

741.5

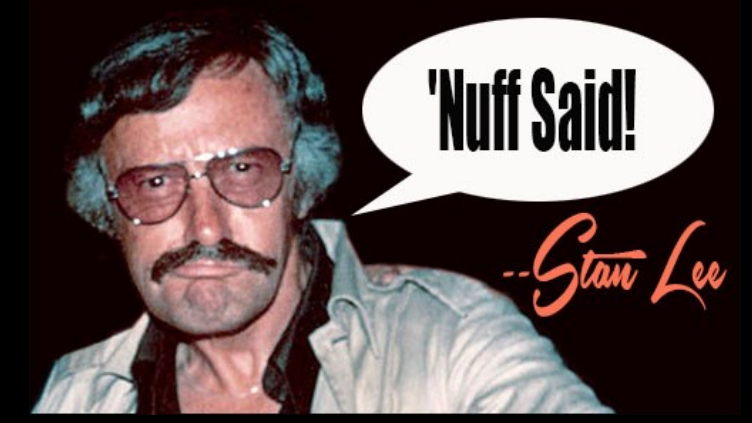
STAN LEE
1922-2018

SPECIAL EDITION 11-18





Stan Lee was born **Stanley Lieber**, December 28, 1922. He changed his name to "Stan Lee" once he began working in the nascent comic book industry. Stanley had dreams of writing the Great American Novel and wanted to protect his future reputation from the bad press that tainted funnybooks. Stan got his gig at what was then Timely Comics the old-fashioned way: he was related to publisher Martin Goodman by marriage. Promoted to interim editor-in-chief in 1941, Lee didn't leave the position until he was kicked upstairs to the Publisher's office in 1972. By then, he had seen the company—under the names Timely, Atlas and eventually Marvel Comics—ride a rollercoaster of success and failure (see sidebar far right). During the company's lowest point in the late '50s, Lee wanted to quit comics. He considered himself a hack who had wasted his life cranking out whatever schlock was selling at the time. But at his beloved wife Joan's urging, he stayed and began writing comics his way. Beginning in 1961 with *Fantastic Four* #1, Lee and his artistic partners changed the way comic books were created, promoted and even sold (see right). By the time he quit writing, Marvel was leading the industry in sales and influence. Later attempts to re-enter the comics biz were frustrated by both creative and business issues. But Lee went on to garner a new generation of fans with his cameos in the block-busting series of Marvel films. Despite scandals near the end of his life, Stan "the Man" Lee is assured of his place in the pantheon of popular culture.



When I was a little boy, I wanted to be Stan Lee when I grew up. Unlike most comics-crazed kids of the Sixties, I didn't pretend to be the amazing Spider-Man. I pretended to be the guy who wrote *The Amazing Spider-Man*. That guy edited all the other comics, too, even the ones for girls and little kids. Inspired by Stan's example, I made up my own stable of characters—Robo-Man, Time Patrol, the Leaper—and line of comics—*WWII*, *Mod Romance*, *Hawkeye Kid*—complete with imitations of Marvel's promotional "Bullpen Bulletins Page" featuring my version of Lee's gabby "Soapbox" editorials. Little Billy Widener was quite the imaginary publishing magnate. And as the very existence of this hand-out will testify, I continued to be one of the thousands of people influenced by the man they called "The Man". Actually, it was Stan who called himself "the Man", and Jack Kirby "the King" and Don Heck "Dandy", all part of the ballyhoo Lee used to sell not only his

WRITER'S DIGEST
NOVEMBER, 1947

> THERE'S MONEY IN COMICS!
By Stan Lee

How To Make a Fan-Book
By William Lynch Valler

The Truth About True Detectives
By R. J. Travers

WHAT HAPPENED ON THE LAST PAGE IS CALLED "TELLING A SYNOPSIS"... MORRIS TELLS STAN WHAT THE STORY IS GOING TO BE ABOUT AND STAN OK'S THE IDEA!

