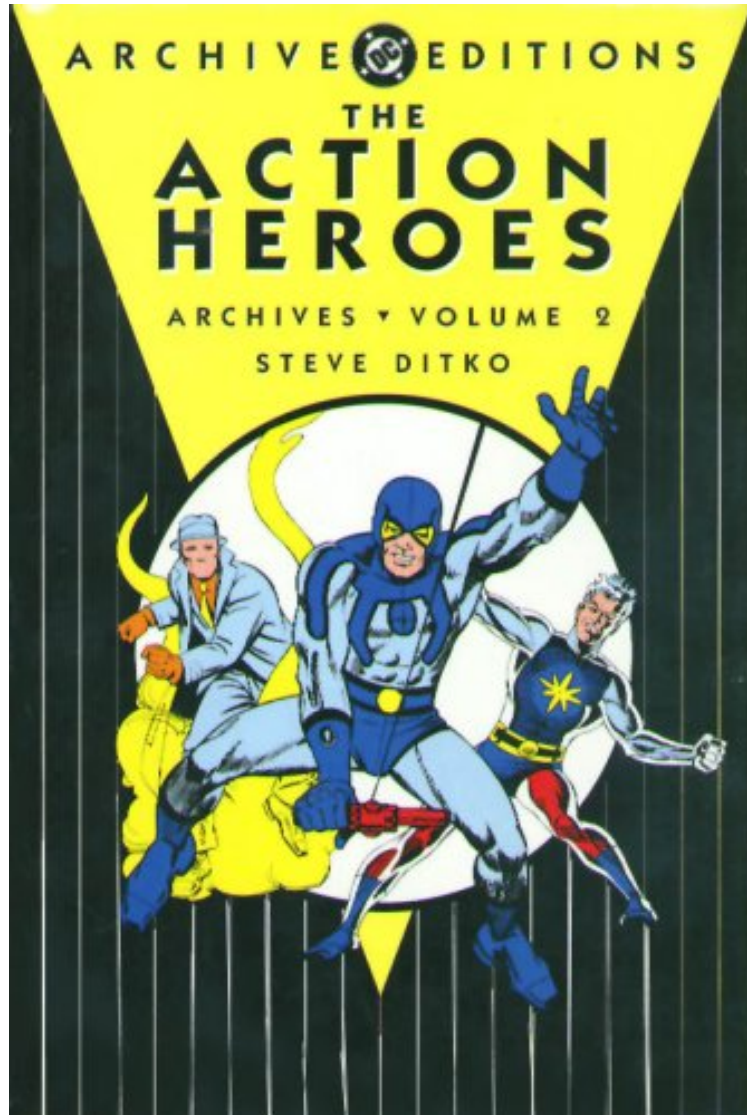


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Steve Ditko, David Kaler, Gary Friedrich, Steve Skeates, Roger Stern
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Steve Ditko, David Kaler, Gary Friedrich, Steve Skeates, Roger Stern : Action Heroes Archives, Vol. 2 (DC Archives Edition) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Action Heroes Archives, Vol. 2 (DC Archives Edition):

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Even for the inflated cover price, this is a good buy...By Adrian Jenkins...but for the pennies for which you can find it now? This is just a no-brainer to me. I've been fortunate with the DC archives of late (thoroughly enjoying the oft-trashed Doctor Fate archive prior to this), but this might be my single favorite volume of the sixteen I've purchased. The art is good (as one would expect), the reproduction (with a few

