind us in everything, and God willing, that will go on for many, many years.

JIM: Are you involved with the actual sales of the comics?

PAUL: Sure.

JIM: How are sales?

PAUL: It hasn't been a bad year. Obviously the direct-sales market has tightened up somewhat, as the distributors and retailers adjust to the changes. But we're very content.

JIM: When I interviewed Dick Giordano a little over a year ago, he referred to a marketing report which showed that the growth potential for direct sales comes to something like four-hundred percent.

PAUL: Well, everybody has his own ideas about how far that market can be extended.

We do think there's a lot of potential growth left to it.

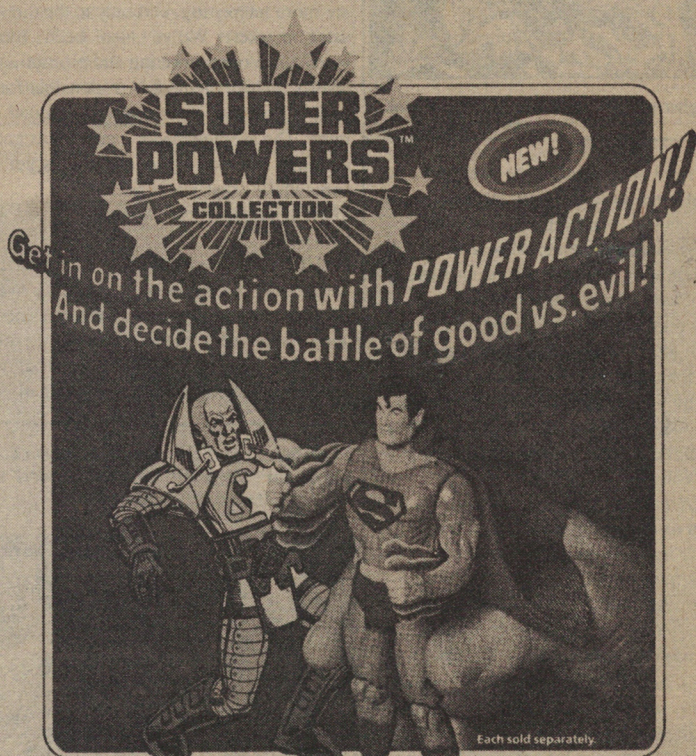
JIM: How is DC involved in helping the market realize that potential?

PAUL: Well, it's hard, as a supplier, to be of great assistance in helping your retailers expand. We try to be supportive of them, but no one, to my knowledge, has come up with a successful program to help build the retailers. Mostly, that would mean risk-capital from people who want to succeed.

JIM: If someone wants to open a comic-book store, would now be a good time?

PAUL: I think it's a good time. The mar-

Ad for the SUPER POWERS toys that ran in many DC comics. “These toys,” says Paul, “will have some marvelous effects, not just on DC, but on comics as a whole.”



They're the most awesome heroes fighting the most despicable villains in a universal struggle for power. And they're yours in this incredible collection of twelve action figures. Just squeeze 'em. Each has its own power action. Superman punches. Brainiac kicks. The Flash runs. Get them together and you trigger the endless battle of the Super Powers Collection. Who wins? Who loses? You decide!



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"You can't do anything effectively without



The higher-priced "hardcover" LEGION book.
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ket slowed somewhat in the past year, but we just went through a very large recession in this country. And yet we had a pretty low failure-rate among comic-book retailers selling comics. When you measure this against the statistics of any other new type of business, I think that's pretty impressive. There are still lots of new stores opening up. There are a lot of people making a living doing something that didn't exist ten years ago. I find that an incredibly impressive story, and I have a lot of admiration for the people involved.

JIM: Retailing is a way for people who like comics as readers to make it their whole life — or a living — without becoming an artist, writer or editor.

PAUL: Absolutely. But it is also a case of people seeing an opportunity and making something happen. And that's so exciting.

JIM: A lot of comic-book publishers who weren't publishing super-hero material, such as Harvey and Gold Key, have more or less suspended publication. The market is very supportive of super-hero comics, but DC has been trying to get involved in other genres. Is that move being supported by marketing?

