

KIRBY AS A "GENRE"!!!

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ERIC LARSON & COMPANY'S TRIBUTE TO THE EARLY FF.



TOM SCIOLI AND JOE CASEY'S GÖDLAND.

THE KIRBY GENRE

AS ONE OF THE GREATEST COMICS CREATORS OF THE TWENTIETH-CENTURY, JACK KIRBY HAS HAD A LASTING INFLUENCE ON THE COMIC BOOK GENRE. BUT MORE SO THAN MANY OTHER GIANTS OF THE ART FORM, JACK KIRBY—AS A CREATOR, WRITER, AND ARTIST—LEAVES AN IMPACT THAT EXTENDS BEYOND MERE IMITATION OR STYLISTIC INFLUENCE. HIS CHARACTERS, HIGHLY STYLIZED DRAFTSMANSHIP, AND THE THEMES AND MOTIFS OF HIS WORK RESURFACE AGAIN AND AGAIN IN COMICS THAT STRIVE TOWARDS KIRBY'S UNIQUE COMBINATION OF STYLE, IMAGINATIVE ENERGY, AND MODERN-DAY MYTHOLOGIZING. WITHIN THE LARGER DC AND MARVEL UNIVERSES AS WELL AS INDEPENDENTLY, KIRBY CREATED A DISTINCT "KIRBYVERSE" THAT CONTINUES TO PROVIDE RAW MATERIAL FOR NEW CREATIVE WORKS. THE SIZE, RICHNESS, AND COMPLEXITY OF KIRBY'S CUMULATIVE WORK AND THE VARIED, CAREFUL, LOVING, AND SOMETIMES IRONIC HANDLING OF THAT WORK BY LATER ARTISTS COMBINE TO CREATE AN EVEN RICHER INTERTEXTUAL AND INTERVISUAL NETWORK OF COMICS, IDEAS, IMAGES, SYMBOLS, AND STORIES.

SOME FEATURES OF KIRBY'S WORK THAT RESURFACE IN THE KIRBYESQUE WORK OF LATER ARTISTS INCLUDE:

- IDIOSYNCRATIC AND HIGHLY STYLIZED DRAFTSMANSHIP
- SIMPLE PANEL LAYOUT AND COMPOSITION
- INTRICATELY DESIGNED MECHANICAL IMAGERY
- NOSTALGIC RETURN TO EARLIER WORKS, E.G., 1960s CAPTAIN AMERICA, 1970s NEWSBOY LEGION

WHAT IS A GENRE?

IN ART AND LITERARY THEORY, A **GENRE** IS SIMPLY A KIND OR TYPE OF ARTISTIC OR LITERARY WORK. THERE ARE VERY BROAD AND GENERAL GENRES, SUCH AS SCULPTURE AND PAINTING IN ART, OR PROSE, POETRY, AND DRAMA IN LITERATURE. FILM AND THE COMIC BOOK ARE ALSO GENERAL GENRES. MORE SPECIFIC GENRES INCLUDE LANDSCAPE OR HISTORICAL PAINTING; THE NOVEL, A SPECIFIC FORM OF PROSE FICTION; THE EPIC, A LONG NARRATIVE POEM; SCIENCE FICTION FILM; SITUATION COMEDY TELEVISION; OR SUPERHERO COMICS. MORE SPECIFIC DRAMATIC FORMS INCLUDE COMEDY AND TRAGEDY.

GENRE TYPES CAN BE EVEN MORE SPECIFIC. THE SONNET, FOR INSTANCE, IS A FOURTEEN-LINE LYRIC POEM. THE SHAKESPEAREAN SONNET, MORE SPECIFIC STILL, IS A SONNET THAT CONSISTS OF THREE QUATRAINS (FOUR-LINE STANZAS) AND A CLOSING COUPLET (TWO-LINE STANZA). A PETRARCHAN SONNET IS MADE UP OF AN OCTAVE (EIGHT-LINE STANZA) AND A SESTET (SIX-LINE STANZA). THE OCTAVE PRESENTS A PROPOSITION AND THE SESTET, BEGINNING WITH A TURN OR "VOLTA" IN THE NINTH LINE, OFFERS A RESOLUTION. ANOTHER VERY SPECIFIC POETIC GENRE IS THE ALBA, A LAMENT OVER THE PARTING OF LOVERS AT THE BREAK OF DAY. UNLIKE THE SONNET, THE ALBA DOES NOT HAVE A SPECIFIC METRICAL OR STANZAIC FORM.

