



TRANSCRIPTION OF SOUNDTRACK

LEGO® Art – 31199
Marvel Studios Iron Man



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[Roy]: It was just an interesting idea, you know, of a guy who has to wear this big bulky armor as he did it first.

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[Maggie]: But you still have to build in that weakness. What is his weakness? Wait a minute, why is this thing in his chest? Oh, wait, he almost died.

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[Roy]: You know, he's this very fragile guy in a certain way, but he's also like one of the richest guys in the world, a great inventor and so forth.

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[Tom]: He's a cool exec with a heart of steel. What else is there?

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[Roy]: Iron man was always an evolving look.

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[Maggie]: It was interesting to see the story evolve because that first outfit that Iron Man had looked like a hot water tank.

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[Maggie, Andrea]: <laughter>

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[Andrea]: Imagine crafting your own wall art. Maybe it's a passion that fascinates you, or maybe it's the promise of an immersive creative experience like no other. A piece of iconic art you can build for yourself. Relax and reconnect with your creative side.

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We've created unique soundtracks. Specially curated around the world of art music and movies. And in this soundtrack, we're going to look into the world of Marvel Comics in general, and the Iron Man character in particular.

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We'll hear from experts and editors with a deep knowledge of superheroes and the way the Marvel universe was created before taking a deep dive into Iron Man and his many armors through time.

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[Maggie]: I almost would say my heart belongs to the water tank. <laughs>

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[Andrea] I'm Andrea Collins. Welcome to LEGO® Art.

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Let's meet our guests and hear when and how their passion for comic books got started.

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Our first guest is comic book collector and Marvel expert Maggie Thompson.

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[Maggie] My name is Maggie Thompson, I'm 77 years old, and I have spent about 72 years of that collecting comic books.

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[Andrea] Wow.

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[Maggie] The deal with the comic book in the 1940s was that if you wanted it you should buy it then, and if you wanted to read it the next month, you'd better have kept it and kept it in good condition because you couldn't go to the library to reread it and thus did collecting begin for me. I discovered that I actually have a comic book I bought when I was four years old.

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[Andrea] Wow.

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[Maggie] I have that comic book.

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[Alex]: As far as comics, my first comics was, I think I was four.

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[Andrea] Another big Marvel expert Alex Grand started with comics at around the same age.

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[Alex] And I liked how you could see the words, the picture showed you who's saying it, so it felt like I was reading a movie, and that really captured my attention.

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Then newsstand comics from like 7/11 in the 80s, and those were generally where Marvel Comics like Power Man and Iron Fist, and then what really captured my attention was like Thor and Iron Man.

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And then by 1988, you know, I was a 10-year-old and I was basically rocking and rolling as a- as a Marvel fan.

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[Andrea]: Here's the former editor-in-chief of Marvel comics, Roy Thomas.

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[Roy] My first memories of comic books, they sort of fade in, really. Evidently, I spotted some comics, probably Batman and Superman kind of stuff on a drugstore shelf when I was about, uh, four and a few months old something like that, four years old, anyway, maybe even a little earlier.

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Although my, you know, parents didn't have much money, this was like the, you know, the tail end of the depression and my dad had just a shoe factory job and all that but they scraped together a dime to get me a comic and that was kind of the start of it.

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Uh, my mother would read them to me, you know, for the first six months or a year but I very quickly was, uh, so intrigued wanting to learn what the stories were that I, you know, that I learned a lot of reading, you know, so that I had a fairly good reading vocabulary by the time I entered the first grade.

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And it wasn't all from comics or else I'd have only known you know capital letters. <laughs>

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But, uh, between that and, uh, some children's books and things like that, you know, I kind of got to jump on things, I think.

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[Andrea]: I'm seeing a trend here. If you become a Marvel fan, you start when you're four. Let's hear if it's the same for the current Marvel editor Tom Brevoort.

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[Tom]: Um... <laughs> My first memories of reading Marvel Comics are all awful.

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[Andrea]: <laughs>

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[Tom]: Um, you know, and so my earliest Marvel memories would have been about watching the 1967 Spider-man cartoon which you know ran in syndication for years in the New York area in the afternoon.

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And as a really young kid of three years old or whatever I was, I didn't understand Spider-man, I didn't understand the web-shooters, um, you know, there'd be these long sequences in the show where Spider-man would swing across the city, and I didn't understand how the web-shooter worked.

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So to my three-year-old mind, you know, Spider-man had had strung all these ropes up all across the city like Tarzan, and was swinging from one to the other that he'd put there previously. I didn't understand, I didn't get it.

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You know, I started reading comics in 1973, I was about six years old. I started with the DC books of the period, and I read a couple of Marvel books during that era, and almost every Marvel book I picked up turned out to be a bad choice for one reason or another.

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[Andrea] We'll get back to Tom Brevoort a bit later on in the soundtrack to hear if he ever got hooked on the Marvel universe. Spoiler, he did. He even found out how the web shooter works.

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Let's go back to Maggie Thompson. She's a respected Marvel expert and a long-time editor of the iconic industry publication Comics Buyer's Guide.

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Together with her late husband Don Thompson, they built a collection of comic books, wrote a ton of articles, and worked together on their passion for comics.

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[Maggie] We started the first amateur magazine devoted to comic art as opposed to superheroes and it was called Comic Art. <chuckles> And we worked on that, and eventually, the hobby turned into a job, and here I am later.

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[Andrea]: Wow. So between the two of you and your husband, how big is your comic book collection at your house?

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[Maggie]: I literally... <laughs> ...have no idea right now.

I've been trying to weed the duplicates out, but more than a hundred thousand.

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[Andrea] Oh, my gosh!

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[Maggie]: Well, you can't write an article about comic books if you don't have the comic books to refer to so I didn't collect them because they were valuable, I collected them because I needed a panel to put in an article that I wrote, or just for relaxation too. There's also revisiting the nostalgia of childhood.

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[Andrea]: Now, if we look at people who created comics, it was a very male-dominated world, um, what would you say about that? Because you are a female comic fan, you've definitely, you're a big name in comics, so what's your take on that?

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[Maggie]: My mother who was fascinated by comic books went to a comics convention at one point and discovered that, basically, the entirety of the female population there was only there because of the boys they were with.

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She went up to each of these females and said, "Why are you here and why did you not collect comics on your... by yourself?" So this was in the 19... I would say 1970s.

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And the response she got was that it was not a socially acceptable place plus the girls did not have the disposable income that the guys had

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[Andrea] Hm.

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[Maggie]: Chances were if the girls got an allowance or they got money from babysitting or whatever, they were expected to provide their own fashion, their own hair care, their own makeup.

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The guys, they had a ball and a bat, and they could go out, and their parents basically handed them the rest of their entertainment money to dispose of it on however they chose, and one of the ways they chose was comic books.

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[Andrea]: But you always stuck with it.

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[Maggie]: Well, because we like the art form. My husband and I like the art form so the magazine that we created, Comic Art, not only dealt with comic books but also comic strips, magazine, cartoons,

animated cartoons, and so forth.

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And then we had kids of our own, and Don, for example, would read to my daughter Spiderman and Fantastic Four and so forth

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because she could look over his shoulder at the pictures as I had looked over mom's shoulder when she read me comic books before I could read.

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When he was reading the stories to Valerie, he made sue storm the brains of the Fantastic Four. So instead of Mr. Fantastic saying, "Okay, Sue, stand over there," she'd say, "Okay, Reed, I'm gonna stand over here while you do this and that the other." So she thought Sue was the head of the Fantastic Four.

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And... <chuckles> I didn't know he had done that. And I said, "Why did you do that?" And he said, "I didn't want my daughter to grow up thinking that all a girl could do was hide."

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[Andrea]: Oh, I love that.

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[Maggie]: Me too.

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[Andrea]: We're now joined by Alex Grant, He has a bachelor's in visual arts, is a frequent Comic-Con panelist, Motion Comics animator, and host of Comic Book Historians Podcast.

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So how does one become a comic book historian?

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[Alex] You know, there isn't really classes for that, right? You know, I think there is comic book fans and there's comic book collectors, then there's comic book historians that they go back and do some interviews, try to find out what happened, kind of read in between the lines a bit, look at the old indexes of the comics, look at the old companies, try to do as much background research, and to the people that made the comics especially as well as the historical context of the time of what was going on in the 60s, what was going on in the 50s, what was going on in the 70s, these are all very different cultural vibes and how do they manifest into that commercial artistic product that we're reading.

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Then there's probably one level above comic book historian called comic book archaeologists and they'll find like the old comics from like the 1800s you know, and try to get them into a museum, right?

And that's kind of a... a different branch.

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And the higher you go, the more esoteric, but I think comic book historians, they still got their finger on the pulse of the fun side of pop culture and also like to look at the cause and effect of why certain things came out a certain way.

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[Andrea]: So there were comic books as far back as the 1800s? The first modern comic book as we would recognize it was published in 1935 and called "New Fun". That was the origins of the DC Comics that also introduced Superman in '39, but then came the Marvel revolution in the 60s.

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[Alex] They called the Marvel revolution where people like Stan Lee, Steve Ditko, Jack Kirby created the Marvel characters.

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And I think the reason why those are important is because they came at a time in the 60s when people were ready for new stuff, and, uh, they were trying to be more relevant, you know, trying to be have more mundane concerns.

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But also like, um, LEGO® pieces, the characters were made by the same people within the same 10 years, so they all fit, really naturally together within the real New York City

as opposed to a lot of other combo companies where one person made another character in vacuum then a while other person made another character in vacuum and these pieces don't fit as well.

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So I think kind of like, um, LEGO® Marvel Comics characters from the 60s, which are all those characters in the movies now, they fit naturally together, their personalities mesh even though they're different personalities. They fit better it feels more natural.

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[Andrea]: And that might be one of the reasons why we're so fascinated by the Marvel Universe. The characters appear to fit almost seamlessly together. According to Maggie Thompson, merchandising is another reason.

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[Maggie] If Stan Lee had sat down with Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko, and they'd told these wonderful stories, and just a bunch of kids ever saw them, we wouldn't be fascinated today.

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But what happened was with making toys available, and costumes available, and costumes tie into imagination. So it's Halloween and if you're five years old, you can wear a superhero costume and people will know who you are. That's a thrill.