PAUL: We're trying to — perhaps in some cases disproportionately so, because part of the job of marketing a book like SWAMP THING is to make people who wouldn't ordinarily buy it aware of how good a book it is. I think it's arguably the best book we're publishing now, yet it's selling, roughly, half as many copies as some of our best-sellers. So we have to put out a fair number of our dollars to promote it.

JIM: In what way?

PAUL: We featured it heavily in things like the DC SAMPLER, which is a promotional giveaway. We've got a poster campaign. We had Alan Moore come over here for some conventions, so we had the whole SWAMP THING crew together and we taped a good portion of it and made a video of it.

JIM: Yeah, I noticed that this year there have been a lot of DC people making the rounds at conventions. Does that have any effect?

PAUL: You can never exactly measure what does what. That's one of the frustrations of this business. But I'd like to believe it's one of the factors in making a book a success. We've had a lot of new people come on board in the last few years, and they've produced a lot of new comics that are more interesting, certainly to the direct-sales market. We've also been more vigorous in our marketing and promotional efforts. Which element is responsible for a book's success? Your guess is as good as mine. The average reader's guess is as good as mine. But as long as our efforts get us somewhere, that's terrific.

JIM: What kind of goals do you set for yourself?

PAUL: There are different goals for different areas of our business. What we try overall is to make the company a better business. That sounds very vague. When I inherited my present responsibility we had half of one person responsible for the marketing of our

Paul supervised DC's promotional campaign for SWAMP THING, which he calls "arguably our best title."



The regular "softcover" LEGION title.

books. We now have five people. And we've gotten more specific about our advertising and promotion. We started to spend a lot more on it. We've gotten more sophisticated in our relationships with distributors and our retailers. We're now getting more aggressive on the ID side of it as well — spending more money there. That's almost a universal corollary. (Laughter.) You can't do anything effectively without spending time, energy and, ultimately, money. And each of these five people in each of these areas improves the company and takes it in a new direction. If I were doing any one of these jobs personally, I'd probably do it differently, but each of these people has their own interesting ideas, and leads us in a slightly different direction. I guess our overall goal is to be the best at what we do.

JIM: Well, at one point, many, many years ago, DC was the number one company.

PAUL: DC was number one, in terms of sales, from '38 or '39 to '72. Marvel's been outselling us domestically for only a fairly short amount of time. But I don't measure "best" solely in terms of sales. I'll be very happy if we're putting out a better line of comics — which we are now, but not by as wide a margin as I'd like. I'll be happy if we're doing our job better and making a better profit.

JIM: Is there any new project that you're involved with that you think is going to have an overall impact on the company?

PAUL: It's not really appropriate for me to reveal works-in-progress.

JIM: How about something that's out now?

PAUL: I think Flexographics is the most ex-

spending time, energy and, ultimately, money.”

citing thing to break this summer. I'm also very excited by the Kenner program. I think it will have some marvelous effects — not only on DC but on the comics business as a whole, because it'll get more young kids to look at comics again.

JIM: *Isn't DC publishing a line of comics for younger readers?*

PAUL: We have some work in development there.

JIM: *But nothing you can talk about?*

PAUL: Nothing to Dick's satisfaction yet. He's still perfecting it.

JIM: *I heard rumors of some weekly publication.*

PAUL: That's another project-in-progress. (Laughter.)

JIM: *Okay, I understand. Then let's talk about Jack Kirby coming back to DC.*

PAUL: One of the proudest statements I can make is that Jack's going to make more money from Darkseid and the New Gods than he did from the whole cast of characters he created for Marvel. When we made

the decision to make Darkseid an important part of the DC line again, we got him on board consulting with us and doing some new design on some of the characters, and in return were able to see that he got a piece of the action — what he might have earned had he created the New Gods today. We were able to do that because so much new creative work was involved. We certainly had the option of getting someone to mimic Jack's work, but it was really exciting to get him involved again. We expect to hand him some extraordinarily-large-sized checks in the next couple of years.

