

EXHIBIT 31

SPIDEY: THE MOVIE!

SPIDEY MOVIE SCRIPTER
TED NEWSOM
TELLS ALL ABOUT IT!

AMAZING ARTIST
ERIK LARSEN
SPIDEY WITH STYLE

STAN LEE
SPIDEY & MORE!

TODD
MAYKLANE'S
CENSORED SPIDEY SCENE

#85

DAVID ANTHONY KRAFT'S

COMICS INTERVIEW

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CANADA



recycled paper



ERIK-- DON'T
KILL HIM! HE'S
GOT 2 MONTHLY
BOOKS, MULTI-PART
CROSSOVERS, GUEST
APPEARANCES, GRAPHIC
NOVELS, CAMEOS
AND A MOVIE
DEAL!

I DON'T
CARE-- I'M ***ING
SICK TO DEATH
OF HIM!!

Spider-Man & Spider-Man II © 1990 Marvel Entertainment Group Inc.

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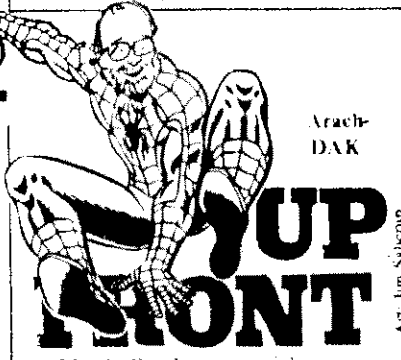
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Arach-
DAK

Art: Jim Salicrup

Martin Goodman was right. As Marvel's publisher, he reportedly told then-editor writer Stan Lee that people would have a negative reaction to a comic character called Spider-Man, since spiders are so hated by many (witness this summer's fear film, ARACHNOPHOBIA) — and, at least in my case, he was right.

I gave the book a wide berth, not even sampling THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN until issue #19, and not really accepting it as truly here to stay until issue #33 (for some reason, I can distinctly remember officially "recognizing" it as of that issue — after all, even back then I knew that many comics came and went, and odds were the ones that reached high issue numbers were "real"). If it had been up to me, I guess that Spider-Man would have quietly faded away.

But many more people apparently liked Spidey than I disliked this new "on-the-wall" character — and so a comics star was born and the Marvel Age of Comics found firm (webbed) footing. Years later, even I came around, and ended up producing the SPIDER-MAN 1978 CALENDAR for Simon & Schuster, aided and abetted by Jim Salicrup.

These days, Jim is the "arachnerd" in charge of editing all the Spider-Man comics at Marvel. His newest SPIDER-MAN series, written and drawn by Todd McFarlane, has just broken all sales records and made comics history (we talked to Todd in INTERVIEW #81, which no doubt gave the book just the boost it needed to blast off!).

Anyway, Jim introduced me to McFarlane (hi, Todd!) at a recent Atlanta comics convention, after which Salicrup came for a stay at our secret hideout on Screamer Mountain (since the mountain wouldn't come to Manhattan). It was good to see him again — for those who haven't read the masthead lately, Jim's our consulting editor — and to hear that Spidey's back on top, where Salicrup believes he belongs.

According to Jim, lots of people want to see Spider-Man and have just been waiting for a good excuse, despite his "missing" ancestral line of fear of machines.

Looks like he and Stan are right, too!

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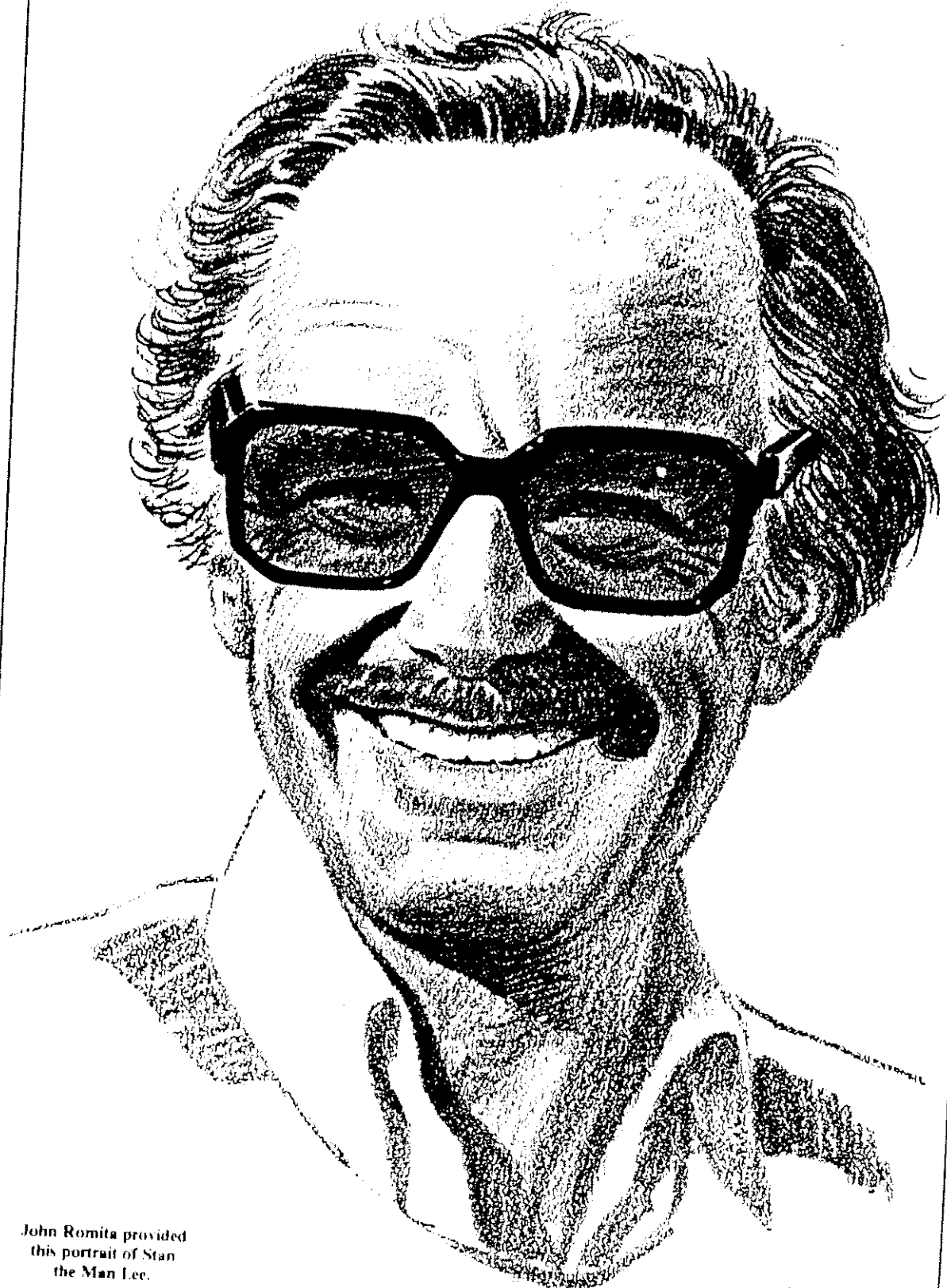


LETTERS:
THE LAST WORD
— and a few



STAN LEE

“What I tried to do in the comics was give



John Romita provided this portrait of Stan the Man Lee.