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[Alex]: I think it's interesting to try to imagine what would it be if there were actual superheroes that lived in our time.

It would be fun to understand that. And try to think that these characters that have these powers, they could literally do anything they want, but instead, they've come upon some internal code where they feel like they want to make the world a better place and if we had these powers, maybe we would also be better people, and so then we strive to be better people in our normal lives.

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[Maggie] A man named Harvey Picard once said, "In Comic Art there's no limit to how good the pictures can be and there's no limit to how good the words can be." So if you put the best words and the best pictures together, you have entertainment that's not like anything else

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[Alex]: It's also just the flashy fighting, I think, as far as a superhero genre, there's different genres like crime and romance, they all give different things. I think in the superhero genre, it's kind of like part of it is like watching a wrestling match where you see this flashy strong person here and a flashy strong person there fighting.

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But Marvel gives that more of an internal meaning as far as they throw in a little bit of romance they throw in a little bit of sci-fi, they throw a little bit of crime, they throw other genres into the superhero genre to make it a mixed fun multi-layered message.

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[Andrea]: That was Maggie Thompson and Alex grant's take on why we're so fascinated by the Marvel Universe.

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Let's explore this a bit more with two people who were on the inside. Current editor Tom Brevoort and the man who became Stan Lee's first successor as Marvel's editor-in-chief in '72, Roy Thomas.

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[Roy]: I don't know what made Marvel you know so special. It was just one of those ideas that, it was just a slight mutation in what comics had been. You know, they'd always been the superheroes and they'd always had some kind of little personal problem, I mean, you know but they were minor things like Superman trying to protect his secret identity from Lois Lane. Well, that's not the kind of problem most of us usually have, you know, but Spider-man and the Fantastic Four, they had they had problems that resonated with people,

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or you had, you know, a guy who's, you know, worried that his, uh, he's trying to do the right thing, but at the same time, if his if his aging aunt finds out that, uh, that he's the superhero and putting himself in danger all the time she's gonna have a heart attack and die, you know, or...

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And sometimes, it was just that he'd get it, he'd break an arm or he'd have a cold or something.

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[Andrea]: And here's the current Marvel editor, Tom Brevard.

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[Tom]: People, first of all, like stories. Um, you know it's just there's something about the way human beings are wired.

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We like stories, uh, and we tend to like our stories to have easily delineatable good guys and bad guys, heroes and villains, or protagonists and antagonists, people that you empathize with and are rooting for and are following along and learning something about the human condition while you do it.

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Any superhero story is about larger than life characters who often can do things that are impossible at the at the outset. But that's really no different in its, in its way than almost any action-adventure movie. Nobody can really do what Indiana Jones does.

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The audience, we just like larger-than-life heroes, we like people who, who stand for something, we like to, uh, you know, experience the, the vicarious thrills, and danger, and excitement. Uh, we like being powerful, we like, uh, you know, relating to characters that foul things up and muddle their way through, and, uh, you know, learn how to do it better.

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And all of these are things that, you know, we try to imbue the various Marvel characters and Marvel stories with.

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[Roy]: The thing with the Marvel things in the early days was I think that you just didn't know what was going to come next, I mean, you know, the Fantastic Four would be going along just fine then all of a sudden, there'd be a story in which they lose all their money and they get kicked out of their building, you know. <chuckles>

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[Andrea]: Yeah. <chuckles>

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[Roy]: You know, or Spider-man, you know, uh, would, uh, you know, lose one girlfriend, get another one. One of them even, you know, very spectacularly died, you know, in the story and the writer of that story got hate mail and was afraid to go to comic conventions for several years because you'd always get attacked by the fans.

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[Andrea]: <chuckles>

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[Roy]: But obviously, people took these things, you know, very seriously. it's not that they believed that they, you know, most of the people were, they're not, you know, crazy enough or immature enough to believe they're real.

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But they get an investment in them when you read a character every month, or you read and you read a bunch of characters every month, you really get invested with the character and with the storyline, and you get upset if it goes a direction that you really, you, you really hate, you know.

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[Andrea]: I think it's about time we got to know a bit more about the two gentlemen, Tom Brevoort and Roy Thomas, that you just heard.

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Roy is one of the founders of comics fandom and among the first of its ranks to turn pro.

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When Marvel was getting kick-started in 1961, and carrying on through the mid-'60s, Stan Lee was really the only one doing the plots.

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So he needed someone also to be able to think like him, so the universe could expand and be pushed. And Roy was perfect for that role because he came in as a huge fan.

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Let's get Alex and Maggie to help me introduce Roy.

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[Alex] Roy Thomas was really important, in that he was able to then take what Stan and company were doing, and then expand and push and make it fresh, and also start appealing to the new audiences that were starting to kind of develop in the later 60s into the 70s that kind of wanted to take it into a slightly more mature fashion.

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[Maggie]: Roy came up about the same time we did in terms of being a fan, a published fan.

So Don and I created an amateur magazine called Comic Art, and Roy Thomas worked with a college professor named Jerry Bales, and they put out their own fanzine and it was called Alter Ego that, by the way, is continuing today with Roy Thomas as the editor.

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So Roy went from fan, to professional, and back to professional fan. I, I don't know all the things he's doing, but, but it's an, uh, his career is a fascinating arc.

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[Alex] So he was perfect because he could bring in comic history perspective, a comic fan's perspective, but he's also a great writer.

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He knew what Stan was looking for because he loved what Stan was doing so much that he was able to then kind of unload some of the work off Stan.

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[Maggie]: He was one of the first to go to New York City as a fan

who wanted to work in the industry and become a professional.

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And he passed the Stan Lee test and my guess is he can speak to that himself.

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[Andrea]: So, Roy, you left your native Missouri to go to New York City in '65 at the age of just 24?

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[Roy]: I guess it was fairly young then but as one professional told me, it says, "Ah, you're an old man getting into the field," he said, "We were all teenagers."

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[Andrea]: <chuckles>

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[Roy]: In my case, since 1961, when I was 20, I had been involved in the, uh, the world in a way, which was the comic book fanzine.

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I never quit reading comics. A lot of people, I guess a lot of guys, girls, give them up when they reach puberty or they're 10 or 12 or 14 or something like that. I never did that.

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So I kept doing this fanzine about comics mostly about the return of the superhero comics and then about the history of the old ones from the 40s and the 50s that kind of thing, and, uh, I exchanged letters with a few editors at DC and with Stan Lee who was the, uh, the one editor really at Marvel, maybe one or two other people.

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And then one day, as I was a, uh, when I was teaching, um, my fourth year teaching high school in near St. Louis in Missouri, I received a letter from the man who edited, uh, the seven Superman titles for DC, you know, there was Superman, Super Boy, Lois Lane, Jimmy Olsen, a couple of others, one with Superman and Batman together and offered me a job, uh, based on the fact that he'd seen the fanzine writing I'd done and the letters I'd written, and he offered me a job as the... as his assistant editor or editorial assistant whatever it was, so I, uh, moved to New York in late June of 1965.

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But unfortunately, after a week or two, I discovered that I just couldn't get along with the, uh, the editor. He had a reputation well deserved for being kind of a sadist and I wasn't as good as his previous assistant at putting up with that kind of behavior.

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[Andrea]: <chuckles>

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[Roy]: So I didn't know exactly what to do except tough it out, except that, um, I wanted to meet Stan Lee because I felt he was writing, you know, the best comics that were going at the time, and I wanted to meet him.

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And I didn't get ever meet him but, uh, over the phone, he ended up having me come by later and take this sort of writing test writing a few pages of dialogue to go with pictures of an already existent Fantastic Four story.

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After I did that, I got a call while I was working at DC, and, uh, was asked to come over and, uh, meet him on my lunch hour, so I sneaked over, and about 15 minutes after we met, he offered me a job.

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[Andrea]: He offered you a job pretty much on the spot then?

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[Roy]: Yeah I'd never met him before, we'd exchange one or two letters, that was about it really.

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Pretty soon, I was dialoguing a couple of Doctor Strange stories and an Iron Man and, finally, I graduated to my first regular series which wasn't quite a superhero comic, it was Sergeant Fury, and from then on, it went on to the X-men and Avengers and other things.

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[Andrea]: Wow.

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[Roy]: It's just like, there's that old line in Uncle Tom's cabin I think about how, you know, topsy the character there says. She just grewed, and that's sort of what my job did, it just grewed.

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[Andrea]: <laughs> What was it like working with Stan Lee? What was he like to work with?

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[Roy]: Well, mostly it was good, you know, like anybody else, sometimes he could get the temper and, but then, of course, I probably deserved it sometime.

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But I would say 90 plus percent of the time, we got on quite well. I, I admired the, uh, the work he was doing, and the fact that he seemed to know what he was doing,

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and ride heard over some very good artists especially Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko, but gradually he was he was able to even sell comics with lesser artists and teach them how to draw the kind of comics he was looking for which mainly meant that they were exciting, and it kind of left DC in the dust over the next few years.

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[Andrea]: Wow.

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[Roy]: Not that they didn't have some good books and some very talented people but Marvel just, uh, kind of, you know, gradually kept gaming, gaining on them in terms of sales.

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[Andrea]: Um in '72, you became Stanley's first successor as Marvel's editor-in-chief. How did that happen and... and what was that like to find out that you were stepping into those big shoes?

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[Roy]: Well, it was a little more gradual than that but it was it was really totally unexpected. I... I never really have been a person, a guy who thinks ahead a lot, you know.

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Some people have their five-year and ten-year plans, where you want to be in five years, I could never really think that far ahead. I knew I wanted to get out of teaching. That was about it.

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Uh, once I was in comics, I just never thought beyond the idea he was going to stay the editor and I'd stay the associate editor, which is my title by then, and...

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And then, one day, and I had no preparation for this, really, I found out that Stan had used his clout with the conglomerate that had purchased us a few years earlier to say that he was either leaving or he wanted to become the publisher and president of the comic company part himself of Marvel comics.

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[Andrea]: Let's hear from the current Marvel editor Tom Brevoort, and he's actually been with them for more than 30 years now.

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How'd that happen? As you might remember from the beginning of the soundtrack, he wasn't that big of a Marvel fan when he was a kid.

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[Tom] I actively didn't like them, you know. I was, I was a Marvel naysayer until... probably until around I was you know maybe 10 years old.