JIM: *That's good to hear. Wayne Boring is also doing some new material?*

PAUL: A number of the old artists and writers are poking their heads in and saying, "Oh, boy — comics are really different."

JIM: *How about Jerry Siegel?*

PAUL: That would be fun. He's submitted some ideas from time to time. I saw Jerry last Wednesday. He's looking well.

JIM: *I thought it was interesting that the co-creator of SUPERMAN has been doing material as a back-up feature in an Eclipse comic.*

PAUL: It's nice to see people back in any part of the field. I obviously have proprietary feelings about DC, but most of all I'd like to see comics a healthy business. If Marvel Comics or Eclipse Comics does something wonderful, I think it's just nifty. I'm glad to see a new creative idea, wherever it comes from. I'm glad when there are more creative people in the business. I'm really glad to be in a business where people are coming into it, instead of getting out.

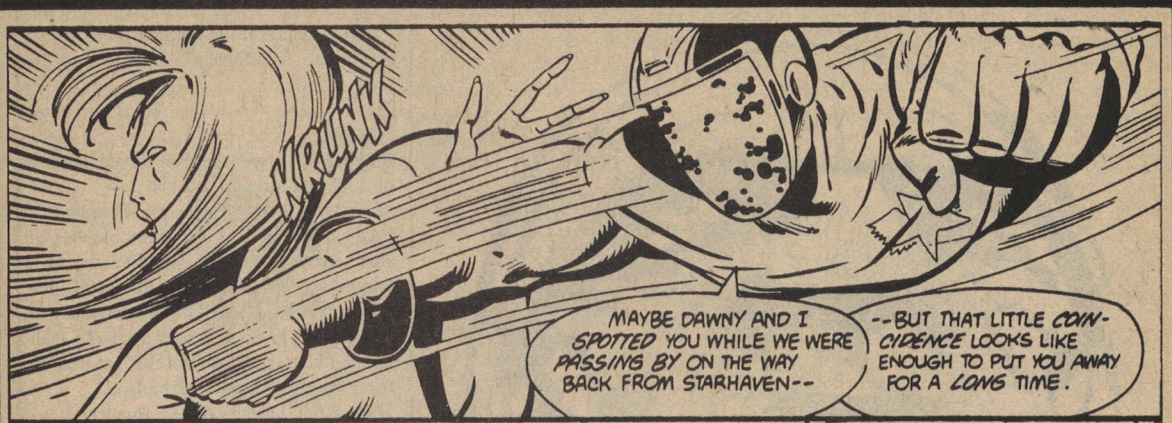
JIM: *How did you get involved with writing THE LEGION?*

PAUL: THE LEGION was probably my favorite comic book as a kid. When **Jim Shooter** went to Marvel — in 1976, I guess — I took over the book from him. **Denny O'Neil** was editing it at the time. I stayed on it about two years, and had to give up the book in a fit of exhaustion. A couple of

Members of the Legion of Super-Scripters meet in their secret headquarters. From left to right: Paul Levitz, Don McGregor, Stan Lee, and Len Wein.



“It was exciting getting Jack Kirby involved again.”



Wildfire of the Legion of Super-Heroes pounds some sense into Titania of the Legion of Super-Villains, in the deluxe-format LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES #2. Words by Paul Levitz, art by Keith Giffen and Larry Mahlstedt.

years ago, Mike Barr, who was editing it, talked me back on to it.

JIM: Why did you give up the book when you did?

PAUL: I was just awfully tired. It's difficult doing the writing and having a staff job at the same time. At that point, I'd just gotten too many commitments on my desk and had to give up most of them because it was all falling apart.

JIM: And now you're doing two LEGION books a month?

PAUL: Well, sort of. I'm working with Mindy Newell on the softcover book, doing some of the dialogue, and doing the three-part mini-series within the series. And it's also just one series, so it's under control. Years ago, I was doing three or four different assignments at the same time, which was much too much.

JIM: Well, how do you handle that many characters?

PAUL: Scorecards.

