



Marvel Graphic Novels and Related Publications
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Comicscape: Conquering the Marvel Universe with Robert Weiner

By: [Kurt Amacker](#)

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Six years ago, Robert Weiner set out to conquer the Marvel Universe—or at least to read as much of it as he could. Being both a fan of Marvel and a librarian and instructor at Texas Tech University in Lubbock, he combined his passions to create a reference work of staggering completeness. The end result is an annotated guide to nearly every Marvel book—but not individual issue—ever published through 2005. **Marvel Graphic Novels and Related Publications** stands as his labor of love. The volume features a section based on each type of [book](#), and then organizes them by author. The truly astounding part is that Rob read nearly every book he listed. As such, he likely stands as one of the only Marvel scholars on the planet, in league with those academics that have devoted themselves to the works of J.R.R. Tolkien, Edgar Allan Poe, or Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Rob sent **Comicscape** a review copy of his work, and was kind enough to answer a few questions.

Kurt Amacker: Obviously, this book was a huge undertaking.

Robert Weiner: Well, this book took six years of my life to compile and put together. My hat's off to the publisher McFarland for their belief in the project. They never gave up on me, and believed it was worthwhile. I originally only thought this would take a year, but little did I know it would, more or less, be six years. I tell folks that this book has the amount of work that one would put into three dissertations. I think the result has been a solid piece of work, despite the occasional typo.

KA: Give us some background: what made you want to compile a reference book as such?

RW: I had previously co-authored a bibliography on the band The Grateful Dead with another librarian. I had done other bibliographic type articles and projects. As a librarian, it just seemed a natural to do another one. When I had started collection GN's for the library, I was reading everything that came in. I had always loved comic characters from my early days as a child, and then when the first Batman movie came in 1989, I started reading again with renewed interest. But grad school, work, and life in general caused me to "get out" of comic reading for a number of years. It was just a lark, too. I asked my library director if it would be okay to order some Spider Man and Batman [books](#) and see if the people would check them out. Sure enough, they did and I was off running again into these worlds. I read Alex Ross's **Marvels** and Peter Sanderson's **Marvel Universe** and loved those books. I got so much enjoyment of them and, in a way, they renewed the love I had for Marvel and the characters, although I love Batman, Superman, and the JSA also. **Marvels** made me realize that one could have a story with Spider Man that was as good as any novel or piece of "high" literature. **Marvels** was the inspiration behind the [graphic novel](#) book. It changed my life forever, and that is why Alex Ross is listed first in the dedication. Ross's

art just blew me away. It was distinctive. Now, it seems that everybody tries to copy his style. At the time I read it, I had no idea he was from my hometown of Lubbock. Weird coincidence there! I'd love to meet him and have him see the book.

KA: It looks like you narrowed your scope from your original idea of getting just about every Marvel book in print.

RW: Yes, I had to narrow the scope to Marvel and related publications from the United States. I had originally wanted to document all of those hardback UK annuals, as well. They are pretty cool books, and they published some things that were not published here in the States. There was some cool stuff there, and also in those Marvel role-playing books, which I listed in a small appendix. I actually tracked down a number of those items, but I just realized that I couldn't do it all. In fact, the reason the book took six years—while also working full time and occasionally teaching film classes—was because it had such a wide scope. As a librarian, I wanted to see and read everything. It's not realistic I know, but at least I tried and my heart was in the right place.

KA: But, why focus on collected editions and [graphic novels](#), per se? The only difference between your criteria and a regular comic is an ISBN number and the binding.

RW: As a librarian, that was my goal: to focus on graphic novels, prestige editions, and anything with an ISBN. I think it's unique that I list the ISBNs for those doing research and wanting to track down a particular item, because it makes it easier for them. Not many reference books refer to the ISBN, but earlier on I decided that they would be a very important component of the book. And if it HAD an ISBN, it should be listed in the book. So, I tried to track down those items Marvel published that had ISBNs, and those released by other publishers that reprinted original Marvel comics.

KA: Once you had narrowed your criteria, how did you go about researching and compiling such a book? Where did you do your research? Who did you talk to? Did anything really interesting or unexpected happen along the way?

RW: Whew, that is tough question to answer. I was all the over the place. I of course used the internet to help track down things. Being a librarian, I am pretty tenacious and I don't give up if I know something exists, I can find it. There are a number of librarian tools I used, including a database called Worldcat.