possible misfires here and there) is solid, and unlike many Silver Age reads, the Ayn-Rand-inspired challenge to the 60s ethos makes for interesting (if not always entertaining) reading. A quick summary: this oversized archive continues to collect volumes from Charlton's defunct "Action Heroes" line. Unlike volume 1, which covered only Captain Atom, this volume includes the aforementioned as well as the (Ted Kord) Blue Beetle and The Question. The paper quality is strong as usual, and unlike the general 220-ish page archive, this volume boasts a hefty 380+ page count. It has an increase in cover price, however, to seventy-five dollars, although as you can see, you can find it for significantly cheaper here (I got mine, including shipping, for exactly twenty dollars). A reviewer noted that the reproduction is poor. I cannot say one way or the other, as I have never seen the originals. However, I CAN say that at times, the linework is significantly more coarse here than in other volumes. It is so coarse, in fact, that I often feel like my vision is blurring. It's like watching a SD television after months of HD viewing. Caveat emptor. First, a few lines about Captain Atom. He gets a major re-design from his volume 1 character, and it's not really for the better IMHO. His stories are good enough, but I positively hate his costume (he looks like he's wearing a blue skirt over red tights - not really a good look). If you are looking for Captain Atom, buy this only for completion purposes - I would strongly recommend his appearance in Volume 1 over this. The Ted Kord Blue Beetle would actually become a pretty important piece of the DC puzzle later on. I was perusing my old Justice League comics, and he was a starting member in the reboot following the Crisis on Infinite Earths. He's actually a very interesting character here. His stories are action-packed, and he makes for a good character both in and out of the suit. There is a good origin story, and all in all, I thoroughly enjoyed the tales. However, like many, I didn't come here for any of the heroes, per se (although the Question is immensely cool). I came to read Mr. Ditko's manifestos embedded within. And make no mistake - Objectivism rears its head early on in both the Blue Beetle and the Question, and doesn't let up. My guess is the Question is in fact the answer to the moral mush found in Marvel at the time, and I'll focus the rest of my review on him. The Question has a pretty weak origin, at least compared to the other action heroes. Vic Sage is a tough-talking personality and reporter who speaks the good word and doesn't mind what feathers he ruffles. He's also a tough guy taking on the underworld and those business people who would dishonor the good work of man (sometimes in his normal persona, and sometimes in the form of The Question). He is self-possessed and uncompromising. Good is good, evil is evil, and never the twain shall meet. In short, The Question is the anti-thesis of Spider-Man. Vic Sage is the guy that Peter Parker never will be. The idea of villain as victim is as foreign to him as the idea of giving a handout to a bum, or entertaining for one moment the thought that man does not rise above the universe to make his own way. And I have to say, as someone who is sick to the gills of broody anti-heroes and sympathetic villains, Vic Sage and his alter-ego really struck a chord with me. The Question is a Golden Age hero trapped in a Silver Age world, and he shines here. When he leaves two criminals to drown in a sewer, it's not much different from Superman leaving two criminals on a narrow cliffside (and there is no ambiguity in that instance - one falls to his death). Vic Sage rarely rails against criminals, turning his criticism instead to a public which allows them to exist. Ditko's heroes strive against fate - only "nothings in a nothing world" believe that fate and the spirits guide us. I would have loved to see Ditko take on Batman from the 60s - we might have seen a Year-One-type character 20 years earlier.....except for one problem. While Ditko plots out interesting tales, his writing is often anything but. The Question's full-length comic (Mysterious Suspense #1) flounders, because everyone has to repeat the same thing, over and over. I suppose that Ditko thought that the substance outweighed its style, but I can't help but think that with another person writing dialogue, this could have been really interesting. The following story (where the Blue Beetle and The Question team up to fight anti-heroic attitudes in art by literally fighting anti-heroic art) sounds pretty stupid, but is actually quite readable. If nothing else, it has one of the most hilarious pages in comic history, where Blue Beetle pretty much soils his outfit out of arousal at the prospect of gazing at heroic art. But honestly, I find that this volume is immensely more interesting than most Silver Age DC stuff (which is often pure dreck). It's not meant to be thought-provoking, though; it's meant to tell you that you are wrong. But even if you disagree, I think the concept is interesting enough to provide multiple reads. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. What is the Question? By Wonder Cilatron Captain Atom issues #83-89 (final issue) Blue Beetle issues #1-6 Mysterious Suspense #1 Charlton Bullseye #1,2, and 5 Captain Atom: 9 stories 147 pages Blue Beetle: 10 stories 142 pages Question: 8 stories 71 pages (This version of Blue Beetle started as a back-up feature to Captain Atom, then got his own series. The Question was a back-up feature to Blue Beetle. Nightshade teams up with Captain Atom in a few stories. The last issue of Blue Beetle and the Charlton Bullseye issues are in black and white.) This volume contains the first (character) Ted Kord Blue Beetle stories, as well as (all?) of the original (writer/artist) Steve Ditko Question stories. I got this mainly out of curiosity on what Steve Ditko's Question was like. They were pretty much Randian morality plays, consequently all the characters in the Question stories are behaving even less realistically than normal for Silver Age comics. I like these DC (or in this case Charlton) Archive editions, with the excellent paper quality, binding, and so on, but they're so expensive. Also, I don't have any of the original issues, so I can't tell you how well they reproduced the artwork and color. The star rating is somewhat meaningless here. They're Silver Age stories, what do you expect? If you're really into Steve Ditko (who does most of the writing and artwork), you'll like these more than I do. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Great Art From A Simpler Time In Story Telling By thirdtwin Nostalgia soaked book with characters from a less gritty and more

