= Silver Age of Comic Books =

 The Silver Age of Comic Books was a period of artistic advancement and commercial success in mainstream American comic books , predominantly those in the superhero genre . Following the Golden Age of Comic Books and an interregnum in the early to mid @-@ 1950s , the Silver Age is considered to cover the period from 1956 to circa 1970 , and was succeeded by the Bronze and Modern Ages . A number of important comics writers and artists contributed to the early part of the era , including writers Stan Lee , Gardner Fox , John Broome , and Robert Kanigher , and artists Curt Swan , Jack Kirby , Gil Kane , Steve Ditko , Mike Sekowsky , Gene Colan , Carmine Infantino , John Buscema , and John Romita , Sr. By the end of the Silver Age , a new generation of talent had entered the field , including writers Denny O 'Neil , Gary Friedrich , Roy Thomas , and Archie Goodwin , and artists such as Neal Adams , Herb Trimpe , Jim Steranko , and Barry Windsor @-@ Smith .
 The popularity and circulation of comic books about superheroes declined following World War II , and comic books about horror , crime and romance took larger shares of the market . However , controversy arose over alleged links between comic books and juvenile delinquency , focusing in particular on crime and horror titles . In 1954 , publishers implemented the Comics Code Authority to regulate comic content . In the wake of these changes , publishers began introducing superhero stories again , a change that began with the introduction of a new version of DC Comics ' The Flash in Showcase # 4 (Oct. 1956) . In response to strong demand , DC began publishing more superhero titles including Justice League of America , which prompted Marvel Comics to follow suit beginning with Fantastic Four # 1 . Silver Age comics have become collectible , with a copy of Amazing Fantasy # 15 (Aug. 1962) , the debut of Spider @-@ Man , selling for $ 1 @.@ 1 million in 2011 .

= = Origin of the term = =

 Comics historian and movie producer Michael Uslan traces the origin of the " Silver Age " term to the letters column of Justice League of America # 42 (Feb. 1966) , which went on sale December 9 , 1965 . Letter @-@ writer Scott Taylor of Westport , Connecticut wrote , " If you guys keep bringing back the heroes from the [1930s @-@ 1940s] Golden Age , people 20 years from now will be calling this decade the Silver Sixties ! " According to Uslan , the natural hierarchy of gold @-@ silver @-@ bronze , as in Olympic medals , took hold . " Fans immediately glommed onto this , refining it more directly into a Silver Age version of the Golden Age . Very soon , it was in our vernacular , replacing such expressions as ... ' Second Heroic Age of Comics ' or ' The Modern Age ' of comics . It wasn 't long before dealers were ... specifying it was a Golden Age comic for sale or a Silver Age comic for sale . "

= = History = =

= = = Background = = =

 Spanning World War II , when American comics provided cheap and disposable escapist entertainment that could be read and then discarded by the troops , the Golden Age of comic books covered the late 1930s to the late 1940s . A number of major superheroes were created during this period , including Superman , Batman , Wonder Woman , Captain Marvel , and Captain America . In subsequent years comics were blamed for a rise in juvenile crime statistics , although this rise was shown to be in direct proportion to population growth . When juvenile offenders admitted to reading comics , it was seized on as a common denominator ; one notable critic was Fredric Wertham , author of the book Seduction of the Innocent (1954) , who attempted to shift the blame for juvenile delinquency from the parents of the children to the comic books they read . The result was a decline in the comics industry . To address public concerns , in 1954 the Comics Code Authority was

created to regulate and curb violence in comics , marking the start of a new era .

= = = DC Comics = = =

The Silver Age began with the publication of DC Comics ' Showcase # 4 (Oct. 1956) , which introduced the modern version of the Flash . At the time , only three superheroes ? Superman , Batman , and Wonder Woman ? were still published under their own titles . According to DC comics writer Will Jacobs , Superman was available in " great quantity , but little quality . " Batman was doing better , but his comics were " lackluster " in comparison to his earlier " atmospheric adventures " of the 1940s , and Wonder Woman , having lost her original writer and artist , was no longer " idiosyncratic " or " interesting . " Jacobs describes the arrival of Showcase # 4 on the newsstands as " begging to be bought , " the cover featured an undulating film strip depicting the Flash running so fast that he had escaped from the frame . Editor Julius Schwartz , writer Gardner Fox , and artist Carmine Infantino were some of the people behind the Flash 's revitalization . Robert Kanigher wrote the first stories of the revived Flash , and John Broome was the writer of many of the earliest stories .