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We had a drugstore chain in my area and in the drugstore, during the 70s, they had what in my memory, is a really huge wire bin filled with comics. And the comics were all a couple of months old, they weren't fresh and new off the racks.

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They were a couple of months, uh, you know, older than that, and I went digging through that bin and I pulled up three consecutive issues of Fantastic Four, which featured the human torch, they were 177, 178, 179,

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and I took them back to my house and I stretched out in my living room, uh, you know, with my feet under the living room coffee table, and I read those three comics, and that was sort of my entry into the Marvel universe.

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[Andrea]: There you go. So you totally, you did a full reversal.

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[Tom]: Yes.

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[Andrea]: So how did you end up working at Marvel in '89?

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[Tom]: Um, well, I was an illustration major at the University of Delaware. Um, and I was always interested in comics, I wanted to do comics.

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You know, when I was a kid, even, you know, during the times I was talking about earlier, I would draw my own comics, and, you know, copy things out of the books, and make up my own characters, and, you know, all of that stuff.

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I sort of always had an interest in... in the medium, and the field, and so forth, and, yeah that was something that I was interested in doing.

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So going to the University of Delaware,
uh, for illustration in their arts program,
you had to go and serve an internship, you know, somewhere,
uh, at some organization related in some way to the field.

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So I sent out letters, uh, you know letters of inquiry,
and I didn't just send it to Marvel, I sent it to every,
uh, comic book publisher that there was in those days,
uh, and Marvel was the only one that wrote back to me.

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[Andrea]: <laughs>

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[Tom]: So I, I got a response, uh, and I went up,
and, you know, did... did an interview on the premises in Manhattan,
uh, and then I was a Marvel intern for the summer of 1989.
I interned five days a week, uh, and that was my, my entree into everything.

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[Andrea]: Wow.

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[Tom]: Uh, and by, and by December of that year,
I'd been hired on as an assistant editor and I've been around ever since.

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[Andrea]: Alex grant and Maggie Thompson say that
Tom Brevoort was and continues to be very important for Marvel comics.

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[Maggie]: Tom's fantastic. He's got a great sense of humor, he connects with the fans.
So for example, in addition to his usual work, he's doing things on twitter
where he's posting, "Look at this rare Marvel item. Isn't this just the best thing in the
world?"

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He's doing what's standard in terms of connecting with the reader
and making each reader feel he or she is a friend of Tom's.

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[Alex] I think one thing that's really specifically important about Tom Brevoort
is he's one of the newer Marvel people that still cares about the older Marvel stuff.

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I think that's really important in that he has his own comic history blog,
he really looks back at the old stuff like from the 60s and 50s,
and tries to even now still sort it out, he's made a huge impression
on making Marvel, keeping Marvel great, right?

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And then he is also able to look at the old stuff
so he's a great balance of new and old
and I think that's- that's really special about Tom Brevoort.

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[Maggie]: Tom also has the most misspelled name in comics, I would guess.

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[Andrea]: <laughs>

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[Maggie]: <chuckles> We did a newspaper about comics for years and I don't think I ever had to correct anyone's spelling more often than the misspelling of Tom's last name.

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[Andrea]: In case you're wondering, it's spelled B-R-E-V-O-O-R-T

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[Andrea]: Coming up. All of our four guests have met Stanley. One of them was actually one of the last people to see him alive.

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We're gonna hear more about that a little bit later on and hopefully learn a lot more about this legendary man.

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We're also going to introduce two more names into the discussion. Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko. And discovered just how important they were in the creation of the Marvel universe at the time.

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We're gonna dive much more into the Iron Man character, and then we're joined by the two LEGO® designers who created the LEGO® Art of Iron Man.

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[Christopher]: I was actually super excited, to be honest. I don't very often geek out, but with this product, I definitely did.

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[Andrea]: Hear just how much LEGO® designer Christopher Stamp geeked out and about the process of creating the LEGO® Art pictures of Iron Man from both him and his colleague Kitt Kossmann later on.

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But now, let's explore what actually makes a good superhero. Here's Roy Thomas.

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[Roy]: Well, you know... if I really knew that I could invent a new one and make a lot of money on my old age here...

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[Andrea]: <chuckles>

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[Roy]: Uh, you never really know. You try one out and the public just decides if they like them or not, but I think the best way is just to think it through, make sure that it's he's different from other characters so that when you look at that character, you don't think, "Oh, this is just the same guy with another mask or another secret identity."

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The best characters always brought something new. I mean, Superman was something new under the sun

because there's never been anything quite like it before.

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You know, batman, sure, he was a little like Zorro but, you know, he was a modern day guy. He didn't have any powers like Superman but he had a mask and so forth.

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Spider-man was weird because he had these spider powers which were kind of awkward because he was a kid that had them.

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The thing who was my favorite Marvel character, you know, was just an ordinary joe, a test pilot, you know, kind of gruff who suddenly found himself trapped in this monstrous body that he couldn't, uh, get out of, while the Hulk would bounce back and forth between being the Hulk and being this scientist and each of them hated the other one, you know.

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[Maggie]: The challenge with creating a superhero is in building in their weaknesses and challenges. So if your primary audience is kids, you tap into their concerns.

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So the kid might be isolated and weak, but what if your character is isolated and strong? And then that's a combination of wish fulfillment and imagination challenge.

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What happens next to Peter Parker after he's bitten by a radioactive Spider but he has to watch out for his aunt, et cetera?

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[Alex]: I think the best superheroes are the ones that they have internal problems but they try to overcome them.

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[Andrea]: Alex agrees with Maggie.

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[Alex]: There are certain ones that they're perfect, they kind of fall flat with me personally as a reader.

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I think the ones that are internally driven by guilt or some other feelings but then they strive to get above that and beyond that.

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[Andrea]: Tom Brevoort mentions the importance of having a good story.

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[Tom] There's something about the way human beings are wired. We like stories, uh, and we tend to like our stories to have easily delineatable, uh, you know, good guys and bad guys, heroes and villains, or protagonists and antagonists people

that you empathize with and are rooting for and are following along, uh, in terms of the journey they are on and learning something about the human condition while you do it.

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[Alex]: So you come up with these characters. Each one's got to have something new and something different.

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I made up a character based somewhat on an old character called the Vision, and basically, uh, Stan had told me that he'd like me to make up a character who's an android, you know. He didn't tell me why.

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Why don't you put somebody in the Avengers who's an android that was the end of my instruction, you know? And I found that was interesting because then you had this guy who was a hero but he was also trying to deal with the idea of being human.

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[Maggie] It's the enemies and the challenges because, otherwise, it's going to be boring if you just had oh the guy gets up in the day and, and, uh, everything's peachy, and he has a wonderful breakfast, and he goes out maybe stops a burglary over here, uh, and then gets back to eating dinner. That's not much.

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But if you say, oh, but he's got to protect X from Y and you've got to make Y interesting, too,

that begins to feed into a fully fleshed universe.

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[Andrea]: Mm-hm.

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[Alex]: I think that's interesting. Also, there has to be probably some set limitations. I think just if they can just move a whole planet, there's probably not much that can challenge them. And I think then that becomes a comic to kind of skip over if they have limits. And then they have to figure out ways to fight people that are stronger and try to figure it out.

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I think that also makes for a good superhero that can make that relatable to a reader. I think relatability is probably the number one factor though.

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[Andrea]: Let's hear about one of the characters Roy Thomas created.

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[Roy]: One of the most minor things I ever did became one of Marvel's biggest characters. And I called the writer Len Wiene, and I said, we, you know, we got all these Canadian readers. Five, ten percent of our readers probably are Canadian.

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And we don't, we've never, we've never had, and nobody else that I know of outside of Canada itself at one time,

ever had a Canadian superhero in American comic books.

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So I wanted an animal that lived in Canada
and I thought well, yeah, I knew about animals
so I thought Wolverine that sounded kind of fierce.
And the wolverine's, uh, an animal that's very small,
so I wanted to be short, and it's very bad-tempered
because they'll attack things five or ten times their own size.

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And I just gave that to the writer and the art director and so forth
and out of this, you know, this Wolverine concept I had,
came a character that ended up, you know,
because of all of this, uh, me, Len, a couple of artists,
John Romita who designed the costume,
and Herb Trippy who was the original artist.

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And then other people who took it over later and developed it,
it gradually became, you know, one of the three or four
best known and greatest characters.
But he was originally just a throwaway idea
to get some Canadian readers.

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[Andrea]: Now we all know who Stanley is but there
were many people involved in creating
the Marvel Universe.
What can you say about Jack Kirby, Roy?

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[Roy]: Yeah, it's, uh, I get caught in the middle sometime
because there are people that think that Stan Lee
was the only person important to Marvel and other people
who think that Jack Kirby was the only person important to Marvel.
Of course, they were both very important to Marvel.

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But Jack Kirby, I didn't know who he was
but he had been part of a team that signed themselves,
Simon and Kirby, Joe Simon and Jack Kirby,
and Jack was the one that did most of the actual drawing in that team.
And I was a fan of theirs since when I was five or six years old
and discovered some of their, their stories.

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There was just an excitement and dynamism about Jack's work that came alive
and Stan had gotten lucky back in the late 50s
because Jack, I don't know if you know this, but Jack had been,
actually, he had been working for DC comics for years, you know,
the main competitor of much larger company than Marvel was.
But unfortunately, he got into dispute with an editor there
and, uh, Jack suddenly found himself blackballed at DC.

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So Jack that had to wander over to what
was not even called Marvel Comics at that time,
and, uh, he was just there at the right time,
and about a year or so, later, when Stan decided it was time
to get back in the superhero business and see how that worked out,

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they just happened to be lucky that they had probably as good a superhero artist

as ever existed in the world right there on their doorstep because DC had thrown him out.

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So DC, basically, you know, uh, slid its own throat by firing Jack Kirby back in the '50s.

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[Andrea]: What can you add, Tom?

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[Tom]: Um, well, I, you know, there's probably not enough, uh, you know tape or bites to contain the whole of what could be said about Jack Kirby. Uh, certainly, you know, foremost as one of the best illustrators comics ever had. But the place where I think he's undervalued is, as a storyteller, a story man, and an idea generator.