BUT! NOW THE REAL HARD WORK BEGINS!

MORRIS MUST WRITE THE ENTIRE STORY... WHICH HE DOES!

THEN HE MUST BRING IT INTO STAN LEE'S OFFICE...WHICH HE DOES!

THEN STAN LEE MUST OK IT... WHICH HE DOES...

And Then...

MORRIS MUST TAKE THE SCRIPT RIGHT HOME AND BEGIN TO DRAW IT... WHICH HE DOES!

FIRST, MORRIS WEISS DRAWS THE STRIP IN PENCIL, FOLLOWING HIS OWN SCRIPT AS HE DOES THIS !!!

THEN, THE STRIP IS LETTERED!

THEN IT IS RUSHED TO STAN LEE AGAIN!

I SEE YOUR NEW PROSPECT ENTERTAINED AT AN ORPHANS' FUND PARTY! I DO HOPE HE DOESN'T DISOBEY TO YOU LIKE THE OTHERS!

WHO CARES? I'LL RUN HIM THROUGH THE HOOD AND SEE IF HE CLICKS... AND IF HE DOES-- I'LL WALK UP AND STEP IN AND FLY!!

IMAGINE! -- A SUPER ESCAPE ARTIST! IS HE VERY GOOD?

WELL, I WOULD CALL HIM A BUMS... HE'S GOT SOME GAYT GIMMICKS!

AND YOUR GALOSHES! AND A RAIN HERE'S AN UMBRELLA.

WELL, WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?

I CAN'T MOVE!

FOR SOME UNKNOWN REASON, OPERATIONS ONLY SEEM TO COME TO OL' STAN IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT!

HOWEE! WHAT AN IDEA FOR A SPIDER-MAN STRIP! I'D BETTER PHONE STEVE AND WAKE HIM RIGHT UP! HE WON'T MIND!

AND SO, A SHORT TIME LATER...

LOOK, BUB! I DUNNO-- WHO'S YOUR FIRST BOY? I WAS TAUGHT YOU HOW TO DRAW! YOU BUGHT YOUR FIRST PAIR OF SHOES?

WADDAYA MEAN WEE? I DO THE DRAWING WHILE YOU PRACTICE SIGNING YOUR NAME ALL OVER!

I SURE WASN'T YOU, LEE! I WAS A HAPPY MAN TELL WE TEAMED UP! HOW TO DRAW! YOU BUGHT YOUR FIRST PAIR OF SHOES?



And more importantly, Lee used EC's cultish relationship with its readers as a template for a new kind of comics fandom. This audience not only never "outgrew" comics, but mutated like one of Lee's irradiated heroes into the art-based global culture calling itself "nerddom". Of course, Lee didn't do it alone. Working with dozens of artists, he always had a favorite, a partner. In the 1950s it was pin-up cartoonist Dan DeCarlo, then the eclectic Joe Maneely (with whom Lee also syndicated a failed newspaper strip, above middle). In the Sixties, Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko co-created the Marvel Universe through the "Marvel Method", which upended the traditional way of writing comics (as described in Lee's own 1947 pamphlet "Secrets Behind the Comics", above left) by essentially making artists co-writers

The "grandfather" of Marvel, Timely Comics had three big stars who dominated most of that company's wartime output: Captain America, the Sub-Mariner and the Human Torch. Stan Lee strove mightily to add a fourth. The first character Lee created on his own, the Destroyer headlined *Mystic* and appeared next to the big boys in *All Winners Comics*. Unfortunately, the Destroyer never caught on. But he did get a mini-series in 2009.