JOHN ROMITA

comics 78 interview

every character his own individual style.”

STAN

Yes, Virginia, there is an Asgard. They don't call it that, of course. They call it California, and the Bifrost Bridge is really the Golden Gate. There, in the City of Angels and Stars, dwells the father of the many gods and the author of his own universe. Stan Lee. Let the four corners of the four-color world resound with his name! Lee, the All-Wry! Lee, the All-Cheerful! Lee, one of those troublesome legends who refuses to rest on his past accomplishments, and one of the most accessible deities you're ever likely to meet . . .

DAN HAGEN I was thinking about the HULK TV movies recently. A sort of realism worked in the TV series, but it seemed to me that when you have two super heroes, an attempt at realism doesn't really fly. Are they too restrained in those things? Should they go more for the really comic-book stuff or not?

STAN LEE: Oh, I think they just didn't do it right. I think it could work if it were done a little bit differently. For instance, in the one with the Hulk and Daredevil, I didn't like the idea of both of them knowing the other's secret identity right away . . . and the same with the Hulk and Thor, you know, where each one knew who the other one was? It would have been much more dramatic if Daredevil never knew that David Banner was really the Hulk, or if Banner didn't know that

the blind lawyer was really Daredevil, I think there would have been much more interest. But the minute they both knew who the other one was and they're just fighting together as allies, then I feel it becomes too comic-booky. It's just two guys in costume, doing whatever the hell they're doing.

DAN: I see what you mean. They gave away a good plot development.

STAN: You see, one of the beautiful things about secret identities is it gives an additional layer of drama and interest to the situation. That's why, all these years, nobody knew Superman was Clark Kent, nobody knows Spider-Man is Peter Parker and so forth. Because that somehow adds another layer of interest and, I think, even a little more maturity and sophistication to it. The minute you've got a guy running around in a costume and people know who he is . . .

DAN: What's the point of the costume?

STAN: Yeah. Now, another thing is that in the Daredevil show, the costume was terrible.

DAN: Yeah, a ninja thing. That was an example of what I was talking about. They're doing it, but resisting it.

STAN: Exactly. One of the things I told them . . . and again, I was a consultant; as you know, when you're a consultant, you can talk but nobody has to listen. I told them that the fight scenes were terrible. He was fighting like **Chuck Norris** or like **Bruce Lee**, like anybody you see in any of

these ninja movies. And he should have been fighting like a gymnast. What I always tried to do in the comics was give every character his own individual style. Captain America wouldn't fight like Daredevil, and neither of them would fight like Iron Man or like someone else. They all should have their own styles. And of course, it was silly-looking. It looked like he was wearing a blindfold.

DAN: Sort of a fencing mask.

STAN: Those are little things, but I think cumulatively, when you put them all together, it takes away. What I'm getting at is, I don't think it didn't work because you can't have two super heroes together in film. I think it didn't work because it just really wasn't done the way it might have been.

DAN: I'd love to see two super heroes together in the show . . .

STAN: I'd love to see one, done well.

DAN: The **SUPERMAN** and **BATMAN** movies illustrate to me that the mass audience can accept comic-book stuff.

STAN: Of course, of course. It just has to be done right. Now with the Thor and Hulk show, I think the problem there was that they just changed it too much. They didn't do Thor the way he should have been done. Thor is supposed to be . . . I'm trying to think of his name.

DAN: Dr. Don Blake.

STAN: (Laughter) Dr. Blake. I forget their names sometimes. But they made him two separate people. Instead of him turning into Thor, they had Dr. Blake talking to Thor. So it wasn't really our Thor. They changed Thor's personality.

DAN: Also he wasn't a god, he ain't th, you lost all of that real fantasy.

STAN: That's right. So it's still hard to know. Would our character done correctly have worked?

DAN: Daredevil was closer, I thought.

STAN: Daredevil was much closer than Thor. Well, it was more logical that it could be, because it's easier to be a lawyer who's a lawyer and so forth.

LEE



I WANT TO BE YOUR DOG

COMING IN AUGUST from EBOS COMICS

"TV productions were better than they might have been."

DAN: *It's closer to what they do on TV already.*

STAN: Yeah. Doing a god. *(Laughs.)* People don't have that much familiarity with them.

Let me just mention, though, if you're going to write this, that I don't want to sound like I'm knocking those TV productions, because, by and large, they were still both intelligently done and they had stories that weren't silly.

DAN: *I agree. The Hulk, Thor movie got ratings through the roof.*

STAN: And **Bill Bixby**, who directed them, and **Gerry DiPego**, who wrote

them, are both incredibly talented guys. It's easy for me to criticize, but these things are very difficult to do. The one thing they did bring to both shows was some intelligence and some credibility. And they were shows that an adult could watch. I felt that things could have been done differently, but they were still a hell of a lot better than they might have been.

DAN: *I agree. I don't want to imply that they were terribly bad. It was just a little disappointing. Now, the CAPTAIN AMERICA movie is next, I guess.*

STAN: CAPTAIN AMERICA is almost finished. I understand that they want to

shoot a few scenes over and give it a slightly different ending. I had seen the script on the revisions, and it looks pretty good to me. And I believe any day now they'll be heading for Yugoslavia to shoot those last scenes over again.

DAN: *I think that ought to be a great Trivial Pursuit question: What do J.D. Salinger and Captain America have in common? So you liked the script?*

STAN: It was a good script. Now, we had a number of problems. One of the things that happened was that the script was so good and so rich and the director, **Albert Pyun**, was so in love with the script that

Everyone's favorite
green/gray behemoth — The
Hulk, by Erik Larsen.



"CAPTAIN AMERICA is almost finished.



Captain America (Matt Salinger), with his bullet-proof shield, represents the best of mankind.

he filmed everything. And by the time the movie was shot it ran about three hours. Well, we couldn't have it that long, so it had to go to the cutting room. And by cutting almost an hour and a half out of it, we had something that was more fragmented and not as smooth as it should have been or as the script had been. Ever since then, they've been working night and day to add little bits and to smooth it out and make it not seem jerky because of the parts that were eliminated. So it's a little hard for me to judge it at the moment. I would have to sit down and see it again. But I've still got my fingers crossed. It was, originally, I think, a fine script with a lot of good characterization. At least in the original script, it wasn't just a silly action movie.

DAN: *I saw the stills. They looked good. And it seems to me that they've retained some of what you put into Captain America in the 1940s—the "man out of time."*

STAN: They definitely tried to do that, and I think it came across. I think **Scott Paulin**, the actor who played Red Skull, is magnificent. I don't think it could have been done better than he did it. It was a joy to watch.

DAN: *How did you come up with that "man out of time" thing? Why revive Captain America in the first place, back when you were doing it? I know that was a busy time, and it's hard to remember all those things, but I always thought the "man out of time" bit gave it a certain poignance and really added an edge to the character.*

STAN: Well, I'll tell you what happened, we were starting Marvel Comics, and we started it with the FANTASTIC FOUR and SPIDER-MAN and THE HULK and all of those. I think when I did FANTASTIC FOUR, which was the first one, I decided I wanted four characters that had very definitely different powers. It occurred to me that the

Human Torch, whom we had owned years ago and who was created by **Carl Burgos**, certainly had a unique power to be able to burst into flame and fly. There hadn't been a Human Torch for years, and I figured, "Gee, let's get that character again, but I would change him and make him a teenager and he'd be the brother of the girl and so forth." Then after we were in the swing of things, so to speak, I don't remember which issue of the FANTASTIC FOUR it was, but I thought, "We seem to have succeeded with the torch. It would be fun to bring back the Sub-Mariner," I think in the ...