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The division of labor, uh, was not always as cut and dried as one guy, you know, writes the stuff and therefore is coming up with all of the ideas and the other guy draws them, particularly in the way that Marvel comics of the period tended to be done which was very different and put a lot more of the onus on the artist as not just storyteller but as writer, as creator.

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Most of the Marvel stories would start out with a conversation where, for the sake of this example, I'll say Stan and Jack, would get together. They would either get together in person or on the phone to talk about whatever the next issue or whatever book they happen to be working on was.

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[Andrea]: Right.

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[Tom] So if it was an issue of Thor, they would get on the phone together, and one or the other of them would start with some idea, and as often as not, that would be Kirby, and sometimes, that would be Stan, and they'd say okay we're going to have Loki do this and they would bounce around back and forth. Here's what Loki's got going on, and here's what we want to do with Jane Foster, and maybe we should do this with Balder.

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And at the end of that phone call, Kirby would go away back to his studio and he would draw the entire story. And Stan would dialogue the story, he would write the actual copy that would go on the boards. All of the captions, all of the word balloons and thought balloons and sound effects.

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As a result, uh, there's a real improvisational, uh, sensibility to a lot of these early... early books because it is two guys that are almost playing jazz with one another.

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[Maggie]: Jack Kirby was a founder of endless invention. He never stopped inventing. What he saw that triggered his, that is great response, he would then mold into his own work. So he combined the real world and the imagination that he clearly possessed that was non-stop throughout his entire career.

<chuckles>

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That's what he had going for him in terms of the reason he became so successful, so respected, was that he was himself so wonderful, and so supportive, and so creative.

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[Alex]: The triangle really that made the Marvel Universe was, Stan Lee is the overseer editor, co-plotter, then you have the visual engineers the visual artists and also co-plotters of Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko, who brought totally different ends of a spectrum together, under this feeling of continuity and shared universe that Stan Lee made sure everything kind of fit well with each other.

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So Jack Kirby comes from... he came from 20 years of action superhero already. So by the time he got to Marvel in 1959, he had a lot of storytelling, a lot of action under his belt, and I would say that Stan Lee, he was one of the few editors under a publisher that they valued Jack Kirby's contributions.

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They let Jack create as long as everything fit within the plots. Sometimes he'd go beyond the plots and create even new things but Stanley was fine with that, and he brought power action dynamism and that really meshed well with Stan Lee's dialogue balloons, his, um, wording.

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[Andrea]: And what about Steve Ditko? Roy Thomas?

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[Roy]: Well, he was always a mystery man to them, to me, to just about everybody.

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[Andrea]: <chuckles>

0223 00:40:17:12 00:40:37:11

[Roy]: It's not exactly that he was a recluse but he was a very private guy and he had very strong beliefs, uh, in various areas, and he and Stan were, it seemed opposite wavelengths, and yet for several years, they got along wonderfully. Basically, you know, he was just a wonderful artist in terms of telling the story and... and so forth.

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[Maggie]: Wonderful idiosyncratic.

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[Andrea]: This is Maggie Thompson again.

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[Maggie]: He was so generous to the fans. I'm... I'm gonna... <clears throat> ...tear up a little bit here.

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Ditko's art was very distinctive and he tended to draw non-superhero characters almost stiffly. Uh, the hair was kind of like helmet hair on the girls, they seemed almost rigid. He... And what he did with Spider-man was

he drew a counterpoint to his own style.

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So here are these relatively stiff characters representing daily life that the kid for, reader, for example is experiencing. But swinging through that with vitality and curves is Spider-man swinging out.

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[Andrea]: Spider-man was one of the first things Steve Ditko worked on. Stan Lee had the idea of this character but he didn't go to Ditko first. Here's Roy Thomas again telling us what happened.

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[Roy]: Jack just couldn't get quite what Stan wanted. Uh, Jack was just the greatest superhero world artist in the world but what Stan wanted for this guy was something different. He wanted a... kind of a teenager, even a little gawky teenager, and, um, somehow, Jack kept drawing the guy, he looked too handsome and too heroic, he didn't look like some gawky 16, 17-year-old high school kid.

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So finally, after a few pages got done, Stan evidently said to him, you know, says, "Well, Jack, you know, you got Thor and the Hulk and Fantastic Four to do," and this and that. I'll just, you know, I'll just try somebody else on Spider-man, so he brought in Steve Ditko, they hashed it around, changed the idea evidently quite a bit for what it had been.

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Steve designed a truly wonderful costume, one of the best ever designed,

and the next thing, you know, they had this wonderful character which lasted exactly one issue because the publisher didn't like spider, the idea of a Spiderman, and he canceled the magazine.

He told Stan, "This is characters no good.

People don't like spiders, they're not gonna buy it.

You got a kid as the hero and kids can't be heroes they can only be sidekicks.

And you're giving him these personal problems.

People don't want to read about personal problems of superheroes."

So for all these reasons, uh, he said that Spider-man was just like the, one of the worst ideas.

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Stan says that as soon as the sales figures came in on that single issue they had put out, the publisher came in and said, "Hey, you remember that character we liked so much, that Spider-man? He sold pretty well. Let's do a whole book about him."

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[Andrea]: <sighs>

0235 00:43:10:23 00:43:12:13

[Roy]: And then they were off and running

0236 00:43:12:15 00:43:12:24

[Andrea]: Wow.

0237 00:43:13:01 00:43:15:24

[Roy]: But Stan never forgot, you know, that the publisher had really hated that idea.

0238 00:43:16:18 00:43:23:03

[Andrea]: Maggie and her husband Don liked Ditko's work so much that they sent a letter to Stan Lee praising it.

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[Maggie]: And Stan passed our letter on to Steve Ditko, and Steve Ditko did a drawing for us that is framed on my wall which is the Vulture and Dr. Octopus with Spider-man swinging through them.

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And it's, as I say, it is framed on my wall and he just did that in response to a, "gosh, we like his art" letter.

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So Steve was that kind of guy. He also was highly dedicated to his own point of view which caused some problems with some circumstances, but by golly, when you care that much about what you do, that's an asset in itself, and the fact that, I, there was eventual division just because Steve Ditko cared so much about what he had done, it... <sighs>

0242 00:44:28:04 00:44:29:24

As you can see, I'm at a loss for words.

0243 00:44:31:01 00:44:34:22

[Andrea]: So let's turn to Tom Brevoort, the current editor at Marvel.

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[Tom]: Steve Ditko, a formative creative force, yeah, Steve didn't do as many strips and wasn't as connected to as many characters as Jack was

but every character he touched, he changed and left his mark on, and that includes characters that were not originated by him, um, you know, I'm thinking specifically of characters like Iron Man.

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Steve only did, I think three Iron Man stories in the 60s, but during his three Iron Man stories, he redesigned the character, withstands approval and blessing and encouragement, turning him from the original Jack Kirby design, which was sort of this big, almost stovepipe looking guy into this much sleeker red and gold, uh, Iron Man design, which is very much the design that is still used today even though it's evolved and gone through a number of changes over the years.

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[Andrea]: Wow.

0247 00:45:29:18 00:45:31:04

[Tom]: And that's not a small thing.

0248 00:45:31:06 00:45:41:01

[Andrea]: Nope, that is definitely not a small thing. And that brings us to the next big topic in this soundtrack, Iron Man and his many different armors.

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First, let's hear from Roy Thomas. Iron man was already a character in the Marvel Universe when you joined in '65 and you obviously worked on him. What can you say about this character?

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[Roy]: I would have considered like just a so-so creation back then. He was one of the last of the first round of superheroes Stan made up. He was before Daredevil but he was after most of the rest of them like Thor, and Spider-man, and Ant-Man, and Fantastic Four, and the Hulk.

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But it was just an interesting idea, you know, of a guy who has to wear this big bulky armor as he did at first, in order to be able to move at all because he's in danger of dying, and he has to, I don't know, there's some kind of science-fictional gobbledygook about something in that armor that keeps the shrapnel from... that he's ingested from getting to his heart and killing him. I could never make any sense out of that.

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[Andrea]: <laughs>

0253 00:46:30:04 00:46:47:08

[Roy]: But the idea of a guy who puts on this armor armor to become a superhero was kind of interesting, and then about a year later, they kind of streamlined the armor so he didn't look quite as clunky, and he became, you know, not one of Marvel's great characters but he supported his own magazine for a number of years.

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And, uh, I didn't write his own book very often but I... loved having him as, he was one of the original Avengers, and I liked him having him around the Avengers. Because one of the interesting things was that, you know, he's this very fragile guy in a certain way, but he's also like one of the richest guys in the world,

a great inventor, and so forth, and yet, you know, he also has this kind of physical life.

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But he was... he seemed like a character that was not going to ever be one of Marvel's major characters, then, of course, along came the movies, you know.

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[Andrea]: Yeah.

0257 00:47:15:16 00:48:10:08

[Roy] It's... it's amazing because some of the characters that worked out better in movies didn't work out quite as well in comic books and vice versa. The Fantastic Four, somehow, they never found quite the right movie and although those movies were okay, they didn't establish the primacy in the movies that the Fantastic Four had had in the comic, is always one of the better selling Marvel books, you know, and yet some real quite less important character like Iron Man would suddenly become, you know the sort of the linchpin of the whole Marvel Cinematic Universe, which was a combination of the fact that he just happened to be around and, uh, some rather brilliant casting that somebody had by getting Robert Downey Jr. in there, and having, uh, somebody write just the right kind of dialogue and, that he could play and so forth, and next thing you know, Iron Man became one of Marvel's most popular characters, and a couple of years before that, nobody would have ever believed it.

0258 00:48:10:10 00:48:13:12

[Andrea]: Tom Brevoort, what can you say about Iron Man?

0259 00:48:13:14 00:48:15:18

[Tom]: He's a cool exec with a heart of steel.

0260 00:48:15:20 00:48:16:06

[Andrea]: <laughs>

0261 00:48:16:08 00:48:18:02

[Tom]: What else, what else is there?

0262 00:48:18:16 00:48:42:23

Iron Man has kind of become the face of modern Marvel because he was the first character that, uh, you know, Marvel Studios put forth in a solo movie, uh, and it was the first success that happened there, and all of the other, uh, film successes that came after that kind of grew out of that initial piece and out of Robert Downey's performance as Iron Man.