With the success of Showcase # 4 , several other 1940s superheroes were reworked during Schwartz ' tenure , including Green Lantern , the Atom , and Hawkman , as well as the Justice League of America . The DC artists responsible included Murphy Anderson , Gil Kane and Joe Kubert . Only the characters ' names remained the same ; their costumes , locales , and identities were altered , and imaginative scientific explanations for their superpowers generally took the place of magic as a modus operandi in their stories . Schwartz , a lifelong science fiction fan , was the inspiration for the re @-@ imagined Green Lantern ? the Golden Age character , railroad engineer Alan Scott , possessed a ring powered by a magical lantern , but his Silver Age replacement , test pilot Hal Jordan , had a ring powered by an alien battery and created by an intergalactic police force .

In the mid @-@ 1960s , DC established that characters appearing in comics published prior to the Silver Age lived on a parallel Earth the company dubbed Earth @-@ Two . Characters introduced in the Silver Age and onward lived on Earth @-@ One . It was established that the two realities were separated by a vibrational field that could be crossed , should a storyline involve superheroes from different worlds teaming up .

Although the Flash is generally regarded as the first superhero of the Silver Age , the introduction of the Martian Manhunter in Detective Comics # 225 predates Showcase # 4 by almost a year , and at least one historian considers this character the first Silver Age superhero . However , comics historian Craig Shutt , author of the Comics Buyer 's Guide column " Ask Mister Silver Age " , disagrees , noting that the Martian Manhunter debuted as a detective who used his alien abilities to solve crimes , in the " quirky detective " vein of contemporaneous DC characters who were " TV detectives , Indian detectives , supernatural detectives , [and] animal detectives . " Schutt feels the Martian Manhunter only became a superhero in Detective Comics # 273 (Nov. 1959) when he received a secret identity and other superhero accoutrements , saying , " Had Flash not come along , I doubt that the Martian Manhunter would 've led the charge from his backup position in Detective to a new super @-@ hero age . " Unsuccessful attempts to revive the superhero archetype 's popularity include Captain Comet , who debuted in Strange Adventures # 9 (June 1951) ; St. John Publishing Company 's 1953 revival of Rocket Man under the title Zip @-@ Jet ; Fighting American , created in 1954 by the Captain America team of Joe Simon and Jack Kirby ; Sterling Comics ' Captain Flash and its back @-@ up feature Tomboy that same year ; Ajax / Farrell Publishing 's 1954 @-@ 55 revival of the Phantom Lady ; Strong Man , published by Magazine Enterprises in 1955 ; Charlton Comics ' Nature Boy , introduced in March 1956 , and its revival of the Blue Beetle the previous year ; and Atlas Comics ' short @-@ lived revivals of Captain America , the Human Torch , and the Sub @-@ Mariner , beginning in Young Men Comics # 24 (Dec. 1953) .

Cartoon animal super @-@ heroes were longer @-@ lived . Supermouse and Mighty Mouse were published continuously in their own titles from the end of the Golden Age through the beginning of the Silver Age . Atomic Mouse was given his own title in 1953 , lasting ten years , and Atomic Rabbit

, later named Atomic Bunny , was published from 1955 to 1959 . In England , the Marvelman series was published during the interregnum between the Golden and Silver Ages , substituting for the British reprints of the Captain Marvel stories after Fawcett stopped publishing the character 's adventures .