Also, a lot of it was happenstance. I just happened to find some of these prestige editions, comics with ISBNs, or graphic novels. I can't really tell you the process, or how my mind worked in tracking down all this stuff—most of which I don't own, but have actually seen. I used another service called Interlibrary Loan that you can use at your local library. I also used Ebay, Amazon, Mile High Comics, and other online sources. I did all my research in Lubbock, although Michigan State University has probably the best special collection of historical comics and graphic novels. I almost applied for a grant to go there and do research, but luckily I didn't have to. Most of the time for projects like this, you have to travel because a library may have the only copy of an item and won't lend it. I talked to all kinds of people.

Obviously, you knew about this project. The folks at the Marvel Masterworks ezboard and Marvel Spotlight editor John Rhett Thomas, who wrote the foreword, were very helpful. They helped me track down many an ISBN. I also spoke to Randall Scott at Michigan State, who has been collecting comics and graphic novels for libraries since the 1970s. I talked with other librarians. The folks on Graphic Novel Librarians Listserv were very helpful, as were other comic book academics and librarians. The Folks at Tales of Wonder were also a great help to me.

I guess some of the most unexpected stuff that happened along the way were some of the weird things I found such as the Marvel published guide to the Rock N' Roll Hall of Fame, the Marty Stuart and Billy Ray Cyrus graphic novels, and, of course, one of the worst ever published, **Nightcat**. But, there was nothing strange or life changing besides reading and reading. I realized that even the Marvel comics from the 1940s through the 1960s had something to say to adults. The writing is very good and stands up well. I also realized that the many of the stories from the 1990s speculator explosion stories were not very good.

KA: Why focus on Marvel books exclusively? Obviously, a complete guide to every graphic novel everywhere would be next to impossible, but why start with Marvel?

RW: Well, I love Marvel, which is why I did it. The Marvel characters became like friends to me. Obviously DC, Dark Horse, and other publishers need to have similar books, I think. Batman and

Superman alone would take up a book of the same size. DC would need a book twice the size of mine, and that would be if Superman and Batman were left out. To document all of the printed books, scholarly articles, novels, children's books, and various bits of esoterica was a daunting task to say the least. At the time I started the project, I thought Marvel would be easy. I was in for a big surprise once I decided to be as thorough as I could be. The Marvel characters are just plain cool, though. I loved learning about the Golden Age stuff too, like the Blazing Skull, Citizen V, and Red Raven. These characters are awesome! Regardless of what one thinks of Marvel's business practices, or the way artists have been treated, the characters stand on their own, and deserve recognition for being the icons they are. So yeah, I'm a Marvel Zombie, I guess. Marvel has a great history!

KA: Where do you see such a reference work fitting in an age where virtually everything is available online?

RW: I am glad you asked that. A great librarian told me once "even though it feels like if it is not online it doesn't exist," that it just isn't true. There a number of items documented in my book that are not documented anywhere else, or at least in one place like the book. Yes, there are great online sources that have tons of stuff, like the Comic Book Database and Rob Helmerich's excellent trade paperback website, <http://tplist.millarworld.net/> and <http://www.marvelmasterworks.com/>.

I think that reference books like mine are not obsolete. You have the "value added" aspect of having all these items related to Marvel documented in one place all together. You also get my annotations which I've heard from a number of folks are actually entertaining to read. In a sense, my book is a history of Marvel and its characters. Nowhere else do you find a list of all those bizarre children's books published by Marvel during the 1980s, or all of the paperback reprints of various Marvel comics, or Marvel novels, including the young adult ones. The hardest chapter for me to do was the Epic Comics one. That was tough, and I'm sure I missed number of items, but I did my best. To have this entire grouping in one place is a great service to fans, students, scholars, researchers, librarians, or anyone who's just plain curious. Like I mentioned before with the annotations, one can pick up the book anywhere and read an annotation or two just for fun. It is not a book to be read cover to cover, but it should be savored over a long period of time. There is plenty of documentation online, but not everything! Think of this as a supplement.

KA: Part of your audience seems to be librarians, academics, and anyone else that needs to catalogue or research Marvel's heroes and universe. Do you see your collection as part of a growing larger acceptance of comics as a "legitimate" storytelling medium -- one worth of academic consideration?

RW: Yes, as I argue in my introduction, I think sequential art is one of the highest forms of literature. You have to use both sides of your brain. For some folks, reading comics is not easy. It is as legitimate as any form of storytelling and fun, to boot. More and more academic consideration is going on now. Ten years ago, Barnes and Noble did not have the graphic novel areas they do today. Libraries are collecting graphic novels in record numbers. People are reading them from all age groups. College courses are springing up, as well. I am involved in teaching a graduate course on comics and do work on them for an academic conference. It is finally a valid area of study and always should have been. I think as we go along the acceptance of it will become greater and greater. I mean, look at Japan. They have been producing graphic novels since the 1920s and they have never been seen as just kiddy fare or slush literature. My collection is just another step: a small one, but hopefully an important one. I think there is something for everybody in my book, whether they are an academic or just a fan.

