

= Alex Raymond =

Alexander Gillespie " Alex " Raymond (October 2 , 1909 ? September 6 , 1956) was an American cartoonist , best known for creating Flash Gordon for King Features in 1934 . The strip was subsequently adapted into many other media , from a series of movie serials (1936 ? 1940) to a 1970s television series and a 1980 film .

Raymond 's father encouraged his love of drawing from an early age , leading him to become an assistant illustrator in the early 1930s on strips such as Tillie the Toiler and Tim Tyler 's Luck . Towards the end of 1933 , Raymond created the epic Flash Gordon science @-@ fiction comic strip to compete with the popular Buck Rogers comic strip and , before long , Flash was the more popular strip of the two . Raymond also worked on the jungle adventure saga Jungle Jim and spy adventure Secret Agent X @-@ 9 concurrently with Flash , though his increasing workload caused him to leave Secret Agent X @-@ 9 to another artist by 1935 . He left the strips in 1944 to join the Marines , saw combat in the Pacific Ocean theater in 1945 and was demobilized in 1946 . Upon his return from serving during World War II , Raymond created and illustrated the much @-@ heralded Rip Kirby , a private detective comic strip . In 1956 , Raymond was killed in a car crash at the age of 46 ; he was survived by his wife and five children .

He became known as " the artist 's artist " and his much @-@ imitated style can be seen on the many strips he illustrated . Raymond worked from live models furnished by Manhattan 's Walter Thornton Agency , as indicated in " Modern Jules Verne , " a profile of Raymond published in the Dell Four @-@ Color Flash Gordon # 10 (1942) , showing how Thornton model Patricia Quinn posed as a character in the strip .

Numerous artists have cited Raymond as an inspiration for their work , including comic artists Jack Kirby , Bob Kane , Russ Manning , and Al Williamson . George Lucas cited Raymond as a major influence for Star Wars . He was inducted into the Will Eisner Comic Book Hall of Fame in 1996 . Maurice Horn stated that Raymond unquestionably possessed " the most versatile talent " of all the comic strip creators . He has also described his style as " precise , clear , and incisive . " Carl Barks described Raymond as a man " who could combine craftsmanship with emotions and all the gimmicks that went into a good adventure strip . " Raymond 's influence on other cartoonists was considerable during his lifetime and did not diminish after his death .

= = Biography = =

= = = Early life and career = = =

Raymond was born in New Rochelle , New York , the son of Beatrice Wallazz (née Crossley) and Alexander Gillespie Raymond . Alex was Roman Catholic . His father was a civil engineer and road builder who encouraged his son 's love of drawing from an early age , even " covering one wall of his office in the Woolworth Building " with his young son 's work . After the death of his father when he was 12 , he felt that perhaps there was not as viable a future in art as he had hoped and attended Iona Prep on an athletic scholarship .

Raymond 's first job was as " an order clerk in Wall Street " . In the wake of the 1929 economic crisis , he " enrolled in the Grand Central School of Art in New York City " and began working as a solicitor for a mortgage broker . Approaching former neighbor Russ Westover , Raymond soon quit his job and by 1930 was assisting on Westover 's Tillie the Toiler , through which Raymond was " introduced to [the] King Features Syndicate " , where he became a staff artist and for which he would produce his greatest work .

Raymond was influenced by a variety of strip cartoonists and magazine illustrators , including Matt Clark , Franklin Booth and John La Gatta . From late 1931 to 1933 , Raymond assisted Lyman Young on Tim Tyler 's Luck , eventually becoming the ghost artist in " 1932 and 1933 ... [on] both the daily strip and the Sunday page " , turning it " into one of the most eye @-@ catching strips of the time " . Concurrently , Raymond assisted Chic Young on Blondie .

In 1933 , King Features assigned him to do the art for an espionage action @-@ adventure strip , Secret Agent X @-@ 9 , scripted by novelist Dashiell Hammett , and Raymond 's illustrative approach to that strip made him King Features ' leading talent .

