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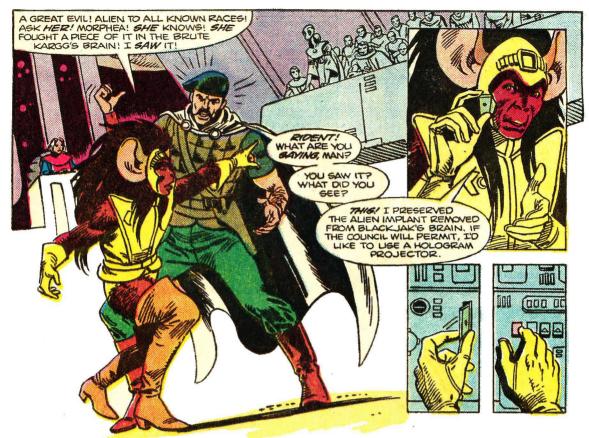


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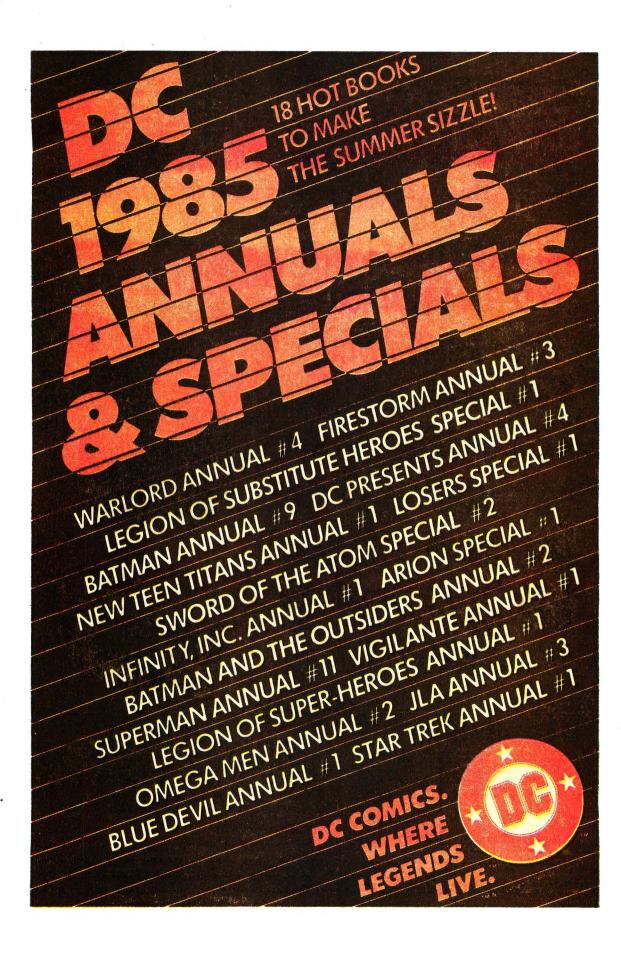
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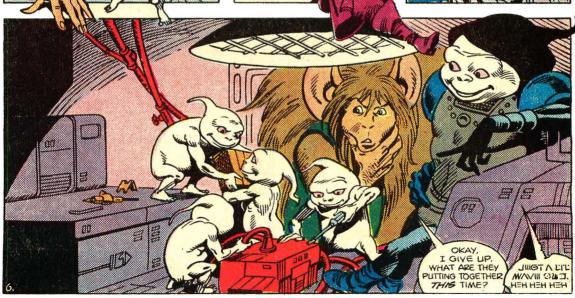










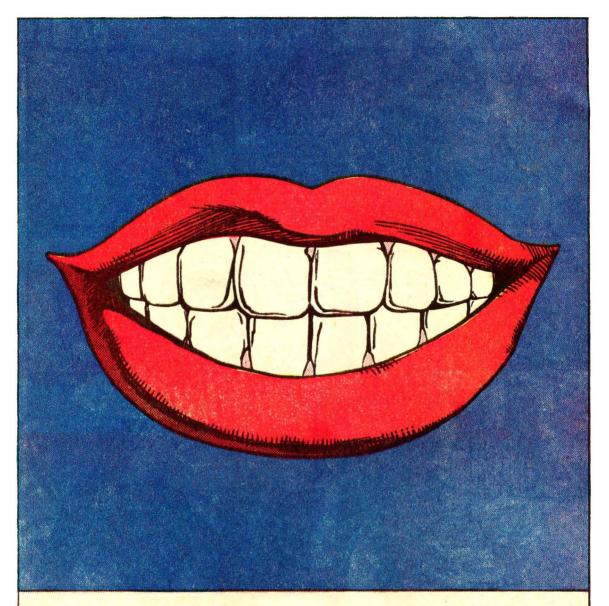












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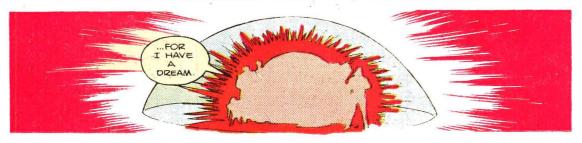