Marvel Comics

 DC Comics sparked the superhero revival with its publications from 1955 to 1960 . Marvel Comics then capitalized on the revived interest in superhero storytelling with sophisticated stories and characterization . In contrast to previous eras , Silver Age characters were " flawed and self @-@ doubting " .
 DC added to its momentum with its 1960 introduction of Justice League of America , a team consisting of the company 's most popular superhero characters . Martin Goodman , a publishing trend @-@ follower with his 1950s Atlas Comics line , note 1 by this time called Marvel Comics , " mentioned that he had noticed one of the titles published by National Comics seemed to be selling better than most . It was a book called The [sic] Justice League of America and it was composed of a team of superheroes , " Marvel editor Stan Lee recalled in 1974 . Goodman directed Lee to likewise produce a superhero team book , resulting in The Fantastic Four # 1 (Nov. 1961) .
 Under the guidance of writer @-@ editor Stan Lee and artists / co @-@ plotters such as Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko , Marvel began its own rise to prominence . With an innovation that changed the comic @-@ book industry , The Fantastic Four # 1 initiated a naturalistic style of superheroes with human failings , fears , and inner demons , who squabbled and worried about the likes of rent @-@ money . In contrast to the straitlaced archetypes of superheroes at the time , this ushered in a revolution . With dynamic artwork by Kirby , Steve Ditko , Don Heck , and others complementing Lee 's colorful , catchy prose , the new style became popular among college students who could identify with the angst and the irreverent nature of the characters such as Spider @-@ Man , the X @-@ Men and the Hulk during a time period of social upheaval and the rise of a youth counterculture . Comic book readers of the Silver Age were more scientifically @-@ inclined than previous generations . Thus , comic books of the Silver Age explained superhero phenomenons and origins through science , as opposed to the Golden Age , which commonly relied on magic or mysticism .
 Comics historian Peter Sanderson compares the 1960s DC to a large Hollywood studio , and argues that after having reinvented the superhero archetype , DC by the latter part of the decade was suffering from a creative drought . The audience for comics was no longer just children , and Sanderson sees the 1960s Marvel as the comic equivalent of the French New Wave , developing new methods of storytelling that drew in and retained readers who were in their teens and older and thus influencing the comics writers and artists of the future .

Other publishers

 One of the top American comics publishers in 1956 , Harvey Comics , discontinued its horror comics when the Comics Code was implemented and sought a new target audience . Harvey 's focus shifted to children from 6 to 12 years of age , especially girls , with characters such as Richie Rich , Casper the Friendly Ghost , and Little Dot . Many of the company 's comics featured young girls who " defied stereotypes and sent a message of acceptance of those who are different . " Although its characters have inspired a number of nostalgic movies and ranges of merchandise , Harvey comics of the period are not as sought after in the collectors ' market as DC and Marvel titles .
 The publishers Gilberton , Dell Comics , and Gold Key Comics used their reputations as publishers of wholesome comic books to avoid becoming signatories to the Comics Code and found various ways to continue publishing horror @-@ themed comics in addition to other types . Gilberton 's extensive Classics Illustrated line adapted literary classics , with the likes of Frankenstein alongside Don Quixote and Oliver Twist ; Classics Illustrated Junior reprinted comic book versions of children 's classics such as The Wizard of Oz , Rapunzel , and Pinocchio . During the late 1950s and the

1960s , Dell , which had published comics in 1936 , offered licensed TV series comic books from Twilight Zone to Top Cat , as well as numerous Walt Disney titles . Its successor , Gold Key ? founded in 1962 Western Publishing started its own label rather than packaging content for business partner Dell ? continued with such licensed TV series and movie adaptations , as well as comics starring such Warner Bros. Cartoons characters as Bugs Bunny and such comic strip properties as Beetle Bailey .

With the popularity of the Batman television show in 1966 , publishers that had specialized in other forms began adding campy superhero titles to their lines . As well , new publishers sprang up , often using creative talent from the Golden Age . Harvey Comics ' Harvey Thriller imprint released Double @-@ Dare Adventures , starring new characters such as Bee @-@ man and Magic Master . Dell published superhero versions of Frankenstein , Dracula and the Werewolf . Gold Key did licensed versions of live @-@ action and animated superhero television shows such as Captain Nice , Frankenstein Jr. and The Impossibles , and continued the adventures of Walt Disney Pictures ' Goofy character in Supergoof . American Comics Group gave its established character Herbie a secret superhero identity as the Fat Fury , and introduced the characters of Nemesis and Magic @-@ Man . Even the iconic Archie Comics teens acquired superpowers and superhero identities in comedic titles such as Archie as Capt. Pureheart and Jughead as Captain Hero . Archie Comics also launched its Archie Adventure line (subsequently titled Mighty Comics) , which included the Fly , the Jaguar , and a revamp of the Golden Age hero the Shield . In addition to their individual titles , they teamed in their group series The Mighty Crusaders , joined by the Comet and Flygirl join with three characters with their own titles . Their stories blended typical superhero fare with the 1960s ' camp .