WHEN WE TALK ABOUT A GENRE WE DISCUSS THE VARIOUS FORMAL, STYLISTIC, AND THEMATIC FEATURES THAT SET THE GENRE—THE TYPE OR KIND—OF ARTISTIC WORK APART FROM OTHER KINDS. THE EPIC, FOR INSTANCE, IS A LONG, NARRATIVE POEM WRITTEN IN AN ELEVATED AND SIMPLE STYLE. THE EPIC TYPICALLY DEALS WITH THE ADVENTURES OF A HEROIC, LEGENDARY, OR MYTHOLOGICAL FIGURE IMPORTANT TO THE HISTORY OF A NATION OR RACE. SUPERNATURAL AGENTS—GODS, MONSTERS, ANGELS, DEMONS—OFTEN PLAY A PROMINENT ROLE IN THE ACTION. AND THE SETTING IS OFTEN VAST, INCLUDING WHOLE NATIONS OR WORLDS. IN ADDITION TO FORMAL AND THEMATIC CHARACTERISTICS, A GENRE CAN ALSO CONSIST OF COMMON DEVICES OR CONVENTIONS, SUCH AS THE EPIC INVOCATION OF THE MUSE.

LIKE THE SONNET, ALBA, OR EPIC, KIRBY'S WORK AND THE WORK OF THOSE INSPIRED BY "THE KING" SHARE A COMMON SET OF FORMAL AND THEMATIC CHARACTERISTICS AND CONVENTIONS.



OFFICIER AND LADRONN'S TAKE ON KIRBY'S TRANSYLVANE.

- USE OF EMERGING POPULAR CULTURE, E.G., BIKERS ("OUTSIDERS"), HIPPIES ("HAIRIES"), AND HORROR MOVIE MONSTERS ("TRANSYLVANE")
- RE-IMAGINING OF MYTHOLOGICAL AND BIBLICAL FIGURES AND THEMES, E.G., THOR & IKARUS.
- RECURRENT THEMES OF RACE & GENETICS (INHUMANS, D.N.A.LIENS, ETERNALS), HOLOCAUST, AND GENOCIDE.
- FREQUENT INTEGRATION OF HORROR AND SCIENCE FICTION ELEMENTS INTO NON-HORROR, NON-SCIENCE FICTION GENRES.

ADAM MCGOVERN'S REGULAR COLUMN "KIRBY AS A GENRE" IN THE JACK KIRBY COLLECTOR DISCUSSES MANY EXAMPLES OF THE LASTING AND WIDESPREAD INFLUENCE OF KIRBY'S WORK.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT WORKING IN THE KIRBY "GENRE" INVOLVES MUCH MORE THAN SIMPLY BORROWING FROM KIRBY'S VISUAL STYLE. WHILE KIRBY'S UNIQUE VISUAL VOCABULARY AND STYLE IS PERHAPS THE MOST RECOGNIZABLE FEATURE OF HIS WORK, THE OTHER NON-VISUAL ELEMENTS, SUCH AS HIS USE OF MYTHOLOGY OR POP CULTURE, ALSO CONTRIBUTE TO THE RICHNESS AND DISTINCTIVENESS OF KIRBY'S WORK AND THAT OF SUBSEQUENT ARTISTS WHO FOLLOW KIRBY'S MODEL. IN THE RECENT EARTH X SERIES, FOR INSTANCE, ARTIST JOHN PAUL LEON'S WORK IS NOT PARTICULARLY REMINISCENT OF KIRBY'S VISUAL STYLE, BUT THEMATICALLY THE SERIES IS VERY MUCH INDEBTED TO KIRBY. TWO OF KIRBY'S LOWER PROFILE CREATIONS, THE CELESTIALS FROM THE ETERNALS AND X-51 (A.K.A. MACHINE MAN) PLAY CENTRAL ROLES, AND THE VAST SETTING AND COMPLEX MYTHOLOGIZING SHOW THE MARK OF KIRBY'S INFLUENCE.

THE IMAGES ON THIS POSTER ARE JUST A FEW EXAMPLES OF SOME OF THE ARTISTS WORKING IN THE SUB-GENRE OF COMICS CREATED BY JACK KIRBY. IN THESE WORKS AND OTHERS NOT DEPICTED HERE, CREATORS DO NOT MERELY APE KIRBY'S VISUAL STYLE; RATHER, THEY CREATE WORKS THAT ARE GROUNDED IN THE CONTEXT OF KIRBY'S CREATIVE UNIVERSE AND PERSONAL MYTHOLOGY AND THAT PARTICIPATE IN AN INTERTEXTUAL DIALOG WITH KIRBY'S WORK AND HIS CREATIVE LEGACY.



