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Obviously, there will be no more future issues as we are goin' outta business. No part of this magazine may be reprinted without the written consent of the editor. Such practices are unethical and unfair. And by the way, why are you reading all the way down to here?
"They told me...  
'Don't get into (comics)...  
I'm glad I didn't listen to them.'

This interview with Carmine Infantino, president of the National
line of comics, resulted from two long conversations with
Carmine.

After working many years for various companies as a multi-
talented storyteller, in 1967 Carmine was assigned to the post
of assistant editor at National. He immediately affected many
changes in the then-stagnant DC comics line. Last summer he
became publisher and was recently appointed to the post of
president of the company—the rest is history.

Carmine, how did you first become interested in art?

That's a good question. You never really know when you
started to become interested.

Well, some artists say they became interested in art as soon as
they could pick up a pencil and draw. It's like that with you?

No. I didn't particularly like art to begin with. I liked films. I
was a big fan of watching the directors. I really studied them.
I didn't realize what I was doing at the time, namely studying
composition and continuity. I guess that led into comics, the
closest thing to films.

How did you get interested in comics?

I'm a child of the depression. In those days, there wasn't much
you could do. You couldn't afford to buy much. You went into
a thing that you felt you were most meant for. Film interest-
ed me, as I said. I couldn't get into movies, so I decided to
draw.

Do you think the studying of films helped you with continuity?

Oh, tremendously. Hitchcock was great. I could watch a film
of his ten times. He did brilliant things. "The Thirty-Nine
Steps" comes to mind. The editing was really modern in one
scene. Every scene was composed beautifully. Then there was
Orson Welles' "Citizen Kane." Go see that.

Did you read comics?

Yeah, I was quite a fan. I used to read Caniff, Lou Fine, Reed
Crandall... Hal Foster was a big favorite of mine.

What about the pulp?


Excellent.

Did you just read comic strips, or the books too?

No, I read the books. I was a tremendous fan of Lou Fine,
who did the Fly, the Black Garden, and some others. Lou was
a designer. He influenced me quite a bit.

Who else influenced your work?

The first influence was Hal Foster. I studied his layout when he
did Tarzan. I used to make copies after copy of that.

What about his later stuff, like Prince Valiant? Did that have any
effect on your work?

No, no. It was mostly Tarzan, because there was pure genius in
those layouts. I used to copy them and study them and try to
understand them. I thought the movement was great. Everything
about the stuff was great. From Foster I went to Caniff, who I
studied for quite a while.

And then somebody said, "Why don't you go to art school and
learn how to draw?" I did. I learned anatomy and so forth at a
couple of schools: The School of Art and Design, The Brooklyn
Museum of Art, and a few others. After I learned how to draw,
I threw it all away and started designing. I'm basically a designer.

If you look at my work, you'll see the anatomy is never correct.
It was done purposely. I believed the movement was more
important than having every muscle correct.

Like Jack Kirby. He never draws muscles correctly, but con-
veys the action.

Yes. I go in a different direction, but you'll find the same prin-
ciple... action. Jack is raw. He'll move hard and fast. He's got
a tremendous punch. Mike was kind of soft and gentle. I think
that was the difference. That is the impression I have. I studied
with Jack for quite a while, you know. We worked together.
You're bound to be influenced watching a guy.

What do you think of Jack's new books?

I wouldn't run them if I didn't like them.

Do you think that by giving him a free reign he's being
carried away?

No.

Some of his stuff is so wild.

That's good. We need wild things. I want him to go crazy. It
doesn't hurt. As a matter of fact, it's good.

Back to influences, Mort Meskin was a big influence on my work.
After that, I kinda popped off on my own, designing. My feeling
is for more design than for anything else. I like design and things
that run in rhythms. That's why I figured, oh, the back of
drawing. I could design better, so I went to design.

Then you consider composition more important than the actual
rendering.

Absolutely.

Is that why your backgrounds were often nothing more than geo-
metric designs?

That's right. Because in my mind, the splash told the same story.
You never fettadethed seeing that background, but if you looked
at it closely there was nothing there. The stuff was deceptively
simple. Ask Murphy Anderson. The poor guy had to ink it. He
had his problems there.

Who are your favorite artists, past or present?

Joe, there are many... I think the fellows we have here at
National are the greatest. Jack Kirby is one of the very best to
me. Joe Novak, who very few talk about. Kirby, Ditko, and
Lucas are sensational. Joe Kubert is a friend... Wait till you see Joe's
Terran of the Apes. You won't believe it.

I've seen some stats of the first issue. It really looks nifty.

The second one makes that look sick. Unbelievable. Mike Kaluta
was looking at it. He called him in and said, "Mike, do you want
to get sick? Take a look at this." He was helped!

Could you compare it to Joe's?

Ten times better. Ten times better than anything Joe's ever done.
It's that simple.