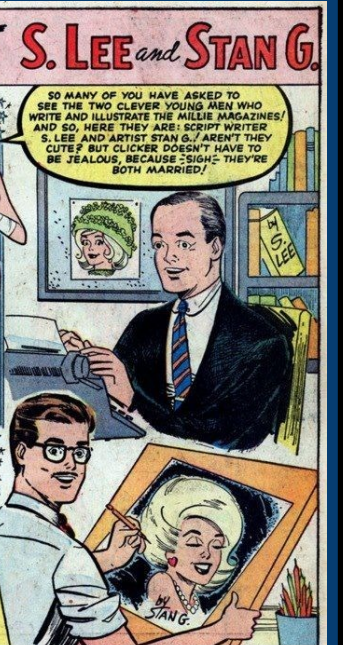
THE "BIG" 52-PAGE MARVEL COMIC

ALSO FEATURING: POWER! MANTRAP!

FEATURING THE MOVIE-LENGTH THRILLER: THE STRANGEST ADVENTURE EVER TOLD!

Lee's idol in the comics biz was Charles Biro, editor of million-sellers *Boy Comics* and *Crime Does Not Pay*. The postwar era saw Stan imitating Biro's notoriously wordy covers in genre books like *Crime Cases* and *Wild Western*. Note the early, short-lived use of the "Marvel" brand.

Until the Marvel Age, Lee's favorite books to write were teen and "girl" titles such as the popular *Patsy Walker* and all her spin-offs and *Millie the Model*, which ran from 1945 to 1974. That's Millie at right, introducing her writer and her 1960s artist Stan Goldberg. Goldberg also colored many classic Marvel covers and went on to join Lee's previous partner on *Millie*, Dan DeCarlo, at Archie Comics.



THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMIC MAGAZINE!

Fantastic Four

THIS MAN... THIS MONSTER!

MARVEL POP ART 12

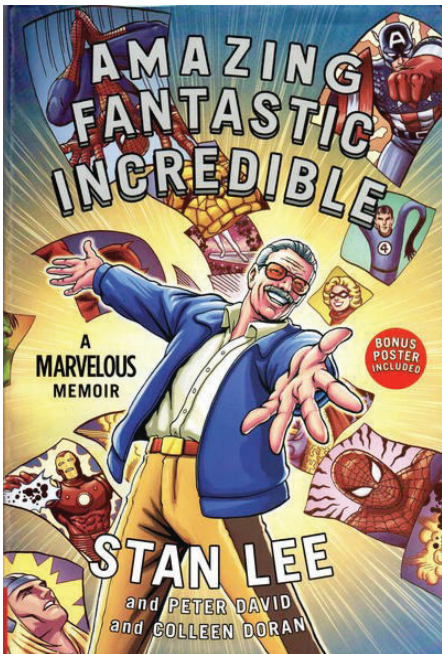
SKY-RIDER OF THE SPACEWAYS!

THE SILVER SURFER

The Marvel Age: The combination of Lee's streetwise realism with Jack Kirby's fertile imagination soon raised the nearly moribund company to new heights. Lee's gift for self-promotion creates a bond between audience and artist that lays the foundation for modern fan cul

ture. Lee's line of jive also appealed to older readers, especially college students. Lee became a spokesman for comics in general and Mighty Marvel in particular. Lauded by both fans and the mainstream, Stan began to believe his own hype. Intent on writing serious work, Lee turned the *Silver Surfer* title into his personal commentary on the human condition (with fight scenes, of course). It didn't sell. Lee stopped writing comics two years later.





It's only fitting that the man who changed comics has a biography that's a big fancy funnybook. *Amazing Fantastic Incredible* is the story of **Stan Lee** as told by "the Man" and written by Marvel veteran **Peter David** and rendered by **Colleen (A Distant Soil) Doran**. Her realistic but colorful style perfectly captures **Lee's** rise from Depression baby to the apex of the American Dream with all the ups and downs between and beyond. It's available from TEEN sections throughout the Lexington Public Library system. This *Marvelous Memoir* spends a few pages on **Lee's** growing disgust with the neutered comics industry of the post-Code era and himself in particular. And it's true: For most of his career, **Lee** was a hack. An accomplished hack, for sure—I myself am a big fan of the monster comics starring the likes of Gorgilla and Fin Fang Foom he published in the early Sixties. Those stories fed into the early Marvel