= = = Flash Gordon , Jungle Jim and Secret Agent X @-@ 9 = = =

Towards the end of 1933 , King Features asked him to create a Sunday page that could compete with Buck Rogers in the 25th Century , a popular science @-@ fiction adventure strip that had debuted in 1929 and already spawned the rival Brick Bradford in 1933 . According to King Features , syndicate president Joe Connolly " gave Raymond an idea ... based on fantastic adventures similar to those of Jules Verne " .

Alongside ghostwriter Don Moore , a pulp @-@ fiction veteran , Raymond created the visually sumptuous science @-@ fiction epic comic strip Flash Gordon . The duo also created the " complementary strip , Jungle Jim , an adventurous saga set in South @-@ East Asia " , a topper which ran above Flash in some papers Raymond was concurrently illustrating Secret Agent X @-@ 9 , which premiered January 22 , 1934 , two weeks after the two other strips . It was Flash Gordon that would outlast the others , quickly " develop [ing] an audience far surpassing " that of Buck Rogers . Flash Gordon , wrote Stephen Becker , " was wittier and moved faster , " so " Buck 's position as America 's favorite sci @-@ fi hero " , wrote historian Bill Crouch , Jr . , " went down in flames to the artistic lash and spectacle of Alex Raymond 's virtuoso artwork . " Alex Raymond has stated , " I decided honestly that comic art is an art form in itself . It reflects the life and times more accurately and actually is more artistic than magazine illustration ? since it is entirely creative . An illustrator works with camera and models ; a comic artist begins with a white sheet of paper and dreams up his own business ? he is playwright , director , editor and artist at once . " A. E. Mendez has also stated that " Raymond ? s achievements are chopped into bite @-@ sized pieces by the comic art cognoscenti . Lost in the worthwhile effort to distinguish comics as an art form , the romance , sweep and beauty of Raymond 's draftsmanship , his incomparable line work , is dismissed . To many , it 's just pretty pictures . Somehow or another , it 's OK for people like Caniff and Eisner to borrow from film . That ? s real storytelling . But for Raymond to study illustrators , well , that 's just not comics . "

Debuting on January 7 , 1934 , Raymond 's first Flash strip introduced the " world @-@ famous polo player " , improbably roped into a space adventure alongside love @-@ interest Dale Arden and scientist Dr. Hans Zarkov . Transported by rocket to the planet Mongo , " which was about to collide with Earth " , the trio " immediately became embroiled in the affairs of Mongo 's inhabitants ? particularly those of its insidious warlord , Ming " , who would become Flash Gordon 's nemesis throughout the franchise 's many incarnations .

Early in 1935 , Hammett decided to depart as writer of Secret Agent X @-@ 9 in order to pursue a career in Hollywood . While it has been presumed that Raymond took on the writing duties of the strip until a replacement could be found , biographer Tom Roberts instead believes that the strip was written by committee during editorial conference , a view R. C. Harvey believes is supported by the strips themselves . Saint author Leslie Charteris was hired to take over the writing of the strip in September 1935 , but the pair would only collaborate on one storyline . By the end of 1935 , " the [work] load was too much for Raymond , " who left Secret Agent X @-@ 9 to artist Charles Flanders , in order to devote more time to his meticulous Sunday pages .

Raymond 's work on X @-@ 9 is said to particularly reach for " the feel of the best pulp interior art of the time , " a style that would evolve with his own so @-@ called " great flourishes " and " later blossom to full effect in Flash Gordon and Jungle Jim " . " Under his pen , " writes Maurice Horn , his Sunday pages " became world famous (especially Flash Gordon) . " However , historian and critic R.C. Harvey argues that " despite Raymond 's great talent as an illustrator , his deployment of the comic @-@ strip medium (on X @-@ 9) was not very impressive . " Harvey feels that Raymond 's work suffers in comparison to Milton Caniff 's contemporaneous work , with Raymond 's failings as a visual storyteller less noticeable on a weekly Sunday strip , where the space afforded played to his skills as an illustrator .

