



Stan Lee: The Man behind Marvel

Bob Batchelor

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The Amazing Spider-Man. The Incredible Hulk. The Invincible Iron Man. These are just a few of the iconic superheroes to emerge from the mind of Stan Lee. From the mean streets of Depression-era New York City to recipient of the National Medal of Arts, Lee's life has been almost as remarkable as the thrilling adventures he spun for decades. From millions of comic books fans of the 1960s through billions of moviegoers around the globe, Stan Lee has touched more people than almost any person in the history of popular culture. In *Stan Lee, The Man behind Marvel Comics*, Bob Batchelor offers an eye-opening look at this iconic visionary, a man who created (with talented artists) many of history's most legendary characters. In this energetic and entertaining biography, Batchelor explores how Lee capitalized on natural talent and hard work to become the editor of Marvel Comics as a teenager. After toiling in the industry for decades, Lee threw caution to the wind and went for broke, co-creating the Fantastic Four, Spider-Man, Hulk, Iron Man, the X-Men, the Avengers, and others in a creative flurry that revolutionized comic books for generations of readers. Marvel superheroes became a central part of pop culture, from collecting comics to innovative merchandising, from superhero action figures to the ever-present Spider-Man lunchbox. Batchelor examines many of Lee's most beloved works, including the 1960s comics that transformed Marvel from a second-rate company to a legendary publisher. This book reveals the risks Lee took to bring the characters to life and Lee's tireless efforts to make comic books and superheroes part of mainstream culture for more than fifty years. *Stan Lee: The Man behind Marvel Comics* not only reveals why Lee developed into such a central figure in American entertainment history, but brings to life the cultural significance of comic books and how the superhero genre reflects ideas central to the American experience. Candid, authoritative, and utterly absorbing, this is a biography of a man who dreamed of one day writing the Great American Novel, but ended up doing so much more - changing American culture by creating new worlds and heroes that have entertained generations of readers.

Stan Lee: The Man behind Marvel Details

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From Reader Review Stan Lee: The Man behind Marvel for online ebook

Rosemary Rey says

Biographies are a great way to learn more about your personal superheroes. And one of the greatest superheroes is Stan Lee. Reading his remarkable story, and that of his parents, helps put in perspective the efforts he undertook to become the creative who brought us so many amazing characters. Finishing this book is timely because of the story of elder abuse of Stan Lee now that he's in his 90s. I appreciated reading his story and hoping to push my own career forward and succeed in my own creative endeavors.

Lexi Vranick says

As a long-time fan of Marvel, this book was such a fun and insightful read. I grew up delighted by Stan Lee's many cameos in Marvel superhero flicks, and while I knew that he was the creator (and cocreator) of many characters and that he was essentially the face the Marvel Comics, I don't think I fully grasped his long history with the company or the struggles he went through to create such iconic characters and stories. Batchelor's extensive research delves into Lee's life from his upbringing during the Great Depression, through his army days, the inception of his first hero team in the Fantastic Four, all the way to his MCU cameos and geek culture stardom. It's an all-encompassing account of the life one of the most prolific figures in popular culture over the past six some-odd decades. I came away from this book feeling both inspired and awed - inspired to create, and awed at the tenacity and persistency of one man as he stormed American and worldwide popular culture. Stan Lee is a remarkable figure. He's a hardworking, creative, tireless talent who is notorious for taking ideas and running with them. This book gave me a much deeper appreciation for him as a creator and as a writer. It's definitely a must-read for Lee aficionados!

Nathaniel Darkish says

Though full of interesting information about Lee's life and role in Marvel, the writing style of this biography fell very flat for me. I felt like I was slogging through the timeline of Lee's life, with occasional anecdotes being reduced to a couple relatively uninteresting lines. With a person as vibrant as Lee, I was disappointed to see so little of his personality shine through. Batchelor would have done well to really dig into interesting stories rather than this bland presentation.

John Plowright says

It used to be said that behind every great man there's a great woman. Stan Lee's wife, Joanie, certainly played a decisive role in making him, if not a household name, certainly one of the most important purveyors of modern popular culture, not only revolutionizing the comic book industry but ultimately inspiring a wave of films that continue to enthrall moviegoers.

Stanley Leiber (as he then was) had drifted into the field in which he would make his mark by taking what he thought would be a temporary job as a general dogsbody at Timely Comics, aged 17. He soon began to fulfil

his creative urges by writing for the comics, adopting the name 'Stan Lee', which he later made his legal name.