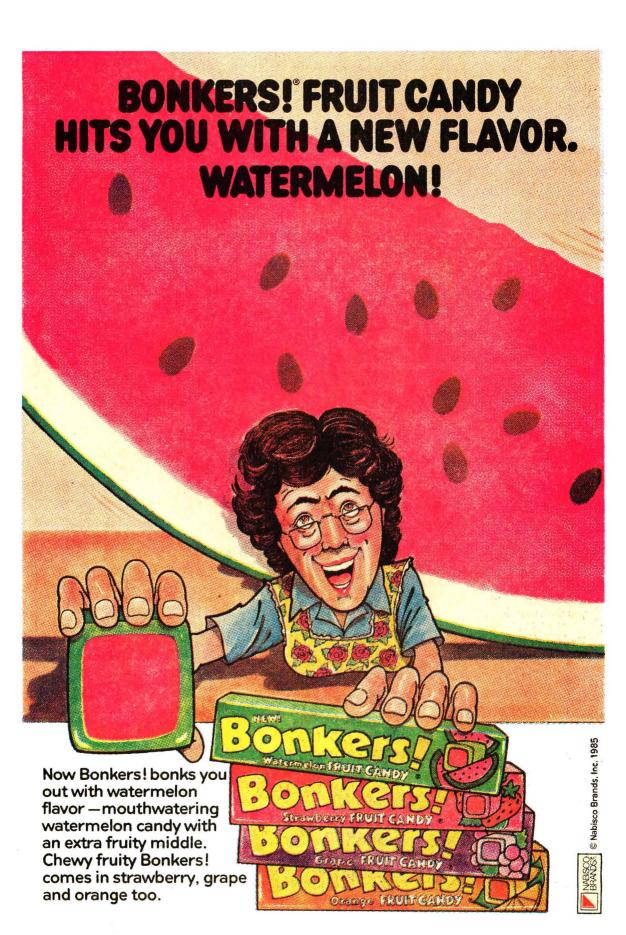














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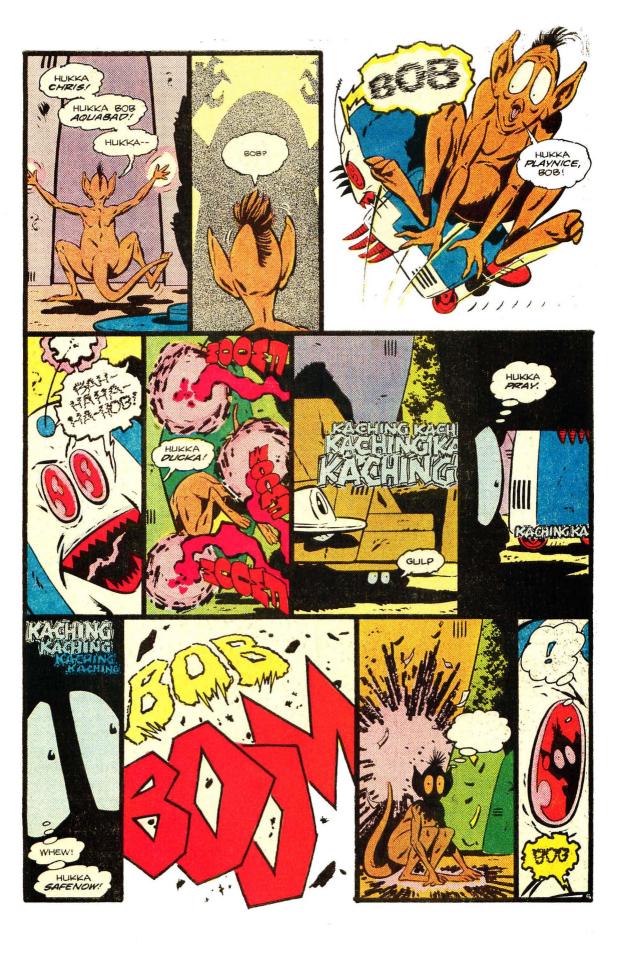
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There's no way you could not know what this editorial is about. The message is plastered on the cover. It's reasserted on the first page of the story. And it hits home on the last page of the ATARI FORCE feature story. Friends and readers, it's like the man Bob Lappan put down-this is THE END. For almost two years we've been using some of the brightest talents in the comic book business to put together an even score of (in this editor's opinion, at least) the most engrossing mainstream comics available today. It began with the writer/artist team of Gerry Conway and José Luis Garcia Lopez. Then, on to the present team of Mike Baron and Ed Barreto. Of course, inker Ricardo Villagran, colorist Tom Ziuko, and letterer Bob Lappan were there from the start, and remained through the transition to serve as a kind of creative glue between the two writer/artist teams. Everyone involved seemed to always do their best work on ATARI FORCE. Their commitment to the work was evident on every page.