I don't want to slight Jim Aparo. I think he's great. Mike Kaluta.
He's going to be the Batman covers for us from now on. I
think he's going to be a young genius. He was nervous when I
said, "You're doing the Batman covers." Dick Giordano... As
for artists, if they're working at National, I like them. Other-
wise they wouldn't be working here.

Would you advocate going into comics as a profession?

Absolutely.

Many professionals advise against it because of the relatively small
amount of money you get paid, difficulties in finding assignments,
and so forth.

They told me the same thing thirty years ago. Six or eight guys
who are no longer in the business. That's the crazy thing about

"I'm basically a designer"

CARMINE INFANTINO, 1972
“Thirty some odd years in the business. That’s kind of a long history.”

Bill Vigoda

It said, “Don’t get into it. It doesn’t pay enough. You’ll never make any money. You’ll never be happy.” I’m glad I didn’t listen to them. You’ve got to make your own decisions. Do you think it’s better to enter the field through art school or do someone’s assistant?

Bill: Absolutely.

Which first?

Actually, I think you could do both at the same time. The school is tremendously important. There are things that you have to learn in school that you need. You just can’t get them outside. And there are things you learn as somebody’s assistant that you might not learn in school.

Do you suggest studying comic strips themselves?

Yeah, I’d study everyone. Everyone. I’ve got some particular favorites. I would particularly study a guy named Nick Cardy. He’s a tremendous storyteller. His Bat Lash... Yeah, I’d study everyone. I’d study everybody. But I’d still go to school to learn the basics; how to draw. That’s number one.

If one wanted to go into comic art, what would you suggest as a course of study?

I would think, if available, courses on anatomy. Those would be the things to start with. Later on, composition and things like that. I studied with a guy named William McNulty at the Art Students’ League.

Bume Hogarth is now teaching at the School of Visual Arts.

Bume is a great man. But McNulty was a genius at composition. He taught me innumerable amounts. You have to get it all from everyone. These guys here [pointing to the current DC comics] are nothing. We meet in high school, the School of Industrial Arts. We were both about fourteen and worked together quite a bit as a pencilling and inking team. We went up to National, and Bumley was editor up there at the time. He liked what I saw, and he gave us the Flash Patrol. Then he gave us Johnny Thunder, the original Flash, and on from there.

Did you and Frank Giacoia work as steam before coming to DC or working on Jack/Frost?

No, for Charlie Biro. I think we’d work together, but I don’t remember.

Did you do the pencils and Frank do the inks?

We began the other way. I was the inker, and he was the penciller. When did you switch?

Something happened. ItFlip-Flopped. All of a sudden, I began to pencil and he became inker. It’s a great inker, I think he’s sensational.

How would you rate your art of this period?

Loopy. It was crude. I mean, you always compare what you did to what you had done just before you stopped.

Were there any good periods?

Yes. The composition, I think sometimes you have more fun in the learning period than after you develop your art.

Was the composition similar to your more recent work?

No, it was a crude beginning, but it was the direction I wanted it to go. It was a pursuit of things like square jaws, angular figures, crowded panels, and very bad drawing.

I understand at one time you drew The Boy Commandos. Why?

Jack went into the service at that time. I think I did some of them, not all. Joe Kubert did some too, I think.

At one point, Joe had this idea called Jesse James for Avon. I did the pencilling and he did the inking. We did three or four books of that. We were really having fun, just kidding around. I pencilled a book in a day and Joe inked it in a day. The whole book! If you look at it, you’ll notice there weren’t even borders. Joe was going so fast he forgot to put them on. Did you ever find the quality of a story affecting the quality of your art?

Yeah, it got quite an effect. No question about it. How you relate to a story is how you draw it.

Did you write Detective Chimp?

No, but I wrote some other things for Julie [Schwartz]. I did a western strip I think we called Kid Coyote. I wrote the Harvey and Airboy for Hillman. I drew some of the Airboy strips, too. Not too many of them.

Who wrote Detective Chimp?

John Broome. They were good. I enjoyed them.

I have some Atlas comics from the late fifties signed “J. Infantine.”

That was my kid brother Jim. He’s in advertising now.

The revival of the Golden Age heroes started in 1956, with the Flash. Would the Code have had anything to do with it? It had limited some of the stories that comics could take.

The banner was a slump at the time. Not a strong one. And every direction had been tried except bringing back old characters. So somebody suggested, “Let’s bring back the Flash and see what happens.”

Did you redesign the costume? Yeah, I did. Bob Kanigher wrote the thing. Joe Kubert inked the first story. Then it went on from there.

Did you prefer your work on Adam Strange (inked by others) to your work on Space Museum, another science fiction strip (inked by yourself)?

I liked Murphy Anderson’s inking on Adam Strange very much. I guess you’re always partial to what you do yourself, though. July issued my inking. Never liked it. I only did some inking. Space Museum, Super- Chief, Pow-Wow Smith, the Elongated Man, some others.

