

# Legends in our Time™

Volume 2  
Stan Lee

‘The Hero behind the Heroes’

By John Carrieri

**Welcome to the second edition of ‘Legends In Our Time’, a series dedicated to celebrating extraordinary individuals during their lifetimes and ours who have excelled in their fields and left a unique, exceptional and distinctive mark that forever changed their discipline and our lives. Stan Lee is such a Legend; he is the consummate character creator and writer that has touched millions and perhaps billions with his iconic superheroes such as Spider-Man, Incredible Hulk, Fantastic Four, X-Men, Daredevil, Silver Surfer, Doctor Strange and many others.**

It’s hard to tell when his prolific career started. Perhaps it was at age six when he combined little stories for himself with the stick figures he would draw, or at the young age of 19 when he was made interim editor of Timely Comics, the precursor to Marvel Comics. What is sure is that his creative genius rocketed his career to editor, editor-in-chief, publisher, president, executive producer and even Chairman Emeritus of Marvel. With all of these great positions and power ; ) I would maintain that his highest position is that of Hero; hero to the millions of fans whose lives he touched, inspirations he sparked and indelible memories he left.

Much could be written of his illustrious career and the giant of comics - Marvel. In fact, in 2006, Marvel commemorated his 65 years with the company by publishing a series of comics starring Lee himself meeting and engaging with many of his creations, even his favorite villain Dr. Doom. During his years of work with Marvel, he went from writing text filler to completely writing, scripting and art directing comics and perfecting what became known as the ‘Marvel method’. This method involved Lee giving the artists the concept and synopsis, while letting them artistically draw the story. Lee would then fill in the word balloons and captions after he received the panels back from the artists and would oversee the lettering and coloring. This collaborative method allowed Marvel to become a productive powerhouse of comics. Some artists who were used to complete scripts could not work with this new revolutionary method. Others thrived with the additional creative freedom. <sup>1</sup>Lee felt that the method produced stronger writing as well as more effective art. “I’d look at Jack’s pictures and the words just came into my mind because the expressions and poses of the characters were so dramatic. I would tailor the writing to the art.” Lee always bountifully praised his artists including

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Winter 2006



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making sure all of the talent was given public credit, even those that lettered the speech balloons.

However, when it came to creator credits, some artists, namely Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko, felt a little slighted from not getting the credit they felt was consummate to their contributions. Lee created Spider-Man and Doctor Strange with Steve Ditko; Incredible Hulk, Iron Man, X-Men, and the Mighty Thor with Jack Kirby; Daredevil with Bill Everett.

Timely Comics, which didn’t officially change its name to Marvel until 1963, didn’t just publish superhero comics, but that of almost every imaginable genre from westerns, mystery, romance, comedy, horror and war. While superheroes like Captain America did well during WW II, the comics’ ‘Golden Age’, they had begun to fade over the next decade. By the 1950’s, Marvel

became the premier comic book company, producing over eighty separate titles on a monthly schedule.

These were the days of the famous Bullpen at Marvel where up to 20 artists worked side by side on the myriad of titles in their office at the Empire State Building in New York City.

Eventually, the Bullpen was closed down in favor of an outsourced model and also to make way for the publisher’s wish to move into the distribution side of the business, but the Bullpen nostalgia carried on with the fans.

As the 50’s progressed, there were some ‘dark days’ as Lee recalls. Lee survived the layoffs at Timely and continued to produce for the publisher Goodman, but a new threat to comics appeared in the form of a doctor. Dr. Fredric Wertham, a New York psychiatrist was convinced that comics were corrupting the youth, and he set out on a crusade to annihilate them. He lectured, campaigned and even wrote a book called ‘Seduction of the Innocent’ in an effort to convince adults and Congress of his theories. According to Wertham, comics made children commit crimes, romance comics could lead to child prostitution and even superhero sidekicks were homosexu-

U. The National College Magazine