

EXHIBIT AAA

**Stan Lee Interview
WBAI radio NY
Conducted by Neil Conan
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Transcribed by Steven Tice**

UNEDITED

NC: My name is Neil Conan and I'm in the studio with Stan Lee, the single person most responsible for what many thousands of people call "the Marvel Age of comics." Stan, at this point you're the editor as well as writing several of the magazines yourself, isn't that right?

SL: That's right, Neil. I think I'd rather you had said millions of people. We tell ourselves we have millions of readers.

NC: What is your circulation?

SL: Actually, it's sixty million a year.

NC: Sixty million a year?

SL: Now, I don't know that that's sixty million different people. There may be a couple of repeat sales there, but that's how many magazines we sell, approximately.

NC: Does that make you number one in the field?

SL: Oh, well, we think we'd be number one in the field if we sold two. No, from point of view of quantity, I think there's another company—who shall be nameless, as far as I'm concerned—that sells a few more, but they print a lot more. We sell more of what we print than anybody else.

NC: In other words, magazine for magazine.

SL: Mm-hm. I think Life may beat us.

NC: [laughs] Okay, would you like to give us some of your background, and I guess incorporated in that would be the background of Marvel.

SL: I'd like to think they're almost synonymous. [laughs] I'm just, I'm not terribly important as an individual. Everything I do seems to involve Marvel. One of the few native-born New Yorkers, I guess, extant, and I've been working at Marvel since I was about 17.

NC: What were they publishing back in those days?

SL: Comic magazines, too, but obviously I think they had Captain America, who was one of the biggest at the time, and they had Marvel Mystery Comics, and Sub-Mariner. Daring Comics and Mystic Comics. Not too many others. It was a pretty small operation at the time. And I was there for awhile, and, as a matter of fact, Jack Kirby, who is now just about our top artist, he was my boss at the time, he and Joe Simon, who had hired me. And after I was there a short time, Joe and Jack left, I was the only fellow remaining, and Martin Goodman, our publisher, asked if I would hold the job down until he could find somebody else on a permanent basis, because I could see he didn't relish a 17-year-old handling this entire, vast operation. And he's never told me that he found anybody else, but he never told me that he stopped looking, so, as far as I know, I'm still there on a temporary basis. [laughs]

NC: The only thing that strikes me about the Silver Surfer is how Galactus ever was in on the surfing scene to name the Silver Surfer what he did.

SL: I have a feeling, I've got the worst memory in the world, but I have a feeling, when Jack Kirby named him, he started out as a guest star in Fantastic Four. Jack and I can never really remember which of us came up with most names, but I have a feeling-- He wasn't even supposed to be in the story. When I plotted it with Jack, it was just Galactus and so forth. And when I got the story from Jack to write the copy, he had drawn this fellow on the surfboard, and I think he called him the Surfer, or the Silver Surfer, and the name was certainly euphonious, and we decided to keep it. And we all fell in love with him.

NC: He's quite a character, but I just had a difficult imagining Galactus listening to Beach Boy records.

SL: Oh, you're quite right. Did we have Galactus name him in the Silver Surfer?

NC: Yes.

SL: Well, you see, this is loosely translated. In his own language, obviously, he said something else.

NC: Right. I've heard rumors that you are also asked to speak at colleges and whatnot. What do you say?

SL: Well, it's more than a rumor. Actually, I hate to make-- I've spoken at, I guess, just about every college in the east, and I've been asked to speak at almost every college and university in the Free World, I guess. I don't do it because I haven't got the time to take these trips, much as I would love to. But I hate to make speeches, and it always turns into a question-and-answer period. I'll get up there and give a very long introduction, something like, "My name is Stan Lee, and I apologize." And that's about it. And then they start firing questions at me, and, as you can probably tell, one simple question and I go off on the deep end and forget the time. And, before you know it, two or three hours have gone by, and everybody's asleep, and that's the whole thing.

NC: Right. And you slink out.

SL: Yeah. In defeat, as usual. But I love doing it, and these college kids are terrific. And I'm always amazed at the questions they ask, always on a philosophical plane. If they talk about Thor, let's say, who's our character who's the Norse god of thunder here on Earth, doing his good deeds, they won't say something as, well, you might expect the average comic fan would say, "Is Thor stronger than the Hulk," or, "Can he run faster than Spider-Man," or something. But I'll get something thrown at me like, "How do you equate Thor's position in the cosmos and his father Odin with our own god? How can you reconcile real religion and what you're trying to do in Thor, and isn't there a contradiction there?" And all of a sudden I've learned that I have to become something of an amateur philosopher, myself, in order to have these little lectures.

NC: Well, I think, especially in Thor, you became something of an amateur philosopher writing the strip.

SL: Oh, I guess I love philosophy, myself, and I think all of us at Marvel do, and it becomes so much more enjoyable when we can put what we consider to be a little meaning, and a little meat, and a little philosophy in the stories, instead of just making them action stories.

NC: Well, I can remember trembling with anticipation waiting for the next Thor during the period when you had Id, the Living Planet, or Ego, the Living Planet. I think that was it.

SL: Yeah. That was Jack's idea, too. I remember I said, "You've got to be kidding." He said, "No, let's get a living planet, a bioverse." Well, I didn't want him to think I was chicken. I said, "All right, you draw it, I'll write it." And, yeah, I think it turned out pretty good.

NC: Is that how all your comics are done?