KA: In its own way, the Marvel Universe is an ongoing story told by many different creators. And yet, it is, unavoidably, riddled with contradictions, inconsistencies, unresolved mysteries, and abandoned plot points. It's shortcomings as a single story nearly outweigh its merits. With this book, do you intend to address the Marvel Universe as a cohesive whole, or do you see it as just a loosely connected series of stories?

RW: I think the book shows, in some sense, the Marvel Universe as a cohesive whole. Yeah there are tons of contradictions and alternative universes, and continuity errors. But take as it is, it is pretty interesting place to be. I think it is more than just a loosely connected series of stories, especially during the Stan Lee and Roy Thomas writing years. They set the stage, but the Golden Age stuff works surprisingly well in the continuity. Today, it is a little more haphazard with **Civil War**, **House of M**, and

the like. But, good stuff is still being produced, and there are still some interesting stories. But overall, despite the contradictions, the Marvel Universe is a pretty cool place to live. It is darker today, but those are the times. In some ways, I think the killing of Captain America was a cheap shot, but it also inspired me to do a book about the good Captain, which I am working on now.

KA: You read every Marvel graphic novel you could to do this book. What impressions of the Marvel's universe do you have now that perhaps you didn't before?

RW: Yes, I read nearly every book documented, which is why it took six years. I actually sat down and went through all these items. It was fun, but a chore, too. The last two years of putting this book together were not much fun. I just wanted to be done with it, but I am glad I persevered because I think the final result is quite good. That is why the book stops at 2005 and the annotations at 2004. I just could not read and keep up with everything and keep a full time job.

As for my impressions of the Marvel Universe, I know now that Epic produced some really good standalone graphic novels in the 1980s and early 1990s. J.M. DeMatteis's **Moonshadow** is one of the most amazing works I have ever read. There were some surprises, like how much I loved Jim Starlin's work and Marv Wolfman's **Tomb of Dracula**, which I see as in the top five best written comic series, period. I also fell in love with characters I did not think I would like or did not really care for when I began the project. Finding Marvel's Civil War history (the actual war, not the story) graphic novels was a big surprise, as were the Marvel music and Christian books. Those were kind of cool to track down and document. The prose novels were not all that easy to track down, either. The young adult Marvel novels were especially interesting to track down and document, as were the pre-Marvel comics pulp stories reprinted in novel form, which were a nod to hardcore fans. There are some inside jokes in the book and little weird things like that for the fans.

KA: Writing this book makes you something of an expert on Marvel's continuity now.

RW: Well not so much on Marvel's continuity, but like with the printed history of the Grateful Dead, I'd say I'm an expert on the printed history of Marvel now. I've read more than most fans, but I have nowhere near the knowledge of Roy Thomas, Peter Sanderson, or Tom DeFalco. But in terms of what Marvel has published in book form, yeah I probably know more than most, including those working for Marvel now. I hope this book can be useful to them, too. And maybe someday, I could do something for Marvel! But, I've not read every Marvel comic, although I'd like to read every Marvel comic produced from 1939 to 1990, if it were possible. Even though I am over 40, I still love those characters and stories. They hold up! That is the mark of timeless work. Alex Schoenburg, J.M. DeMatteis, Gerry Conway, Jack Kirby, Steve Ditko, Stan Lee, Gil Kane, Jim Steranko, and Roy Thomas—all of their work stands up today.

KA: Do you feel like there is a future in working with kind of information?

RW: Yes, of course. As someone who works with information for a living, I think to have information like this in one place is always a plus, whether it is me doing it in book form or on a website. This type of information is good for future historians. Even though my Grateful Dead bibliography ends in 1996 and is way out of date, it is still being used by scholars and fans doing research on the band. I would like to think that 40 years from now when I am dead and gone, people could still find something useful in **Marvel Graphic Novels and Related Publications**.

KA: Do you intend to issue another volume to include works published after 2005?

RW: No, not at this point. I am working on a book of scholarly essays related to Captain America and co-editing a book on grindhouse, trash, and art cinema. I'm also going to be working on a book documenting Marvel on film as well as editing a volume on graphic novels in libraries. And, I'll still be keeping a full time job and doing more teaching! So yeah, I have my hands full!