Among straightforward Silver Age superheroes from publishers other than Marvel or DC , Charlton Comics offered a short @-@ lived superhero line with characters that included Captain Atom , Judomaster , the Question , and Thunderbolt ; Tower Comics had Dynamo , Mercury Man , NoMan and other members of the superhero espionage group T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents ; and even Gold Key had Doctor Solar , Man of the Atom .

= = = Underground comix = = =

According to John Strausbaugh of The New York Times , " traditional " comic book historians feel that although the Golden Age deserves study , the only noteworthy aspect of the Silver Age was the advent of underground comics . One commentator has suggested that , " Perhaps one of the reasons underground comics have come to be considered legitimate art is due to the fact that the work of these artists more truly embodies what much of the public believes is true of newspaper strips ? that they are written and drawn (i.e. , authentically signed by) a single person . " While a large number of mainstream @-@ comics professionals both wrote and drew their own material during the Silver Age , as many had since the start of American comic books , their work is distinct from what another historian describes as the " raw id on paper " of Robert Crumb and Gilbert Shelton . Most often published in black @-@ and @-@ white with glossy color cover and distributed through counterculture bookstores and head shops , underground comics targeted adults and reflected the counterculture movement of the time ,

= = = End and aftermath = = =

The Silver Age of comic books was followed by the Bronze Age . The demarcation is not clearly defined , but there are a number of possibilities .
Historian Will Jacobs suggests the Silver Age ended in April 1970 when the man who had started it , Julius Schwartz , handed over Green Lantern ? starring one of the first revived heroes of the era ? to the new @-@ guard team of Denny O 'Neil and Neal Adams in response to reduced sales . John Strausbaugh also connects the end of the Silver Age to Green Lantern . He observes that in 1960 , the character embodied the can @-@ do optimism of the era . However , by 1972 Green Lantern had become world weary ; " Those days are gone ? gone forever ? the days I was confident , certain

... I was so young ... so sure I couldn 't make a mistake ! Young and cocky , that was Green Lantern . Well , I 've changed . I 'm older now ... maybe wiser , too ... and a lot less happy . " Strausbaugh writes that the Silver Age " went out with that whimper . "

Comics scholar Arnold T. Blumberg places the end of the Silver Age in June 1973 , when Gwen Stacy , girlfriend of Peter Parker (Spider @-@ Man) was killed in a story arc later dubbed " The Night Gwen Stacy Died " , saying the era of " innocence " was ended by " the ' snap ' heard round the comic book world ? the startling , sickening snap of bone that heralded the death of Gwen Stacy . " Silver Age historian Craig Shutt disputes this , saying , " Gwen Stacy 's death shocked Spider @-@ Man readers . Such a tragedy makes a strong symbolic ending . This theory gained adherents when Kurt Busiek and Alex Ross ' Marvels miniseries in 1994 ended with Gwen 's death , but I 'm not buying it . It 's too late . Too many new directions ? especially [the sword @-@ and @-@ sorcery trend begun by the character] Conan and monsters [in the wake of the Comics Code allowing vampires , werewolves and the like] ? were on firm ground by this time . " He also dismisses the end of the 12 @-@ cent comic book , which went to 15 cents as the industry standard in early 1969 , noting that the 1962 hike from 10 cents to 12 cents had no bearing in this regard . Shutt 's line comes with Fantastic Four # 102 (Sept . 1970) , Jack Kirby 's last regular @-@ run issue before the artist left to join DC Comics ; this combines with DC 's Superman # 229 (Aug. 1970) , editor Mort Weisinger 's last before retiring .

According to historian Peter Sanderson , the " neo @-@ silver movement " that began in 1986 with Superman : Whatever Happened to the Man of Tomorrow ? by Alan Moore and Curt Swan , was a backlash against the Bronze Age with a return to Silver Age principles . In Sanderson 's opinion , each comics generation rebels against the previous , and the movement was a response to Crisis on Infinite Earths , which itself was an attack on the Silver Age . Neo @-@ silver comics creators made comics that recognized and assimilated the more sophisticated aspects of the Silver Age .