On the back-up stories, we really let loose. The idea was always to have some fun, to allow some of the best talents in the business to take a look at the more humorous side of the Force, and in turn, to build each member of the group's character through the humor. Keith Giffen, Mike Chen, Marshall Rogers, Ed Hannigan, Klaus Janson, Dave Manak, and Bob Fleming all seemed to have a genuinely good time doing these back-ups, and it shows on the printed page. We can only hope that, through their efforts, we have managed to make the Hukka, Babe, Pakrat, and even Taz appear as human as any other humanoid character in the DC Universe.

But now it's over.

The reasons for the cancellation are numerous— too numerous to get into at any great length here. Sales for ATARI FORCE weren't exactly spectacular, but that in itself was not enough for the book to be canceled. It was comfortably settled in the middle of the line—comfortably enough to insure its continued existence.

No, the reason, truth to tell, was primarily a creative one. We decided awhile back that ATARI FORCE, as it now stood, would eventually run its course, and that by issue 20 there would be little more to be said about the characters as they now existed. That happens sometimes. It's as if, in the process of creating a work of fiction, you get to know your characters so well that you realize the logical thing for them to do would be to actually leave your story. And that was the problem here. The way the story was progressing, there would be no logical manner for the Force to resolve the situation other than by doing exactly what they did on page 17 of this issue's story. In effect, the Atari Force canceled themselves. Now, that certainly relieves a lot of the personal blame, and it's a convenient excuse besides, but it's true.

We kept on publishing issues of ATARI FORCE, knowing that the group was running toward a head-on collision with destiny. There was no other way to do it. And while we never meant to be deceptive about it, we didn't want to tell you in advance, 'cause that would have made ATARI FORCE an honest-to-goodness lame duck magazine. I guess you could accuse us of stringing you all along, but in the process we've managed to give you a complete, 20-issue comic novel, with a beginning, middle, and end. The only way we could have done that was to ultimately end the book.

I suspect, however, that this explanation won't satisfy the legion of fans we have picked up along the way. For them, we can only offer the gift of speculation—the ability to use their own imaginations to decide the course of future adventures for Martin Champion and company. We didn't kill anybody, didn't leave anyone behind, didn't usher the group off into some nameless limbo; whether the Force lives or dies will be entirely up to you. If you cared for the characters nearly as much as we here have, those stories are up there in your brains, swirling around, waiting to be born.

-ANDY HELFER



The British are coming! Airways," the proposals started washing up against my door. A digging my way through submis

That's good news! For DC and its readers.

The British are coming!

A few years ago, Joe Orlando and I crossed the "pond" to England to address a professional group of British cartoonists, acquaint them with DC's policies and rate structures, and tell them that we were anxious to establish an ongoing creative relationship with them. Our talk was well received and we came home feeling that our message had been heard and, at the very least, some long-lasting friendships had been established.

By the time Mike W. Barr's and British artist Brian Bolland's breathtaking, trend-setting maxiseries CAMELOT 3000 was released, I was in charge of DC's editorial department and really glad that Brian had opted to throw in with us.

Since then, the trickle of talent from across the pond has become a flood. We have watched in awe as Alan Moore redefined SWAMP THING cheered at the exciting new heights reached when Dave Gibbons drew GREEN LANTERN, breathed some fresh air with the absolutely unique art of Kevin O'Neill (who has popped up here and there, most notably in a recent issue of OMEGA MEN), and had a real blast reading that wonderful two-part VIGILANTE story set in New York but written by Alan Moore in the English countryside and illustrated by Jim Baikie, who resides in Scotland. (Jim, by the way, is currently drawing the origin of Brother Blood for a TEEN TITANS SPECIAL.)