KA: Anything else you'd like to impart to Comicscape readers?

RW: More than anything, don't be embarrassed to be a fan and read about these characters. The days of the genre geek are over. The world is run by the geeks now, anyway. These stories are modern mythology. One can go back to these worlds over and over again. Let your superhero flag fly. Just like music will never let you down, neither will Spidey or Wolverine!

KA: Thanks, Robert. Maniacs, Robert's book is available at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) if anyone would like to pick up a copy. It's definitely worth a purchase.

The Spinner Rack

By Ben Johnson and Kurt Amacker

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DARK HORSE COMICS

Blade Of The Immortal TP Vol 19 Badger Hole (MR) \$17.95

BPRD War On Frogs #1 \$2.99

Ben: Finally, the French will pay for their fries, kisses and ticklers.

Kurt: Aren't you a preacher or something?

Fear Agent #21 Hatchet Job (Pt 5 Of 5) \$2.99

Fluffy HC \$19.95

Goon #25 \$2.99

Journal Domo Flocked \$14.99

Ben: I didn't know if this was a comic or a journal or what the hell so I left it in, but to be clear, I hate it.

Penny Arcade TP Vol 05 The Case Of The Mummys Gold \$12.95

Star Wars Rebellion #14 Small Victories Part 4 (Of 4) \$2.99

Ben: Finally caught the preview for the new [movie](#). It gave me taint tingle.

DC COMICS

100 Bullets #92 (MR) \$2.99

Kurt: Eight issues left and then I can read it in one glorious sitting.

Absolute Sandman HC Vol 03 \$99.00

Kurt: If you love **Comicscape**, you will buy this for me. I am completely serious. Go to Amazon and order it for me right now. I will send you a thank you note.

Action Comics #866 \$2.99

Batman #676 Rip 2nd Ptg \$2.99

Batman Confidential #18 \$2.99

Batman Strikes #46 \$2.25

Booster Gold #10 \$2.99

Burnout \$9.99

Ben: And to think, people used to think Kurt had big things in store.

Kurt: [Just you wait, Alaska boy.](#)

Cartoon Network Action Pack #26 \$2.25

Chuck #1 (Of 6) \$2.99

Kurt: What Ben did with his bottle of Thunderbird after he drank it.

DC Universe Special Superman Mongul \$4.99

Ben: Wouldn't special Superman be Bizarro?

Kurt: You are trying to have us sued, aren't you?

Gotham Underground #9 (Of 9) \$2.99

Green Arrow Black Canary #9 \$2.99

Green Lantern Corps #25 \$2.99

Huntress Year One #3 (Of 6) \$2.99

Joker The Greatest Stories Ever Told TP \$19.99

Kurt: Featuring a hilariously twisted take on the Jesus story.

Justice League Of America HC Vol 03 Injustice League \$19.99

Legion Of Super Heroes In The 31st Century #15 \$2.25

Lost Boys Reign Of Frogs #2 (Of 4) (MR) \$3.50

Ben: This is what it is like to see my fondest memories pooped on.

Kurt: Holy crap, did this book suck.

Mad Magazine #491 \$4.99

Metamorpho Year One TP \$14.99

Number Of The Beast #5 (Of 8) \$2.99

Kurt: I'm too tired to make an Iron Maiden joke here, so feel free to add your own in the comment section.

Programme TP Vol 01 \$17.99

Question The Five Books Of Blood HC \$19.99

Kurt: If five Books of Blood showed up at my place, I wouldn't question them about a damn thing. I'd just give them what they wanted and quickly shut the door.

Salvation Run #7 (Of 7) \$3.50

Salvation Run #7 (Of 7) Var Ed \$3.50

Simon Dark #9 \$2.99

Teru Teru X Shonen Vol 02 \$9.99

Tiny Titans #5 \$2.25

Ben:Robin gets pantsed.

Kurt: A book like this just opens the door for a series of tasteless jokes. Think of your own, because mine won't be nearly as bad as the ones you don't share with others.

Titans #3 \$2.99

Trinity #2 \$2.99

Vinyl Underground TP Vol 01 Watching The Detectives (MR) \$9.99

Kurt: This is a really good series. It's like **Hellblazer** by way of **The Mod Squad**.

Will Eisners Spirit Archives HC Vol 24 \$59.99

Wonder Woman #21 \$2.99

Young Liars #4 (MR) \$2.99

IMAGE COMICS

Amazing Joy Buzzards Gn Vol 01 Here Come The Spiders \$19.99

Charlatan Ball #1 \$2.50

Elephantmen #12 \$2.99

Invincible #50 \$4.99

Ben:Sweet! Now if only Kirkman would get his other books to release I might call off the hit I put on him.