optimistic time in graphic art. A visual window into the past. Well worth your time. A highlight in the long chronology of 'funny books'.

From the mid-1960s -- the legendary Silver Age of Comics -- come these fast-paced super-heroic tales starring the colorful Blue Beetle, the nuclear-powered Captain Atom, and the man of mystery known only as The Question! Originally created as part of publisher Charlton Comics' line of "Action Heroes," nearly all of these classic tales were written and illustrated by artist Steve Ditko, co-creator of Spider-Man.

From Booklist With its shoddy printing and cheap mechanical lettering, Charlton Comics always seemed like the comic-book equivalent of the movies' Poverty Row studios. Like its Hollywood counterparts, Charlton could sometimes rise to the occasion and produce a gem, usually by turning the reins over to an auteur, which is what happened with these late-1960s stories. Spider-Man artist Ditko had just left Marvel Comics and ensconced himself at Charlton, which gave him fewer readers and less money but greater artistic freedom. Besides resuming duties on his 1960 cocreation, nuclear-powered superhero Captain Atom, Ditko revamped the 1940s character the Blue Beetle and created the masked crimefighter the Question, infusing the stories with an Ayn Rand-inspired moral absolutism that Marvel never would have allowed him to voice. This volume collects the later years of Ditko's Charlton run. While the tales lack the polish of the artist's Marvel work, his angular artwork remains brilliantly idiosyncratic, and the stories' political bias is precisely the kind of iconoclastic viewpoint that seldom gets expressed in mainstream comics. Flagg, Gordon "In 1966, Spider-Man co-creator Steve Ditko left Marvel Comics. This book shows his subsequent work on three Charlton Comics super-heroes: Captain Atom, Blue Beetle and the Question -- all created or co-created by Ditko himself." -- Bob Garrett "One of those books that should be required reading for any comic book artist, given the mastery of storytelling. Even the casual reader will enjoy it, especially if they're old enough to remember any of these characters, or just the days when comics were printed on newsprint and sold in grocery stores." -- Rich Meyer "The stories in this book represent Steve Ditko at perhaps the apex of his powers, coming straight from his epochal runs on Amazing Spider-Man and "Doctor Strange" to a run at low-rent Charlton Comics. There's no question that Ditko loved the freedom he found at Charlton doing these stories. You can see Ditko's enthusiasm in every element of the stories he presents." -- Jason Sacks "The crisp, sharp colour of these Archive editions is far superior to the appalling reproduction that originally introduced Charlton's heroes to the wide-eyed kids of America, circa 1966." -- Win Wiacek