DAN: *Third or fourth issue, somewhere like that.*

STAN: Somewhere in there. And that worked. Then I thought, "Wouldn't it be great if we could make Captain America popular again?" Because over the years we had tried to resurrect him, and he never worked. After World War II ended, he was just a guy in a dumb

They want to give it a slightly different ending.”

costume running around. I mean, that's the way a lot of people perceived him...

DAN: *And a particularly cornball costume.*

STAN: Yeah. So I thought, "Wouldn't it be fun to say he had been frozen in the ice for these two decades or whatever it was, and now he's back?" I'm always trying to think of some way to give them a personality hook or a character trait that would make them unique. And I thought, "Wouldn't it be great? Here's a guy who's been out of it for 20 years, and suddenly everything is changed!" He never knew what a hippie was. There are hippies, there are guys smoking marijuana, all those things...

DAN: *And all these people with their disintegrating belief in America.*

STAN: That's right! And here's a guy who'd be considered totally square. He believes in liberty and freedom and the flag. It was the Vietnam War, and nobody was interested in war anymore. People were turned off. So I figured, "Let's give it a shot." So that was the reason for the man out of time, out of sync.

DAN: *And also there you take what people would criticize about him — "He's cornball, he's passé, he's World War II" — and turn it on its head and make it an advantage instead of a disadvantage.*

STAN: Well, I think it's very perceptive of you to say that, because one thing I always tried to do was take things that were disadvantages and try to make a plus out of them. And that used to happen to me a lot in the stories that I wrote. You know, very often — in fact, most of the time after we got started — the artist did most of the plotting. I would just give him a one-liner, like, "Let's feature Dr. Doom and he goes back in time" or something. And whoever the artist was, he'd practically do the whole story, but when I would get the artwork back and I had to put the copy in, very often there were things that I thought didn't work or were foolish or didn't make sense or something.

Instead of having the artist redraw and go to a lot of trouble, the thing that was the most fun for me was to find out how I could take that discordant element in the story and make it seem as if we purposely did that to embellish the story. You know what I mean? And turn it into a good story point. It was like doing a crossword puzzle.

DAN: *You can do that in many ways, but perhaps by having the characters comment on what a silly thing it was.*



The Red Skull, portrayed by Scott Paulin, is the human embodiment of evil.

STAN: Exactly, exactly.

DAN: *And then they share the in-joke with the reader.*

STAN: For example, I think there was a time when I had Spider-Man or some character walking down the street and he just got into the costume and I thought it looked silly. So I had the character say, "I feel like a nut, dressed like this."

DAN: *(Laughter.) I was thinking too, along that line, super hero comics have these conventions, in many ways like Broadway musicals, if all things. In Broadway musicals, people walk down the street and they burst into song and the audience accepts it...*

STAN: *(Laughter.) That's right.*

DAN: *... because they accept the convention and they like it. And I think super hero comics are similar. People have double identities, they get dressed up, they have super powers.*

STAN: That's a very good analogy, because in a musical you're in the middle of the city and you burst into

song and the orchestra comes up from nowhere.

DAN: *And nobody notices. Utterly silly elements. And now both of those mediums are twisting or pulling those conventions in order to make them more interesting, as you did back in the '60s.*

STAN: Hey, I think I ought to be interviewing you.

DAN: *(Laughter.) Well, thanks. Let me see, what else? A DAREDEVIL TV show spinoff from THE HULK, or any others?*

STAN: You know, I hate mentioning things, and I'll tell you why — only because they change. And by the time it comes out, people either think I was lying or I don't know anything. So if you could just preface anything you write by saying that's the way it is at the moment... I never know. For instance, Cannon was supposed to do SPIDER-MAN, and then Cannon was bought by Pathe, and Menahem Golan — who had the rights to Spider-Man — went over and formed

"As it looks now Columbia may buy SPIDER-MAN."



21st Century. And they're supposed to do SPIDER-MAN and now they're talking to Columbia, and the way it looks now Columbia may end up buying SPIDER-MAN from 21st Century. Each time I put a notice about something in the Bullpen Bulletins page or somewhere, I never know if, by the time it comes out, it'll have all changed.

But at the moment, we are putting together a DAREDEVIL show with Shelley Duvall, who does

DAN: FAIRY TALE THEATRE.

STAN: And I'm hoping that we may put it on Fox television network.

DAN: Great!

STAN: But again, it's not contracted for. But that's what our plan is.

DAN: And Iron Man? There was talk he was close to a movie.

STAN: IRON MAN... we're negotiating with Universal Pictures to do that, and are presently working with Michael Miner, who was the co-writer of ROBOCOP. But again, we hope the deal goes through with Universal.

DAN: Sure. One of the things you did in Marvel Comics, of course, was to create a whole, interconnected universe, a little like the WAR AND PEACE of comic books. Were you conscious of doing that or did that just evolve? Did you envision doing it?

STAN: I enjoyed it, I was conscious of it. I didn't know it would turn into such a big thing. The reason I did it is that in the beginning I was writing almost all the books myself, and that made it easier for me. If I had trouble dreaming up a plot, I would say, "Gee, won't it be fun if Iron Man meets the Hulk or Thor meets Captain America?" or whatever the hell it was, you know. So I would put them in the same story.

And it was easier for me to do than it is, I would imagine, for the guys today. Because I don't know how they can even keep track of all the permutations. But when you write them all yourself, I would say, "Well, let's see, I'll have Thor do this. No, he did that in my last story, so I'll have him do that instead." And I could sort of have an overview of where they were all going. And it was fun, it kept my own interest up. And it was always fun to think "What would it be like if these guys met? How would they act and what would happen?"

DAN: Before we get off Captain America, I wanted to ask you this, too. This is something I don't think I've ever seen you address, and again you may not remember, but in about the 16th issue of THE AVENGERS you dropped all the big guys—Thor, Iron Man—and went with Captain America and Hawkeye and

Scarlet Witch, the minor characters. Why did you think of doing that?

STAN: You know, Dan, I really don't remember. Did I do it, or did the writer alter me to do it?

DAN: I think you did it.

STAN: Did I? I must have had a reason.

DAN: They were all title characters, and maybe you figured you wanted to spotlight minor ones.

STAN: That may have been part of it, and I'm guessing now, but usually when those things happen it's because you want to give the book a shot in the arm as far as the sales go. I may have figured, "Maybe it's getting a little dull. It's the same thing all the time. Maybe I'll try to see if I can stimulate more interest by getting new characters."

And it may also have been—and again I'm guessing—because I was finding it too difficult to seem to be realistic. For example, in his own book, Thor might have been trapped in Asgard somewhere, and yet in THE AVENGERS book he's here attending a meeting. I seem to remember, I did get mail from a lot of readers about that point, and I felt, "Maybe it's destroying the pseudo-realism of the stories, where a character is dying in one story, and in the other story he's the champion of the Avengers meeting." I think that had a lot

"I think they're geniuses at Marvel. I really admire them."

to do with it, as a matter of fact.