When you inked, it looks as though you used a pen almost exclusively. Is this correct?

Pretty much so. I like the feel of a pen. But it looked so scratchy.

Yeah, I used it like a pencil, pencilled that way also.

Why was the Elongated Man the only strip you inked in the later sixties?

“I think sometimes you have more fun in the learning period than after you develop your art.”
No time to do others, really. Julie didn’t like my inkings anyway, as I said.
Well, why hadn’t you put your own pencilling job instead of the inking on that strip?
I wanted to ink and I liked the Elongated Man. I guess Julie figured I’d do less damage there than anywhere else. Dick Giordano is doing a beautiful job on the strip now. That man is just gen-
tal. That’s why I respectfully gave him up as an editor; to use him as an artist.
Who do you think is National’s best inker?
I think Dick [a], I personally feel that way.
Do you think you’re a better penciller or inker?
I like both, because I think my inking fits my pencils.
A lot of people felt Murphy Anderson’s dicker inks enhanced your pencils.
That’s true. They certainly did. But you still favor your own inks. Murphy prefers to ink his own pencils to inking someone else’s.
Do you have any inkers that you particularly enjoyed working with?
Murphy. I think he’s great. He was my favorite, even over Giotta, who I worked with for so long on Flash.
Was your artwork of the late fifties more similar to your current work?
It was evolving. I would experiment like crazy. I’d take a fountain pen and ink with it, chip off the end and put in flat blacks, just looking for directions.
Why didn’t you use the continuity method of shadowed shapes from Strange Stories stories and other again?
I don’t know. When we started that book, Julie said to me he’d like to try something unique. So I went home and thought about it. I thought by using the silhouette I could give the effect of motion. The guy swung at the ball, the bat followed through. So that’s why,
it came about. I think I used it on a Phantom Stranger story years ago, illustrating the captions. But not to the same extent.
How about the captions themselves, which you always shaped into hand or profile or something like that?
Well, that was designing the captions. But I think that constantly using the shapes added the reader after a while, even though it showed up so much motion. For that particular thing it worked. It was a stamp for the book. It was a different type of thing.
How did the splash [GC Special] do?
The first one did well, the second one not so well, and the third not well at all. The mail was fantastic on all of them. Unbelievable. Is the mail on any book an indication of its sales?
Not really. Strange Sports got enormous mail response. Sales weren’t that good. Some books get no mail and do great. You just can’t figure it out. Blanco and Dobi got loads of mail. The kids loved them. They even write in their problems to the love books.
Why were you chosen to do the “new look” Batman?
Well, I worked for Julie in those days. He was the editor, and he chose me. I was not a fan of Batman. I never did enjoy doing Bat-
man. Neal [Adams] is the one who really does Batman.
Did you or Kane redesign Batman?
I did. In fact, I did the mock-ups for Filmanics for the Batman televis-ion show.
What were the comments on your Batman, in new thing for you. af-
ter you had been established for so many years as the Flash artist?
The reaction was mixed. Some liked it, some didn’t. I didn’t like it. I didn’t like Adam Strange, either. I enjoyed doing Detective Chimp
and the Elongated Man. There were times I enjoyed the Flash and times I got bored with it. I enjoyed a few Pow–Wow Smiths that I liked.
You did the first Batgirl story [Detective Comics 359]. Did you de-
sign her costume?
Yes. I designed it for television originally. Then it was decided to in-
corporate the character into the strip.
Did you redesign Kid Flash’s costume?
Yes, I did. I drew a cover sketch with that as the scene, and Julie decided to use it as the basis for a story.
Who designed the cover now?
I design most of the covers. Now and again someone will come in with a sketch, I’ll like it, and I’ll say, “Let’s use it.” But I design most. They’re sometimes done before a story, sometimes after.
How do you feel about wordless Batman covers?
Some I like, some I don’t.
It usually ruins the effect of the art.
For the fans, but the fans comprise a very small part of the buy-
ing public.
The intro page for “The Hall of Golden Age Heroes,” run-
ing in Justice League, was drawn by Murphy Anderson from a sketch by me. Is this done-often?
Once in a while.
What type of comic did you enjoy doing the most? (war, super-
heroes, western, love, sci-fi, etc.)
Detective Chimp, whatever that would be classified as. Humor, I suppose. Along the lines of the original Plastic Man, I think that’s why I enjoyed the Elongated Man so much. Too, I had fun with him. I enjoyed the pulling and stretching, like Plastic Man.
How long did it take you to pencil and ink a page?
There was some kind of story going around about how fast I was.
I was fast in the early days. Toward the end, I was fast at all.
I had stepped down to about a page and a half of penciling a day.
And I was getting slower all the time. The more you learn, the slower it takes. I was very fast at inking. I could do two, three pages a day.
Do you paint?
I used to do watercolors years ago. Seascapes, landscapes, fig-
ures, you know.
With what medium do you feel most comfortable?
I like black and white graphics. They’re the toughest, I think.
Why were you chosen as Editorial Director?
I really don’t know. I had very little editorial experience. They called me in one day and asked me if I would like to take charge. We were being laughed at Marvel at that time. I said no. So that passed for a few days and they asked me again and again and I kept saying no. Then one day, Jack Liebowitz said to me, “I didn’t know you were afraid of a challenge.” That did it.
What were the first changes you made as Editorial Director?
"One day, Jack Liebowitz said to me, 'I didn't know you were afraid of a challenge.' That did it."
Your Flash was dumber, lazier. All their characters are...muscley and heavy. Jon Nodell's Flash is much more sensible, more Sensational. He's doing a great job. That's the right guy for the job.