JIM: How does that work?

PAUL: I can't keep track of where all the characters are, at any given time. So a lot of the plotting is on little charts, along with the sub-plots and how they're evolving and where I last left the characters. Each time I do an issue I get out all my papers and sort it all out. Maybe there's somebody out there who could keep all this in their heads, but I sure can't.

JIM: Are there any particular characters you prefer?

PAUL: Nah — it varies with the story I'm doing. It's a cliché, but to some extent they do tend to write themselves.

JIM: Do you do the plot first, and dialogue it from the pencils?

PAUL: Yeah, I've done most of my stuff "Marvel style" for many years.

JIM: Why is that?

PAUL: When you're working with an ar-

tist whose aims are sympathetic to yours, you often do your best work that way. I work full script when I'm working with an artist who prefers that method, or when I'm working with an artist I don't know, or do know but don't necessarily agree with. It doesn't mean the artist is bad. He just has a different storytelling approach.

JIM: You're working with two artists now?

PAUL: Primarily with Steve Lightle who does the hardcover book, and a little bit with Dan Jurgens, who's doing the softcover.

JIM: And how closely do you work with them?

PAUL: Less so with both of them than with Keith Giffen, who was on the book previously. Lightle and I talk about once a month or so, kibbitzing about different ideas. I always feel comfortable with artists making changes with my plots and contributing ideas of their own. It becomes a game of "Can You Top This?"

JIM: Are you still excited about THE LEGION?

Also from LSH #2: close-ups of Legionnaires Element Lad, Cosmic Boy and the White Witch (top row); and Colossal Boy, Phantom Girl and Blok (bottom row).



“What the Legion needs is a really *big*



Jack Kirby pencils of Darkseid. Will “the Big D” return for a rematch with the Legion?

PAUL: I certainly still enjoy doing it every month, although it's hard to find the time.

JIM: *It seems to have evolved its own large following.*

PAUL: Yes, and they've stayed with it through good times and bad.

JIM: *What is the reason for its appeal?*

PAUL: Part of it is the sheer number of characters. There's enough diversity in it that everyone can see something in it that they want to see. Part of it is the fantasy of the future. The book has always had a feeling and a style all its own that set it apart from the rest of the marketplace.

JIM: *Which writers have influenced you?*

PAUL: Most of my writing style has evolved from **Roy Thomas** — his work on **THE AVENGERS**, particularly. And I've got a feeling it was shaped by the people I've worked with — **Joe Orlando**, and **Denny O'Neil**, to name two.

JIM: *What kind of influences did you get from them?*

PAUL: It's hard to put it into simple terms. Denny was a blessing to me. He taught me to say more with less. Joe has the best storytelling imagination I've ever seen. He taught me, really, just how to “blue-sky” ideas and how to get enough idea content.

JIM: *How do you do that?*

PAUL: It really comes down to understanding your characters and just taking a logical extrapolation. Sounds very simple, but it's a complicated process. I'm not sure. If I could teach you in one paragraph, I'd patent it and make a fortune.

JIM: *Well, this may be another work-in-process, but what about DC UNIVERSE — CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS? Will that have an effect on THE LEGION storyline?*

PAUL: Oh, I think it's gong to have an effect on everything in our line. I haven't read it yet, but I know a couple of things they're doing to tie together with **THE LEGION**.

JIM: *But that's secret, too. (Laughter.)*

PAUL: Not so much “secret” as “in-progress.”

(DC's publisher, Jenette Kahn, peeks in.)

JENETTE KAHN: Hi, Jim. I didn't recognize you at first. What happened to your beard?

JIM: *I shave every ten years.*

JENETTE: It makes your face look shorter. *(Laughter.)*

(Jenette exits.)

JIM: *Paul, you mentioned earlier the decision to make Darkseid play a more important part in the DC Universe. Was that in your mind when you were writing the LEGION stories with Darkseid in them?*

PAUL: No, the decision was made prior to that. I'm an old Kirby fan. I think he's one of the best, ever. The Legion's had a few

villain, and Darkseid is kind of irresistible.”

good villains, but they need a really *big* villain, and Darkseid's kind of irresistible. I'm very happy with those stories.