And as I say, I don't know how the hell they manage to overcome that problem today, with the characters appearing in a hundred different books.

DAN: *I was going to ask you about that, too, for Spider-Man. Now he has, what, a fourth title? He's a busy guy, isn't he?*

STAN: They all are. Spider-Man is. Wolverine is. The X-Men in general are.

DAN: *I guess their schedules are as busy as yours.*

STAN: I have to tell you, I think they're geniuses at Marvel because they make it all somehow tie in. They get these series where something happens in one issue of one book and it's part of what happens in another issue of another book and it's also going on in the guy's own book — and it all works out.

DAN: *A logistic nightmare.*

STAN: And I really admire them for being able to do it, and they do it pretty well most of the time.

DAN: *I remember when I first visited New York City, I looked up and I said to Dave Kraft, "You mean Spider-Man swings between these buildings?" They looked closer together in the comics.*

STAN: *(Laughter.)* He only does it on narrow streets.

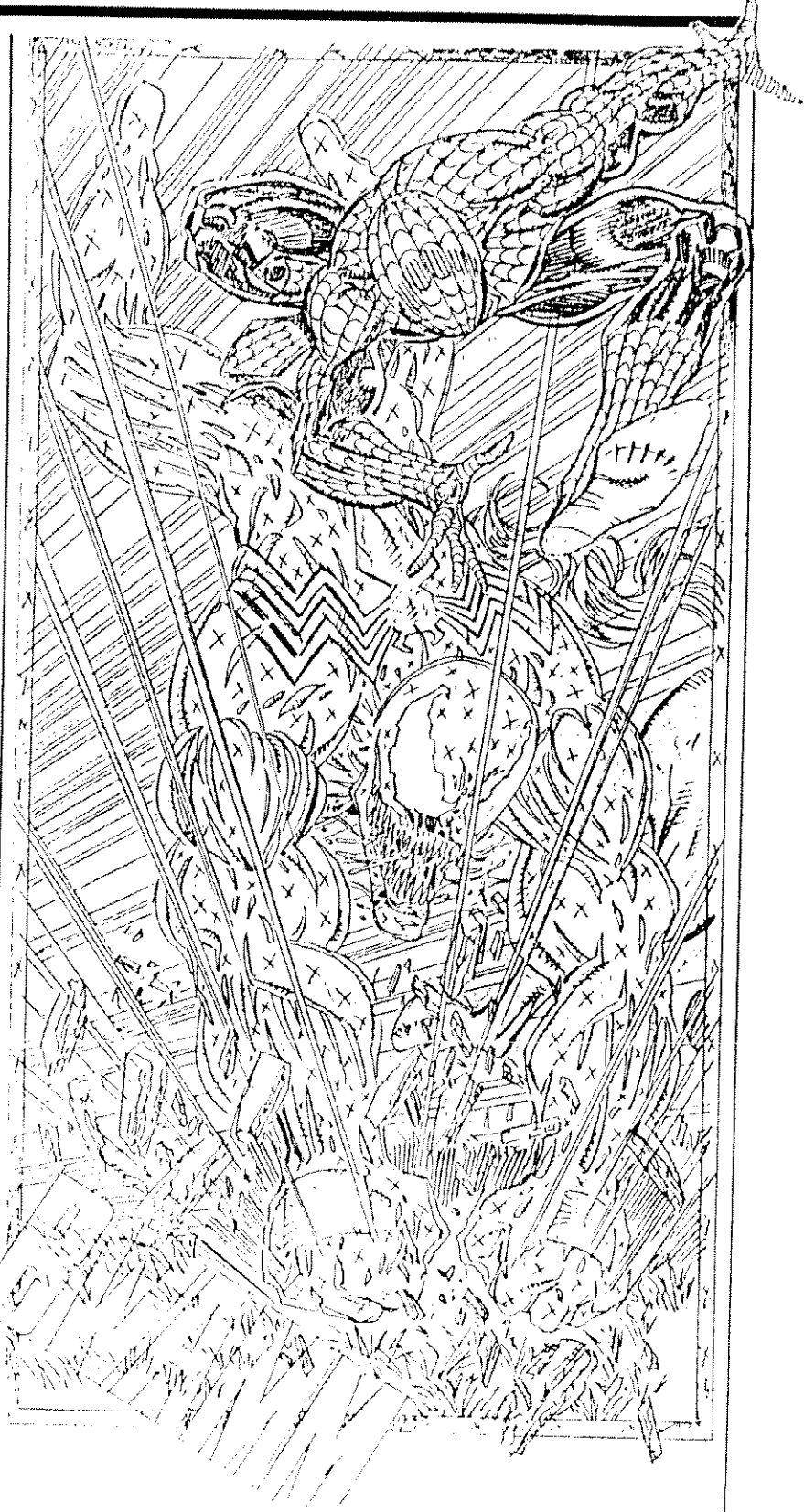
DAN: *That's very convenient, that crime occurs there. On the double identity, too, I always thought that at least Spider-Man has a full face mask. All these other characters running around with secret identities who have domino masks and things, it's hard to imagine no one would know.*

STAN: You're right, I used to lecture a lot, and I still do a little bit. And one thing that always got a laugh out of the audience was that I would talk about Superman. And I would say, "I don't know if you ever thought of it. . . ." I wear a pair of glasses, you know, and I would say, "Here I am, Stan Lee, talking to you and I'm wearing my glasses. Now if I suddenly take my glasses off, and muss my hair a little bit, I'm sure you're all thinking, 'Gee, who's this new guy on the podium? Where'd Stan go?'" And I'd say, "Has anybody ever thought of that with Superman and Clark? I mean, it's the same guy." All he does is put on his glasses and he gets a little tousled forelock over his forehead, and nobody knows!"

DAN: *Exactly. That's stretching the boundaries as far as believability will go.*

STAN: But I think the readers of super hero stories, apparently, are quite willing to suspend disbelief in those areas.

DAN: *In some things and not in others. It's always interesting. I know from all*



Venom and Spidey, from issue 232. Pencils provided by Erik Larsen.

"There's almost nobody who doesn't know Spider-Man."

the letters you've gotten, you saw what you could stretch and what you couldn't over the years. Why do so many super heroes have media jobs, by the way? That's always interested me, since I do, too.

STAN: I think it makes it easier to get them involved in situations. It's the same as most of the adventure shows on TV. The heroes are either policemen or detectives or reporters, or something that'll make it easy for them to get involved in crimes. Now, if a guy, let's say, is a soda jerk, it isn't as natural for him, week after week, to get involved. *(Laughter.)* But if he works in a newspaper or he's a news photographer or he's a cop or a detective or a member of the CIA or the FBI, well, then it's natural that he'd be involved. And that's really the main reason. It's the easiest course.

DAN: *With Spider-Man, you made the choice to let the character develop, rather than remain static. He's married now. Did you think about that a lot? Does that have advantages and disadvantages?*

STAN: Oh, I'm sure it has disadvantages. I think any change you make in a character has disadvantages, and I'm always nervous when these changes are made, but I think it's something you have to do. Because you almost can't have a character, month after month after month, for years, and come up with interesting stories where the character never changes at all.

The disadvantages are that it throws the reader off a little, because it's nice and comfortable to always be able to know who the character is, where he lives, who his friends are, to be able to predict what he'd do under a given set of circumstances. Suddenly, you change all of that. You throw in a wild card. You move him to another city or you kill off one of the characters, one of his friends, or introduce a new character . . .

