

Stan Lee: WELL, I started working when I was about 15. I was still in high school and I took a part-time job delivering sandwiches for a drug store in New York. And man, I ran. Every delivery I ran as fast as I could. All the other delivery boys there would walk kind of slowly, and they'd say to me, "What are you knocking yourself out for?" And I'd say, "I'm getting tips!" I thought, "These guys are idiots. By me running, I'll make twice as many deliveries as they do and get twice as many tips." And I've never stopped running.

Stan Lee: Right. And I must have been the only one who answered the ad, because I got the job. I didn't even know it was a comic book publisher, but I figured, "I'll take the job, get some experience and move on." I've been here ever since. And that's the story of my life [smiles].

Wizard: This was happening around World War II. When did you serve in the army?  
Stan Lee: I enlisted in the army when I was about 18, so I guess I had been working for Martin a little more than a year. And I was supposed to go overseas, but somebody found out that I had worked in comics, so they pulled me out of that unit and sent me to Astoria, Queens, where the army had a movie division.

I was there to write training films and instructional manuals, but I also drew a cartoon that I think was one of the most famous of World War II. I was asked to do a poster to warn soldiers to go to a prophylactic station for treatment if they had been naughty with a girl. Now, how do you do that in one poster?  
Wizard: Or any poster!  
Stan Lee: Well, I drew a cartoon of a soldier walking into a "pro" station smiling very proudly, and I had a little dialogue balloon over his head saying, "YD? Not me!" They must have distributed 200 trillion of those things. I won the war single-handedly [laughs].

Wizard: Not exactly Sgt. Fury. But anyway, back on the home front, how big a company was Timely at that point?  
Stan Lee: Oh, tiny, tiny. When I got there, it was Joe Si-

I had a lot of other jobs. When I was 16, I was an usher at a big Broadway movie theatre called the Rivoli. Now in those days, being an usher was like being a West Point cadet. They had inspection when you reported to work in the morning to make sure that your uniform was pressed and you were standing up straight. One day we found out that Eleanor Roosevelt was coming to the theater, and sure enough, she came down my aisle. I was so proud, I was leading the President's wife, so I walked as erect as I could, looking straight ahead with my chin held high. But some louse had his foot stuck in the aisle and I fell right on my face. The next thing I know, Mrs. President has her hands on my shoulders and she's saying, "Can I help you, young man?" Then I saw an ad in the paper: Assistant Wanted In A Publishing Company.

Wizard: And that ad was for Timely Comics, which eventually became Marvel Comics?



# The Amazing Marvel Man

## Stan And His Spiderman

An interview by Tom Russo for Wizard Magazine

Do you know Stan Lee? Hmm ... okay, do you know Spiderman and the Incredible Hulk? I think you do. Stan Lee is the man who has created these comic characters and more. But more importantly, his 50 years involvement with the Marvel Comics in New York had contributed a lot to the comics industry and the world of science and fantasy fiction.

His works had blended the pop culture to such an extent that he has successfully influenced Hollywood and the rock music industries. If you know him, you'll enjoy this interview published by Wizard Magazine in 1995. If you do not know him, never mind, this interview is going to interest you.

mon and Jack Kirby. Jack was the artist and Joe was the editor. And since Timely didn't really have much of a staff other than Joe and Jack, Martin Goodman would buy additional material from an art service called Funnies, Inc. Martin originally bought the Human Torch and the Sub-Mariner from Funnies.

Wizard: Did you get ahead fairly quickly once you were hired?  
Stan Lee: I was young and inexperienced at publishing, so in the beginning I just ran errands for Joe and Jack. But yes, I got into the creative end very quickly. They would have me proofread things, and I'd say to myself, "Jeez, I can write these stories as well as other people."

So after a while they had me write some stuff, and that was it. I became a writer. Then, not long after I got there, Joe and Jack left, and Martin needed somebody to replace Joe as editor. At that time I was about 17, but I was just about the only guy there. So Martin said, "Do you think you can hold down the editor's job while I look for a grown-up?" When you're 17, what do you know?  
So I said, "Sure," and I became the editor. Apparently Martin never found anybody else, because I stayed in the job until I came back and worked as editor, art director, and head writer until I was made publisher in 1972.

Wizard: Do you find that a lot of people do not know your real name used to be Stanley Lieber?  
Stan Lee: Well, I've been Stan Lee for so long but yes, my name was Stanley Martin Lieber. Lovely name. Poetic! But when I started writing comics, I thought someday I'd write the Great American Novel, and I wanted to save Stanley Martin Lieber for that. So I just cut my first name in half and thought, "I'll use that for comics, because it's just a temporary job. I'll work here for a year and then get a real job." But then I stayed, and more and more people came to know me as Stan Lee. Which is such a silly name ... when people who don't know me ask



my name and I say, "Stan Lee," they always say, "Stanley what?"

Wizard: Where were you coming up with the inspiration for these characters?  
Stan Lee: I have no idea where the ideas [came] from. I think about it. I could probably trace a few.