To show her appreciation for jobs well done, President-Publisher Jenette Kahn recently took some 30 writers and artists to dinner in London when she went to England on business. The dinner was held at the Savoy Hotel, a posh locale of which Dave Gibbons commented, "I didn't think I was good enough to even walk in front of the building."

The dinner, everyone tells me, was a smashing success. Everyone had a good time and Jenette let everyone know that DC is still looking for new talent and new ideas. All I had to do was sit back and wait. Sure enough, in less time than it takes to say "British"

washing up against my door. After digging my way through submissions, I was pleased to see a high level of quality ... at least equal to the level we get from my colleagues here in America. And so in the coming year, you will be seeing (at the very least) a graphic novel by Pat Mills and Kevin O'Neill with the working title ARMAGEDDON: an issue of the DC CHALLENGE penciled by the fastdrawing Dave Gibbons and inked by Mark Farmer; Vega tales in the back of OMEGA MEN by Steve Parkhouse, Alan Moore, and Kevin O'Neill; at least 12 issues of BATMAN AND THE OUTSIDERS by Alan Davis; and a very special maxi-series from Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons-one I mentioned

When Editor Bob Greenberger was going to London for holiday in early January (see, I can speak like an Englishman), I asked him to meet with a number of the writers and artists to follow up on business we began doing by mail. When he returned, rested and bursting with good cheer, he made the following report:

in a previous column ... and still hush-

hugh

"The British writers and artists are much like a fraternity. They gather regularly at a pub across the street from Forbidden Planet, the largest comics shop in the country. As is the local custom, they bought each other rounds of drinks and no one ever kept a tab. Despite a smoke-filled room, everyone gathered around a table and chatted away ... usually swapping tales about people not in the room.

From what I can gather, most of these gents have grown up on DC Comics and working for us is a dream of sorts come true. For example, both Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons admitted an unending devotion to Tommy Tomorrow, a character who hasn't appeared in his own series in over 18 years! And every time one of them comes to America, they usually hover around Julie Schwartz's office, hoping for spare copies of his older titles, in order to complete their collections. Julie, I have learned, gets most of these guys to say yes to assignments by promising to give them hard-to-find back issues.

"On the first day, I had lunch with Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons, spending the afternoon discussing

their maxi-series. Later we shared Indian food with Alan Davis, Mark Farmer, and Mike McMahon. All but Mike have been doing work for us, and try as I might, I couldn't wheedle a commitment out of Mike. He said when his current commitments are finished, he'll see what we have to offer. Meantime, Alan Davis explained that he has had to rethink his drawing because this is the first time he's working in full color from start to finish. Many of the British weekly comics use color sparingly and no story is ever completely in color. He's been coloring in photostats of his BATO pages just to get some idea of how his work will look.

"Mark is looking forward to his issue of CHALLENGE and is spending some of his free time illustrating children's books in England. Everyone is really very pleasant and relaxed about their jobs, without any of the seeming pressure felt by many of the creators back in the States.

"The next night I was treated to Indonesian cuisine by Nick Landau of Eagle Comics. We were joined by Brian Bolland, Steve Moore, Steve Parkhouse, Kevin O'Neill, and the always gregarious Dave Gibbons. Everything seemed to go all right until Nick handed me a plate and suggested I sample the squid. Yipe!

"Anyway, Steve Parkhouse explained that he had been completing assignments for the British comics publishers and was looking forward to doing a great deal of work for DC. In addition to a few VEGA stories, Steve will probably contribute ideas for graphic novels and one-shot tales. Steve Moore, on the other hand, has already submitted one maxi-series and one graphic novel proposal. He's serious about wanting to work with us. And Brian mentioned the night before that he has a hard time saying no.

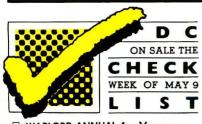
"There were others I wanted to meet and speak with, but either there wasn't enough time or they were unavailable. From what I can gather, though, the people over there are more than eager to do work for us."

No more eager than I am to have them work for us, Bob. Thank you for the report, and I'm glad you had so much fun.

Hmm. Now that Bob and Jenette have been over there, I wonder when I get my turn to go to London and take these guys out?

Thank you and good afternoon.





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