0263 00:48:43:00 00:49:13:24

Consequently, Iron Man is way better known and way more popular today than he was, even, you know, in the comic field and internally in 2007. And that that's one of the wonderful things about the Marvel characters. There have been things that haven't worked in their time or haven't caught on at a given moment that have become hugely successful when the moment has changed, and the time, uh, has been right.

0264 00:49:14:01 00:49:34:20

You know, this sort of trajectory that happens with the Marvel characters all the time and the most unlikely pieces of the Marvel Universe, the most unlikely characters

can suddenly find their moment and become hugely embraced, you know, you never, you never know, and all of it, even the failures are successes.

0265 00:49:34:22 00:49:38:08

[Andrea]: Yeah, exactly, you never know. Maggie Thompson what are your thoughts?

0266 00:49:39:01 00:49:49:22

[Maggie]: Well, he built in a weakness for Iron Man. And it was interesting to see the story evolve because that first outfit that Iron Man had looked like a hot water tank.

0267 00:49:49:24 00:49:50:15

[Andrea]: <laughs>

0268 00:49:50:17 00:50:28:13

[Maggie]: And it was amusing that, in the movie, they actually addressed that. It is... I mean, fans went "Yay! That's the original costume that is so silly looking." Um, and then the realization that you have to make that evolve so that it will appeal all the way around, but you still have to build in that weakness, what is his weakness, wait a minute, why is this thing in his chest? Oh, wait, he almost died. So how do we have a vulnerable hero who is worked out how to protect himself and then goes on to protect others as well. What other challenges will he be met with?

0269 00:50:28:15 00:50:35:12

And it doesn't hurt that by the time you get a movie out there, you've got a fantastic actor putting it across to an audience.

0270 00:50:35:14 00:51:14:00

And, again, with that wonderful vulnerability of the character..

If the character is invulnerable, who's going to care?
Oh, he's not going to die, he's not going to get hurt, he's going to be just fine,
he probably has all the friends he ever needs, etcetera,
well, you go, "Well, maybe it's not that simple. Maybe it's not that simple."
And, and Iron Man was, by no means, the first use of the concept
of "hey you could have this armored character who could go out there and do things."
But what he did was build in your vulnerable, brilliant hero,
and use that device to make fascinating stories

0271 00:51:14:02 00:51:14:15

[Andrea]: Hm.

0272 00:51:14:17 00:51:44:07

[Alex]: You know it's interesting he started out as kind of an anti-communist,
like, commentary on the Vietnam War, but it grew into something more than that
where they actually kept them out of wars after a while.
And he became more of, of an inventor trying to figure out what armor
will fit this current situation
Like, Jack Kirby's first suit, um was so much fun.
It was just this kind of primitive gray metallic suit he made while he was in captivity.

0273 00:51:44:09 00:51:54:16

[Roy] Yeah, he started off, uh, having to make this big, clunky armor.
it was like, you know, it would have made him an extra foot or so taller,
it was just huge he looked like a robot really.

0274 00:51:54:18 00:52:18:04

[Alex]: That was a Jack Kirby design, then you have the yellow golden suit
that was showcased in the early Avengers comics,
then you have Steve Ditko's redesign of it where you have the red and yellow that,
and that's still being used in the movies and things.
Uh, my favorite one is the silver centurion from the '80s.

I like the, uh, the '80s shoulder pads. <laughs>

0275 00:52:18:06 00:52:19:03

[Andrea]: <chuckles>

0276 00:52:19:05 00:52:41:13

[Alex]: And those are fun to look at. But also, it's just sleek clean.
It looks really like this '80s contemporary modern look.
Barry Windsor Smith did a great rendition of that in 1988,
and then the suits developed through time, right,
you have the nanotech stuff that's more recent
where little particles of metal come together again like LEGO® pieces
to assemble his outfit.

0277 00:52:42:09 00:52:50:09

Yeah, I think the tech, uh, and the... the fascination with technology
is something that I find really appealing about Iron Man.

0278 00:52:50:11 00:53:00:21

[Andrea]: Yeah, Alex, can you deep dive on that a little bit more?
How the armors were affected by technology and trends in different decades?
You mentioned the shoulder pads, what other elements do we see of that?

0279 00:53:00:23 00:53:13:14

[Alex]: Yeah, exactly, so I think in the '60s, you know,
there's a love of science fiction anyway,
so there was still an echo of the '50s sci-fi element
in his first outfit that Jack Kirby came up with.

0280 00:53:14:03 00:53:33:23

Then I think as the '60s are kind of rolling along, we like colors, right?
So the '60s are all about color.
If you look at psychedelic posters, color matters in the '60s.
And so I think, initially, the colorists then made it more of a golden yellow color,
still the clunky outfit though.

0281 00:53:34:00 00:53:34:14

[Andrea]: <chuckles>

0282 00:53:34:16 00:54:11:04

[Alex]: Now, Steve Ditko, like when he designed a Spider-man costume,
and he designed the use of Doctor Strange and the look of Doctor Strange
and his powers and even plotted a lot of the stories,
when he redesigned the Iron Man costume,
he made it so that it was like putting on gloves and a helmet,
and they were red, but then the yellow pant legs and sleeves
would kind of slide up the arm and take up the rest of the space to assemble the
costume,
and that's when the concept of this armor that's mobilizing to fit the wearer
starts to come into play that was Steve Ditko's contribution to that.

0283 00:54:11:06 00:54:17:09

And that's again part of the... if you look at a lot of '60s advertising,
it's all about sleek, like, let's make it sleek

0284 00:54:17:11 00:54:17:22

[Andrea]: Mm.

0285 00:54:17:24 00:54:35:07

[Alex]: And then I think just as the '70s goes on,
it's probably less about technology in the '70s,

things got a little, um, darker in the '70s,
but one of the funny additions was they added a nose on Iron Man
which almost makes no sense but they added a pointy triangle there.

0286 00:54:35:09 00:54:35:23

[Andrea]: <laughs>

0287 00:54:36:00 00:55:04:01

[Alex]: Then I think in the '80s, it's a little more exciting.
I think it's a different air in the 80s. If you look at, like, music videos,
there's more of an interest in tech and '80s tech,
you look at the funny experimental MTV videos,
you think, wow, it looks so goofy then
but they were actually having fun just with technology
and that's when you have like different
outfits like, uh, the underwater Iron Man costume
which was like the whole thing was just really dark blue
just to kind of camouflage undersea.

0288 00:55:04:03 00:55:25:17

You have the silver centurion where it was like this clean silver-white look,
and then, of course, you have '80 shoulder pads.
In the '90s, it got a little different because you have a lot of action movies
coming out in the '90s. It was all about extreme action.
I don't say all about, there's also independent films and independent comics that
weren't.

0289 00:55:25:19 00:55:50:13

But I think the mainstream interest and what got fans to the comics
and what got movie goers to the movies was big, explosive action.
So you see the Iron Man costume taking on almost extreme proportions
where it's... you have war machine which is like full of machine guns

and missile launchers, right? It's like this kind of Arnold Schwarzenegger version of Commando but in an Iron Man costume.

0290 00:55:50:15 00:56:26:21

Then you have in the 2000s, you know, extremists where you have almost like a biotech version where it's part of his brain chemistry. Uh, the adaptation of a suit, it's almost like part mutation, and then I think more of the modern times is nanotechnology and how you can get nanotech receptors and remote control with things that are that are smaller than a human cell, right, and then that becomes manifest in the... the new Iron Man suits which were in the movies where they would come like a horde of insects but it was actually nanotech driven pieces of his armor suit.

0291 00:56:26:23 00:56:41:13

[Maggie]: Well, I suspect that you have a bunch of designers, whether they're comic book artists or whether we're in the movies and we're actually having to animate the action. The designer's saying "here's what works and here's what doesn't work."

0292 00:56:41:15 00:56:50:19

So there was a question at one point as I recall, like, did Iron Man have a nose? Could you see his nose under the helmet? This was back in comic book days.

0293 00:56:50:21 00:57:24:09

Um, one of the challenges with Iron Man is determining the emotion of the character behind an expressionless visor. And that's challenging and yet you can tell that story but you need to see that there's that guy underneath so we... we suddenly we go from this face plate, which is just a piece of pot on his head, to having a visor that will raise so that, "Oh, we can see his face. We can see the way he looks if he wants us to."

0294 00:57:24:11 00:57:41:22

And then the concept of what does he see in that costume. In movies, they face the challenge and it got more complicated in a way but easier in a way to understand what's going on because you see underneath the visor a lot of the time and you can see his face reflected into.

0295 00:57:41:24 00:57:54:02

So you have different artists solving different problems of storytelling to make it more and more and more interesting and then you end up with a Halloween costume that a kid can wear and get a candy bar for.

0296 00:57:54:04 00:57:56:19

[Andrea]: Yeah. <chuckles> Um, did you have a favorite?

0297 00:57:56:21 00:58:01:04

[Maggie]: <laughs> I almost would say my heart belongs to the water tank, but it doesn't.

0298 00:58:01:06 00:58:01:19

[Andrea]: <chuckles>

0299 00:58:01:21 00:58:05:12

[Maggie]: Um... <inhales> Oh, goodness.

0300 00:58:07:10 00:58:30:05

No, no, there... Each one solves its own problems, and then as it evolves, I don't think anything is lost from generation to generation of that costume.

I think each is intriguing, I don't look at the current costume and go "Oh, I wish he was a water tank." <chuckles>

0301 00:58:30:07 00:58:30:17

[Andrea]: Yeah.

0302 00:58:30:19 00:58:32:20

[Maggie]: They've come a long way, let's put it that way.

0303 00:58:32:22 00:58:33:13

[Andrea]: <chuckles>

0304 00:58:33:15 00:58:51:06

[Roy]: Yeah, in the original days, I remember, there was a lot of talk about transistors, you know. Nobody who knows about transistors anymore but he was, for a while, he was called the transistorized titan, and then the transistors were a big deal then. Then it became, I don't know, different things, I don't know what he runs on now, maybe solar batteries or wind power I don't know.

0305 00:58:51:08 00:58:52:07

[Andrea]: <chuckles>

0306 00:58:52:09 00:58:53:16

[Roy]: They didn't have to pay himself green.