ROGER STERN AND BRUCE TIMM REVISIT THE EARLY AVENGERS.

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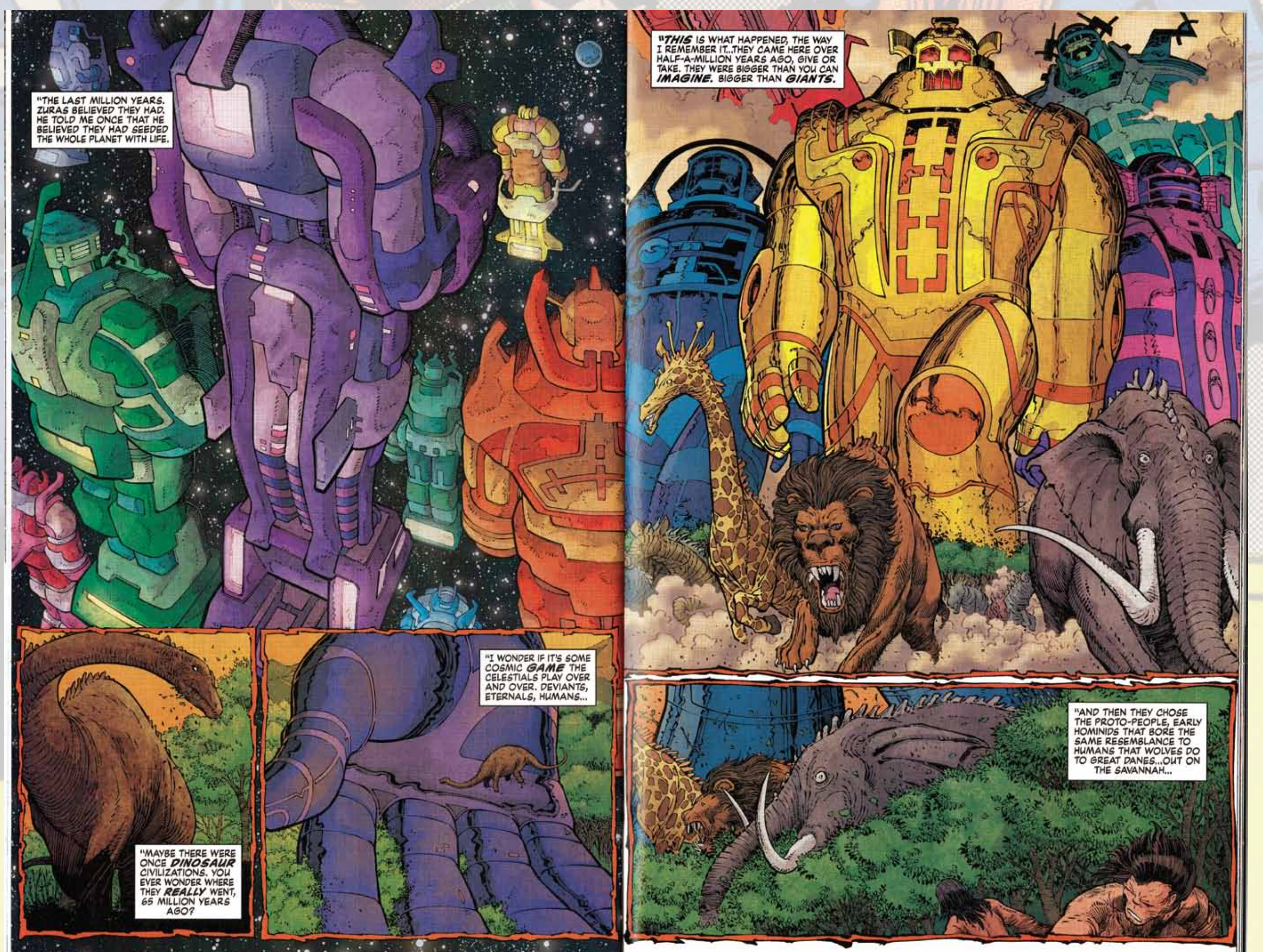
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