Raymond 's sensual artwork ? for which the artist particularly " studied popular illustrators , " including pulp artist Matt Clark , whose work Raymond 's male figures particularly evoke ? outshone its borders and " attracted far more loyal readers than ... [the] rather contrived and unconvincing adventure stories " his work depicted . Raymond swiftly became " among the most highly @-@ regarded ? and most imitated ? in all of comics " for his work on the weekly strip , with Harvey declaring his work on the strip " a technical virtuosity matched on the comics pages only by Harold Foster in Prince Valiant . " Raymond evolved the layout of the strip from a four @-@ tier strip in 1934 to a two @-@ tier strip in 1936 , reducing the number of panels but doubling their size . Combining this with a removal of dialogue from speech balloons to captions at the bottom of the panel afforded Raymond the space to create detailed and atmospheric backgrounds . Against these spacious backgrounds , the placement of characters in heroic pose " lent the entire enterprise a mythic air . "

Flash Gordon gained a daily strip in 1940 , illustrated by Austin Briggs . Raymond left the Sunday strip in 1944 to join the Marines , whereupon the daily strip was cancelled and Briggs assumed Sunday duties , continuing until 1948 . Briggs was succeeded on the Sundays by Emanuel " Mac " Raboy , while the daily strip was revised in 1951 by Dan Barry . Barry also took over Sunday duties after Raboy 's death in 1967 .

Run above Flash Gordon , Raymond 's Jungle Jim is described by Armando Mendez as " a thing of beauty ... always more than just a topper or a shallow response to Hal Foster 's exquisite Tarzan " . The companion strip evolved over time , morphing from an initial " two tiers and up to six panels [layout] , with speech balloons " into " a single row , of four very tall panels with declamatory text and static , vertical composition " . Raymond 's skill and artistic dexterity , however , kept the storytelling constant and the artwork vibrant . Jungle Jim was " set in contemporary times and the exotic Malay peninsula of islands , [but] was intended to hark back to the original tales of Kipling , Haggard and Burroughs " .

= = = Military career = = =

Raymond took the war in Europe seriously enough to incorporate it into his strips , with Flash returning to Earth in the Spring of 1941 . Jungle Jim found himself involved in the conflict too , fighting in the U.S. Army . Raymond was becoming " restive about doing his duty " , a restlessness increased by the knowledge that four of his five brothers were already enlisted . In February 1944 , Raymond left King Features and his work on the Sunday Flash Gordon / Jungle Jim pages to join the US Marines , commissioned as a captain and serving in the public @-@ relations arm . Raymond is quoted as stating " I just had to get into this fight ... I 've always been the kind of guy who gets a lump in his throat when a band plays the ' Star Spangled Banner ' " .

Shortly thereafter , he " was sent to Quantico for training in the curriculum of the Aviation Ground Officer 's School , " and was soon producing " posters and patriotic images from a government office in Philadelphia . " His most famous image from this time is " Marines at Prayer , " which " was destined to become a well @-@ known and well @-@ circulated image of Marines on a battlefield pausing for worship . " Raymond also " designed the official 1944 Marine Corps Christmas card . " Desiring " to get closer to the action , " he then trained at the Marine Corps Air Station in Santa Barbara before serving in the Pacific Ocean theater " on the 1945 cruise of the escort carrier USS Gilbert Islands . " Treated by his fellow marines (who had been raised on Flash Gordon) as a celebrity , he was nonetheless seen as " a down @-@ to @-@ earth fellow , " and well liked . He saw " a period of intense combat in June 1945 , " and was " made an honorary member of VMTB @-@ 143 in August 1945 . " Raymond had , in May 1945 , designed a squadron patch for the men of VMTB @-@ 143 , after which the " squadron adopted the new name ' The Rocket Raiders ' " . "

He was demobilized as a Major in 1946 . Upon his return , Raymond was unable to return to Flash Gordon . King Features were not prepared to usurp Austin Briggs from the Sunday strip and pointed out that Raymond had left voluntarily to enlist . Relatives of Raymond recall the artist as resenting this decision , which left him feeling " cast off with so little regard . " However , King Features offered Raymond the opportunity to create a new strip .