Murphy is doing a lot of very important work now, like working on the Superman/Supergirl

Swan is underrated. I always liked his Superman, especially when acted by Anderson or the late George Reeves. Why did you only do one? Do you miss it, the first? That's what I really want to know about. I mean, you've been involved in a lot of important stories. What was it like to be a part of that? How did you feel about it?

That's what I meant when I said Superman was being edited by the Editorial Director.

Oh, I think it was the story I drew. Then Adams came along. He associated me with Superman.

Well, he did all except that one. Right, but I wrote them, I did the plotting, gave it to Jack Miller, who would write it down. Neal would draw it. I did the plotting, the dialogue, the whole thing. I did four or five of them, then I stopped.

I didn't know you were talented in the writing department.

I wrote Batman too.

I thought...no, I didn't plot it and give the plot to him. He sat down and wrote it down. Dennis would pick it up and add a few things.

And the new Wonder Woman was by Dennis and I. That's what you're actually behind some of those changes Dennis has been making.

That's a pretty tough job, isn't it? That's a very talented young man, Mr. O'Neil.

Now that he's editing Wonder Woman, will he be writing less?

I suppose so.

Who are your favorite writers? I think Dennis is the best. I think Wally is second. Kirby. Outside of comics, I'm a fan of Bradbury.

Do you think the best comic artists are also good writers?

Some of them are. Some of them think they are. Some are very bad. Some might be Seraphs on Nick Fury and Neal on Superman. I told you something about both of those fellows.

When Neal took it over, whether you liked it or not, Neal didn't slow anyone down. Didn't send the letters to Kirby. So I'm sure the fans liked it. I don't think the general public was all that strong. Neal thinks he's a good writer. He's, I disagree. That's all. He may be. I don't think so.

What do you think of Wally Wood's statement, "The editor who edits best sells least."

It depends on the quality of the people an editor gets working for him. What character, as an artist, did you enjoy doing the most?

Detective Chimp.

How about from an editor's point of view?


I think it was played too humorous for the western fans and too western for the humor fans.

Could be. We'll see about the reaction to the reprint in All-Star Western.

Is it true that you changed that book to Western Western because Wood is what it is?

Yeah. That's the genre that sells so well now.

Why do you think horror is now weird and Gothic, as opposed to... well, all your horror books used to be science fiction.

Scare. People want to get away from things. That's why we developed the gothic romance books. The field sold tremendously well in paperbacks for years and years.

In a radio interview, I mentioned the fact that you didn't put out horror comics. What about House of Mystery, Witching Hour, etc.?

To me, horror comics are what Bill Gaines put out years ago, with the thing in the head, shopping up bodies, somebody eating somebody else.

What do you think of science fiction romaics?

It never occurred to me that Bill Gaines would go after that. That was what I thought Bill and I are rather close. Bill, too, by the way, is a very real writer. He's a great publisher. And he's done the age of some people who don't have his talent.

Did you see the National Lampoon issue of Mad?

They thought they'd kill me, but he didn't follow up. He's too smart for that. That magazine is twenty years old today and he's selling 1,750,000 copies a month. I think I think it's the third best selling magazine. That's genius. Why were several best selling books (Guaderni, Balam, etc.) changed in format?

Because change is necessary in anything.

But do you lamper want success do you?

Why not? Don't automobile people do it?

Are supernumerary species dropping externally, as was predicted in the last issue by people like Dick Giordano?

No. Some of those books recently went monthly, as a matter of fact.

Why was Green Lantern/Green Arrow discontinued?

It didn't sell, that's all. I heard a rumor that Neal Adams was having problems meeting deadlines.

That's one of the big reasons. The last book was two and half months late. The printer wouldn't put up with it. We can't put up with it. It's got to have a chance to grow slowly.

Do you read your competitor's work?

I look at them.

What do you think of all the new artists working for Jim Warren?

