

EXHIBIT 32



Stan Lee Replies to Éric Leguèbe

ÉRIC LEGUÈBE / 1978

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Stan Lee.

*(Editor's Note: Stan is tape recording his answers to questions to be
transcribed by his secretary.)*

Okay, Martha, I'm going to try again on this interview. . . . Here we go.
The first question:

A. Spider-Man was born about sixteen years ago when I decided to do a
character who could be like a real human being who suddenly got super-
power. I wanted a character who was terribly realistic. Who got allergy
attacks, ingrown toenails, worry about money, not be successful with
girls. In short, somebody with whom the reader could relate.

B. Spider-Man is specially important in my point of view because he became our very most popular and best-selling character, and he seems to represent and to typify the entire line of Marvel comics.

C. Yes, I've seen the cartoons done for TV that are now being seen in France. But I haven't really worked on them. We merely licensed them to other companies to do. I think they tried to keep the spirit of Spider-Man. Of course, I don't think they did it as well as if we ourselves had done them.

D. I don't understand this question. I'm sorry I can't answer it.

E. I don't really imagine new partners for Spider-Man. I feel a character like Spider-Man has to be a loner, and I don't expect he really ever will have steady partners in the future.

F. One day Spider-Man had been the friendly enemy of Superman because we did a book in partnership with DC Comics called *Spider-Man versus Superman* in which the two of them meet and fight and then become friends. It was just an experiment; we thought it would be an interesting thing to do, but I don't think we'll ever do it again.

G. I think the film done about Spider-Man which has shown in Paris is fairly good, which is based on a television show which was done here in the United States. I don't think it's as good as it really should be, but it's not as bad as it might have been.

H. I think that TV and cinema are parts of the media and methods of communication just as comic books are. Just as ballet is and just as opera is. I think every form of art is a form of communication. They are all different, but they all try to do similar things. I think the spirit of the style of Spider-Man or any character could be captured by TV or the cinema. It very often isn't captured because different people do the movie than have done the book or the comic book or the novel or whatever it is. But to answer the question specifically, yes, I think it is possible for a movie to keep the spirit of a comic book.

(Ed. Note: For some reason Stan starts to identify the questions using numbers instead of letters.)

I. I became an author of comics accidentally, actually. I never really wanted to be in the comic book industry or intended to be. I originally wanted to be an actor, then a lawyer, then an advertising man. But I

heard there was a job open in comics when I was young, thinking it would be a temporary job, but I've stayed ever since.

2. No, I haven't gone to any sort of artist school nor have I studied writing except when I was in high school when I took an English course, just as everybody else did. I guess whatever I know, I've been self-taught.

3. Yes, indeed, I feel admiration for other artists of comics and the so-called fine arts both from today and of the past. It would take me forever to say which ones. I admire the successful commercial artists of today. I admire Jack Davis, I admire Charlie Schulz. I admire Leroy Nieman, Salvador Dalí, Picasso. I admire anybody who is good at anything. I don't feel that fine art is more important than commercial art. In some ways I feel it is harder to be a commercial artist than to be a fine artist, but my admiration extends to anybody who does anything well, whether he be an artist or a pianist or an actor or a shoemaker.

4. Yes, I would have to answer the same way. I feel admiration for writers of yesterday and today, and again that goes for so many of the good ones. I admire . . . my favorite writer of all time was Shakespeare. But I was also a fan of Edgar Rice Burroughs, Arthur Conan Doyle, Victor Hugo, Omar Khayyam, or perhaps I should say Edward Fitzgerald who translated him. Kurt Vonnegut, Robert E. Howard. I just enjoy any good writer. No, I don't have a preference for science-fiction authors. Oh, sorry this is question 5.

5. No, I don't have a preference for science-fiction authors. I enjoy them as much as I enjoy any other authors if they are good. I guess my favorites are Ray Bradbury and Arthur Clarke, and I must say I think *Childhood's End* by Arthur Clarke is probably one of the greatest science-fiction stories, maybe one of the greatest stories that one could read.

