With the passing of Will Eisner, the comic book world lost its D.W. Griffith, because Eisner, like Griffith with film, so codified the very language of the comic book story in his masterpiece, The Spirit, that the comparison is an apt one.

A city is a living thing... it is a breathing, pulsating, man-made phenomenon whose foundations go deep into the earth... there, in the wet catacombs of its roots, springs a life quite unknown to us in the forest of towers above...

BY ARLEN SCHUMER
The Spirit reader heard Eisner's stories as well as read them, for Eisner employed deft draftsmanship and expert, evocative hand lettering to create de facto soundtracks. You can hear lightning strike, rain drip, glass shatter—and the shrill sound of a telephone breaking the silence.
LIKE OTHER COMIC ARTISTS OF HIS DAY, EISNER’S EYE WAS INFLUENCED BY WELLES’ CITIZEN KANE, BUT HE BEST TRANSLATED THOSE LESSONS TO THE COMIC MEDIUM. IN DOING SO, EISNER’S PANEL AND PAGE DESIGNS WENT BEYOND MERELY IMITATING FILM ON PAPER TO TELL STORIES THAT COULD ONLY BE TOLD IN COMIC BOOK FORM. FOR EISNER, THE COMIC BOOK PAGE WAS A STAGE, EACH PANEL A PROSCENIUM ARCH.

FROM WORM’S EYE TO BIRD’S EYE, EISNER’S CAMERA MOVED READERS INTO EACH PANEL AND OVER EACH PAGE, CONSTANTLY PLACING THEM AT THE PEAK MOMENT OF ACTION.
Eisner took the vehicle of the seven-page story and created a primer on the verbal and visual art of the comic book itself. His splash pages alone were stunning examples of the calligraphic potential of a logo.

The examples shown here are but the tip of an iceberg of logos that graphically telegraphed each story’s theme.

After the splash pages would come stories that ran the gamut from light comedy and straight-ahead action adventure, to gritty urban drama and tragic, O. Henry-like parables that pointed out the fate and foibles of the human animal. Eisner told them like no one else, by utilizing every element of comic book storytelling.