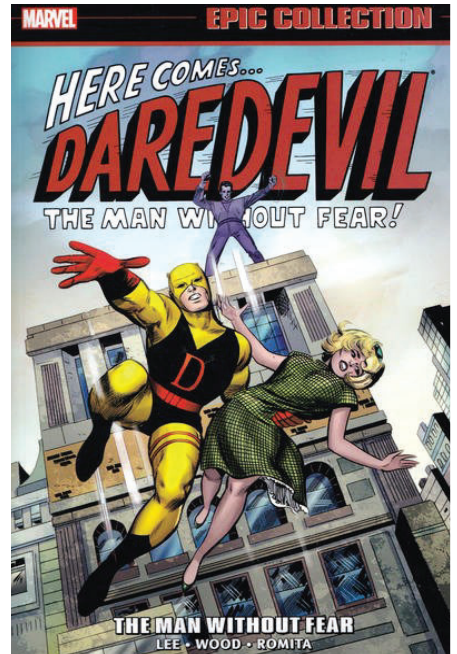


MEANWHILE

Age, the difference being the Things, Hulks and Spider-men switched from being the heels to being the heroes. That transition happened in the first true Marvel comic, *Fantastic Four*. Long the company's flagship title, *FF* has been overshadowed since by the X-men, *Daredevil* and the Avengers. But *Fantastic Four* was an instant game-changer from the first issue in 1961. Hastily slapped together to exploit the renewed interest in superheroes inspired by DC's Silver Age characters, it's still a raw, exciting read. Watch the embryonic Marvel Universe come to life in *Marvel Masterworks: Fantastic Four Volume One*, available from Central TEEN. As noted, **Lee's** success was dependent on his artistic partners. Other than the seminal duo of **Siegel & Shuster**, no partnership was more important to the growth of comics as a business and an art form than that between **Stan Lee** and **Jack Kirby**. A beautiful ex-



ample of the wonders wrought by "the Man" and "the King" is the work reprinted in the third volume of the Epic Collection starring the Mighty Thor. Available from **Tates Creek**, *The Wrath of Odin* shows **Kirby** sparking off one insane idea after another while **Lee** hangs on and tries to make sense of it all. **Lee** loved writing *Thor* because it let him indulge his love for grandiose language to the hilt, especially when writing for the titular All-Father of the Asgardians (above). For more info on this book, see "Meanwhile", 741.5 #13 Jan 2018, under the "Collections" tab at lexpublib.org. The extent to which **Lee's** artists contributed to the creation of the Marvel Universe is an ongoing debate. The best arguments for the centrality of **Jack Kirby** and **Steve (Dr. Strange) Ditko** to the success of the House of Ideas are all the comics **Stan** wrote that they didn't draw. **Don Heck**, **Dick Ayers** and especially **Wallace Wood** were excellent draftsmen. But they lacked the imagination that **Lee** came to depend on. For best evidence, get the Epic Col-



lection of the first two years of *Daredevil* from Eastside TEEN. While his colleagues battled the likes of Doctor Doom, the Green Goblin and Loki, God of Evil, *The Man Without Fear* (or fashion sense, until **John Romita Sr.** designed DD's iconic red outfit) faced the Matador, the Owl and my favorite C-list bad guy, Stilt-man. Always the bridesmaid among the original slate of Marvel titles, *Daredevil* was still a good read. But the book didn't have an identity of its own until former DC romance artist **Gene Colan** took over the art. His moody, urbane style inspired **Lee** to write such memorable tales as "Brother, Take My Hand", one of the many classics reprinted in *Marvel Visionaries: Stan Lee*. Available from Central TEEN, this 344 page tome includes some work from the 1940s and '50s. But most of it is made up of the Silver Age superhero comics that made **Stan Lee** a legend. *Excelsior*, Real Frantic Ones!

