

TOP 10 LIST! 6-8-07

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Hello friends! A quick follow up on last week's foreskin column...My friend's Dirk and Melissa had their baby boy last Friday and, apparently, didn't read my blog in time. They butchered the poor kid. He is now one of us...the poor, foreskinless wanderers of this cookie-cutter world we live in.

Sigh...I tried.

Onto other things...

I am always asked "Who's your favorite comic book artist?" or "Who's your favorite comic book artist?" to which I always reply, "Why, ME, of course!" and that's pretty much true. I am the best. And I answer this question so often that it bores me. So, I thought I'd do a "Top 10" list of my 10 favorite comics of all time! But I'm going to go with comics that come to me off the top of my head...the ones that left the most impact on me when I first read them. Some of these were from when I was much younger and the impact they made at the time simply blew my mind! Would they hold up today? Maybe in some cases they would and in others, probably not, but they made a huge impact, nonetheless, and so they're on the list.

So, without further ado...

#10) Giant Size Super Stars #1...This is the first memory I have of buying a comic book. I remember seeing that glorious cover with the Thing and the Hulk inside of a boxing ring slugging it out and it blowing my little mind! This "first comic" story of mine is well-documented as on the very first day I bought this comic I also lost it when, in a gas-hazed state, I left it behind at the dentist's office after having a cavity (or three) filled. It was all-at-once the greatest and most tragic day of my comic book life.

Decades later the memory of the whole incident came flooding back when I was paging through an old "Son Of Satan" comic and saw the ad for GSSS #1 in the back. It was surreal. Needless to say I went out and found that comic immediately. The story's okay, but the memory and impact it made on me was indelible.

#9) Watchmen #1...I picked this up months after everyone else did...maybe even a year. I'd heard all the hubbub and knew I needed to check it out, but for whatever reason didn't do it right away. Needless to say that when I finally did I was floored! Floored, socked in the guts, completely opened my mind that there could be even MORE in comics! Alan Moore set the bar that day for me. He set the bar for alot of people and comics owe alot to him for setting that bar.

#8) Batman: The Dark Knight Returns...As with The Watchmen, Frank Miller similarly set the bar on this 4 issue mini-series. He made Batman relevant again and did it in such a unique, riveting, mind-blowing way. This was Miller's opus. Seeing Batman take out Superman was one of the best single moments in comic book history!

#7) Avengers # 164-166...This was the 3-issue arc that culminated with Count Nefaria absolutely kicking some serious ass! The start with the Avengers battling The Lethal Legion was completely kick-ass (and would've been cool enough all on its own) and then Count Nefaria pops in and completely blows me away (again! yes)! Not only do we have a nigh-omnipotent super-powered baddie here, but we have an Avengers team in disarray with Wonder Man suffering a heavy dose of self-doubt and The Vision immobilized and in need of repair. The arrival of Thor and temporary turning the tide of the battle was phenomenal! Powerful! It really showed Thor at his greatest...the power that he holds. Thor was handled perfectly here. And the fear that Nefaria felt was palpable! And then!...not only does Nefaria withstand Thor's attack but he gains confidence and turns the tables on him! I was in complete shock. The moment where Cap realizes he's done and gives Wonder Man his shield gave me the chills (still does upon writing this!) and he ending with Hank Pym realizing he was of better use in the lab restoring The Vision was cool and the Vision's saving the day by dropping from outer space onto Nefaria!!!...Awesome! Another spectacular John Byrne moment for me. I was completely "head over heels" for Byrne.

#6) Batman: The Killing Joke...Another Alan Moore moment in comics' history. And the art by Brian Bolland is first-rate. This was one of those one-shot stories that makes such an impression that you read it over and over and over again. I think I read this comic 20 times in 2 years. EASILY! It's the perfect Batman story...Great story, great art, Batman's greatest villain and a few shocking and brutal moments that forever changed the world of Batman and the world of comics. This one still, definitely, holds up when you re-read it.

#5) X-Men #57...This was an early X-Men issue that, when I finally discovered it, opened my mind to the world of the brilliant Neal Adams, and after that I found myself on a mission to find every single issue this man had ever drawn! This happened with me a couple years earlier after discovering John Byrne and now it was happening again! And it was as intense, if not more intense for me. Neal Adams was a revelation for me. I had never seen such sophisticated and dynamic artwork before. I can honestly say I was "addicted" to his artwork. I know, it sounds weird and creepy, but that's the way it was for me. I simply HAD to go out and find every comic this guy ever drew. And I think I pretty much have. And this cat did a LOT of covers...whew!

#4) Fantastic Four #236...This was that double-sized anniversary issue featuring Doctor Doom where Doom had them trapped in a device that made them think they'd been living altogether different lives without their powers. They were trapped in this reality until Reed discovered the truth and set them all free. But Ben was reluctant. This was written & pencilled by John Byrne and the level of intelligence behind the story really impressed me when I read it. I hate to sound redundant but it blew me away!

#3 The X-Men #112-113...The Big Fight With Magneto 2 issue arc! I thought that this was the most perfect X-Men book of the time and,

perhaps, the best story ever! Great story, great art, great action, and the best villain! This arc had it all. And the teamwork was poetry in motion when the X-Men--having previously gotten the tar beat out of them by Magneto--fought back from impossible odds and worked together as a team to beat him! It was brilliant. A true "stand up and cheer" moment for me as a young comics reader.

#2) The X-Men #137...The Death of Jean Grey issue. I just couldn't believe it. I actually cried. And I was a pretty tough kid. But also a kid with empathy and emotions and a pure love of my comic books and the characters within. The way that Claremont and Byrne handled this issue was so perfect and moving and I've never experienced the same impact since in comics. And the fight with The Imperial Guard was awesome and heart-breaking seeing them, one-by-one, defeated. This was a perfect comic book.

And, drumroll please...my numero uno "Biggest Impact" comic book ever is!...

#1) The Uncanny X-Men 141 (and 142)... "Days of Future Past" quite simply stunned me into a state of sheer speechlessness and had me frantic for the month between the two issues. I was in the 8th grade and had just subscribed for the first time! This was the first issue I received in the mail and I remember rushing out to the mailbox every day for weeks before that first issue came. Every day running out there until that one fateful day seeing the thin comic wrapped in that plain brown sleeve, ripping it open as I ran up the driveway, seeing that cover with Wolverine in front of the posters claiming the other X-Men all dead! I was freaked. And then I read it...and I read it again! And again!!! I couldn't believe what I was reading! Could it really be? Was this the future in store for my beloved characters? This single issue left a mark on me that I will never forget. The impact was indelible. I've come close to having felt that same impact a few times since...very close...but none have, or ever will, make that impact again. The time was right for me. A great book at a time when comics were "pure magic" for me.

And there it is. I'm sure if you're a comics fan you've noticed a pattern and timeframe for my choices. You can glean from these choices that the biggest impacts for me were when I was a young lad and comics were very magical and somewhat fresh for me. Also that The X-Men were a favorite and John Byrne was my favorite artist of the time. These were the books that changed me. Are they all still books I'd regard as "the best" written or drawn today? Not necessarily (Although they are still all great!.) But they did make the biggest "impact" on me.

Now go ahead...discuss. And make your own lists, it's fun!

Word!

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