== Rip Kirby ==

Raymond's " police daily strip , " named after its central character - J. Remington " Rip " Kirby - debuted on March 4 , 1946 , conceived (and initially scripted) by King Features editor Ward Greene . The plotting of the strips is harder to attribute , the scant evidence available supporting the notion that Raymond was more than simply an illustrator . However , as was relatively commonplace on such strips , published credit went to Raymond , whose name was the major selling feature ; the artist even managed to gain a part @-@ ownership deal with King and a better split of the profits than was usual . Rip Kirby was Raymond's reintroduction to newspaper strips after the war , and he was quick to forge a new " up @-@ to @-@ date " style for the strip , while keeping ties to the audience he had built up with Flash Gordon , Jungle Jim , and Secret Agent X @-@ 9 .

Running alongside the post @-@ World War II reintegration of America's military into civilian life , Rip (like Raymond) was " an ex @-@ Marine , " who " set himself up as a private detective " a vocation tailor @-@ made to provide daily thrills .

Described by Stephen Becker as " modern and almost too intellectual " , the strip eschewed many of the pulp fictional detective tropes (e.g. alcoholism , two @-@ fisted assistants , and an assortment of interchangeable femmes fatale) . Instead , " [Rip] did more cogitating than fisticuffing , and smoked a leisurely pipe while he did it ; " " had a frail , balding assistant ... instead of a two @-@ fisted sidekick ; " " had a steady girlfriend ... [and] [i] f that wasn't enough , he even wore glasses ! Rip " lived and worked in a recognizable , glamorous , modern New York City on cases involving very human frailties and vice " , and " grew older as the strip progressed " , a continuity advancement little seen in the strips of the time (although pioneered in " Gasoline Alley " and Mary Worth) . Raymond noted the change in subject matter , commenting that " I wanted to do something different and more down to earth . "

Stylistically , " Raymond turned to the Cooper Studio @-@ Al Parker advertising style for inspiration , spurring a new generation of comic artists to follow a fresh direction " , that of " glorify [ing] contemporary post @-@ War American life " . Although the strip was published entirely in black and white , Raymond worked hard to add tone through artistic technique . " Raymond nevertheless [colored] through his use of varying linework ... [creating] color through contrast " . His new style was much imitated throughout the industry and became known as ' the Raymond style ' .

Circulation of the strip rose steadily , and it was the artist who was apportioned most of the praise - including being awarded the fourth Reuben Award in 1949 . He also served as the National Cartoonists Society's president from 1950 until 1952 , putting into place the committee structure responsible for overseeing the organization , and threw himself into championing the medium as an art form . Raymond profited in recognizability as well as financially , and continued on the strip until his untimely death in September 1956 . His collaborator from 1952 was writer Fred Dickenson (who wrote the strip for a further 34 years) , and he was succeeded artistically by magazine and Prize Publications ' Young Romance illustrator John Prentice . Commentators have said that Prentice echoed the Rip Kirby artistic style , but lacked " Raymond's excellent design sense , " although he continued to draw the strip until his retirement in 1999 , the strip itself concluding shortly after .

== Legacy ==

In 1967 , Woody Gelman , under his Nostalgia Press imprint revived some of his earlier work . Regarded by Time magazine in 1974 ? alongside Prince Valiant author @-@ illustrator Hal Foster ? as " some sort of genius " , and described in Jerry Bails and Hames Ware's Who's Who in American Comic Books as " [p] ossibly the most influential artist on early comic books " , Raymond's legacy as an artistic inspiration is immense . Harvey argues that it is because of Raymond and Foster that the illustrative style became the dominant one used for adventure strips . " His work and Foster's created the visual standard by which all such comic strips would henceforth be measured . " Biographer Tom Roberts also believes Raymond's work on Rip Kirby " inspired all the soap opera style strips of the fifties and sixties " . Roberts argues that strips such as Apartment 3 @-@ G " can

trace their origins to the success of Raymond 's strip " . Although his work was rarely seen outside of the newspaper " funny pages " , as Raymond preferred to focus his energies on strip work , he also produced a number of " illustrations for Blue Book , Look , Collier 's and Cosmopolitan " . as well as Esquire .