JIM: *So Darkseid's going to be around a while?*

PAUL: If not in the LEGION, somewhere.

JIM: *We've covered a wide range of topics — your writing, your role in the business end of the company, your goals, and so on. Speaking of DC in general, how would you sum it all up?*

PAUL: We're very pleased with our growth

in the last couple of years. We think there's a tremendous distance yet to go, but we have some of the best people in our industry. As I said before, we want to be the best at what we do. We don't see any reason to settle for less.

George Perez depicts the Legion of Super-Heroines.



“I like doing a book like **THE LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES**, where you can build a universe.”

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Dan Jurgens

Occupation: Storyteller

Born: 27 June 1959 — Ortonville, Minnesota (Population 2000)

Residence: Minneapolis, Minnesota

Training: Minneapolis College of Art and Design, followed by advertising work.

Credits: WARLORD, BATMAN, SUN DEVILS, TEEN TITANS, TALES OF THE LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES

Favorite Comics (Past): BATMAN, THE LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES, FANTASTIC FOUR, SPIDER-MAN

Favorite Comics (Present): JON SABLE, AMERICAN FLAGG, SWAMP THING

Favorite President: Abraham Lincoln

Favorite Drink: Gin and Tonic

Favorite Movie: FANTASTIC VOYAGE

Favorite LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES Character: Ultra Boy

Hobbies and Interests: None, really, at present. When I was in college, comics were my hobby. Now that I'm in comics, it's time to find another hobby. So far, I haven't been able to find one. *(Laughter.)*



Dan takes to the high seas, during a much-needed respite from the drawing table.

DAN JURGENS

When Dan Jurgens was a fan, one of his favorite comics artists was Mike Grell, and one of his favorite comic books was *THE LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES*. Now a comics professional himself, Dan has followed in Mike Grell's footsteps by pencilling *THE WARLORD* and has recently become the new artist for *TALES OF THE LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES*.

Does all this make Dan Jurgens' life a fan's dream come true? Not quite, as ye

managing editor found out in a recent talk with this young and unassuming Midwesterner ...

BILL CHADWICK: How did you come to be the *TALES OF THE LEGION* artist?

DAN JURGENS: Last April I was in New York, visiting DC, and at that time I had pretty much resigned from *THE WARLORD*. I had been on the book for

about two years and just couldn't see doing it any more. I was burnt out on *WARLORD*, and was just going to concentrate on *SUN DEVILS*. I got talking to some people who asked me, "What would you like to draw?" and I said how I wouldn't mind doing the *LEGION* some day. It wasn't long afterward that **Karen Berger** called me up and asked me if I would like to do it.

BILL: When you say you were "burnt out"

"I find Conan a very boring character."

on *WARLORD*, do you mean you were dissatisfied with it or tired of it?

DAN: Well, it was actually a combination of a lot of things. First of all, *WARLORD* is not the right type of book for me to be working on anyway. I took it when it was assigned to me but it was not where my real interest lies. The book has such a strong presence of **Mike Grell**. It was always kind of a conflict — with myself, and with DC, too, I think — as to just how the book should be handled. As an artist you really want to push a story in your own direction, and at the same time, the book had been such a success as it was done by **Grell**, that there was always a conscious effort on DC's part to keep it that way — for example, they still wanted the double-page spread every issue on pages two and three.

BILL: With the little box about what a dangerous place Skartaris is?

DAN: Right. And that meant the storyline had to be built around the spread. There were a number of things wrong with it. For me, it just wasn't artistically satisfying enough to work on.

BILL: You don't like sword-and-sorcery?

DAN: Not much. I find *CONAN* a tremendously boring book and character. Sword-and-sorcery has just never interested me at all. Although *WARLORD* isn't true sword-and-sorcery, its subject matter was just not something I wanted to do.

BILL: If *WARLORD* isn't your type of book, what would you say is?