0307 00:58:53:18 00:58:56:03

[Andrea]: Yeah, yeah, he's somehow part of a Tesla.

0308 00:58:56:05 00:58:57:05

[Roy]: Yeah. <chuckles>

0309 00:59:00:21 00:59:18:03

[Roy]: Iron Man was always, uh, an evolving look, you know. Sometimes, the... the armor would get big a little bigger and bulkier it would suddenly have, I don't know, uh, things jutting off it and so forth, and it would be... Red and yellow was a good color for a while I became red and white, that didn't look too good.

0310 00:59:18:05 00:59:33:11

It was every few years when they'd want to juice the sails up a little bit. They'd have something new happen with Iron Man's armor and you'd get a little different look, but it was always a minor cosmetic thing. I think about the only thing they ever really did really big with him was, you know, when they turned him into an alcoholic, you know.

0311 00:59:33:13 00:59:34:15

[Andrea]: What about you, Tom?

0312 00:59:34:17 00:59:53:03

[Tom]: I think my favorite, unfortunately, is, it's kind of a boring answer, I like the classic red and gold armor that, you know, Iron Man war from the mid-'60s into the mid-'80s. You know, that's another good example that, uh, you know, of kind of the evolution of a Marvel character.

0313 00:59:53:05 01:00:17:05

You know, Stan and Jack Kirby and Don Heck launched Iron Man, and he did all right, but the strip wasn't quite catching on to the degree

that other Marvel properties did, and they completely head to toe redesigned the character, like they threw the old design out and gave him a new suit and that became part and parcel of, you know, what the character was about.

0314 01:00:17:07 01:00:53:14

Creating this identity for himself, uh, and this super humanity, uh, you know out of his own intellect, uh, and then that became a larger idea that, okay, well, if you can create, uh, you know, and upgrade and improve the suit that you're in, maybe you could also create, uh, suits for specific purposes and so you would roll out the space armor that Iron Man would use when he had to go on a deep space mission or the undersea armor when he had to go to the bottom of the ocean floor or the stealth armor when he had to sneak into some, uh... you know, a hostile area.

0315 01:00:53:16 01:01:08:13

And each one of those changed the parameters, the character a little bit gave it a momentary visual refresh and made it interesting, added color to the character, and expanded on the idea of... uh, what Iron Man could be,

0316 01:01:08:15 01:01:22:24

Uh, you know, to the point now where, you know, we've done a zillion different iterations of Iron Man armor and we're constantly, the character is constantly rolling out and developing new looks and new technologies, new weapons, new defenses, new gadgets.

0317 01:01:23:01 01:01:31:03

[Andrea]: Now, Roy, Alex and Maggie mentioned it briefly before, there was a short run where Iron Man's mask had a nose in the comic books?

0318 01:01:31:05 01:01:31:14

[Roy]: Yeah.

0319 01:01:31:16 01:01:36:16

[Andrea] It was in '63 before you were there, can you tell us more about how the nose came about?

0320 01:01:36:18 01:02:01:21

[Roy]: Well, I've just heard this evidently, Stan, of course, had been overseeing that character since the very beginning. He had written it for years. And he was still the editor and the publisher, and all of a sudden, one day, he evidently said to a couple of his editors, he suddenly looked at the mask and said, "You know, I guess it just looked like you couldn't really fit a nose or something under that, you know, armor, with that, you're saying," so he said shouldn't he have a nose.

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Well, they took that literally so then they designed a nose for him and then when Stan saw this, "Well, that doesn't look good. Get rid of that nose," you know. The thing is Stan was always doing these things by the seat of his pants, and he just kind of throw out ideas, sometimes you had to take him seriously, sometimes you didn't, you know.

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In this case, I don't know if he meant it when he said it or not but, uh, it was just one of those things that didn't work out.

0323 01:02:22:03 01:02:23:00

[Andrea]: <chuckles>

0324 01:02:26:21 01:02:34:08

Coming up, we're going to hear back from all four of our Marvel experts about their meetings with the man himself Stan Lee.

0325 01:02:34:10 01:02:40:09

In fact, it turns out Roy Thomas was one of the last people to see him before he passed away in 2018.

0326 01:02:40:11 01:02:50:23

But now, let's bring in LEGO® Art senior designer Kitt Kossmann and design lead Christopher Stamp, and talk about how Iron Man was recreated in LEGO® Art.

0327 01:02:51:00 01:02:59:11

What's it like working at the LEGO® group? What's the day-to-day like? Is it... is it as LEGO®-like as people would hope to imagine? <laughs>

0328 01:02:59:13 01:03:15:16

[Kitt] It's really a fun place to work because there are so many nationalities and there's so many people. In some way, it's like being in school still, like, when I was going to the art school, because there's some so many people that are interested in the same topic.

0329 01:03:16:05 01:03:35:23

And if you have any issues with things that you can't really figure out how to do or you just need to talk to somebody about what you've done and hear their reflections on it, you can always find somebody, and I think everybody has time for you which is also really nice. So, um, I think the atmosphere is really good.

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[Christopher]: Yeah, I think the same as Kitt, it doesn't feel like a job sometimes because it's quite fun and, I mean, you spend a lot of your days discussing, you know, if it's a Star Wars model, you discuss you're discussing the lasers on the side of a Star Wars vehicle and you're developing elements that can shoot bullets and stuff, so it's kind of, it's like discussing how which one can go farther, so it's, it's not exactly what you would call it a normal job.

0331 01:04:00:12 01:04:18:18

Every time we're doing a product, every little detail, you really go into it and you talk for hours over the smallest of details, from colors, to element choices, to everything and just that level of passion and attention to detail that's really, uh...

0332 01:04:19:20 01:04:32:04

I don't think you get that a lot of places, so it kind of feels a bit old-fashioned which is great because you can tell there's definitely a passion there and an interest in what the work the people's doing.

0333 01:04:32:06 01:04:46:22

[Andrea]: Yeah, it sounds like every detail is something that's up for great discussion and debate, and everyone's learning from each other. It sounds like a really creative environment and it probably, probably really brings out the inner child in a lot of people.

0334 01:04:46:24 01:05:02:13

[Kitt]: Yeah, I think it is. I think it does, yeah. I feel like, like Chris, you know, like going to work is fun, it's like playing a lot of the times, and sometimes, yeah, people also say to you like, "How can you get money for just playing with bricks?"

That's, yeah, that's amazing. <laughs> Is that your job?

0335 01:05:02:15 01:05:03:08

[Christopher]: Yeah, exactly.

0336 01:05:03:10 01:05:06:16

[Kitt]: So, yeah, just going to work is like, "I have to build today. Yay!"

0337 01:05:06:18 01:05:07:02

[Christopher]: <chuckles>

0338 01:05:07:04 01:05:09:15

[Kitt]: That's nice, that's really nice.

0339 01:05:09:17 01:05:19:12

[Andrea]: What are your... your relationships with Marvel Universe?
Did you grow up reading the comic books or how is this exciting working with Marvel for you?

0340 01:05:19:14 01:05:35:22

[Kitt]: Well, I've always been very fascinated by... by superheroes.
I think, like, it's a fascinating universe and it's just like fascinating that these people have all these skills.
Like, as a child, of course, you dreamed of, like, being able to do something like that.

0341 01:05:36:17 01:06:01:07

And my personal, like, superhero, super, super, superhero, is, it's not particularly Iron Man.
I like Iron Man but I like Spider-man better, and I think that has to do with the...

with the universe he's in and his character
because he's like funny but he also makes mistakes.
Um, and I always found that he was, he was very amusing

0342 01:06:01:09 01:06:02:08

[Andrea]: What about you Christopher?

0343 01:06:02:10 01:06:11:02

[Christopher]: I was actually super excited, to be honest.
I have to admit I don't very often geek out, but with this product, I definitely did.

0344 01:06:11:14 01:06:28:18

As a child, I was, as a '90s kid, I was a big huge fan of the, the, uh, cartoons rather than the comics so I was really into the '90s Spider-man animated TV show, and the 90s, uh, X-men animated TV shows on FOX. I thought those were fantastic.

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Um, and then over the last 10 years, I'm... a huge fan of the Marvel Cinematic Universe. I've... actually, last week, I watched all of them again, but I really love those movies. Big fan of, uh, of Ryan and his team who do all of the concept art for the movies and I'm just a big Marvel cinematic geek. So for me, this was a... this was a dream project.

0346 01:06:54:06 01:06:58:06

[Andrea]: No kidding, what was the kid in you saying when you found out you got to do this?

0347 01:06:58:08 01:07:02:00

[Christopher]: <chuckles> To be honest, the first thing, I was like "Am I going to meet Iron Man?"

0348 01:07:02:02 01:07:04:06

[Andrea, Kitt, Christopher]: <laughing>

0349 01:07:04:08 01:07:19:15

[Christopher]: I think, yeah, that's kind of the... like, "Oh we have to go and visit Marvel? Oh, no." That would be like a great opportunity. Um, we didn't have to, obviously, because we're very digital on this project. Um, but that was always on the back of my mind.

0350 01:07:19:17 01:07:23:01

[Andrea]: <chuckles> That's so good. What can you say about Iron Man?

0351 01:07:23:03 01:07:58:06

[Kitt]: I was actually very surprised that he had so many outfits, like, that we started out like with the Mark III, and then went on to a Mark LXXXV, and the Hulkbusters. Well, he has so many outfits, and I must say, even though I'm an Iron Man fan, I also must say that I might be a bit of an Iron Man ignorant since I didn't know that he had all these outfits but I really learned a lot doing this, and Chris told me the differences between the... the different outfits that I had to pay, like, a lot of attention to that, to the Mark LXXXV that had gold like shoulders as an example.

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[Andrea]: Yeah, let's actually get into those. Um, if you have the set, you can choose to make one of three different pictures of Iron Man, tell us about the Mark III armor.

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[Christopher]: So we looked at the catalogue of the different suits. Um...

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We talked a lot about which ones were the right ones to do and why. I know that for a long time, I was discussing the Mark I, which is the one he uses to break out of the cave. The challenge with that is, obviously, the color palette doesn't match. So that would just cause some practicality issues.

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The reason that we went for the Mark I is because... well, first of all, we focused on the movie, uh, designs rather than the comic books because with the movies, that's what the current generation of adults and kids really know, the character for...