A significant break came when the departure of editors Joe Simon and Jack Kirby for DC Comics, left him in charge, although the next two decades, as editor and chief writer, were professionally unfulfilling as he fairly slavishly followed instructions to follow market trends. It was when he contemplated quitting after being instructed to emulate DC's 'Justice League of America' in 1961 that Joanie fatefully intervened. Why not, she asked, create a comic book which conforms in outline with the brief given but actually make the contents as you'd truly like them to be, as the worst that could happen is that you could be sacked instead of quitting?.

What actually happened was that The Fantastic Four turned out to be a runaway success and over the next ten years Stan Lee followed success with success, revolutionizing comic books, creating a Marvel Comics superhero stable (assisted by talented artists such as Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko) which included The Incredible Hulk, the X-Men, and The Amazing Spider-Man (a character readers could crucially identify with, rather than just fantasize over), among many others.

In 1972 Lee effectively began a new and equally successful career, leaving the comic book end of the business to oversee production of cartoons and films based on Marvel characters.

This is the story which Bob Batchelor tells in 'Stan Lee', a workmanlike no-frills rather than warts-and-all biography. Lee, like Steve Jobs, is often accused of a genius for self-promotion which resulted in him taking the credit for the work of others. Batchelor acknowledges this debate without addressing it in any great detail – although, to be fair, in the nature of comic book creation it is often difficult precisely to assess an individual's precise contribution.

In short, Batchelor's is the best available biography of Lee, although his efforts to assess the cultural significance of the comic book phenomenon and explain the enduring appeal of the superhero genre are not terribly profound.

Wesley Britton says

Few figures in popular culture have been under more critical and biographical microscopes than revolutionary comics writer, editor, and publisher Stan Lee. Of course, since the '60s, Lee has been a constant self-promoter providing countless interviews, appearing at numerous conventions, and, along with co-author George Mair, writing his 2002 autobiography, *Excelsior!: The Amazing Life of Stan Lee*. In short, no one would describe Lee as a private man shying away from attention or the limelight.

In addition, there has been no shortage of both appreciations and criticisms of Lee's work at Marvel; the most exhaustive is likely Sean Howe's excellent 2012 *Marvel Comics: The Untold Story*. With all this, is there a need for a new full-length biography of a man whose presence has always been public but perhaps a tad mythologized?

I suppose much depends on how much you already know about the life and legacy of Lee or how much you want to know about the main motor behind Spiderman, the Fantastic Four, the X-Men, and the Avengers. To

be fair, Bob Bachelor has done a very professional and well researched job, but many knowledgeable readers won't learn much if anything new.

Still, if you want to understand the principal creator of the Marvel Universe, this new biography could serve as a one-stop shop. Other than Lee's own *Excelsior*, I don't recall reading in any other source quite as much background tracing Stan Lee's early years living in poverty during the Great Depression when he was still Stan Lieber. The struggles of his parents left a lifelong impact on Lee, resulting in a strong work ethic and a fear of being unemployed. On top of that childhood foundation, Bachelor clearly demonstrates just how a relentless energy and superlative imagination drove Lee's career. A bit of luck and being the right man at the right time didn't hurt either.

Lee's drive included a lifelong tug to do something more than create comics, like his unfulfilled mission of writing a great novel or working in television and movies. This led, in part, to the success of the Marvel movie franchise but also the financial disaster of SLM, Stan Lee Media. Lee has kept working into his 90s although most of his new projects haven't had the impact Lee hoped for. Because of this, Bachelor's overview of Lee's later years could contain revelations for readers who know little or nothing about Lee's non-Marvel work after the glory years of the 1960s.

Bachelor's history doesn't include much about Lee's personal life, leaving the reader with the impression Lee has had a life of enjoyable work but little play or home life. Inevitably, Bachelor had to touch on all the criticisms that Lee is a glory-hound who didn't give enough credit to artists like Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko for their contributions to Marvel. Bachelor also had to explore all the problems with Stan Lee Media and determines, echoing the court's findings, Lee just wasn't on the financial ball as much as he should have been. Bachelor retells the tales of how Lee came up with his ideas for his characters, how he shaped the brand-name of Marvel to appeal to his readers, and provides much information about the business side of Marvel from its roots in Martin Goodman's *Timely Comics* up to its current corporate identity.