DAN: I like doing a book like *THE LEGION* or *SUN DEVILS*. Not necessarily group books, but where you can really build and design the universe of the book itself. In other words, if you take a book like *SUPERMAN*, you pretty much have, as a basic foundation, what you look at outside your window every day. With something like *THE LEGION* or *SUN DEVILS*, you're dealing with different races, different planets, different styles of architecture. You can really build a universe that you're working with for the entire book. That's what interests me a lot.

BILL: Do you have any plans for building and designing the *LEGION* universe?

DAN: **Keith Giffen** has done a really tremendous job of designing a universe for *THE LEGION*, right down to the home planets of the various Legionnaires. Keith came up with a design for every little facet of *THE LEGION*. And as a new artist, I can't just walk onto a book and change that over night. It would just be too radical. If I were going to be on it for a period of several years, then I could change it, bit by bit. So far I've agreed to do it for six issues. Beyond that, it's up in the air.



From *TALES OF THE LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES* #321: Dawnstar, soon to be the heroine of her own mini-series. Words by Mindy Newell, art by Jurgens and Kesel.

“I wish I had SUN DEVILS to do over again.”

With something like SUN DEVILS, you have the opportunity to start from Square One and build the book's universe from the ground up. My problem was, when I started the SUN DEVILS, that I hadn't been in the business long enough to know how to do that. I wish I had it to do over again. A lot of working in comics, I think, is having confidence in what you're doing. I think everybody, when they start in the business, is a little hesitant to take chances, because if you've just been put on a book that someone else has been working on — like WARLORD — you have to look at what they did and borrow from them. Also, I think when you start working in the business, it takes a period of several years to find yourself, and until you've done that, I don't think you can really move in and create anything right away that's going to really have its own real strong sense of direction.

BILL: Do you think that you've found yourself now?

DAN: No, it's not like you wake up one day and decide, “Aha, this is it! Let's go set the world on fire!” I see myself developing and changing all the time. I look at something I did six months ago and know that I could do a better job of it today. In a way that's gratifying and in another way that's frustrating. Every time I see my work on the stands I have a tendency to say, “If only I could do it all over again!” But that's just part of gaining the experience that you need.

BILL: Well, now that you've had a few years of experience as a comics professional, how would you evaluate yourself as an artist?

DAN: One of the stronger things I see myself developing is my own style of storytelling. And now that I've started to write, that's something that's coming along even further — really thinking in terms of telling the story. One thing I want to improve on is just pure drawing skills. I don't think you could ever get too good. You sketch all the time, or take drawing classes.

BILL: You are a big LEGION fan, correct?

DAN: Yeah!

BILL: Was that an important motivation to try to get on the book?

DAN: It was. Another thing is that it was just the type of book I wanted to do at the time. So those two factors went hand in hand. When you're a fan and then get into comics professionally, there's a tendency to want to work on your favorite book because everybody wants to be able to work on the character they wanted to do when they were twelve or thirteen.

BILL: When you were a young LEGION fan did you have any ideas of what you wanted to do with the book — and how do you see



Brainiac (the good one), depicted by Jurgens and Kesel for LEGION #321. Words by Mindy Newell.

those ideas now, in terms of the reality of actually being the LEGION artist?

DAN: What I wanted to do ten or twelve years ago is a lot different from the reality of the situation now. The series itself has changed a lot in the past ten to thirteen years. A lot of characters have come and gone, and a lot of things have happened in the storyline. A lot of mistakes happen when someone comes on a book and ends up doing something they've wanted to do for a long time because the book was a fan favorite for them when they were young — although a positive example of that is THOR, where Walt Simonson has had these ideas burning inside him since he was a kid. That's great. But THE LEGION is a series that has changed so much that I don't think it would be realistic to try something like that. I have to take the book as it exists right now and try to work with it in that context, rather than what was happening with it fifteen years ago.

BILL: Why do you think THE LEGION is such a perennial favorite?