I saw their work a year ago. They're very talented. What I'm concerned with it, can you read it? I don't think they all tell stories too well. The artwork is sensational, but look at their storytelling. That is what is your selling, isn't it?

Is that why you like panels to conform to definite shapes?

I think it's easier to read. Another, more important reason is that it makes the artist think harder. When you're confined to a square box, you have to design the box as best you can. I don't think it really inhibits the artist.

What do you think of Marvel's twenty-centers?

I would put out twenty cent comics if I had thought they were good. I think it's up to you to decide, because you have to buy them. I didn't want to go to twenty cents because I didn't want to change more and goingsomething more, I don't think it's right. But I don't disagree with their right to do it. You have to give people something for their money, though. You can't cheat them. That's what I believe.

What about Marvel's reprint books? Roy Thomas said they were selling well.

Peculiar thing about Marvel. Their artists, writers, and editors have become distributors too. They seem to know more about distribution than their own distribution people. Very interesting. As for Roy Thomas, I'm not impressed with him. Not even with his Conan. He makes a nice picture. I'm not sure that Conan would go. And I'm not mistaken, Roy wrote an article for this magazine saying that one of the competitors thought the book wouldn't go, and suddenly it's going like crazy. Look at the figures yourself. It's now in the top ten. I can't answer that. It's kid stuff to play games with him. And he's a little boy so I'm not going to play that. It's not going to write a column for a fantasy. You don't have a fiancee to hear about rivalry crap.

Stan Lee said, "For years the big things on campus had been McLuhan and Tolkien and Stan Lee and Marvel. And everyone
We're very different. I prefer a tight script. Movie people do it the same way. Don't you get a feeling that there's a sameness in most of Marvel's books? I think that's one of the disadvantages in their format. But apparently it works for them. Our works for us.

How do you feel about the code?

I feel it's necessary, because without it people would really go crazy. I think Marvel's going overboard with Green Arrow by Neal Adams, and the like. I'm making objections to the Code about it. It's not creative.

Now that the Code has been liberalized, will you be coming out with anything like Marvel's Green Arrow by Neal Adams?

Absolutely not. In no shape or form. That smacks of the old days with Wertham. This is crap. You don't have to do it. It's not creative one bit. I'll never do a book like that. If my guys can't do better than that, then they don't belong in this business. Simple and frank. I really feel that sincerely. There are so many things you can do to be creative. This can only open up old wounds. It's senseless.

In another interview you said, "Comic books have more freedom than comic strips." What about the Code?

Comic strips have a stricter code. They have different editors across the country. They're really hard-headed. You'd be surprised at the things they edit out. They're rough.

What do you think of the underground comic?

Well, they're growing, that's for sure. I guess if they ever reach the establishment level, you'll die because nobody will want them. Harvey Kurtzman said that things that rebel usually do well. Then when they become successful, they're not as rebellious.

Well, to become successful, you have to satisfy the majority. Have you seen any stuff by Richard Corben?

He's great. I tried to get him to work for us, but he said that at the moment, he was busy. Undergounders open all sorts of doors. I'm not against them. There's a lot of good quality in them. A lot of talent too. It's just how it's directed.

How you seen Steve Ditko's Mr. A?

It's interesting. Would you ever consider running something like that in a comic?

No. Anyway, Steve is into completely different thing now. Has Kirby control made any changes at DC?

It opened up doors. They're quite good. They want to do lots of new stuff. They let you do what you want, but if it doesn't work, it's your neck. I think that's fair.

You've previously stated that comics will be used as educational tools in the future. What's happened with education?

They're starting to take hold now. They're being tested.

In closing, what format do you think comics will be taking in the future?

They'll be changing, that's for sure.

In another interview, you said that you thought comics wouldn't be read in the future. Would that be a market for that?

Yeah.

What?

The new Superman book sold out its first printing and they're making a second printing of it. It sells at ten bucks. But that's mainly reprints and so it appeals to the nostalgic oldsters who can say, "Gee, I remember this story when when I was kid?"

Maybe. I don't think so. Kirby Unleashed is selling like a bandit.

That's for fans. It only went on sale through the comic scene.

I think quality pays off. If you ever went to a hardware format, do you think you would have art like that used in "Little Annie Fanny?"

Somewhat. Harvey Kurtzman is a genius.

What about those adult characters you tried in '68, all of which wore fringes? Even Green Lantern/Green Arrow faded.

Maybe. The package has to change. That could be part of it.

Although this interview is obviously outdated, we have decided to present it in its original form in order to show Garrikins' original feelings before the recent upsurge in the comic industry.
A client has a product to sell. He comes to an agency. They are responsible for advertising the product. The agency will call me, the artist, up, with an idea of what they want to do. Usually they leave it up to the artist to tell it as he sees fit, in his own way, working with a script.