DAN: *Or you marry him, one of the most dangerous ones.*

STAN: Or you marry him. Now someday, maybe we'll think about him having a kid. What do you do with the kid? I remember when I came up with Reed Richards having a son in the FANTASTIC FOUR, I said, "What'll I do with the son? All the readers are going to say, 'He's got to have a super power.'" What would his super power be? and I figured, "Well, it'll be years -- I'll keep him a baby for a long time and I'll make a mystery of it. Everybody will wonder what will his super power be, and by the time it has to be explained, somebody else'll be writing it. *(Laughter.)* I won't have to worry about it." And that seems to be the way it happened. I was kind of lucky.

DAN: *I can imagine you might have been a little frustrated over the BATMAN movie, because I remember once that you and producer Peter Guber had talked about doing a SPIDER-MAN*

movie many years ago.

STAN: Years ago, when I was still in New York, he called. He was an executive at the old Columbia then, and he wanted to do SPIDER-MAN. I remember he flew me out here, and I met with him at his house and he had a number of members of his staff there. Everybody was so excited, and he seemed so bright and so hip and so understanding of what the character should be. And I said, "Oh man, are we going to get a good movie out of this?" And then what happened was, Columbia had a change of management, and Peter Guber left. The whole project just fell apart when he left and I guess he then had other fish to fry. I never heard from him again. And now here we are, a million years later, and it looks like maybe we'll get together again on a project.

DAN: *Superman and Batman — one of the things about the movies that I wanted to bring up is that Superman and Batman have a history that is 20 years longer than the Marvel characters. Do you think that factors in? I mean, almost everybody grew up with Superman and Batman, but the people who grew up with Marvel are thirtysomething, like me, or maybe in their early 40s.*

STAN: You're absolutely right, but they're the largest segment of the movie-going public. I think there's almost nobody who doesn't know of Spider-Man. Some characters like the Fantastic



Covers to
CAPTAIN
AMERICA: THE
MOVIE
SPECIAL, parts 1
and 2. These
paintings by
Marvel painter Joe
Jusko.



"The Turtles are a new phenomenon, yet it's successful."

Four or even the X-Men — which is probably the world's largest-selling comic book — a lot of adults aren't so familiar with them. But the people who are of the age that the movie producers are looking for, most of them know the Marvel characters because most of them did grow up with them. Guys in their 20s, 30s and even early 40s grew up with Marvel.

DAN: *Speaking of the X-Men, that reminds me of the TURTLES movie, which I haven't seen yet. That struck me as ironic, too. Here's a comic book that began six years ago as a parody of the X-Men. Now it's a \$100 million grossing movie.*

STAN: Isn't that funny? I haven't seen it, either, but somebody had sent me the shooting script, the screenplay, and I read it and I thought it was brilliant. Because I do this, I'm sure every writer does, when you hear of a project, you say to yourself, "How would I do that?" I'm not that familiar with the Turtles, because I read the book only once, but I said to myself, "Geez, I wouldn't know how to do a screenplay that people could accept about some goddamn turtles who live in a sewer." (Laughter.)

DAN: *Even though the term "teenage mutant" became popular because of you...*

STAN: I know. And then I read the screenplay, and it was quite witty and interesting and very innovative. I forgot the name of the writer, but my hat's off to him. You know, it's so funny because producers today are all looking for the Batman or Superman that, as you say, everybody has known of since they were kids. Now, the Turtles are a new phenomenon, and most of the public didn't know who the Turtles were, and yet it's successful.

I tell so many people that sure, it's good to have the added value of name recognition, but I don't think it means that much. For example, you take a movie like *DIE HARD*, *LETHAL WEAPON* or *BEVERLY HILLS COP*, you never heard of those movies but they're enormous hits. If you get something good, and it's what the public wants to see, and if the studio, the distributor, gets behind it and promotes it enough, word of mouth will make it a hit. One guy goes to see it and tells his friend.

DAN: *That's what happened, for example, with RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK...*

STAN: Of course. Nobody ever heard of that. Nobody ever heard of *STAR WARS*, before it came out.

DAN: *And I think they're in part counting on that for DICK TRACY — the presold audience. But I'm afraid that Dick Tracy interest died some time ago. The movie better be pretty damn good on its own.*

STAN: I have a feeling it'll do well. At least, I have a feeling there's going to be as much previous interest in it as there was in *BATMAN*, because they're promoting the hell out of it with *Madonna*, and I keep reading they're going to use comic-book coloring in the photography and they've got these great guest stars. And *Dick Tracy* is another one that I had said to myself, "Why would anybody buy the rights to *Dick Tracy*? He's just a

detective. I mean, there's nothing special about him."

DAN: *Exactly. He had colorful villains, but he himself was rather dull...*

STAN: I have a feeling it'll be the villains that make it, if the movie is a hit. And I have the same feeling about *FERRY AND THE PRIATES*. I read somewhere that they're going to make a multi-million-dollar production with a lot of big stars. *Milton Caniff* was a genius, and I'm one of his biggest fans, but if you try to do a one-liner about Terry, he's just a kid who was over in the Orient and he was with a friend named Pat Ryan and they fought smugglers...

DAN: *Yeah. What makes that different*

Pre-production artwork for the *DR. STRANGE* movie (TV) — 1978.
Art by Frank Brunner.



"I was always a little ashamed of myself that I didn't

from anything else."

STAN: So it's hard to predict these things.

DAN: *By the way, I just wanted to mention that the MARVEL MASTERWORKS series is wonderful, and it's kind of every comic-book collector's dream, don't you think? Has it been getting good reception?*

STAN: Oh, wonderful, and I was surprised. Because when they told me the price — 29 bucks! — I said, "Nobody's going to spend that." But they're selling well.

DAN: *And DC's doing it too, and yours is cheaper than theirs.*

STAN: That's right, and everybody who buys them seems to like them, when I go to comic-book conventions and there's an autograph session, I seem to get more of those to autograph than anything.

DAN: *And of course it's a permanent form on good stock. It's what everybody always wanted in the original runs of the comics.*

STAN: Just as a matter of pride and satisfaction, I love having them myself.

DAN: *And they'll be around forever. Comic books ultimately deteriorate.*

STAN: One thing that I'm happy about is that we're going to do the Silver Surfer in that form, and I always felt that the SILVER SURFER series that I did with **John Buscema** is one of the greatest comic-book series of all time — owing more to his artwork than to my stories. *(Laughs.)* I just thought they were such beautiful books, and the fact that they're going to be in the MASTERWORKS format really excited me.

DAN: *Why did it take so long to do MARVEL MASTERWORKS, though? I would have thought somebody would have said, 10 years ago, "Let's put these out in hardcover."*

STAN: Oh, I think it took 'til now to realize that the market is really there. You know, it's only been these past few years that any of the comics are being done in real expensive formats. We're making toys and models and things like that. It took a while for people to realize that there is so much interest and enthusiasm for these super hero characters.

DAN: *And back then when you started Marvel, you were saying, "Someday I'll write the Great American Novel," and without knowing it, you were, in a way, now they're in hardcover, and expensive hardcover.*

STAN: That's a very interesting point, and you're absolutely right. For the first years, I always felt, "Why am I wasting time doing this?" I was always a little

ashamed of myself that I didn't just quit and take a flyer on writing novels or movies or something. But apparently it turned out the same anyway.