Bachelor clearly knows what he's doing, being the author of cultural studies on subjects ranging from *Mad Men*, John Updike, to *The Great Gatsby*. If you want someone to provide an objective, outsider's analysis of the life and work of Stan Lee, then it would be hard to find a cultural historian more qualified than Bachelor. This is especially true for readers who haven't dived into the story of Marvel comics before. For all fellow baby boomers—remember how Stan the Man used to sign off all those Soapboxes—*Excelsior!*

This review was first published at BookPleasures.com on July 2, 2017:

goo.gl/tF17eq

Jessica says

2 Expected-More-Stars! 🌟🌟

This is a book for people who already know about Stan Lee and want to know more. For people who have a grasp on common comic knowledge. Going into it blind I found myself confused and bored at certain references of older comic issues and characters. Names were thrown around as if everyone knows who these

characters are.

Its written more like a timeline of Stan Lee's life rather than showcasing him as the interesting person he is. It could have been written better. I have no idea why i was listening to John 5's music while reading this book, but if i wasn't, i may have dozed off. ? ? ? ? ?

I can't say i grew up with the same fascination about Stan Lee and Marvel as the Author, Bob Batchelor did, but my interest in this man has developed over the past few years. Not only interest but questions. How did one man create such a empire that millions flock to? An empire that dominates pop culture, television, movies, toys, apparels and more.

But jI have to say again!: I wish it was written better! The story fell flat for me. I read more interesting biographies in my 3rd grade social studies class.

Fun Fact!:

1. Before DC had it's iconic name, there were called National Periodical Publications. ...Jesus!
2. Stan Lee wanted to quit the business of comics early on, before the superheroes trend really took off for Marvel.
3. Stan Lee created the Fantastic Four as a last resort to save his comic business.
4. Stan Lee's real name is Stanley Lieber.
5. Stan Lee is Romanian.
6. In Romania, during the 1890's laws outlawed education for jews, while anti-semitism was taught in high-schools.
7. I has goosebumps as the book recalled events in detail of the Haulocost and the great depression. I can't imagine going through what Stan Lee went through.
8. "He beamed with gratitude. A steady paycheck...\$8 a week" -WHAT! \$8 today wont buy you a happy meal from McDonalds. Wow, how the times have changed.
9. Stan Lee started his career working for Jack Kirby as a gofer.
10. Jack Kirby started as a writer and then began drawing for marvel.
11. I always thought Kirby hated Lee for Lee's comment about him being the creator of the characters but apparently it's because Kirby was cheating marvel and moonlighting for DC on the side for extra money. Since Lee knew about this, Kirby blames him for snitching?! But it was never said that he didn't.
12. The photo of Stan Lee standing next to a very young Kevin Smith was hilarious!!! Kevin is poising with his classic sad puppy-dog face.

To reiterate, the writing sucked. Stan Lee was too humanized, almost to the point of border-line depressing. I felt his pain and wish he didn't have to go through those struggles but i also feel it could have been portrayed differently.

Did i learn some new things? -Sure.

Am i glad i read this book? -Nope. :(

Ran says

Batchelor paints Stan Lee as a charismatic company man in a often semi-abusive relationship with Marvel and occasionally in contentious relationships with Marvel artists, particularly Jack Kirby. The author cites the experience of the Great Depression and desire for stability as motivating factors for which Lee did not leave Marvel when circumstances perhaps should have prompted him to do so. This work tries to balance the defamation of all parties involved in such tiffs, including Lee, Kirby, Marvel, etc. Treated as a "popular history" rather than a work of historical research - as, to be completely honest, it should be. A little repetitive as there are no deep dives beyond printed resources and interviews.

Nenia ? Queen of Literary Trash, Protector of Out-of-Print Gems, Khaleesi of Bodice Rippers, Mother of Smut, the Unrepentant, Breaker of Convention ? Campbell says

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"Excelsior!"

When I first saw this book on Netgalley, I was super excited because I thought it was going to be a graphic-novel style biography of Stan Lee's life, because some fool had slapped it with the "graphic novels" label. But STAN LEE is not a graphic novel - it is merely a biography about a man who wrote them. Apart from that slight disappointment due to some questionable labeling choices (*cough*), STAN LEE is a pretty fantastic book. I've read several comic book histories, about Wonder Woman and Superman, and they were all good. But they were also all DC. It would be really cool, I thought, to see the Marvel side of things. I've always liked Marvel.