= = Legacy = =

The Silver Age marked a decline in the prominence of American comics in genres such as horror , romance , teen and furry animal humor , or westerns , which were more popular than superhero adventures in the late 1940s through the mid @-@ 1950s , and fans of these genres see the Silver Age as a decline from that earlier era .

An important feature of the period was the development of the character makeup of superheroes . Young children and girls were targeted during the Silver Age by certain publishers ; in particular , Harvey Comics attracted this group with titles such as Little Dot . Adult @-@ oriented underground comics also began during the Silver Age . Some critics and historians argue that one characteristic of the Silver Age was that science fiction and aliens replaced magic and gods . Others argue that magic was an important element of both Golden Age and Silver Age characters . Many Golden Age writers and artists were science @-@ fiction fans or professional science @-@ fiction writers who incorporated SF elements into their comic @-@ book stories . Science was a common explanation for the origin of heroes in the Silver Age .

The Silver Age coincided with the rise of pop art , an artistic movement that used popular cultural artifacts , such as advertising and packaging , as source material for fine , or gallery @-@ exhibited , art . Roy Lichtenstein , one of the best @-@ known pop art painters , specifically chose individual panels from comic books and repainted the images , modifying them to some extent in the process but including in the painting word and thought balloons and captions as well as enlarged @-@ to @-@ scale color dots imitating the coloring process then used in newsprint comic books . An exhibition of comic strip art was held at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs of the Palais de Louvre in 1967 , and books were soon published that contained serious discussions of the art of comics and the nature of the medium .

In January 1966 , a live @-@ action Batman television show debuted to high ratings . Like pop art , the show took comic @-@ book tropes and re @-@ envisioned them in the context of a different medium . Voiceover narration in each episode articulated the words of comic @-@ book captions while fight scenes had sound effects like " Biff " , " Bam " and " Pow " appear as visual effects on the

screen , spelled out in large cartoon letters . Circulation for comic books in general and Batman merchandise in particular soared . Other masked or superpowered adventurers appeared on the television screen , so that " American TV in the winter of 1967 appeared to consist of little else but live @-@ action and animated cartoon comic @-@ book heroes , all in living colour . " Existing comic @-@ book publishers began creating superhero titles , as did new publishers . By the end of the 1960s , however , the fad had faded ; in 1969 , the best @-@ selling comic book in the United States was not a superhero series , but the teen @-@ humor book Archie .

= = Artists = =

 Arlen Schumer , author of The Silver Age of Comic Book Art , singles out Carmine Infantino 's Flash as the embodiment of the design of the era : " as sleek and streamlined as the fins Detroit was sporting on all its models . " Other notable artists of the era include Curt Swan , Gene Colan , Steve Ditko , Gil Kane , Jack Kirby and Joe Kubert .
 Two artists that changed the comics industry dramatically in the late 1960s were Neal Adams , considered one of his country 's greatest draftsmen , and Jim Steranko . Both artists expressed a cinematic approach at times that occasionally altered the more conventional panel @-@ based format that has been commonplace for decades . Adams ' breakthrough was based on layout and rendering . Best known for returning Batman to his somber roots after the campy success of the Batman television show , his naturalistic depictions of anatomy , faces , and gestures changed comics ' style in a way that Strausbaugh sees reflected in modern graphic novels .
 One of the few writer @-@ artists at the time , Steranko made use of a cinematic style of storytelling . Strausbaugh credits him as one of Marvel 's strongest creative forces during the late 1960s , his art owing a large debt to Salvador Dalí . Steranko started by inking and penciling the details of Kirby 's artwork on Nick Fury , Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D. beginning in Strange Tales # 151 , but by Strange Tales # 155 Stan Lee had put him in charge of both writing and drawing Fury 's adventures . He exaggerated the James Bond @-@ style spy stories , introducing the vortex beam (which lifts objects) , the aphonic bomb (which explodes silently) , a miniature electronic absorber (which protected Fury from electricity) , and the Q @-@ ray machine (a molecular disintegrator) ? all in his first 11 @-@ page story .

= = Collectibility = =

 A near @-@ mint copy of Amazing Fantasy # 15 , the first appearance of Spider @-@ Man , sold for $ 1 @.@ 1 million to an unnamed collector on March 7 , 2011 .