

Proposal for
The Mighty Crusaders

by John Packer

I want to bring The Mighty Crusaders into the mainstream superhero realm with stories that allow the characters to grow, that are consistent with Archie's image as a family oriented company espousing wholesome values, and that are entertaining for readers and fans of all ages.

The Mighty Crusaders are ultra heroes, cut from a different pattern than the Avengers or the Justice League (as they are currently portrayed). They are true heroes, self-sacrificing, espousing integrity, with humble character, as willing to help a child free a cat from a tree as save a city from the machinations of a nefarious villain bent on its destruction. The Mighty Crusaders will always be morally upright, modest in dress/costume and actions, and law-abiding. (If a hero commits a crime, there will be an adequate explanation for the action, i.e., mind control, subterfuge, etc.) As with any comic book of this type there will be some violence, but The Mighty Crusaders will not have the level of violence that is so prevalent in comic books from other companies that are on the stands today.

The series over the first year will focus on a newer, untried team of Mighty Crusaders consisting of The Shield, Eclipse, Fly-Girl, Fireball, Steel Sterling, Sonik and She-Fox. They will be government sanctioned with Col. (Ret.) Hank Boyle as their liaison. This relationship is an uncomfortable one and will eventually dissolve. Though all Archie/MLJ heroes are technically Crusader members, these seven are the government recognized ones, and are considered active Crusaders. (There is a back-story regarding this restriction, which will be related as the series unfolds.) At times the others join the battle as needed. The Shield is the leader of this team, hand-picked by the government. Eclipse (formerly Archie's Shadow), is not trusted by the other members, because they suspect that he was planted to be a government watchdog. Fireball is the grandson of the original. He is impetuous and headstrong; a real challenge for The Shield. Sonik is Afro-American and, unknown to the others, except for Shield, is also connected to the FBI. He has a genius level IQ. Both Fireball and Sonik are in their late teens/early twenties.

This team's baptism by fire comes when a group of ultra-powered villains calling themselves the People's Strike Force crashes a UN Security Council meeting, takes the Security Council hostage, and claims Manhattan in the name of P.E.R.I.L. and their leader, the Dark Commander. This story will run across two issues with the heroes held captive and bound with ultra-power-sapping transfinite bonds at the end of the first issue.

I have story ideas that will carry the series for five years. PERIL will be a major adversary. Its leader, the Dark Commander, has a personal vendetta against the Shield.

PERIL will ultimately be brought down with devastating personal results for the Shield.

After the defeat of the People's Strike force, the Crusaders will go on to battle Steel Sterling, who comes under the influence of the Maestro. In "Menace On the Moon" the Crusaders will battle Inferno, the Destroyer and his band of synthizoids (artificial beings). This story will leave a mystery at the end of how a base inside the Moon could be built without the knowledge of the US government. This will be answered as the series progresses. In "Stormy Weather" the Crusaders must aid victims of "unusual" weather, while also tracking down the cause.

In the next two stories The Mighty Crusaders will team with the Super Teens to battle Dr. Dome. These stories will be contemporaneous with stories one and two, and will have a different Mighty Crusaders line-up: Captain Flag, The Fly, Comet, Jaguar, Bob Phantom, Black Jack and Firefly. Ethel Muggs will be added to the Super Teens, as Thinderella. Team-ups with the Super Teens will become an annual event.

Next, the Crusaders will meet the Enforcers (a team under the control of Brain Emperor); the Time Emperor (formerly Dovi) and his Criminal League of Time; and the Pharaoh, who will attempt to revert Egypt back to its ancient glory. Comet, the Fly and Jaguar will return to the line-up at the end of the first year as they battle Phantasmon and his dragons to save Fly-Girl whom he has kidnapped. The Crusaders will go on to battle the Ultimate Man; Dr. Diablq and his micro-men; X; Monster Master; Dr. Evil and The Malefic Masters; the Golden Scimitar; Plant King (Roxr); The Sinister Seven; and Awesome Bravo and his Mutant Society of Evil. In a story entitled "Brain Surgery" the Crusaders must rescue the Brain Emperor from an even deadlier foe called, the Devourer.

By the end of the second/beginning of the third year, there will be two groups of Crusaders, one policing the eastern half of the U.S., the other policing the western half. The second group will consist of: Captain Flag (leader); Black Jack; The Fly; Falcon; Bob Phantom; Nocturne (Darkling); Firefly. They will be headquartered in the Rocky Mountains. Stories will alternate between the two groups and depending on the scope of the menace both groups might act together, until a spin-off magazine occurs. Then there will be crossovers between the two groups.