For example, let's take the Vote toothpaste commercial. The art director had drawn three pictures of different stages which he gave me to work with. Those comprehensives (rough sketches) had no personality; they were just rough stick figures. This was the direction in which the client wanted me to go, and I was to establish characters and a sequence of drawings. I had to break it down to six pencil drawings, one of which you see reproduced here. When I submitted these six drawings, I hadn't heard any voice tapes. They were undecided about one of the characters so they played the voice for me. As a result of the tape, one character was changed from the one you see here. It fit the voice, another important part. After those drawings were accepted, I did twenty more drawings in various stages. When they were accepted, two of them were done in a final, color version. All these drawings were given to Focus, an animation house, who gave them to a staff of illustrators. They don't create anything, but just fill in the steps in-between on cells. They don't necessarily all have to be full drawings. Some can be one part of the body moving. They're traced over a lightboard. For a one-minute commercial like this, about eight hundred or so drawings are required. It's the same basic principle as the flip books; each picture moves a little more.

A good commercial depends wholly on the animators. They can ruin it or make it successful. It's very important that a cartoon flows well. There are some animators who try to cut corners and ruin the flow. The finished version looks choppy and the animators do a poor job in copying an artist's style. As a result, the commercial becomes hackneyed. Focus is a top animation house and I was pleased with the finished version in this case. The actual commercial was run on Joey Bishop's old show and a couple of other places. It did very well.

This sequence was for Utica beer. Henry Youngman's voice was used and they wanted me to come up with a character that would portray him in simple form. My intricate style has to be simplified for TV animation. The more intricate it is, the harder it is to animate.
I met Youngren at a Mad party and that was the only associa-
tion I ever had with him. I remember he made a big fuss over my
wife.

The final was very successful. The client really liked it. It plays in
upstate New York, where Utica Beer is very popular. Because of
this, I've never seen the final version.

They have a way of testing commercials, using a rating system from
one to fifteen. This commercial got the highest rating, fifteen. I
did some ads for Party Tyme mix that ran in some magazines; a
score of six different drawings. The first one got a fifteen rating.
The same agency tried the same thing, this time by Al Jaffe, for
another client. Passport Scotch. The Party Tyme Client got upset
about it, because they felt that theirs was first and the agency
shouldn't have handled the Scotch ad in the same way. They stop-

ped their account and left the agency. Three of the series saw
print. Those ads agencies pull some big boons sometimes.

I did another commercial for ARN and HAMMER. We animated
the hand on the package. A little germ ran across the screen
and the hand stomped it. There were two thirty-second commer-
cials like that done by the same animation house. That also did

pretty well, from what I understand.

I was working on a Saturday morning cartoon series that fell
through for Steve Krantz Productions, under Ralph Back. I

produced the Piff the Cat film. It was supposed to be
all about animals. They're a good and successful outfit, but
the show was never bought. The picture that was originally pre-

sented to them is this issue's special poster.
There is no such article as the "comic book art form." Mostly because comics are not art. Instead, they are poorly drawn, written, edited, and packaged attempts at creative expression.

While a few of the "artists" in the comics present to us good composition, that is all they do. All the pencillers in the field lack any sort of understanding of anatomy. Their figures are abstractions of the human body. Foremost of these offenders are Harvey Kurtzman, Jack Kirby, and Steve Ditko. All of their figures are grossly incorrectly drawn to the point of diabolical. To compound this problem of poor rendering, the comics have decided to employ substandard inkers. Instead of improving on the penciller's work by making it more realistic, the inkers further misrepresent the human figure by using absurdly fat brush strokes. Going beyond this, most comic book artists lack any sort of craft. And without craft, there is no chance for art. Most artists have little formal training, and their work shows it. Besides their lack of understanding of anatomy, most artists know little of spatial relationships and other such knowledge of which all artists are required to be masters.

But this is not the only reason why comic book "art" is not art. Such deficiencies in craft could be overlooked if the artists in the comics experimented. Many forms of comic book expression which have lacked any real craft have still been considered art. Mainly because they have innovated. There is, however, very little experimenting present in the comics. Most artists are content to draw the same figures and backgrounds year after year. The few examples of experimentation in comics have been borrowed from the films, and thus, these experiments are neither new nor experimental in the true sense of the word. So then, if comic book "art" is not art, what is it? Comic book "art" is a form of unexperimental commercial art which lacks a good deal of craft. Then, it is merely a flimsy means of self-expression. And that is all.
While the art in comics displays at least a slight amount of craft, the writing in comics is wholly inadequate. Weak plotting, weak characterization, and weak dialogue—all are typical of comics. Although Stan Lee did indeed raise the writing standards of comic books, it is not anything really worth mentioning. He lifted the level of comic book writing from that of a children's daytime television show to that of a soap opera. Same difference.