The " heightened realism " of Raymond 's photorealistic style has been " chastised for making his pictures too realistic , too gorgeous for its own sake " , although many commentators believe that this very method " plunges the reader into the story " . Raymond 's work has a " timeless appeal , " many aspects of which ? including the use of feathering (a shading technique in which a soft series of parallel lines helps to suggest the contour of an object) ? have inspired generations of cartoonists , his work becoming " the raw material for the swipe files of future generations " . His work on Rip Kirby is especially noted for its use of " sophisticated black spotting " , a technique Raymond used from c.1949 " for pacing " reasons . Fellow @-@ cartoonist Stan Drake recalled that Raymond called his black areas " pools of quiet " , serving as they did " as a pause for the viewer , something to slow the eye across the strip 's panels " .

= = = Specific influences = = =

Alex Raymond 's " influence on other cartoonists was considerable during his lifetime and did not diminish after his death " . George Lucas has cited Raymond 's Flash Gordon as a major influence on his Star Wars films (which , cyclically , inspired the 1980 Flash Gordon film) , while Raymond 's long shadow has fallen across the comics industry ever since his work saw print . Comics artists who have cited Raymond as a particularly significant influence on their work include Murphy Anderson , Jim Aparo , Frank Brunner , John Buscema , Gene Colan , Dick Dillin , José Luis García @-@ López , Frank Giacoia , Bob Haney , Jack Katz , Everett Raymond Kinstler , Joe Kubert , Russ Manning , Mort Meskin , Sheldon Moldoff , Luis Garcia Mozos , Joe Orlando , Mac Raboy , John Romita Jr . , Kurt Schaffenberger , Joe Sinnott , Dick Sprang and Alex Toth , among many others .

In particular , Raymond has been named as a key influence by many of the most influential and important comic book artists of all time . EC Comics @-@ staple Al Williamson cites Raymond as a major influence , and is quoted as saying that Raymond was " the reason I became an artist " . Indeed , Williamson ultimately assisted on the Flash Gordon strips in the mid @-@ 1950s , and Rip Kirby in the mid @-@ 1960s (all post @-@ Raymond) . Key Golden Age artists credit Raymond with influencing their work . The artistic creators of Batman (Bob Kane) and Superman (Joe Shuster) credit him (alongside Milton Caniff , Billy DeBeck and Roy Crane) as having had a strong influence on their artistic development . Decades later , the herald of the Silver Age (and co @-@ creator of most of Marvel Comics 's pantheon of heroes) , Jack " King " Kirby also credits Raymond , alongside fellow strip artist Hal Foster , as a particular influence and inspiration .

Cerebus creator Dave Sim has published a comic book since 2008 called glamourpuss which is an examination of Alex Raymond 's career (and the techniques of other photorealists like Stan Drake and Al Williamson) structured around a hypothetical storyline set during the last day of Raymond 's life .

= = = Death = = =

On September 6 , 1956 , Raymond was killed in an automobile accident in Westport , Connecticut . Driving fellow cartoonist Stan Drake 's 1956 Corvette at twice the 25 mph (40 km / h) speed limit , he hit a tree and was killed . Roberts describes in his biography the circumstances as a result of the weather . Driving in the convertible with its top down , Raymond decided to reach his destination quicker rather than stop to put the top back up when rain started to fall . Drake was thrown clear of the crash , but Raymond , with his seat belt buckled , died instantly . Speculation surrounds the nature of his death , with some , Drake included , believing Raymond was suicidal . Raymond had been involved in four automobile accidents in the month prior to his death , which led Drake to say Raymond " had been trying to kill himself " . Author Arlen Schumer ascribes the motive for suicide as being related to Raymond 's personal life . Schumer alleges that Raymond had been having

affairs , and that his wife was refusing to grant him a divorce . R. C. Harvey is dismissive of this motivation : " Committing suicide strikes me as an odd way for a man of Raymond 's sophistication to react to his disappointment in romance " . Harvey also notes that no mention of any alleged affairs is made in Tom Robert 's biography , " probably out of consideration to Raymond 's surviving family " . Drake has also been quoted as speculating that Raymond " hit the accelerator by mistake " instead of the brake . Raymond is buried in St. John 's Roman Catholic Cemetery in Darien , Connecticut .