The Crusaders leadership on both teams will change on a rotating basis. At one point in the series, the Shield will resign as leader because of events taking place in his own magazine (or a sub-plot) and the Comet will be voted in. The Comet will take over in the midst of a membership upheaval and will not be a confident leader feeling overshadowed by the Jaguar and Mr. Justice.

The Mighty Crusaders headquarters is currently Manhattan, as it was in the eighties. They will move to an estate along the Hudson River between Tarrytown and Croton-on-Hudson, which is owned by Walter Blane Whitney (the son of the original Wizard). The

Crusaders will have much hi-tech equipment supplied by Whitney's company, WhitTech. Their Crusader Cruiser is capable of Mach-plus flight, with VTOL capabilities, EMP (electro-magnetic pulse) propulsion, and it seats 10. It has no windows, with outside views provided by LCD screens. There will be smaller versions of the Crusader Cruiser called Crusader Cutters, which will be used when the Crusaders have to split up during missions. WhitTech will also provide equipment for T.R.I.U.M.P.H. (**T**he **R**eserve **I**ntelligence, **U**nited **M**ilitary and **P**aranormal **H**eadquarters). TRIUMPH will interact with the heroes, and on occasion they will aid TRIUMPH, but the Crusaders will not be members of TRIUMPH. TRIUMPH's leader will be General (Ret.) James Collins.

Their computer system will be called ARCHIE (**A**dvanced **R**obotic **C**omputational **H**olographic **I**ntelligent **E**ntity). ARCHIE will supply security, operate the holographic Crisis Chamber where the Crusaders train, triangulate signal devices, etc. He can appear as a hologram to converse with the Crusaders, and also has a separate robotic body for additional mobility.

Most stories will have ultra villains as antagonists, but some stories will be mysteries, human interest, or the heroes saving people from the forces of nature gone wild. They will not only battle foes on the Earth, but under the Earth, and beyond the Earth. One such story will have the heroes travel to Altrox as the Mecks again try to subjugate that planet. They will also travel through time, and to parallel worlds. In one story the Mighty Crusaders think they have returned home, after dimension-hopping, only to find that they are on a world where the British have won the Revolutionary War. They are taken for rebels and must battle the Guardians of the Realm, who are carbon copies of themselves.

The world The Mighty Crusaders inhabit will not be an exact mirror image of ours. Some things will be similar to make the stories more realistic and believable, but much will be different as in most fiction. I've placed many of the individual characters in real time cities, i.e. New York, Chicago, Las Vegas, Seattle. Major country names will remain the same, but occasionally fictitious countries will be created. You've already established some alien races such as the Ziks and the Altroxians; and the idea of subterranean civilizations with the Terrible Titan and others. These ideas will be expounded upon. I have ideas for a number of underground civilizations in different parts of the world. Kree-Nal is your resident member from an undersea community. There will also be several undersea civilizations, with a story line about an attack by some of these against the surface world, which will be instigated by Eterno.

The Mighty Crusaders will also interact with ultra-hero groups from other countries such as: The Eight (Chinese); Euro-Force (Europe); Guardians (British); Power Force (Japanese); Protectorate (Russian); Rampart (Canadian); South Guard (Australian).

On the main, I see each issue of the series with two stories per issue. This could be two 10-page stories, which I think can be done effectively in a series of this type, or one 12-page story and an 8-page story. The second story will feature a different group of Mighty Crusaders (see above); hero solo stories; or human interest stories where the Crusaders play more of a supporting, secondary, or narrative role. This does not preclude having feature length stories or continued stories. With rare exceptions, continued stories will not go longer than two issues.

If I had the choice of artists, I would seek out fans and have them submit samples. There are many fans of the Mighty Crusaders out there with artistic talent, some, I'm sure, who are waiting for a chance like this. I feel using fans gives you someone who has a definite love for the characters and will do them justice.

The Mighty Crusaders would be the cornerstone for re-launching your ultra hero line. (I have ideas for all of the heroes in your pantheon, including some not-so-famous-ones.)

The market for this series would be Mighty Crusaders fans, Archie Comics current fan base, and readers of superhero comics in general. The stories will be on a level that appeals to your total fan base. They will be kid-friendly and parent-friendly, as well as entertaining for adult fans.

The comic book reading public needs heroes like this today. Though they are only on paper, they represent the types of role models kids today should be following. There is currently nothing out there in the superhero world like The Mighty Crusaders.

(Sample story synopses follow)