To say that comic book writing is anywhere near adult is stretching things a bit much. Perhaps the largest problem in comic book writing is that of terribly weak characterization. The people portrayed in comics are no more "real" than my typewriter. None of the comic book characters show real emotions of any sort. Instead, they are all the same lilliputian figures who are merely used as a vehicle to lead into a fight and nothing more. What little good characterization there is in comics is often vanquished by incompetent editors who switch around writers and artists like bowling pins.

The dialogue in comics is not much better. Most of it is pure emotionalism, wrapped in trite clichés or just plain foolishness. A common line such as, "I could recognize that grunt of his anywhere," is enough of a testimonial, if ever there need be one, to the trite, illogical dialogues in the comics.

Although in the past few years, with the emergence of Ray Thomas, comics have become increasingly poetic, it is clear that the comic book writers are not good enough to live up to what they are attempting. Such captions as, "Soft. The sounds of the night are soft, like the rattle of garbage cans," show us most vulgarly that under the new wave of poetic wordiness the writing in the comics is still as sophomoric and banal as ever. As Stan Lee so obliquely states, "Null said."

Another failing in the comic book industry is that of poor editors. In addition to their lacking a total command of the English language, which is normally required of any editor, most editors have little knowledge of formal art techniques, thus resulting in the chronic misuse of many of the pencils and inks in the business. Instead of understanding their craft, it seems that most editors are more concerned with selling their product, no matter how poor it is, and with giving their publications good public relations. In short, most editors are businessminded instead of editors.

While most of the creators and the collectors of comics refuse to accept that comics are a banal, cheap form of entertainment, the publishers know this fact all too well. They realize that the writing and the art work in comics is not good, and it is because of this that they pay only "minimal" rates to the people working in the field. But they aren't really minimal at all. The artists and writers are getting exactly what they deserve for their efforts: chicken feed. The publishers' realization that comics are indeed a cheap creative form is also expressed in their packaging of the books. Surely if comics were a bona-fide art form the publishers wouldn't subject them to the poor printing, coloring, and paper stock that is being used. Instead, they would print them by the finest printing processes and on the highest grade paper. But, they realize that the comics are not an art form, and they present them accordingly.

In light of these conclusions, it remains a mystery to me as to why so many people profess admiration for the beauty of the comic book media. They're cheap, dismal, poorly executed attempts at art and nothing more. And yet, so many people are "fans." It seems that many fans are primarily interested in the art in comics; and this is their excuse for enjoying this juvenile product. My suggestion: if you are interested in Art go to museums and experience Michelangelo and Dali and Picasso, stop wasting your time studying Kirby and Streanko and Adams. Why waste your time with movies when you can view the masters? If you enjoy the writing in comics, read the classics instead, and see what good writing really is all about. And, if your prime interest in comics is in its composition and story telling, study the films, they do it better.

There is a wide spectrum of art forms in America, but the graphic story medium is sadly enough, not one of them. And, the quicker all of you realize this, the more appreciative you will be of the true art forms in this country.

Howard Campbell is a Chicago University graduate who, in addition to writing many short stories and novels, is a serious student of all the creative forms in America.
The first step for Feldstein is a "punctuation layout" (a page break down to decide upon the length of the articles). "If it's real nasty," DeFebIlco reveals, "I might go six or seven pages. If it's a filler, then you set in and out with two or three pages; you say your hit and then that's it." Feldstein tops up the die-cut text with extra space, which in turn sends it to the type house to be set. "Then we will pull finished proofs on it, and then all those boxes are enlarged double—one. We give those photos to the artist (the artist is the lastman on the job) and he just pastes it down in the various panels. We give him a mechanical to follow, so he knows where the placement is. The actual creative work on each story for any given issue finishes, "the elements are combined in the production office." In this way as to "regen- sent each artist so we get a different overall look to the book."

Although many have mentioned the "tremendous latitude" EN EC publisher Bill Gaines, "even through Al Feldstein was, in theory, Harvey never worked as hard as Al did. Al produced one story a day, and Harvey had this tremendous luxury of going to libraries and art basins."

DeFebIlco claims that Kurtzman had a "hands-on" attitude while writing with stories, likening them to "little gems that kept being polished and polished" whereas he allegedly felt that Feldstein was "sort of battling them out over a day," and that "that horror stuff was just out-and-out fiction.

Near to the Maddaring crowd
by Martin Pasko and Alan Bremmers
Copyright 1972 Martin Pasko and Alan Bremmers.

One of those hardy individuals paid to remain was associate editor Jerry DeFebIlco, who greeted us at the door, somewhat taken back by the size of our entourage. Nevertheless, he braved himself for the ordeal to come, and attempted to explain the development of a typical MAD article, after ushering us into what we took to be an office.