DAN: *Yes. I see again that Jack Kirby has been claiming creation of everything. Do you just pretty much ignore that, or what?*

STAN: I have to ignore it because... it's a very difficult thing for me. I don't want to make a big issue of it. I don't even want to discuss it, to tell you the truth. It's a very unpleasant thing.

DAN: *I imagine, because you worked together for years.*

STAN: Yeah, I don't even like talking about it.

DAN: *Dave Kraft wanted me to remind you that years ago in COMICS INTERVIEW #5 he published your original plot synopsis for FANTASTIC FOUR #1.*

STAN: Oh, I hope he saved it...

DAN: *He printed it and if it ever comes up in a discussion or something, that clearly shows that you defined all the characters, you described them and their interrelationships and what their personalities are.*

STAN: I did that with all of them. I don't know why I saved the FANTASTIC FOUR one, but nobody ever thought those things would amount to anything or anybody would care about them, so I did it and I threw them away. I did that with every book we did.

DAN: *So if you ever want to throw proof in somebody's face, it's there.*

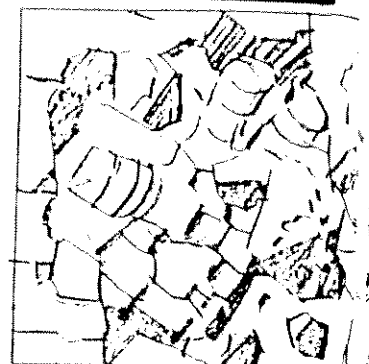
STAN: Well, bless your heart, I'm glad you reminded me.

DAN: *The other thing I wanted to talk about was the future of comics. I've got a Nintendo now — and I've got the X-MEN game — and I look at that and I think, "I used to read comic books. Kids today are in them, interactively." But I wonder, is comic-book readership just aging thirtysomething fanboys like me now, spending a lot of money on them? Is there a new readership coming up? Do kids read anymore?*

STAN: Well, it's interesting that you should say that, because I'm going to head a committee for a foundation called the American Spirit Foundation. The committee I'm heading is going to be called Entertainers for Education. And I'm going to gather together some of the biggest names in entertainment, and we're going to try to find ways to make textbooks and education as exciting for kids as watching television or playing video games.

And when you mention comic books,

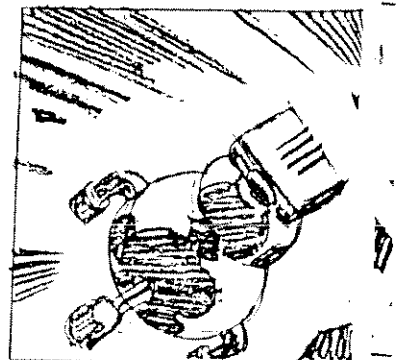
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IT CRACKS!



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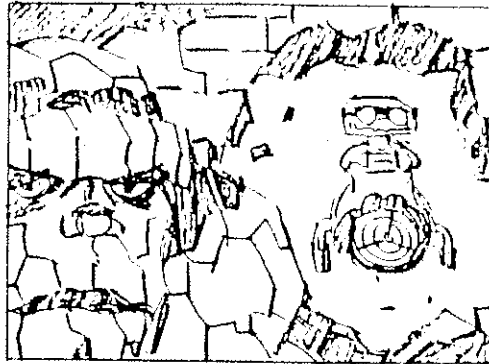


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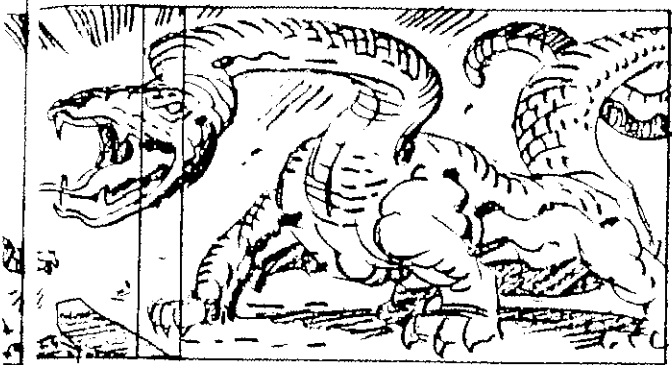
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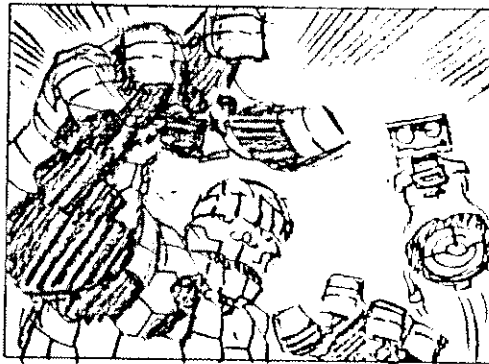
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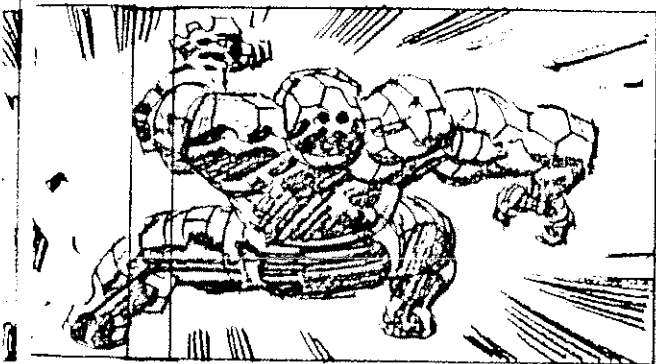
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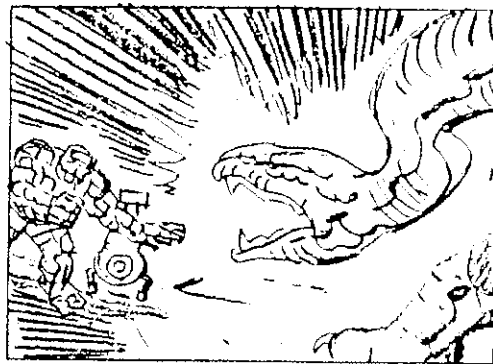
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IT IS USELESS TO DEFEY ME!



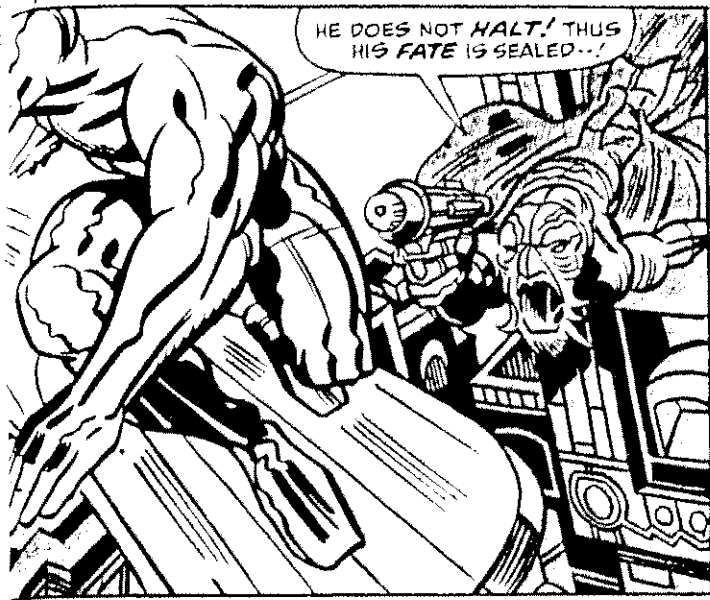
THIS IS AN STORY!

