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Marvel: Five Fabulous Decades Of The World's Greatest Comics ([Marvel Comics])



Synopsis

Marvel Comics - full of cosmic battles and complex psychology - are the best-selling comics in America today. For generations, Marvel's moody heroes have captured the imagination of readers with their daring feats and iconoclastic wit. Relive the Marvel Magic in this lively history of the company and its heroes - both imaginary and real: --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The strongest impression one gets from this commemorative album is of the extraordinary skill with which Marvel Comics has hopped on the bandwagon throughout its 50-plus-year history. Timley Publications (Marvel's original name) started publishing superhero comics after Superman and Batman became prominent in the late 1930s (and stopped when the genre lost popularity after WW II), and romance and horror comics after competitors Prize Publications and EC Comics, respectively, popularized those genres in the late 1940s/early 1950s. When DC Comics's Justice League of America repopularized super-heroes, Marvel inaugurated its famous line of superhero comics, starting with The Fantastic Four in 1961. Daniels (Living in Fear: The History of Horror in the Mass Media) lays to rest the myth that Marvel publisher Lee (whose introduction is written in hyperbolic, adjective- and alliteration-laden prose) was the sole creator of those 1960s superheroes, which was Marvel's position until others in the field pushed to give proper credit to the artists who worked with Lee, especially Jack Kirby. The book does a fine job of documenting Marvel's

overlooked pre-1961 background and is beautifully illustrated. Copyright 1991 Reed Business Information, Inc.

The old adage, the more things change the more they remain the same, holds true in the case of this retrospective piece. Fifty years as a comic book company is quite an accomplishment, but only when a certain level of growth can be demonstrated. Unfortunately, this book is 287 pages of stagnation. Marvel's formative years prove interesting and nostalgic, but 50 years later the company is still cranking out comics "the Marvel Way." This work falls short in its reference function of detailing Marvel's recent years due to the glutinous mass of material that would have to be collated--it would require a volume all its own. The book's strong point is the high-quality reproductions of comic book pages and covers. An optional purchase for area collections.- John S. Drew, Copyright 1991 Reed Business Information, Inc.

One of my favorite books as a kid, this has everything an 80s kid remembers fondly from Marvel, plus a gorgeously illustrated and curated history. I've given a few as gifts, they're great for any 9 to 90 year old boy.

Marvel: Five Fabulous Decades of the World's Greatest Comics is the most enjoyable comics-related history I've read thus far but it's not the best one. As with his similar volume on DC Comics (see Reaction Paper #5), historian Les Daniels fails to make clear where his allegiance lies: with unbiased history or corporate approval. Without making his intent clear, Daniels makes suspect the truth and fairness of this detail-rich account of Marvel's history. Such suspicions are most glaring when controversies that have been well documented in other sources are mentioned only in passing, glossed over, or ignored altogether. For example, Jack Kirby's departure from the company in 1970 which some comic-book historians point to as one of the initiating events of the Bronze Age receives only a page and a few polite comments from Kirby and Stan Lee (p. 145); Daniels account captures little of the acrimony other sources have suggested led to the split. The author also doesn't discuss Kirby's return to the company in the mid-1970s, subsequent re-departure, or extended, bitter battle with the company over original art; that last item generated many headlines in the industry trade press throughout the 1980s. A second example of potential whitewashing of controversy can be seen in Daniels material regarding Jim Shooter, Marvel's editor-in-chief from 1978 to 1987. While acknowledging that Shooter may have stepped on a few

toes, the author largely casts the former E-i-C as someone who was both business savvy and a friend of the creative talent (p. 206). Daniels writes: "He was concerned about conditions for artists and writers and he was convinced that making some changes would ultimately increase sales" (p. 183). Shooter himself is quoted talking about significantly increasing page rates, extending medical coverage and establishing incentive programs (p. 183). While all of this is most likely true, it is also common knowledge that many creators do not fondly recall Shooter's tenure. Daniels does note that long-time Marvel writer and former E-i-C Roy Thomas left the company over a disagreement with Shooter (p. 185). But it's a fairly well known fact that Thomas wasn't alone, and that many of these old wounds remain. (I've personally witnessed this: At a Comic-Con International panel last summer, Bronze-era talent including Doug Moench, Gene Colan and Marv Wolfman all talked of leaving Marvel to escape Shooter "who they referred to as "he who shall not be named.") It's a shame that the intent of Daniels history is suspect, because the book, on a whole is an entertaining and informative read. The author clearly has access to primary sources, and the company-specific scope gives unique facts and angles room to breathe. A few examples relevant to the Bronze Age: The importance of the "Kree-Skrull War," a 1971-72 Avengers storyline that demonstrated that plot lines could be extended almost indefinitely and solidified the idea that every comic book Marvel had ever published was part of an endless, ongoing saga (p. 150). There was a conscious effort to increase the number of minority and female superheroes (p. 158). The great impact of art director John Romita, who provided many uncredited cover layouts and character designs, including initial designs for the Punisher, Ms. Marvel and Wolverine (pp. 161-63, 166, 172). Such nuggets of information are gold to the comics historian. With the addition of a simple statement of intent and description of methods, Daniels book would have been invaluable.