0356 01:08:47:20 01:09:02:23

It's... You're talking about more the die-hard fans who know the comic books so we specifically went for the... the movie direction to be more with the now and the present, and, uh, work with what people currently think of when they- they see Iron Man.

0357 01:09:03:00 01:09:25:10

The reason that we picked the Mark III first was because that is what you see in that, ten years ago, that original Iron Man movie. This is kind of the first true Iron Man costume when he's really, went back to his workshop. He's... corrected, the all of the functions and features, and he's stand to become the true Iron Man as we begin to know him.

0358 01:09:25:12 01:09:40:15

So, for us, because that was his first real outing in the red and gold color palette, we felt that that was the one we had to do. Um, no matter what the other images became,

that was one that we definitely wanted on our wish list

0359 01:09:41:17 01:09:44:16

[Andrea] And what about the Hulkbuster Mark I?

0360 01:09:44:18 01:10:04:13

[Christopher]: So with the Hulkbuster, we were looking for differentiation throughout the different designs, and the whole booster, first of all, it's a fan favorite. Just going into the story about it and the connection with the Hulk, it's a huge, it's a huge deal in the comics, and it's... it plays a huge part in Age of Ultron.

0361 01:10:05:16 01:10:38:02

We tried to pick costumes from different movies throughout the Marvel Cinematic Universe

and also, um, designs that were distinctively different, and when you think about it, the whole poster comes straight to your mind.

Personally, it's one of my favorite Iron Man suits.

So it was something that, straight away, I was like, okay different shape helmet, a different body shape, this is one that... I don't know how we're going to achieve it, but this is something we need to just explore because it'll give us definitely a different, uh, silhouette and shape on the box.

0362 01:10:38:04 01:10:53:20

The face plate is different, everything about it looks different because of the color palette.

It's also the same. So it was different enough but it wasn't too different that you think it's a completely different character so that's kind of what lent us towards the Hulkbuster.

0363 01:10:53:22 01:11:06:05

When you're looking at the different versions of the Hulkbuster,

you have to like with the Mark III, you have to go for the original.

Um, there is a few different versions out there but you have to go for the original. That's the big one.

0364 01:11:06:07 01:11:09:05

[Andrea]: And then the Mark LXXXV armor, what can you tell us about that?

0365 01:11:09:07 01:11:36:09

[Christopher]: So the Mark LXXXV, so this one kind of we talked a lot directly with Marvel about because... obviously, um, spoilers for hidden End Game, uh, in Infinity War and in End Game, that's Iron Man's final movies, and we discussed a lot about what do people think about and how do they remember Iron Man as a character. And this is the suit he wears in those movies, and this is the nanotech suit.

0366 01:11:36:11 01:12:04:12

Um, so the reason that we picked this one was because it felt like this... if we were telling if you use the three images to tell a story of Iron Man's journey, these three kind of take screenshots of that full journey. Starting with his first suit going through his battles with the team and the Avengers, with the Hulkbuster, to this being his final suit. So we felt that as a character arc for the character, this selection of suits made sense as a trio.

0367 01:12:05:07 01:12:09:05

[Andrea]: And I guess you had photos to work with when you started the design.

0368 01:12:09:07 01:12:09:17

[Kitt]: Mm-hm.

0369 01:12:09:19 01:12:11:15

[Andrea]: Tell us a bit about that process.

0370 01:12:12:06 01:12:52:11

[Kitt]: I think the biggest challenge that I found with doing these ones was, uh... that we had to create this field of gold, uh, in the in the faces of them without actually using gold. So that was a definitely a challenge to get that right, because we didn't... there is like legal gold in there but that legal gold is not really shiny so we had to create both shape and also the feel that this is shiny and golden by using different shades of brown.

And the same actually went for the red when we did the body of the Iron Man.

0371 01:12:52:13 01:13:09:23

And the thing was, also, we needed to make it feel like a suit so we need to needed to create these big shapes and chunks of a color to kind of get the feeling that this is one big metal part that is made in in the color red but still add the shape to it.

0372 01:13:10:00 01:13:46:09

[Christopher] Absolutely. We tried to... with the... when we first started looking into this, we tried to simplify it, and it looked like a comic book version, which isn't necessarily a bad thing because that is the medium in this case, but because we'd specifically made that choice to focus on the movies and photo, focus on more of a photorealistic aesthetic, it was kind of a double... a double, uh, task because not only were we trying to capture the highlights in terms of the shadows and highlights to make it look 3D, but then on top of that, trying to make it look like reflective metal.

0373 01:13:47:01 01:14:11:12

Then we started really looking at this product the way an artist would with a... with a paintbrush and a set of colors because you were really trying to...

Then you start looking into shading and... okay, there's a highlight here so that's going to affect that highlight, but, oh, that highlight on the top of the helmet needs to be brighter than the highlight on the front of the helmet so you then get into long conversations about highlights.

0374 01:14:11:14 01:14:35:23

Um, in... when you look at Iron Man, normally... the strange thing about this is you don't focus on the highlights, you focus on the complete picture. But if we remove those highlights from the picture we're creating, all of a sudden, it's not Iron Man, or it's not the Iron Man that you recognize. So it's something that most people don't think about but if you remove it, you'll notice that something's wrong.

0375 01:14:36:00 01:14:44:21

[Andrea]: Yeah, and the first Iron Man mosaic you worked on was the Hulkbuster, and in the beginning, you were using square tiles to build the model. Is that correct?

0376 01:14:44:23 01:14:59:14

[Kitt] That is correct, yeah. We did that in the very beginning, and what we found out was, actually, we first... we first did it in squares and then I think, I think we did a version of the same one with the round plates instead on black plates.

0377 01:14:59:16 01:15:18:11

And what we found out was just that the picture gets so much deeper by using like round plates where you can like see the black plates, a bit... It's kind of like the color emerges in your head in a better way when we do it with round plates on the black background.

0378 01:15:18:13 01:15:49:23

[Christopher] Yeah, Kitt's exactly right. When we were looking at it, we physic, this is one that we physically made. A lot of this project was digital, um, but this was a product where we made it physically with the square plates and then the round plates, because with the square plates, we kept looking at it, and, yes, it's mosaic, but it looked pixelated. It looked very angular. And for a suit that's quite organic, when you think about it, the edges, they just weren't soft enough, there was a lot of corners in places that they shouldn't be corners.

0379 01:15:50:19 01:16:06:08

And then as soon as we change to the more round look, then all of a sudden, all of those kind of sharp edges were removed and it disappeared, and it became a much more softer shape. And therefore, the overall aesthetic became a lot, um, more organic and a lot cleaner.

0380 01:16:07:00 01:16:17:01

And it just, I don't know, it kind of made it feel a lot more real all of a sudden. It made it feel like it was popping more out of the picture rather than looking flat against the background.

0381 01:16:17:03 01:16:18:01

[Kitt]: <clears throat>

0382 01:16:22:22 01:16:36:13

[Andrea]: It's normal that LEGO® fans are creating something new, and now that these brand new LEGO® Art tiles are out there, do you expect that fans are going to start creating their own pieces, and if so, are you looking forward to that, to see what they'll come up with?

0383 01:16:36:15 01:16:42:19

[Kitt]: Oh, I really, I really hope that they'll do that. That could be, um, that could be very inspiring also for us to see.

0384 01:16:42:21 01:17:06:05

[Christopher]: Yeah, I completely agree with Kitt. We've got such a fantastic, uh, adult community, and if you, if you go on the Internet, you can see they make these fantastic creations, uh, their imagination is just off the charts. I think the good thing about this, um, what I'm most excited about is you don't need to stick to the 48 by 48 scale.

0385 01:17:06:07 01:17:06:23

[Kitt] Get the frame.

0386 01:17:07:00 01:17:19:24

[Christopher]: Yeah, the frame, uh, so what you can do is, this is sliced up into nine sections, and you can you can make it bigger, you can make it smaller, you can... it's a building system. You can build on it and make it a bigger image if you wish.

0387 01:17:20:01 01:17:37:18

So I think that's what I'm really excited about is... Yeah, there'll be...there'll be people who make images of their favorite characters or themselves and things, and I think that alone is fantastic. But I'm really excited to see what stuff are we not thinking they're gonna do, that they surprise us by doing.

0388 01:17:37:20 01:17:52:14

Are they gonna make a picture that's... I don't know, 3,000 by 3,000, and it's huge from the floor to the ceiling, or are they gonna make something

that's really short but really long or... I'm just excited to see what new things they come up with.

0389 01:17:52:16 01:18:01:10

[Andrea] Wow, that's so neat. It's like, it could be the final product or it could be just the beginning for some LEGO® fans. It's so interesting. Thanks so much, you guys.

0390 01:18:01:12 01:18:02:10

[Kitt]: Thank you.

0391 01:18:09:08 01:18:20:12

[Andrea]: Before we wrap up, let's bring back our four Marvel experts, Alex, Maggie, Tom, and Roy, and hear about their encounters with the biggest hero of them all, Stan Lee.

0392 01:18:20:14 01:18:26:09

Maggie Thompson, I heard that you wrote Stan a letter when you were fairly young. What can you tell us about that?

0393 01:18:26:11 01:19:13:08

[Maggie]: <chuckles> I wasn't very young when I wrote Stan. I am embarrassed to say I was probably 20, no, 19 or 20 so not very young. And when my daughter was helping me clean my attic last year, she found a very embarrassing letter because we... I kept the communication. I kept my carbons. And what I was doing was complaining to Stan that, uh, in the Thor comic book, that obviously he was missing a bet because he didn't understand that Loki was not Thor's brother, that Loki was one of the elder gods, basically, on a par with Odin blah, blah, blah for six pages.

0394 01:19:14:03 01:19:38:16

And... <chuckles> ...my daughter found this letter, as I say, filled with self-importance. And Stan's response boiled down to it's wonderful that Marvel has created something that builds such fans that they would go into such details about what they're reading.

0395 01:19:39:07 01:19:48:24

"Please feel free to write to me again and I'll be glad to answer any question you have as long as it can be answered with yes or no."

0396 01:19:49:01 01:19:51:18

[Andrea, Maggie]: <laughs>

0397 01:19:51:20 01:20:17:16

[Maggie]: And Stan has always, always, always been kind and responsive. My brother worked for Marvel in the 1990s, and I was talking to him the other day, and he always felt that a major goal for Stan Lee was to make reading seem cool to kids.