6. Yes, when I was a young boy I did enjoy comic strips and comic books, and I enjoyed, well, again, I enjoyed them all, the ones that nobody would even remember today. I enjoyed one called *Red Barry*, one called *Skippy*—he was one of my favorites by Percy Crosby. I liked *The Phantom*. I liked Tim Tyler's *Luck*. I just liked them all. The humorous ones, the serious ones. I liked *Mandrake the Magician*. As far as why—it's hard to know why you like anything, they just gave me enjoyment.

Oh, Martha, by the way, in question five: "Do I have a preference for science-fiction authors?" I'd like you to also mention Harlan Ellison as

one of my favorites. By the way, I sure hope that this is coming out okay. I'll shoot myself if this doesn't work. Okay, Question 7.

7. No, today, I don't have a chance to read comic books. I'm so busy traveling and writing my own material and doing the millions of other things I seem to do, so to answer the question, I don't have time. I certainly wish I did have time, but what I do is thumb through the books quickly, I look at the drawings, I try to read a sentence here and there so that I can stay familiar to some degree with what's being done. As far as which ones, certainly I try to read mostly Marvels, but I try to look through the competition to see what's happening.

8. Of course I admit the influence of science-fiction writers. I admit the influence of all writers. I feel that everybody is influenced by everything he reads, or sees, or hears. Anything that touches us has to influence us.

9. I really don't understand the question, I really don't know what he means by "is my work with Marvel part of the space-opera" so I can't answer that question.

10. My method for the construction of the script consists of discussing the story with the artist and having the artist do the pencilled art on his own, drawing whatever he wants so long as it tells the story we've discussed. I would then put in the dialogue and the captions and indicate where the dialogue balloons are to be placed and where the captions go, and then the script goes to the inker—it's lettered of course. Then I have it proofread and that's it. I proofread it myself if it's my own story.

(Ed. Note: Stan starts reading out the next three questions he's being asked.)

11. How long does it take me?

I used to do one complete comic in a day on an average.

12. Do you have a special pace for the writing of a story to another one? I'm not sure I understand the question, but actually I don't remember that I used to write one story differently than another. They all took me the same length of time, and none were really any more difficult or more easier than the others were. To me one story is like another. Maybe the ones that used archaic dialogue may have been a little slower. For example, it might have taken me a little longer to write the dialogue for Thor or the Silver Surfer or Dr. Strange than somebody who spoke totally in a modern idiom.

13. Do I usually go from a hero to another one?

Yes, I never had any problem. The minute I finished one story, I would write another story. It never bothered me to go from one hero to another. It never bothered me to go from a science fiction to a western or to a Millie the Model or to a horror story or to a detective story or to a humor story. No, it didn't bother me at all.

14. The super villains are almost as important as the superheroes—a good super villain can make the story interesting, and a weak super villain makes the story very dull. I can't say what the balance is. There are some super villains, like Dr. Doom, who are probably more popular than some of the second-rate superheroes. Then by the same token, I don't think there's any super villain as popular as Spider-Man or the Hulk. So you can't really answer that question. Or I can't.

15. Probably if I had a bit of tenderness for my superheroes, it would be for Spider-Man because he's the most successful, and also for the Silver Surfer, whom I've always been very partial to. But basically I like them pretty all the same. As far as my stories, the only way I could mention which is my favorite story or stories is to go back and reread most of them, because I've forgotten most of them, because I've written so many.

16. Occasionally I may reread a story over again. I don't have the time to do it. The few times I have, I'm always amazed at how good it seems to be. I never realized that we were writing that good so many years ago. I sort of wish some of the stories today were done in the same style.

17. I thought I had answered this already. No, I don't have time to read comics today.

18. The perfect balance between balloons and drawings is when a drawing is very interesting, I try to keep the balloons small. When the drawing is dull, I try to use a lot of balloons and sound effects and anything else on the panel to liven it up a bit. It depends on what you think of the drawings.