**THE BEST AND MOST INEXPENSIVE VALUE IN MARVEL COMIC HISTORY YOU WILL FIND.
FOR THOSE TRYING TO RECAPTURE THEIR YOUTH-BUY IT!**

Covers the beginning of the company through Marvel Age and into the late 1980's. Lots of great pictures and behind the scenes photos and information. A very interesting read!

I bought this book as a gift for my husband. Not only did it arrive in just a few short days, it was

perfectly packaged. The item couldn't have been handled with more care and when it arrived my husband was so excited. We love the book and would definitely order again in the future. Thank you!

Marvel Five Fabulous Decades of the World's Greatest Comics is a well-presented but incomplete volume that I would highly recommend for those interested in the history of pulp fiction and comic books, especially Marvel Comics. It is a brilliant summary of a large portion of the genres, formats, and marketing strategies of Marvel Comics, which dates back to the 1930s and 1940s. Even a reader who is not particularly a comics fan will likely find this book fascinating and enlightening. To me, this publication is a decent effort to document the history and development of the superhero fantasy. Introduced in this publication are highlighted stories and photographed covers of the various pulp fiction magazines, including Marvel Tales, The Spider, Weird Tales, etc., all of which were prevalent in American dime stores and contained various tales about time travel, unlimited atomic energy, ghosts, and alien invaders. Though these fantasies were popular, the pulp novel editors, most notably Martin Goodman, eventually needed to find a way to publish their stories at a pace in sync with an accelerating, thus increasingly demanding, society that was producing faster machines, trains, planes, and automobiles. Thus was developed and introduced by Goodman, along with illustrator, Bill Everett, what would be the very first issue of Marvel Comics, which has its cover photographed in miniaturized form as displayed in this book. So according to the following pages, the cornerstone of Marvel Comics was laid, and there was to be no turning back. In Five Fabulous Decades, each page is glossy and contains several photographs in color of the various aforementioned pulp fiction works along with the very early issues that would lead to an expanding Marvel Universe. It is also stated that contrary to what many comic book history writers have informed their respective readers, the creation of the comic book itself did not immediately replace and eradicate the pulp fiction magazine, because pulps continued to be printed well into 1955. All in all, Marvel did a good chapter-by-chapter sequence, bringing forth names of the great contributors to the comic book universe. Some very poignant moments are presented, especially in the 1950s when the comic book medium comes under scrutiny for presenting violent images. Outrage, according to the book, was so loudly expressed by individuals who alleged the comic book industry was corrupting America's youth that matters were taken before the Federal government and ultimately, Congressional hearings were being held so as to determine the link between comic books and juvenile delinquency. It is then stated that, as a result, the reputation of the comic book industry was maligned and left many editors, publishers, and illustrators without work. Following this

crisis passage is a long-winded narrative of the Marvel Comics resurgence in popularity in 1961 that would spawn the creation of heroes such as The Fantastic Four, The Hulk, Spider-Man, as well as the return of old favorites, such as Ka-Zar, Captain America, and The Sub-Mariner. From then on are trivial profiles of the central Marvel characters and how each inspired the creation of TV shows, movies, toys, as well as the creation of superhero groups. All in all, this is a very good book to own. My only complaint is that the second half focuses more on marketing strategies revolved around the superheroes than on the impact that the superheroes' stories had on their readers. What started out as a potentially perfect rendition of one facet of comic book history got lost in the shuffle with the commercialization of Marvel Entertainment, which is still fascinating in itself. As a recommendation, for those who are genuinely interested in the history of comic books as a whole, and not just Marvel, please try and find copies of both volumes of The Steranko History of Comics by none other than the great Jim Steranko!

I don't even know where to start here? To save time: if you are in ANYWAY interested in Marvel Comics and the characters/stories/artists they created - get this book. Book looks gorgeous, is set up great and you learn SO MUCH about Marvel stuff you liked as well as the stuff you may have missed.

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