0398 01:20:18:12 01:20:28:20

Remember that there was a time when reading novels was considered to be spending time on trash. Well, after World War II, it was reading comics that was considered to be spending time on trash.

0399 01:20:28:22 01:20:29:14

[Andrea]: Mm.

0400 01:20:29:16 01:20:48:17

[Maggie]: And Stan worked for many years to make it clear, comic books aren't trash... and reading for pleasure is beneficial.

And Stan said it better than I've just expressed it,
and he was completely successful in making reading seem cool.

0401 01:20:48:19 01:20:51:06

[Andrea]: Mm-hm. Did you ever meet him?

0402 01:20:51:08 01:20:52:21

[Maggie]: Oh, many times, yes.

0403 01:20:52:23 01:20:54:06

[Andrea]: Tell us a bit about that.

0404 01:20:54:08 01:21:10:11

[Maggie]: <chuckles> Well, he was just always wonderful. He had a famously bad memory.

So among the impressive things about Stan Lee was his being able to produce as much work as he produced, and it was work.

0405 01:21:10:13 01:21:33:00

Dealing with a bad memory, can you imagine keeping all the special attributes of all the characters and all the characters' names straight and telling a story with this artist and that artist and the other artist while he was churning out volumes of material, which, as I say, sometimes meant that he didn't remember a particular person.

0406 01:21:33:02 01:21:54:14

So I was at a breakfast meeting with him at a convention, and we went through the whole meal, and I think the check came or something, anyway, uh, Carol turned to me and she said, "Well, Maggie, and Stan did a double take."

And as I say I'd known him for years, and he said, "Maggie, oh, I thought you were Carol's secretary.

I'm sorry I didn't realize it was you."

0407 01:21:54:16 01:22:04:00

So he was wonderful, and affable, and sweet, and articulate to people that he thought he was meeting for the first time.

0408 01:22:04:18 01:22:29:14

I did an essay at one point saying that if you think of someone who represents editors to the world at large, it was Stan. You would recognize him in an elevator, he was the editor. There were other editors who were more influential, maybe, but by golly, Stan was the guy who was the image of the editor to a generation that grew up with his work.

0409 01:22:29:16 01:22:31:11

[Andrea]: Alex Grant, you also met Stan?

0410 01:22:31:13 01:23:03:12

[Alex]: Yeah, I met him once at a, uh, at WonderCon, and I had a black Spider-man suit on.

This is I think before I got more public about my comic book historian stuff, but he liked the black Spider-man costume, and we took a picture together. He was kind of in a rush with a lot of the other ones, but with me, he was really nice. I think he just kind of, um, liked my vibe and I asked him a few questions. And he was just really nice, he shook my hand, and really, really nice fella. I could tell he was kind of stressed from the lines, because he's like 95 at this point.

0411 01:23:03:14 01:23:04:04

[Andrea]: Mm-hm.

0412 01:23:04:06 01:23:29:14

[Alex]: Um, maybe even 90, maybe he was 93, but... but it was just nice that, I think when it comes to social cues, Stan is a master. He was a master of that in the '60s, '70s, even in the '90s. Such a dynamo. I think that, um, that, yeah, the world is missing something with him gone that's for sure, but I think some people love what he did that it's... that keeps the magic going.

0413 01:23:29:16 01:23:31:03

[Andrea]: Where do you have that picture?

0414 01:23:31:05 01:23:39:08

[Alex]: Huh, it's actually in my, uh, wall I... I don't show it to too many people because I'm in that black costume but I love it. It's framed.

0415 01:23:39:10 01:23:41:07

[Andrea]: <chuckles> Of course.

0416 01:23:41:09 01:23:46:11

So what about you, Tom? You've been with Marvel Comics for 30 years so you must have worked with Stan.

0417 01:23:46:13 01:24:03:17

[Tom] Um, I've worked with Stan, uh, you know, a number of times over the years since I was at Marvel. Enough so that, you know, while I would, in no way, consider myself a close friend of Stan or anything, but he certainly knew who I was.

0418 01:24:03:19 01:24:22:21

Stan was very much, you know, the person that you see in the... on TV or in films, and here in the various interviews, you know, he did. There's certainly a dial on it, you know, he would dial the experience up or dial it down.

0419 01:24:22:23 01:24:49:14

But that wasn't really a put on. He legitimately was, uh, that excited, and excitable, and energetic, uh, and enthusiastic about, uh, what he was doing, and he would legitimately talk and write the way he sounds in all of those clips that you've seen, uh, from over the years, at least to my experience, going back to '89.

0420 01:24:49:16 01:24:50:07

[Andrea]: Right.

0421 01:24:50:09 01:25:21:15

[Tom]: I work with Stan in the early 2000s on a book that was called The Last Fantastic Four Story, and the promise of the project was exactly what it says. Um, you know, we went to Stan and we paired him up with, uh, John Romita Jr., one of the preeminent artists of the Marvel stable for years and years, and, you know, we basically said, "Stan we want you to just write whatever it means, whatever the last Fantastic Four story would be for you. Write that and we'll do that as a special."

0422 01:25:21:17 01:25:37:23

Um, and Stan went away, uh, and he wrote up his, uh, outline, and sent it in to me, um, and, you know, we looked at it and, you know, we generally liked it but we had a couple of notes, a couple of thoughts, uh, and I sent Stan back those notes and things.

0423 01:25:38:00 01:26:04:02

And we came in the next day and there was a message from Stan on my office voicemail.

And the message was Stan going "Well, I don't know Tom, you know, you've got these notes

and I don't know if I can do it this other way that, you know, that you want.

If you want to be different than what I want to do, maybe I shouldn't be doing it."

And, you know, and this was sort of a traumatic moment for us because we had made Stan, you know, sad and upset. <chuckles>

0424 01:26:04:04 01:26:05:06

[Andrea]: Yeah.

0425 01:26:05:08 01:26:11:17

[Tom]: Marvel's offices are on the East Coast and Stan lives on the West Coast. Or, uh, you know lived on the on the West Coast.

0426 01:26:11:19 01:26:30:20

And so it was gonna be three or four hours before I could even call him back, uh, and tell him, "Hey, you know, you're... you know, you don't have to worry, Stan. You know, if you're committed to doing X, Y, and Z the way you want to do it, that's fine," and so forth.

0427 01:26:30:22 01:26:43:17

So we had three hours or so to walk around and fret about this and to feel bad or whatever, and so, you know, it finally got to be 12 o'clock or 1 o'clock, you know, late enough that you could call the West Coast.

0428 01:26:43:19 01:27:19:21

And so I called Stan up, and before I could even really get into the conversation, uh, Stan said to me, "Hey, Tom, I want to apologize to you

about the message I left you yesterday.

I'd spent the whole day revising a whole bunch of other things and I got your email at the end of the day and it was...

The last thing I wanted to do was revise anything else,

I was so burnt out and exhausted but I've looked at all your...

your notes and the feedback you had and it's all great and it's good by me.

I'm gonna take care of it all right now, and so you don't have to worry about that.

I'm sorry for leaving you the message."

0429 01:27:19:23 01:27:20:11

[Andrea]: <chuckles>

0430 01:27:20:13 01:27:27:14

[Tom]: And that was it, and he went and did all that stuff and then... then, you know, went off.

And we finished the book and put the book together.

0431 01:27:27:16 01:27:42:14

[Andrea]: As we all know, Stanley passed away a few years ago.

And Roy Thomas, you are one of the last people to see him

when you flew across the country to visit him 48 hours before he passed away.

Could you tell us a bit about that experience?

0432 01:27:42:16 01:28:02:14

[Roy] Yeah, it was actually even less than that but what happened is that,

earlier, I had roasted subject to the person who was, uh, you know,

sort of handling his affairs with him and so forth at the time about six months or so earlier

about the idea of coming out there and he said fine,

but then he left and nothing ever happened of it.

0433 01:28:02:16 01:28:19:03

And finally, one day, uh, my... I have a manager who handles my convention appearances and signings and different things, uh, John Cemino, who's been a dealer and worked in conventions for many years, and we were taught... he just decided that, uh, you know, he should make that happen.

0434 01:28:19:05 01:28:32:13

So he got on the phone with, uh, some people he knew, and it turns out he was able to reach the guy who was then sort of, you know, working with Stan, uh, staying there in the house with him during the day, and it turned out, it was somebody he knew... he even knew slightly, a very nice guy.

0435 01:28:32:15 01:28:49:21

And, uh, so we arranged for me to fly out there from the East Coast, just, we knew that, uh, you know, at the most, we're gonna be able to spend about a half an hour with it before Stan would probably, you know, be tired because, uh, you know, he had... he didn't have much energy left, had come close to death once or twice before.

0436 01:28:49:23 01:29:12:01

Uh, but I figured, well, you know so well, I'll fly across the country and take a chance of spending a half an hour talking to this person who has meant, you know, so much to me, and I mean a little something to him, you know. And, uh, might cheer him up and would cheer me up and so forth, so we took a chance, and it worked out, and we had a nice little visit for that half hour.

0437 01:29:12:03 01:29:23:04

I just got that I necessarily thought he was going to pass away in a couple of days. I wouldn't have been surprised if he had passed away months earlier. I wouldn't have been surprised if he had lasted another year or two,

you know, it's hard to tell.

0438 01:29:23:06 01:29:34:09

But he didn't have much energy, uh, and we saw him, you know, on an afternoon and he passed away on the morning about, must have been, you know, 35 or 40 hours later, I guess, actually.

0439 01:29:34:11 01:29:52:23

And I was very glad we saw him, and I think it cheered Stan up a little bit, too, so I think it was a good situation, but I was sorry that our final meeting, of course, had to be under that kind of, uh, circumstance. But we just, you know, kidded around, didn't talk about anything that serious, and... then it was over.

0440 01:30:15:18 01:30:35:15

[Andrea]: Thank you for listening to the story behind Marvel comics and Iron Man. How's your piece of art coming along? Are you getting ready to hang it on the wall? Maybe you're ready to break it apart and build one of the other versions or create your own.

My name's Andrea Collins and this has been an original soundtrack from LEGO® Art.