19. No, I don't control the colors. That's one thing I never paid attention to.

20. My method of working with the authors and artists is to try and be as friendly as possible, be as fair as possible, and get the most work out of them as possible. Let them work as much as possible in their own style. Tell them the type of results I want, but not how to obtain them.

21. How do I explain the evolution of my heroes? . . . uhhh, I can't answer that now, I'd have to write a whole book to explain that. It's just too difficult a question.

22. I really don't know what he means by "How did I create Russian superheroes?" I didn't know we had any Russian superheroes. We aren't going out of the way to create Russian superheroes. I'm afraid that question doesn't make that much sense to me.

23. No, I don't do any special research in science, history, social, or evolution for my stories. I never really had any time. That's one of the reasons why when I would mention a scientific device, I would make up a name for it, like a "super gamma ray gun," only because I don't know what a super gamma ray gun is, and I'm sure nobody else does. I never had the time to worry about being technically accurate—it was just more important to get the stories done quickly.

24. Of course I believe that comic books are a special kind of literature, just as novels are, just as plays are. The point of view of drawing as an independent art . . . of course they are an independent art. Comics are a very specific and unique art form, which the more one studies them the more one can appreciate them.

25. It's easier to assume control as far as going with the relationship between Spider-Man, Captain America, Iron Man, and so forth when I wrote all the stories myself, but now that we have so many writers it's very difficult. It's just up to the editor to do as best as he can.

26. I guess the reason for the American and international success of our superheroes is the fact that they have so many humanistic qualities that people all over the world are able to relate to them, because they're really similar to real people, and real people are pretty much the same all over the world.

27. Again, it's hard to understand the question, "[What's] the difference between a classical hero and a superhero?" because many of the classic heroes were superheroes and many of today's superheroes like Spider-Man and the Hulk I'm sure may become classical heroes. I don't know what the difference is. Anything that lasts is a classic and that's all, and if our superheroes last, they'll become superheroes.

28. As far as the difference between the creation of the daily strips and the comic books, yes, there is a difference. The comic books are easier

to write because you have more panels for dialogue. The story keeps flowing steadily. The daily strips you only have three or four panels. The first panel has to summarize what happened before, the last panel has to be a sort of cliff-hanger. So you only have one or two panels in-between to move the story. It's really much more difficult to do a newspaper strip than a regular comic book story.

(Ed. Note: Questions 29 and 30 are missing from the recording. We only get the last line of Stan's reply to what question 30 was about.)

30. Maybe science-fantasy stories will be in the future what western stories were in the past.

31. Are we living in a new golden age of comic books?

Yes, I'd like to think so. And I'd like to think of it as the new Marvel Age of Comics.

32. The present phenomena of nostalgia for comic books of yesterday has been caused by people loving today's comics so much and getting interested in comics and wanting to learn what comics used to be like. You only love things in the past when you care about them in the present. If you don't love today's movies you won't be interested in old-time movies. I think the whole thing is a tribute to the comics of today.

33. Okay, I'm sorry, but again I can't understand the question. How do I assume the formation of my writers and artists? I don't know what that means.

34. How do I feel about the merchandising of our superheroes—the buttons, t-shirts, stickers, gadgets—and are they part of the glory of the star? Well, I don't know if they are part of a glory of a star, but they are good business, and the money helps us to make us rich enough to pay better rates to our artists and writers. I think there's nothing wrong with our merchandising, I think it helps to publicize our characters. Again, it's only done because people like our characters. When you like something, you want to wear a t-shirt with its picture on it. You enjoy wearing little jewelry that represents the character, you enjoy reading it in other forms, playing games based upon it. I think it's a very good thing that we have a lot of merchandising.

35. Of course there are some artists that I work with more easily than others, but I don't like to mention that. I don't like to mention favorites

or things I like the least—it's not fair to the others. I will say, though, that the quality that I ask first of an artist is that he be a good artist. That he be a good artist and draw the kind of stories that people will want to read. He doesn't have to be a person I like, he doesn't have to be any special age or nationality or sex or anything. The most important qualification is that he be a good comic strip artist. First and foremost.