Wizard: Well, how about the X-Men?  
Stan Lee: That was easy. At the time I did the X-Men, I had run out of ways that characters could get their superpowers. Spider-Man was bitten by a radioactive spider, the Fantastic Four had been hit by cosmic rays. Thor just happened to be a god. So I said, "I'll make it easy for myself 'what if people are just born that way? What if they're mutants?' That's nothing, though. That's just the idea. The important high is coming up with characters the readers will care about. You can read the greatest story in the world, but if you're not interested in the characters, the story won't mean anything to you. And to me, creating characters is the most fun you can have, even more so than writing. I really don't like to write, which is why

I'm such a fast writer the faster I can do it, the sooner I get finished and can stop. That's probably one reason I've stuck with comics so long. I've had a lot of offers to write books and screenplays, but the thought of writing something that you have to spend days and weeks with is scary to me. You do comics in one day and then you're finished.

Of course, the next day you have to start another comic book, but still, no project lasts more than a day or so.

Wizard: Tell us who your favorite character is.

Stan Lee: I'd have to say my two favorite characters are Spider-Man and the Silver Surfer. Spider-Man because he's become as famous and he and I are so closely identified with each other. And the Silver Surfer because I always enjoyed being able to have him say all those things that really expressed a lot of my philosophy.

Wizard: Word is that when the original Silver Surfer title was cancelled in 1970, it was because Martin Goodman was saying, "Let's change the character. Lose the philosophizing."

Stan Lee: Yes, and I'd rather

have dropped the book, which I did. But I've always been lucky with the Surfer. Kirby created [him] and did a magnificent job, then Buscema came along and did a fantastic job, and then I did the book with Moebius, and I thought he was brilliant. Yeah, I'm very proud of the Surfer. In fact, I would have preferred it if nobody had ever written the character again except me. But after a while, Marvel decided to bring the Surfer back. I didn't have the time to write it, and it really wouldn't have been fair of me to make a big issue and say, "No, no, don't do it at all," so we went ahead. But at least I know I wrote all of the early ones. To me, that's the quintessential Silver Surfer.

Wizard: How would you define your role at Marvel today?  
Stan Lee: At Marvel Comics, I'm still publisher and chairman, but it's an honorary title more than anything. I've always felt that if you don't have responsibility, you shouldn't try to exert authority. If things go badly at Marvel Comics, I'm not going to get the blame, and therefore, it isn't fair for me to try to tell them what to do or how to do it. So I just serve in an advisory capacity and try to help them as much as I can. At Marvel Films, I'm the co-executive producer of all our movie, TV, and animated projects. I work with [Marvel Films president] Avi Arad, and the two of us initiate these projects, trying to make sure we get the best writers and directors for them, and that the projects are placed at the best studios. [Editors Note: Marvel characters in various stages of big screen development now include the Black Panther, Blade, Daredevil, Doctor Strange, the Fantastic Four, The Hulk, Iron Man, Luke Cage, the Silver Surfer, Spider-Man and the X-Men, and for television, Black Widow, Generation X, Nick Fury, the Punisher and She-Hulk.]

Wizard: But what the fans want to know is: Where are these movies already?  
Stan Lee: Nobody's saying it more than me.

Wizard: Don't you think a point is going to come when you

have to take a hardline with the studios and say, "Enough is enough. Let's get started on these!"

Stan Lee: I would do that if we felt the studios were dragging their heels. They're really not. The most important thing is to get a good script. If we have somebody hand in a script that isn't good enough and the studio says, "No, this isn't right, we've got to get another script," I have to be glad that the studio feels that way. What I'm afraid of is that they'll figure, "Hey, the X-Men are such great characters, it doesn't matter what the story is. People will go to the movie. Let's do it." We want these movies to be good. We've had enough of "Howard the Duck."

Wizard: With rewrite being done on so many of these projects — not to mention Jim Cameron's Spider-Man movie being tied up in legal hell—how do you stay so optimistic?  
Stan Lee: I'm optimistic about everything [laughs].

Wizard: You've assigned something like half a dozen of your scripts to David Goyer, the writer doing the sequel to "The Crow." He seems to be a clever guy, but do you think it's a mistake to steer so much material to any one writer?  
Stan Lee: No, no. He's very fast and he's very good, and if he's able to do it, fine. The minute he turns in a bad script, we won't buy it. I had the same problem years ago when I worked for Martin Goodman. People used to say, "Why are you letting Stan do so many books?" And he'd say, "Well, the stories are good. When they stop being good, I won't let him do

