

Earthlings ... Who Can Save You Now?" was the tagline of *Flash Gordon* (1980), a high-octane movie updating of the original comic strip buoyed by Max von Sydow's twisted turn as the Emperor. Screenwriter Stephen Sommers (*The Mummy*, 1999) is returning Ming to the big screen in *Flash Gordon* (in development in 2006). Ming has appeared in numerous original *Flash Gordon* novels, Big Little Books, and comic-book series issued from a variety of publishers, as well as in three television cartoons: 1979's *The New Animated Adventures of Flash Gordon*, 1986's *Defenders of the Earth*, and 1996's *Flash Gordon*. To avoid racial stereotyping, in the latter series Ming was redesigned a pointy-eared reptile-man. Ming action figures tying into the animated series were produced, as was an elaborate Ming outfit for the poseable figure of Captain Action's arch-foe, the original Dr. Evil. —ME

Miroku

As the true source of evil in the action fantasy manga *Madara* (1996–1999), Miroku is the one who set the events of the story in motion. Created by Eiji Otsuka (story) and Sho-u Tajima (art), Miroku first appeared to *Madara* readers in the "Tale of the Abandoned Prince" storyline in 1996. However, he is described in the prologue of the first volume of *Madara*.

According to legend, many years earlier, Miroku was the leader of a strange army that claimed to be "descendants of the gods"—meaning he was possibly of extraterrestrial origin. Miroku stood at more than 40 feet tall, and he physically resembled a human being. He also had control over demons called "Moki." Swiftly defeating all enemies, Miroku eventually took over the land, established the Diamond Kingdom, and declared himself emperor.

Yet Miroku's own offspring would become his undoing. When his son was born, Miroku—acting on a prophecy that his son would eventually depose him—sacrificed the infant to the demon lord and divided the body among his eight generals. Only the child's spirit survived, taken away by the wizard Hakutaku. That child is Madara.

Fifteen years later, Madara—his soul now inhabiting a cybernetic (or "gadget") body—began to search for the creatures that possessed the parts of his real body. Each time the boy killed one of Miroku's generals he gained a part of his real body back, as well as the experience needed to defeat his father. Miroku, now alerted to his son's quest, sent out his own army of bizarre and horrific creatures, as well as his demonic henchmen, to destroy Madara. One of his best commanders is Kaos, who later joins with Madara to bring about Miroku's downfall. —MM

Mirror Master

Petty crook Sam Scudder learned a trade while in prison. As seen in *The Flash* vol. 1 #105 (1959), Scudder, in the pen's mirror factory, mistakenly applies the incorrect chemical to glass and inadvertently discovers a means of manipulating mirrors into tools for crime. As the high-tech purloiner the Mirror Master, wearing a green cowl and gold bodysuit designed by the tale's artist, Carmine Infantino, Scudder uses his "Image Controller"—writer John Broome's interpretation of a hologram projector—to rob a bank with a mirror-created surrogate of the bank president. The keen-minded Flash, trailing the reflective rogue, is ultimately able to whiz through Mirror Master's deceptive hall of mirrors and gauntlet of holographic grotesqueries to shatter his plans.

Readers witnessed no end to Scudder's mirror-based schemes over the decades. Mirror Master shrunk the Flash to nothingness with a giant mirror, turned the speedster into a mirror-man (which he nearly obliterated into shards), gained superspeed by switching legs with the hero, and second-guessed his foe with his "future-mirror." With each new story, the supervillain's arsenal became more outlandish. He hopped dimensions, produced facsimiles of himself, and even took to the air using mirrors, keeping *Flash* fans guessing as to how the Scarlet Speedster could possibly escape the Mirror Master's traps.

Beginning with *Flash* #155 (1965) Mirror Master signed on as one of the founders of the Flash's Rogues' Gallery, an acrimonious accord that routinely ambushed the Sultan of Speed. He helped

organize the Secret Society of Super-Villains in 1976, and on occasion fought the Elongated Man, the Justice League, and Batman. Despite those diversions, Mirror Master remained determined to challenge the Flash, his ardor cracked only by death: first the Flash's, then his own, in issues #8 (1985) and #10 (1986) of the landmark maxiseries *Crisis on Infinite Earths*. Yet the grave could not restrict the Silver Age Mirror Master from media exploitation: former teen heartthrob David Cassidy played a non-costumed Sam Scudder in episode nineteen ("Done with Mirrors," original airdate: April 21, 1991) of CBS's live-action series *The Flash* (1990–1991), and in the 2000s DC Direct merchandized the villain as an action figure and as a pocket-sized miniature.

In the late 1980s, Mirror Master appeared to have returned from the dead, but it was actually fellow Flash rogue Captain Boomerang lifting his identity to commit crimes while a member of the Suicide Squad, a U.S. government-controlled strike force.

A mercenary Scot named Evan McCulloch became the new Mirror Master in *Animal Man* #8 (1989), written by Grant Morrison and drawn by Chas Truog. An orphan whose hardship-filled youth fomented his career as a hired killer, McCulloch was traumatized after learning that one of his hits was actually his biological father. Instead of turning away from evil, he accepted the offer of a corporate/government conclave to use Scudder's original costume and weaponry as a supervillain for hire. McCulloch's troubled past and recurring bouts of substance abuse make this Mirror Master more malignant than Scudder, to the chagrin of the Fastest Man Alive's successor, the Flash III. If the price or incentive is right, the new Mirror Master will ally with others: he joined Lex Luthor's Injustice Gang in 1997, became a regular member of the Flash's Rogues' Gallery, and palled around with Killer Frost in 2005. Mirror Master was added to the burgeoning lineup of the Cartoon Network's *Justice League Unlimited* (2004–present) in 2005, and an action figure was released in conjunction with the show. —ME

The Mist

The Mist was an illusive Golden Age (1938–1954) malefactor first introduced in the pages of



The Mist. *The Brave and the Bold* vol. 1 #61 ©1965 DC Comics. COVER ART BY MURPHY ANDERSON.

Adventure Comics #67 (1941) in a Starman feature story scripted by Alfred Bester and rendered by Jack Burnley. Scientist Kyle (whose last name is never revealed) is adept at creating interesting formulas and devices, most notably an invisibility solution and a matter destabilizer, the rays of which can disintegrate objects. When gangsters attempt to steal the matter destabilizer from the scientist, the invention is turned on him and Kyle transforms into the supervillain the Mist. As a criminal mastermind who is able to convert into an almost-invisible vapor, the Mist battled the Golden Age Starman through most of the 1940s.

The Mist engaged in such diabolical feats as destroying buildings, robbing banks, and taking tourists hostage. Through chronic use of various chemicals or constant manipulation of his physical body, the Mist eventually developed true superpowers, including invisibility and intangibility. At one