"We use a lot of the same reliable writers, specifically because the president with editor Al Feldstein, associate editor Nick Megginson, and DeFebIlco. "We have to rely on a certain clique or group, or from anywhere from ten to a dozen. We have about five writers who went out to the West Coast, now we roll on down there; we're fortunate enough to have them still contribute when they have the time." Then there are those that DeFebIlco refers to as the "old-timers"—those people who "generally think in our idiom and produce the type of material that we use, or could. Those in the metropolitan areas, such as Frank Jacobs and Jack Delardio, "might come in once a month" for a story.

"Flavor" notwithstanding, there is no doubt that MAD's approach to humor has changed over the years, perhaps even, DeFebIlco concedes, out of necessity. "We've decided that there's a new humor in the land today. Say ten or a dozen years ago, or even back to the fifties, forties, and thirties, American humor has been a laugh not at what's happening, but rather at what's happening to the other guy. . . but today, humor has changed. It's humor that you can relate to, It's truth humor. When it happened to you, you probably couldn't laugh at it, but it might have been even tragic. But in retrospect, you can say, "Oh, that's so true, that happened to me too." And I think that's why a lot of articles that really hit home or hit a nerve are the most successful . . . our whole concept of humor in this country has changed.

With such a change in the American sense of humor has come a reduction in the number of themes considered paramount. DeFebIlco maintains, however, that "We do deal within the realm of good taste, because we essentially a family magazine to a great degree. We have some ideas that are great ideas," he explains, but, being of a questionable nature, they are discarded; "we'd rather not use them, then, than be offensive.

With the discovery of the new brand of humor came the development of a social conscience for MAD magazine, one which leads readers to support that MAD, on occasion, will Forego an obvious gag to defer to an opportunity for a really serious social commentary. DeFebIlco admits that "we've made statements because we realize that in today's climate you can't just laugh at anything anymore." He points out that "Before, MAD was ahead of the world, . . . we used to project. And all of a sudden the world was set on its ear, and we got into MAD... We prophesied how that you didn't buck your seat belt before turning your ignition key, you couldn't get a mild stuck last year... Popular Mechanics showed it to be true actually."

As of now, good stories that DeFebIlco can point to are "Horror for horror's sake" to our six o'clock, and they called attention to us. We were going along very nicely with our own little sort of specialized comics. Our readership was a little more intelligent than the usual comic book reader."

"Humor in a Jugular Vein"

The first "comic's comic book," as the ad went, had its beginnings as an economy move. According to MAD creator Harvey Kurtzman, MAD was "something that I could do without research. We were doing Two-Fisted Tales and Front Line Combat with incredible research. We'd go down on a commission. I didn't think it was worth the time to do it.

DeFebIlco, in the Fifties working with Kurtzman on his war books, recalls the research not quite so fondly. "I went out, dug up some old sources on the U.S.S. Guardsman," he recalls, "and this was used to write a comic book story. Kurtzman, DeFebIlco claims, was given a "tremendous latitude" by EC publisher Bill Gaines, "even though Al Feldstein was, in theory, Harvey never worked as hard as Al did. Al produced one story a day, and Harvey had this tremendous luxury of going to libraries and art basins."

DeFebIlco claims that Kurtzman had a "hands-on" attitude while writing with stories, likening them to "little gems that kept being polished and polished" whereas he allegedly felt that Feldstein was "sort of battling them out over a day," and that "that horror stuff was just out-and-out fiction."

MAD would not be here today if Harvey had stuck with MAD. DeFebIlco states. "It was only that Al really got it on schedule. You never knew when MAD was coming out when it went from the comic book into the slick magazine; you never knew when it was going to appear, because Harvey could not adhere to a schedule. He would get an idea and he would work up an article and set it down in type, and overnight he would have a change of heart, and the next day he would pull the story and rewrite it, and send it down for type again, and he might not use it. He'd have three type billings for an article, and that's no way to put out a magazine."
And just as the EC titles had a fringe readership of adults and others above the average comic book—reading age of the time, so MAD has polled in a phenomenal audience not restricted, as critics have charged, to twelve-year-olds. Presently the book is the fifth largest magazine in the nation, surpassed in circulation only by Family Circle, Women's Wear Daily, ET Guide, and Playboy, and it is distributed in such countries as England, Holland, France, and Sweden. Whether the responsibility for its success should go to Al Feldstein or Harvey Kurtzman is a moot point—but there is little doubt the someone must be doing something right.

MISGUIDED TOUR DEPARTMENT

Over the years, unscrupulous rumors—many—have spread many vicious stories to the effect that the offices of MAD magazine are not offices of the respectable, dignified, efficient and brain-curdling type one would expect to find on Madison Avenue, but in fact strongly resemble the day rooms at Bellevue. We feel it is our duty to inform the public that all of these dirty, nasty, unconfirmed rumors are absolutely, positively, and categorically TRUE!!! As proof, we offer the following representation of the treatment we receive here:

This is our best gag.

(With all due respects to the Marx Brothers)
WELL, FANCY MEETING YOU HERE!!!