Invincible #50 Alt Connecting Cvr (Pp #797) \$4.99

Jack Staff #17 \$3.50

Madman Atomic Comics #9 \$2.99

Magdalena Daredevil (One Shot) \$3.99

Ben: Oh, no.

Pilot Season Lady Pendragon #1 \$3.99

Red Mass For Mars #1 (Of 4) (Res) \$3.50

Ride TP Vol 02 (MR) \$15.99

Screamland #4 (Of 5) \$2.99

Kurt: My bedroom, most nights.

Wildguard Insider #2 (Of 3) \$3.50

Witchblade #116 Wizard World La Excl Var \$10.00

Witchblade Origins TP Vol 01 Genesis \$14.99

MARVEL COMICS

Amazing Spider-Girl #21 \$2.99

Amazing Spider-Man #562 \$2.99

Captain America TP Vol 01 Death Of Captain America \$14.99

Kurt: Why, pray tell, is this volume one?

Captain Britain And MI 13 #2 SI \$2.99

Civil War Chronicles #12 \$4.99

Clandestine #5 (Of 5) \$2.99

Dark Tower Long Road Home #2 (Of 5) 2nd Ptg Var \$3.99

Ben: And with gas prices the way they are...

Kurt: Wow, way to get a cheap cheer Ben.

Eternals #1 \$2.99

Eternals #1 Acuna White Var \$2.99

Eternals By Jack Kirby TP Book 01 \$24.99

Kurt: I bought the originals on the cheap a while back, but I haven't read them yet.

Genext #2 (Of 5) \$3.99

Hulk Raging Thunder \$3.99

Ben: The movie tide begins.

Kurt: Man Ben, you're off your game. You just passed up a perfectly reasonable fart joke.

Incredible Hercules Against World Prem HC \$19.99

Invincible Iron Man #1 2nd Ptg Larroca Var (Pp #817) \$2.99

Kurt: This is actually really good.

Invincible Iron Man #1 2nd Ptg Meinerding Var (Pp #817) \$2.99

Iron Man Legacy Of Doom #3 (Of 4) \$2.99

Iron Man Viva Las Vegas #1 (Of 4) 2nd Ptg Granov Var \$3.99

Last Defenders #4 (Of 6) \$2.99

Marvel Adventures Hulk #12 \$2.99

Marvel Illustrated Three Musketeers #1 (Of 6) \$3.99

Marvel Zombies 02 HC \$19.99

Mighty Avengers #13 2nd Ptg Yu Var \$2.99

Moon Knight #19 \$2.99

Ben: Is anyone still reading this?

Kurt: Weren't you all about this book a few months ago?

New Avengers #40 2nd Ptg Cheung Var \$2.99

New Exiles #7 \$2.99

Newuniversal Shockfront #2 (Of 6) \$2.99

Ben: Two in the pink, one in the stink.

Kurt: Jesus Christ, I hate you Ben.

Punisher Max Little Black Book (MR) \$3.99

Secret Invasion #1 3rd Ptg Yu Var \$3.99

Secret Invasion #2 2nd Ptg Yu Var \$3.99

Secret Invasion Who Do You Trust \$3.99

Ben: Not Kurt. That guy is shifty.

Kurt: Only the shifty, drunk, and amoral make truly great writers.

Silver Surfer TP In Thy Name \$10.99

Skaar Son Of Hulk #1 \$2.99

Ben: This might be the worst idea ever. Second worst. Number one was sliced bread.

Sky Doll #2 (Of 3) (MR) \$5.99

Kurt: Available for \$99.99, along with a selection of beers, wines, and cocktails. Just ask your flight attendant. Exact change is appreciated.

Spider-Man Magazine #1 \$6.99

Ben: Does he have a movie coming out?

Kurt: No, but some female relation of yours will be starring in a pornographic film in the near future.

Spider-Man With Great Power #4 (Of 5) \$3.99

Twelve #6 (Of 12) \$2.99

Ben: Good God, this is great.

Kurt: I'm guessing that God already knew about this book, and didn't need you to tell him. But, since you bothered him about it, here comes the lightning.

Ultimate X-Men HC Vol 08 \$39.99

Wolverine TP Enemy Of State Ultimate Collection \$29.99

X-Force Aint No Dog \$3.99

Ben: It's a platypus.

Kurt: Already with the one-shots. That didn't take long.

Questions? Comments? Let us know what you think at comicscape@mania.com.

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