One of Stan's television (cartoon) scripts . . . Visual interpretations provided by former Marvelite Jack Kirby.

"The Silver Surfer I did with John Buscema is the greatest



— owing more to his art than my stories.” (Laughter.)



1: The Silver Surfer's first appearance, F.F. #48, 1966, by Lee, Kirby and Sinnott. 2: From Silver Surfer's solo book, issue 1, 1968, by Lee, Buscema and Sinnott. 3: S.S. #18 (the last issue), 1970, by Lee, Kirby and Herb Trimpe. 4: From F.F. #122, 1972, by Lee, Buscema and Sinnott. 5: S.S. hardcover novel, 1978, by Lee, Kirby and Sinnott. 6: S.S. second hardcover, "Judgment Day," 1988, by Lee and Buscema.



"Comics are the only things that young

basically comic books are about the only things that very young people today will read of their own volition, without being told to. And I've discussed this with many, many educators, all over the country. Comic books serve a very valuable function, because they're the one medium that allows a youngster to equate enjoyment with reading.

DAN: *Exactly.*

STAN: You know, when you go to school and you're told to read a school book—even if it's a great school book—you do it reluctantly. "Oh, I've got to read this damn thing." But kids love to read comics. And you can't understand the stories without reading the words. It gives you a facility at reading. The more you do it, the more facile you become, the more adept you become.

DAN: *I always said one of the first words I could read was "meteorite," oddly enough.*

STAN: *(Laughter)* Well, that's right. And as I say, you equate enjoyment with what's on the printed page. Now, nobody stays with comics forever—or they may stay with comics but once you become adept at reading, you go on to reading other things, too.

And this is something I wasn't aware of in the beginning. I don't want to make it sound like we published comics in order to educate the world. It was an entertainment medium, but we found out that, just peripherally and incidentally, they seem to be serving a great purpose in an age when kids are glued to the screen. Suddenly, there's one thing that'll make them want to read, and that one thing is a comic book. Now, I seem to be a little far afield from your question.

DAN: *No, that's where I was going.*

STAN: Will kids want to keep reading comics, or is it just the older people? There is something about the basic comic-book format that I think young people will always find interesting. That is the combination of words and pictures and color, and when you add the element of fantasy, which all our super hero books have, and action and suspense. I think a thousand years from now, kids will be reading comics. They may be three-dimensional comics or holographic or who knows what, but I think people love to read exciting stories, and I think they always will.

You know, they said when television came along, that was the end of the book publishing business. Well, books are bigger than ever.

DAN: *And there are more magazines.*

The old ones died—**COLLIERS**, **SATURDAY EVENING POST**—but the market has fragmented into different things. Yes, I certainly hope that's true, because that worries me a lot. Well, let's see. Any possibility of a Lee Ditko **SPIDER-MAN** graphic novel or something like that?

STAN: I would love it! But some people have spoken to **Steve Ditko** about this, and I think I mentioned it to him once years ago, and I do not know his reason, but he has been quoted as saying that the two characters he'll never draw again are Spider-Man and Dr. Strange.

DAN: *His two most famous ones.*

STAN: I don't know why. I wish he would change his mind, but that's the way it stands now. I was **Ditko's** biggest fan, and I still am. I think the man is a genius. He's just as good at story as he is at artwork. His layouts—he can depict situations and scenes and actions and tell a story through pictures as well as anybody I've ever known.

DAN: *One would think a **SPIDER-MAN** movie or TV show ought to look like **Ditko**, don't you think? If it can, I know it's hard. And the way **Ditko** used to pose him on the wall. How spider-like and creepy, in a way. It gave him a real personality as a character.*



people will read without being told to.”

STAN: Absolutely. There was a flavor to Steve's artwork that was just beautiful.

DAN: *Did the switch between Ditko and John Romita about 40 issues or so into the SPIDER-MAN run change the way you handled the character in any way?*

STAN: A little bit. I had to write Spider-Man, or Peter Parker, as though he was a little more glamorous. John had always done romance stories. Not always, but he had done a lot of them. And it was hard for John to draw a character who was just your average guy, somehow, you know? Even though, in the beginning, John got very close to Steve's style, as it moved along, for him to be more relaxed

with it, he had to put it in his own style. And the way an artist drew always affected the way I wrote the stories. I would base every bit of dialogue on the drawings that I looked at, on the expression, on the pose and so forth.

DAN: *So that helped the evolution of the character. You were making him not as much of a nerd already, but this sort of pushed it along.*

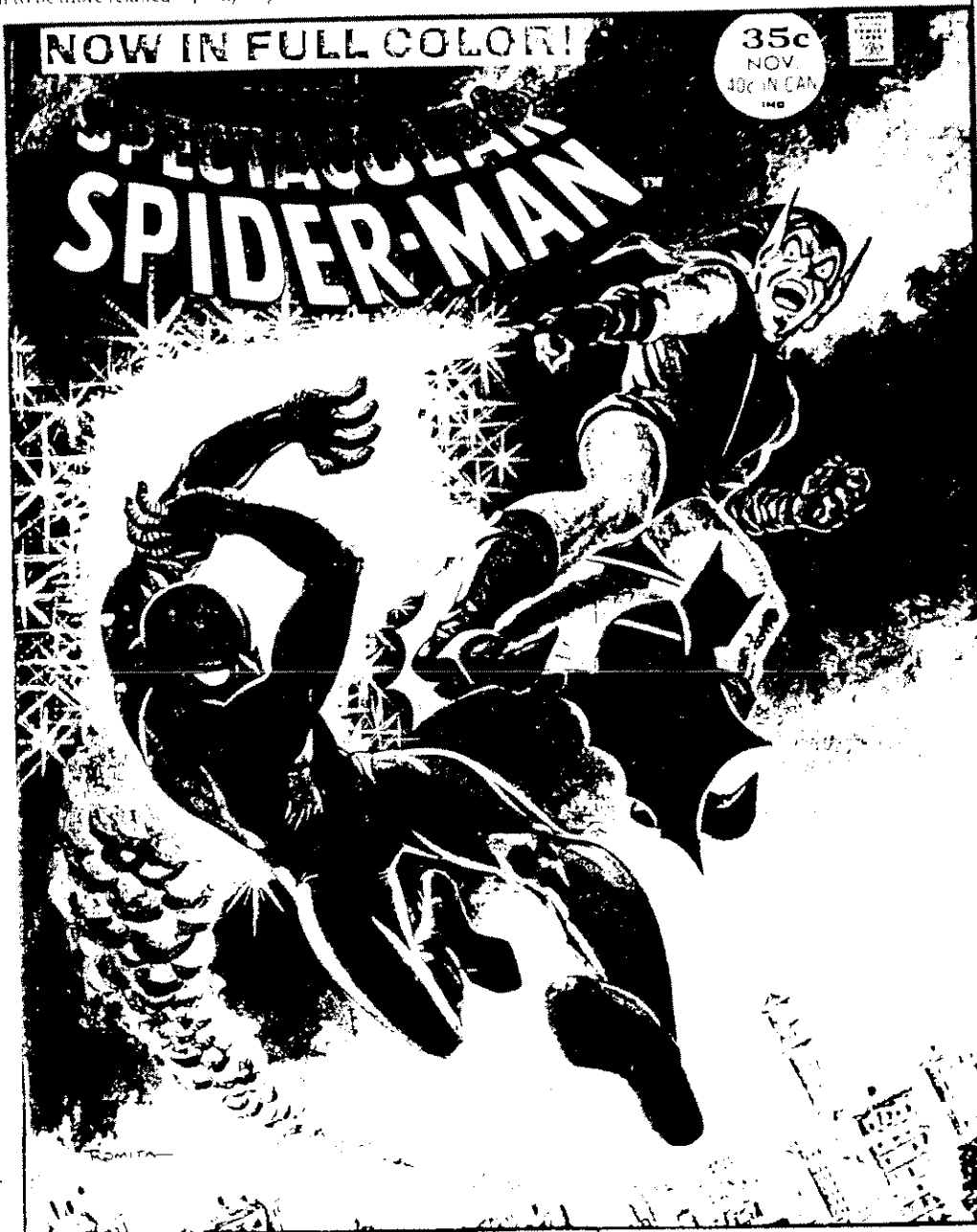
STAN: That's right.

