

the savage sword of conan

The Savage Sword of Conan is a legendary comic book series that has captivated audiences since its inception in the 1970s. This series, based on the character created by Robert E. Howard, is renowned for its gritty storytelling, dynamic artwork, and its embodiment of the sword and sorcery genre. In this article, we will delve into the history of the series, its artistic evolution, and its impact on pop culture and the comic book industry.

History of The Savage Sword of Conan

The origins of The Savage Sword of Conan can be traced back to the early 1930s when Robert E. Howard first introduced the character of Conan the Barbarian in a series of short stories. These tales were published in pulp magazines, and Howard's portrayal of Conan as a fierce warrior in a mythical, prehistoric world quickly captured the imagination of readers.

In 1970, Marvel Comics acquired the rights to adapt Howard's character into a comic book format. The first issue of Conan the Barbarian was released, and its success led to the development of a black-and-white magazine titled The Savage Sword of Conan. Launched in 1974, this magazine was distinct from its color counterpart and aimed at a more mature audience.

The Format and Style

The Savage Sword of Conan was published in a magazine format, which allowed for more pages and larger artwork compared to traditional comic book formats. This size provided creators with the freedom to tell more complex stories and included a range of artistic styles. The series was notable for several reasons:

- **Black and White Artwork:** Unlike many comic books of its time, The Savage Sword of Conan was printed in black and white. This artistic choice allowed for more detailed illustrations and lent a gritty atmosphere to the stories.
- **Mature Themes:** The magazine format also allowed for more mature storytelling, exploring themes of violence, sexuality, and morality. This depth set it apart from other comic series and attracted an older audience.
- **Serialized Stories:** The series often featured long-form storytelling, allowing for character development and intricate plotlines that spanned multiple issues.

Key Contributors

Over the years, The Savage Sword of Conan has been shaped by numerous talented writers and artists. Some of the key figures include:

1. Roy Thomas: As the original writer, Thomas played a crucial role in adapting Howard's stories into comic format. His deep understanding of Conan's character helped establish the series' tone.
2. Barry Windsor-Smith: Perhaps the most iconic artist associated with the series, Windsor-Smith's lush illustrations and unique style set a standard for the artwork in The Savage Sword of Conan.
3. John Buscema: Another major artist, Buscema contributed significantly to the series with his dynamic and powerful depictions of action scenes, further solidifying the visual identity of Conan.
4. Other Notable Contributors: The series also featured work from artists like Ernie Chan, Alfredo Alcala, and many others, each bringing their unique flair to the magazine.

Impact on the Comic Book Industry

The Savage Sword of Conan was instrumental in shaping the landscape of comic books in several ways:

- Pioneering the Black-and-White Movement: The success of The Savage Sword of Conan inspired other publishers to explore black-and-white comics, leading to a renaissance of independent comic book publishing in the 1980s.
- Emphasis on Mature Content: The series pushed the boundaries of what could be addressed in comic books, paving the way for more mature and sophisticated storytelling. This influence can be seen in later works such as Frank Miller's *The Dark Knight Returns* and Neil Gaiman's *Sandman*.
- Cultivating a Dedicated Fanbase: The series developed a passionate following, leading to conventions, fan clubs, and even adaptations into other media, including films and video games.

Legacy and Modern Adaptations

The Savage Sword of Conan has left an indelible mark on the fantasy genre and continues to influence creators today. Its legacy can be seen in various forms:

- Reprints and Collections: In recent years, there has been a resurgence of interest in the series, leading to the publication of various reprints and collections. These compilations have introduced the stories to new

generations of readers.

- **New Comic Series:** Dark Horse Comics acquired the rights to Conan and launched a new series that pays homage to the original works while introducing modern storytelling techniques.
- **Multimedia Adaptations:** The character of Conan has been adapted into numerous films, television shows, and video games, each drawing inspiration from the stories found in *The Savage Sword of Conan*.

Conclusion

The Savage Sword of Conan is more than just a comic book series; it is a cornerstone of the sword and sorcery genre that has influenced countless creators and captivated readers for decades. Its combination of rich storytelling, stunning artwork, and mature themes has solidified its place in the annals of comic book history. As the world of comics continues to evolve, the legacy of Conan remains vibrant, inspiring new generations to explore the adventures of this iconic barbarian. Whether through reprints, new adaptations, or the original tales, *The Savage Sword of Conan* will undoubtedly continue to resonate with fans for years to come.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is 'The Savage Sword of Conan'?

'The Savage Sword of Conan' is a comic book series that features the character Conan the Barbarian, originally created by writer Robert E. Howard. The series is known for its mature themes, graphic violence, and detailed artwork.

When was 'The Savage Sword of Conan' first published?

'The Savage Sword of Conan' was first published by Marvel Comics in 1974 and continued until 1995, encompassing a total of 235 issues.

Who were some of the notable artists and writers associated with 'The Savage Sword of Conan'?

Notable contributors include Roy Thomas, who was a key writer and editor, and artists like Barry Windsor-Smith, John Buscema, and Alfredo Alcala, all of whom significantly shaped the visual style of the series.

What is the significance of the magazine format of 'The Savage Sword of Conan'?

The magazine format allowed for larger pages and black-and-white artwork, which provided a grittier and more mature presentation compared to traditional comic books. This format also enabled more graphic storytelling.

How does 'The Savage Sword of Conan' differ from other Conan adaptations?

'The Savage Sword of Conan' is distinguished by its darker tone and more adult themes, focusing on the raw brutality and complexity of Conan's world, in contrast to other adaptations that may be more family-friendly.

What themes are prevalent in 'The Savage Sword of Conan'?

Themes such as survival, adventure, betrayal, and the conflict between civilization and barbarism are prevalent throughout the series, reflecting the harsh realities of Conan's world.

Has 'The Savage Sword of Conan' been re-released or collected in recent years?

Yes, in recent years, there have been several collected editions and trade paperbacks released by various publishers, including Dark Horse Comics and Marvel Comics, celebrating the legacy of the series.

What impact did 'The Savage Sword of Conan' have on the comic book industry?

'The Savage Sword of Conan' set a precedent for mature content in comics, influencing later works that explore darker themes and complex characters, and helped establish the popularity of fantasy comics.

Are there any new adaptations or continuations of 'The Savage Sword of Conan'?

Yes, there have been recent reboots and new series featuring Conan, including a relaunch by Marvel Comics in 2019, which aims to capture the spirit of the original while introducing new stories to a modern audience.

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