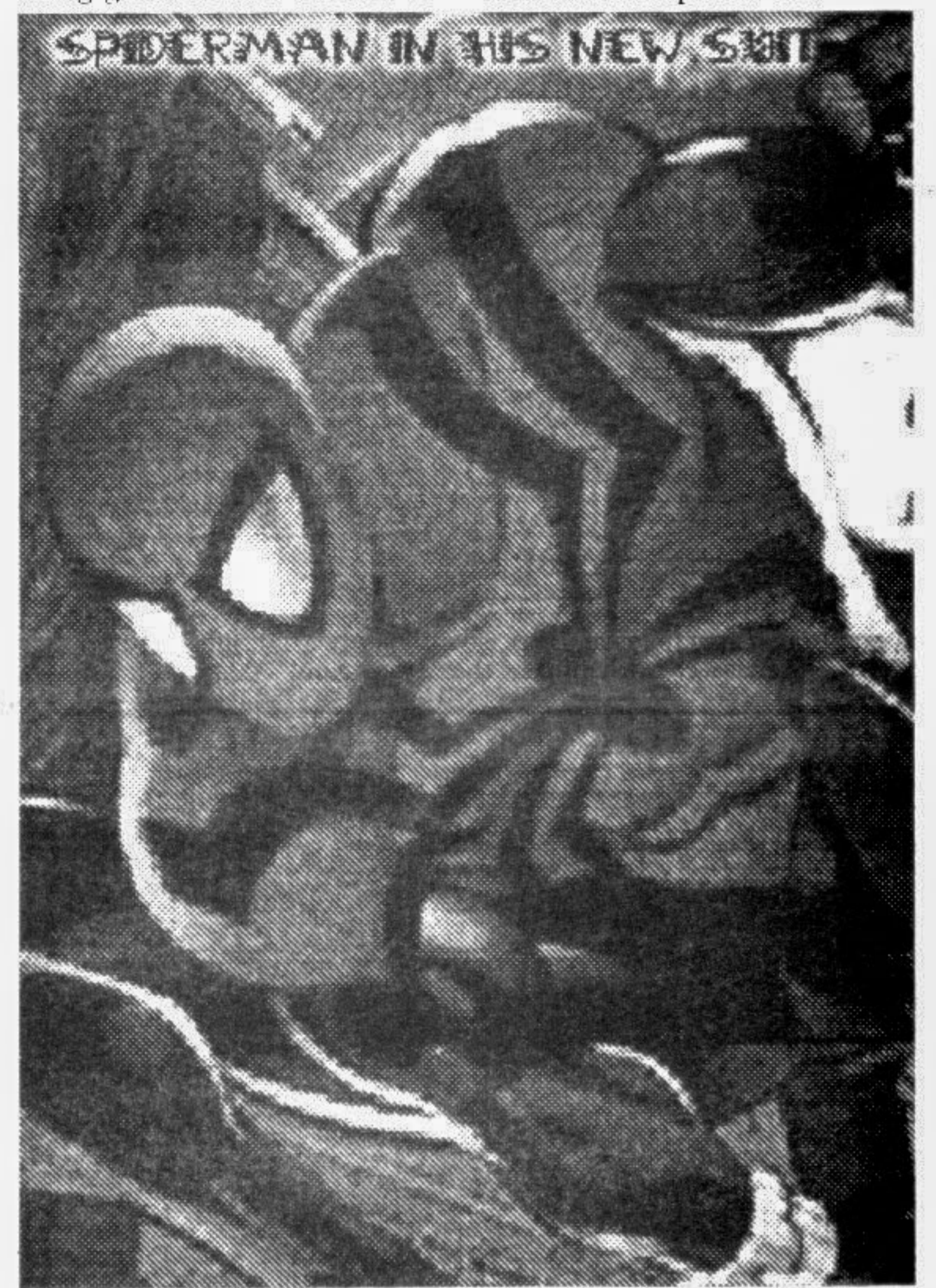
them."

Wizard: Of the stories you have written, what's your all-time favorite?  
Stan Lee: It's hard for me to say. Sometimes I'll look through a Marvel Masterworks or somebody will give me a book to autograph, and it'll be a story I've forgotten, and I'll say [combustively excited], "Wow! That's one of my favorite stories!"

Wizard: Oh, that's not too mind-blowing — "Ho-hum, I was just flipping through Marvel Masterworks the other day, looking at a story of mine that I had completely forgotten."

Stan Lee: [Laughing] But there are so many. There was a Daredevil story I did about a blind, embittered Vietnam veteran who's in trouble, and Daredevil helps and encourages him [Daredevil #47]. I like stories that have some heart to them, some warmth, and I thought that one in particular did. Then there were the three Fantastic Four stories that are referred to as "The Galactus Trilogy" [Fantastic Four #48-#50]. I love that name. What I used to lecture at colleges, students would say, "Tell us about 'The Galactus Trilogy,' and I'd feel so important. I thought my whole run of Silver Surfer stories with Buscema, from first to last, were as good a run of comic books as anyone has ever done. And I loved a lot of The Amazing Spider-Man books. Actually, I really can't tell you what my favorite comic was. I loved 'em all.

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## A Tribute To 1952

Photographs by Zahedul Islam Khan



IMAGINE you go to your office and have to converse in Urdu with your fellow colleagues. How would you feel? Being strangulated, right! Had there been no Language movement, we would not have Bangla as our official language and would not freely sing or dance like the people in the photos. As culture is entwined with Language, much of our rich cultural activities would have sunk into oblivion. Indeed, we are indebted to and proud of those who made the Language movement a tremendous success.

