



# The Secret History of Marvel Comics: Jack Kirby and the Moonlighting Artists at Martin Goodman's Empire

By Blake Bell, Michael J. Vassallo

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**The Secret History of Marvel Comics: Jack Kirby and the Moonlighting Artists at Martin Goodman's Empire** By Blake Bell, Michael J. Vassallo

**The untold story of the House of Ideas.**

Marvel Comics is home to such legendary super-heroes as Spider-Man, Hulk, Thor, Captain America, and Iron Man, all of whom have spun box office gold in the 21st century. But Marvel Comics has a secret history hidden in the shadows of these well-known franchises.

*The Secret History of Marvel Comics* digs back to the 1930s when Marvel Comics wasn't just a comic-book producing company. Marvel Comics owner Martin Goodman had tentacles into a publishing world that might have made that era's conservative American parents lynch him on his front porch. Marvel was but a small part of Goodman's publishing empire, which had begun years before he published his first comic book. Goodman mostly published lurid and sensationalistic story books (known as "pulps") and magazines, featuring sexually-charged detective and romance short fiction, and celebrity gossip scandal sheets. And artists like Jack Kirby, who was producing Captain America for eight-year-olds, were simultaneously dipping their toes in both ponds.

*The Secret History of Marvel Comics* tells this parallel story of 1930s/40s Marvel Comics sharing offices with those Goodman publications not quite fit for children. The book also features a comprehensive display of the artwork produced for Goodman's other enterprises by Marvel Comics artists such as Jack Kirby and Joe Simon, Alex Schomburg, Bill Everett, Al Jaffee, and Dan DeCarlo, plus the very best pulp artists in the field, including Norman Saunders, John Walter Scott, Hans Wesso, L.F. Bjorklund, and *Marvel Comics* #1 cover artist Frank R. Paul. Goodman's magazines also featured cover stories on celebrities such as Jackie Gleason, Elizabeth Taylor, Liberace, and Sophia Loren, as well as contributions from famous literary and social figures such as Isaac Asimov, Theodore Sturgeon, and L. Ron Hubbard.

These rare pieces of comic art, pulp and magazine history will open the door to Marvel Comics' unseen history.

Black & white with some color

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

Winner: "Favorite Comics Related Book 2014" - U.K. *True Believers Comic Awards*

...*The Secret History of Marvel Comics* is part archeology, part luxurious art book and something else besides: a history of dodgy publishing practices in the 20th century. (Daniel Kalder - Publishing Perspectives)

#### About the Author

Blake Bell is the author of Strange & Stranger (a retrospective of Spider-Man co-creator Steve Ditko); The Secret History of Marvel Comics, Fire & Water: Bill Everett, The Sub-Mariner, and the Birth of Marvel Comics; Amazing Mysteries: The Bill Everett Archives; and Strange Suspense and Unexplored Worlds (two volumes in The Steve Ditko Archives). He lives in Toronto, Ontario, with his son.

Dr. Michael J. Vassallo is a noted historian on Marvel's early pulp, Timely and Atlas periods. A Manhattan dentist, he spends his free time attempting to bring recognition to artistic creators of the 1940's and 1950's. He has also written introductions to 20 Timely and Atlas Masterworks volumes, dissecting the credits for posterity and providing historical context, as well as writing the detailed captions to the first 210 pages of Taschen's "75 Years of Marvel" coffee table book. He lives in Westchester County, New York.

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