= = = Personal life = = =

Raymond married Helen Frances Williams on December 31 , 1930 , with whom he had five children . The names of his three daughters ? Judith , Lynne and Helen ? were immortalized in that of Rip Kirby 's girlfriend , Judith Lynne " Honey " Dorian . The Raymonds also had two sons : Alan W. and Duncan . He was the great @-@ uncle of actors Matt Dillon and Kevin Dillon . His younger brother , Jim Raymond , was also a cartoonist , and also an assistant to Chic Young on Blondie .

= = = Collected editions = = =

Raymond 's work has been collected a number of times . Most recently :

Flash Gordon (hardcover , Checker Book Publishing Group) :

Volume 1 (collects Raymond 's earliest Sunday Strips starting from the first , printed on January 7 , 1934 ; 98 pages , October 2003 , ISBN 0 @-@ 9741664 @-@ 3 @-@ X)

Volume 2 (collects strips from 1935 and 1936 ; 100 pages , December 2004 , ISBN 0 @-@ 9741664 @-@ 6 @-@ 4)

Volume 3 (collects the pages printed between October 25 , 1936 and August 1 , 1937 ; 96 pages , May 2005 , ISBN 1 @-@ 933160 @-@ 25 @-@ X)

Volume 4 (collects strips printed between 1938 and 1940 ; November 2005 , ISBN 1 @-@ 933160 @-@ 26 @-@ 8)

Volume 5 (collects " The Ice Kingdom of Mongo " , " Power Men of Mongo " , and " The Fall of Ming " ; 1940 to 1941 ; 80 pages , November 2005 , ISBN 1 @-@ 933160 @-@ 27 @-@ 6)

Volume 6 (collects the pages printed from August 1941 to May 1943 ; 100 pages , April 2007 , ISBN 1 @-@ 933160 @-@ 28 @-@ 4)

Volume 7 (collects the final strips from mid @-@ 1943 , until the final Raymond issue from February 1945 ; 100 pages , December 2006 , ISBN 1 @-@ 933160 @-@ 20 @-@ 9)

Rip Kirby (hardcover , IDW) :

Volume 1 (collects strips printed between 1946 and 1948 ; 2009 , ISBN 978 @-@ 1 @-@ 60010 @-@ 484 @-@ 8)

Volume 2 (collects strips printed between 1948 and 1951 ; March 2010 , ISBN 978 @-@ 1 @-@ 60010 @-@ 582 @-@ 1)

Volume 3 (collects strips printed between 1951 and 1954 ; November 2010 , ISBN 978 @-@ 1 @-@ 60010 @-@ 785 @-@ 6)

Volume 4 (collects strips printed between 1954 and 1956 ; August 2011 , ISBN 978 @-@ 1600109898)

Flash Gordon & Jungle Jim (hardcover , IDW) :

Volume 1 (collects strips printed between 1934 and 1936 ; December 2011 , ISBN 978 @-@ 1 @-@ 61377 @-@ 015 @-@ 3)

Volume 2 (collects strips printed between 1936 and 1939 ; August 2012 , ISBN 978 @-@ 1 @-@ 61377 @-@ 220 @-@ 1)

Volume 3 (collects strips printed between 1939 and 1941 ; April 2013 , ISBN 978 @-@ 1613775806)

Volume 4 (collects strips printed between 1941 and 1944 ; NYP)

= = Awards = =

Alex Raymond received a Reuben Award from the National Cartoonists Society in 1949 for his work on Rip Kirby , and he later served as President of the Society in 1950 and 1951 . He was inducted into the Will Eisner Comic Book Hall of Fame in 1996 . He was inducted into the Society of Illustrators Hall of Fame in 2014 .

Maurice Horn calls Raymond " one of the most celebrated comic artists of all time as the creator of four outstanding comic features (a feat unequaled to this day) , " noting that he " received many distinctions and awards during his lifetime for his work , both as a cartoonist and as a magazine illustrator . "