DAN: Well, when I was younger, I think one of the big pluses for me was that it was a book about young people. That was something I related to very strongly. Here's a bunch of kids — fifteen, sixteen years old — in a clubhouse kind of situation. I could identify with it. Beyond that, the fact that it takes place in the Thirtieth Century gives it a real flavor of fantasy and make-believe. If you take a SUPERMAN or BATMAN story and have Earth invaded by a bunch of aliens, you can only accept it to a certain degree, because every ten-year-old kid knows that isn't going to happen. But for some reason that kind of story is easier to accept if you're talking about Earth in the Thirtieth Century, with a number of different cultures and aliens already influencing the society.

BILL: Is there anything in comics currently that you'd care to comment on?

DAN: I think a lot of positive things are happening now with the independents and the alternatives, in terms of what they're trying to publish. About two or three years ago, when all this started to happen, I think people were expecting too much of the independents. A lot of people expected the creators to do what they wanted to do, and we'd have brilliant comic after brilliant comic. That was fairly unrealistic, and it has not really happened. Although it would be marvelous if it did! (Laughter.)

BILL: Well, what would you like to see happen in comics?

DAN: I'd like to see the marketplace stabilized, first of all, and beyond that, I'd like to see a marketplace that would allow for a number of different comics in different for-

“I don’t think you could ever get too good.”

mats. Whether it’s a sixty-cent newsprint comic, or a \$5.95 graphic novel, I’d like to see a marketplace that would accept both of those and everything in between. And I think it’s important that the marketplace find more readers, rather than just selling maybe two more books apiece to each of the readers already out there. Once we have a stabilized marketplace and expand it to include more readers, we will be able to do more things and publish different things in different directions and experiment a little bit more.

BILL: Any future ambitions?

DAN: It’s funny, because my goals have been changing quite a lot ever since I came into the business. I would like to write more. Right now I have four months of commitment to some projects that I really want to get done.

BILL: What’s it like working with Paul Levitz, considering he’s not just your writer but also a DC Vice-President?

DAN: I really haven’t worked with Paul enough at this point to really know what it’s like. I’ve only done a couple of LEGION issues at this point, and only one of those was Paul’s plot. Right now I’m in the middle of a three-part series which may or may not be spun off into a mini-series. It involves Dawnstar ending up on a planet of exiles.

The fact that Paul’s a Vice-President really hasn’t entered into it. The only time a Vice-President comes into consideration is when I find that **Dick Giordano** is inking something I did, then I always wish I’d done a better job drawing it. (Laughter.) I remember when I’d only been working at DC for a couple of months, I did a couple of BATMAN stories for **Len Wein**, and these were real quick fill-ins and they needed them in a hurry, so I did them right away. Then I found out after I’d handed them in that Dick was going to be inking them. Right away my reaction was, “Thanks for telling me now!” Because when you find out the Vice-President is going to be inking your work, you really wish it would have been the best job you could have done in your life.

BILL: Is your comics work keeping you very busy?

DAN: Oh, yeah, definitely. You get to the point — at least this has been true of me, especially in the last couple of months — where all you really have time for is doing comics. My wife will come home from work and we’ll sit down and have dinner, and then I’ll start working again and work on throughout most of the night. That’s when you realize, “Hey, it’s time to move on to some other things to get me out of the house a little bit.”

BILL: I know you’ve said your early influences were more the “serious” illustra-



Above: Covers pencilled by Dan Jurgens and inked by Dick Giordano. Sometimes collaborating with Dick is a strain, as Dan explains in this interview.

tors more than comic-book or fantasy artists. Do you ever think you’d like to do any illustrating work besides comics?

DAN: Right now I’m just looking to comics. Before I was in comics I was a graphic designer in advertising and that’s something I really wouldn’t care to get back into. The illustration end of it, I would. One

of the things I’ve enjoyed seeing is **Bill Sienkiewicz** coming into comics and then starting to work in a more illustrative style. He expanded outside of comics and then pushed it back into comics and expanded his art even further. I think that’s real nice to see and I’d like to be able to do that myself in a couple of years. □

“Sometimes,” says Dan, “you get to the point where all you have time for is doing comics.”

