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ANNOUNCING “STRANGE & STRANGER: THE WORLD OF STEVE DITKO”

COMING IN JUNE 2008 FROM FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS

On his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, Fantagraphics Books is proud to announce the June 2008 release of the first critical retrospective of Steve Ditko, the co-creator and original artist of the Amazing Spider-Man.

In the wake of the astonishing success of Sam Raimi’s three *Spider-Man* movies, Steve Ditko’s status as a driving force behind the pop culture icon has been revealed to an audience the world over. But, in the context of Steve Ditko’s 50-year career in comics, his creative involvement with Spider-Man is merely the tip of the iceberg.

Ditko is known amongst the cartooning cognoscenti as one of the supreme visual stylists in the history of comics, as well as the most fiercely independent cartoonist of his generation. From his earliest days in the 1950s, working for the notorious low-budget Charlton Comics (the Roger Corman Productions of the comics industry), Steve Ditko broke every convention in comics, with his innovative special designs and imaginatively hallucinatory landscapes of Dr. Strange, the almost plebian earthiness of *The Amazing Spider-Man*, and his black-and-white views on morality and justice through his uncompromising vigilante of the late 1960s, Mr. A (inspired by the work of *Atlas Shrugged* author and Objectivist philosopher, Ayn Rand).

Why will this book appeal to such a broad readership, to those who may not even be comic-book, or Steve Ditko, fans? “For the non-comic-book reader,” says author Blake Bell (author and essayist for the Marvel Comics’ line of Ditko-related Omnibus reprint projects), “we tell the narrative of Steve Ditko, the artist, from humble beginnings in Johnstown Pennsylvania; to the dizzying heights of co-creating Spider-Man; to the spectacular *Howard Roark-like* determination, and tribulations, in bringing his personal and philosophical vision to a recalcitrant audience. There’s a fantastic, dramatic storyline running through Ditko’s career; the artist having walked away from the Spider-Man franchise (and the billions it was to generate) as it was reaching the height of its popularity. What price did Ditko pay, and what was the impact on his work?”

Comic-book fans have also been waiting for a definitive examination of Ditko the artist; a chance to have the entire artistic scope of his career in one volume. “Fans of Ditko, and comic art, will not be able to put the book down,” says Bell, “as we explode many of the myths surrounding key moments in Ditko’s career, as well as present reams of rare and unpublished Ditko artwork. For the comic art scholar, we also break down the “hows” of Steve Ditko as a great sequential storyteller, dissecting his work in depth for the first time, also with analysis and commentary by some of the most skilled and articulate comic creators of the day.”

While Steve Ditko himself remains absent for the World Wide Web (minus a summer back in 2001, when Bell himself worked for Ditko as his official web site designer), *Strange & Stranger* will assault the 'Net with similar intensity to that of the creator himself.

In addition to updates to Bell’s unofficial Steve Ditko web site at [www.ditko.comics.org](http://www.ditko.comics.org), readers will be able to keep abreast of updates with pages on Facebook, MySpace, and a dedicated feature page at the Fantagraphics web site, found through the portal [www.steveditkobook.com](http://www.steveditkobook.com). This will have a web log offering on-going commentary on the process of creating the book, with commentary by Bell and the staff at Fantagraphics. It will also publish commentary by professional comic-book creators on Ditko’s career and artwork, and feature artwork that won’t make it into the book. As the book speeds to its June 2008 release date, teasers, convention appearances by Bell, as well as book store signings will be featured on the site.

2008 will mark the year when Steve Ditko fans the world over will have the opportunity to celebrate the artist’s 50-plus year career with this definitive volume from Blake Bell and Fantagraphics Books.

A selection of images in a variety of formats is available for publication. For additional information, contact Eric Reynolds at the numbers above.

#### TITLE INFORMATION:

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By Blake Bell

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