DAN: *Which seemed natural to me. Here he was originally, a very, very insecure teenager and he had the hang-over of those feelings even after he got super powers. But after a while, surely,*

super powers would give you a little self-confidence.

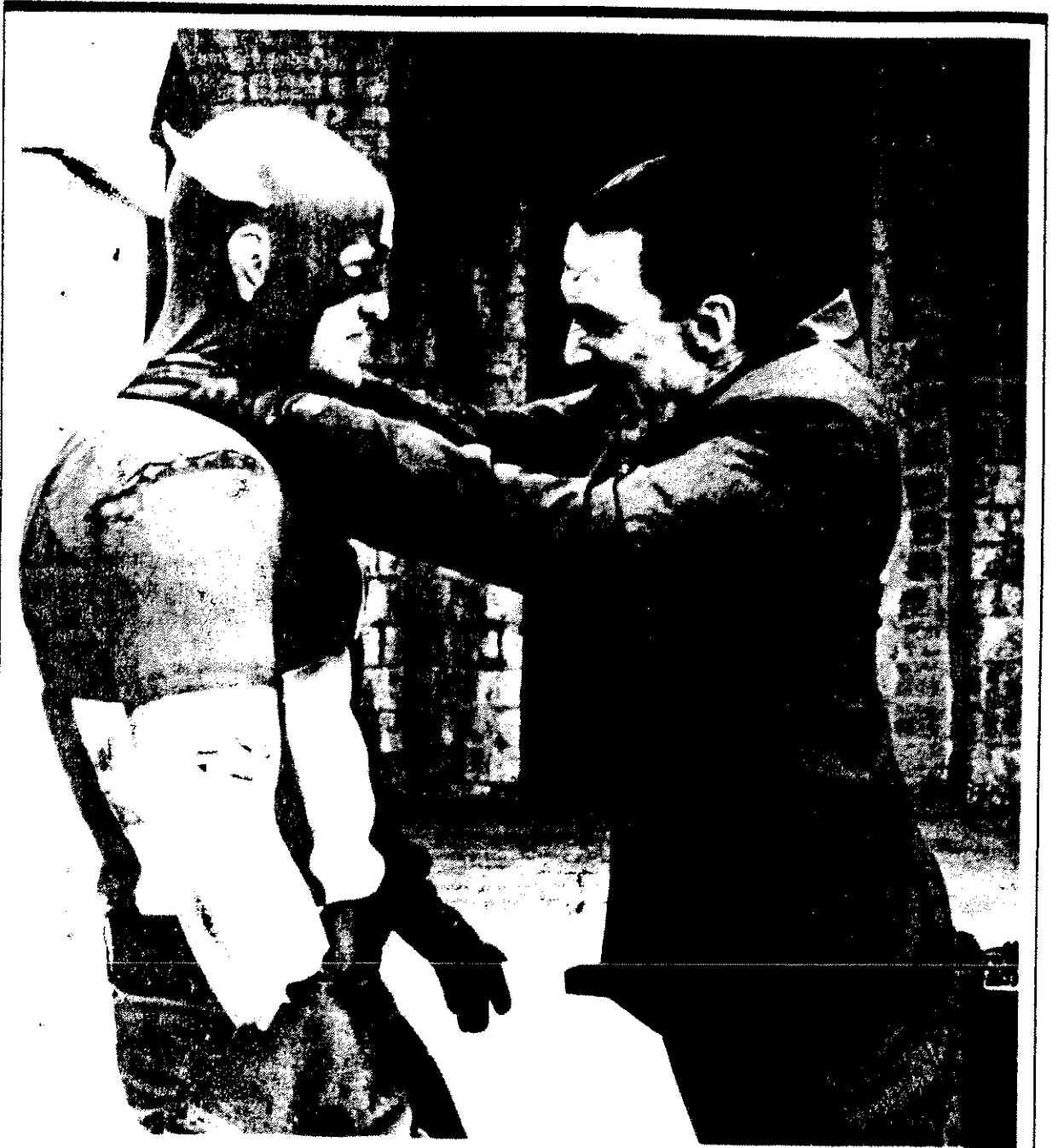
STAN: It was, I think, a natural evolution, anyhow. And as you said, we would have been doing the same thing with Ditko, only it would have been more gradual.

DAN: *What about when you created Spider-Man and gave him those powers? I always thought those powers were a nice balance. He's not invulnerable, of course. On the other hand, he's powerful enough to be very, very dramatic from time to time. So he's got vulnerabilities for the plot device but he's also got the fantasy element of really vast strength.*



Here and previous page: two examples of John Romita's cover art. The first is from his first issue of AMAZING SPIDER-MAN, 1966, a line drawing; the other a painting from the second issue of the oversized comic THE SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN, 1968.

“I think characters have to have some vulnerability.”



Captain America (Matt Salinger), and the Red Skull (Scott Paulin) renew their battle when the Skull kidnaps Tom Kimball, the president of the United States.

STAN: Right. Well, I think characters have to have vulnerability, or else they're totally uninteresting. That was the reason they finally decided to get kryptonite for Superman. You've got to have something for the reader to worry about.

About his strength, one of the most brilliant things Steve Ditko ever did, and it was all his idea. I don't remember if I told him to do it or not... was the scene

where he's trapped, I think, in a subway tunnel and there's water coming up...

DAN: Right. I remember *The Master Planner* plot.

STAN: He had to lift something...

DAN: That was impossible.

STAN: And Steve did it over a series of pages of him straining. And I think nobody who's ever seen that has been able to forget it. It was just beautiful.

And again, he wasn't the Hulk, who just threw it off, or Superman or someone. He had to strain and you, the reader, were not sure whether he'd be able to do it or not. It was just as dramatic a sequence as I think you'll ever find in a comic.

DAN: I remember that one very well.

STAN: I know. Anybody who's ever read it has never forgotten it.