STAN LEE shows how Stan Lee became involved with Marvel, how the Depression made him desperate and hungry (a familiar tale with many comic book authors and illustrators). It shows his contributions to the war effort with colorful cartoony instructional pamphlets for the soldiers. But the best part is his contributions to the Golden Age of Comics, before the Comic Code snafu. I had no idea that he was involved with *so many* of the Marvel superheroes - X-Men, The Fantastic Four, Thor, Doctor Strange, Iron Man, Spider-Man, The Hulk. Basically all of them. It was incredible. I guess there are some controversies over *how much* of the effort was his versus, say, Jack Kirby's, and I found a pretty great *Vulture* article called *Why Is Stan Lee's Legacy in Question?* that does a pretty good job discussing the subject, whereas this book, STAN LEE, kind of glosses over it.

STAN LEE is obviously biased in that it is very much pro-Stan Lee. You don't want to air all the dirt on your childhood heroes. Why would you? But then, Stan Lee is a cool guy. He's got that "cool grandpa" vibe, where he's kind of nerdy, but not really out of touch. A living personification of the grandfather character in *Princess Bride* who woos his grandson over with a tale of heroics and romance and good triumphing over evil. That was the vibe that I got from STAN LEE. He wooed over America when we were being saturated with superheroes, and helped keep Marvel from going under in the Silver Age of comic books, when they were being stifled by the Comic Code.

This isn't all rose-tinted lenses, though. STAN LEE does touch on some of Lee's failings or mediocre efforts. The ill-fated Stan Lee Media venture was mentioned, and so was the Pamela Anderson-voiced Stripperella cartoon from the early 2000s, which I only vaguely remember as being one of those saucy late-night shows that I wasn't allowed to watch along with Greg the Bunny and The Man Show. And then of course, Batchelor also discusses Stan Lee's settlement with Marvel.

But good times and bad times aside, it's clear that Stan Lee is a creative individual who not only has a highly active imagination and creative eye but an excellent business sense as well. If you're a fan of Marvel or Stan Lee, I highly recommend this book. It's a great addition to the existing comic book histories, and I enjoyed it just as much as the Super Man and Wonder Woman histories, if not more.

P.S. For some reason, there are a *ton* of Excelsior Cafes in the Tokyo area in Japan. I don't know if they are named so as a nod to Stan Lee or what, but when I was in Akihabara - the gaming/comic district of Tokyo - I made sure to stop by one and drink a toast to Mr. Lee.

Thanks to Netgalley/the publisher for the review copy!

3.5 to 4 stars

11811 (Eleven) says

Almost entirely unremarkable. Bummer.

Keith Chawgo says

Stan Lee's biography is wonderfully put together by Bob Batchelor who was able to put together a truly thoughtful novel that gives more insight to a master than I ever thought possible.

Stan Lee has been a very popular figure within the world of publishing and comics who gave birth to Marvel Comics. He is a man who has been in the public eye and who has been very open book about himself that it would seem impossible to find any new information about the legend but Batchelor has really outdid himself.

Delving into his beginnings and really investigating his childhood and upbringing opens your eyes to the history of Stan Lee like never before. This is an honest and heart felt biography that really does the subject justice. This is a story of a man who succeeded in every way possible from his rough beginnings to respectable name that people can look up to and admired.

The history of Marvel and his creations is a real added bonus. Batchelor is able to entwine all this information into a real bonus and has written it so it enjoyable and thought provoking. This is definitely a true sign of a real writer writing about a subject that he loves. Someone with lesser talent would most definitely approached the subject less successfully.

This is an informative and entertaining biography that was insightful. It keeps the reader involved and is a

real page turner. This is one of those biographies that you can cherish and want to share with your friends and family. This is an open book biography and with the extra bonus of reference notes, bibliography and index surely makes this book a winner. This is a definite five star book.

Quintin Zimmermann says

Who doesn't love a story about a person coming from humble beginnings, persevering and making an indelible mark in contemporary history.

Stan Lee, born Stanley Lieber, the manic mouthpiece, the mad maestro of Marvel (some good old alliteration) has lived an interesting life from when comicbooks were on the fringes of society, deemed reading material for adolescents and underachieving young adults, to becoming a global phenomenon entrenched in cool popular culture.

Stan Lee is a brilliant self promoter and may have taken more credit than was his due, but with his unique style and voice, he has undoubtedly made a massive contribution to his industry finding itself at the forefront of a cultural zeitgeist.

A well researched and fascinating biography into the life and times of a fascinating man.

Chad says

I first became aware of who Stan Lee was when he narrated Spider-Man and His Amazing Friends and other Marvel cartoons in the 80's. I wondered who this guy was behind all of Marvel's greatest creations. Bob Batchelor answers this question well. Batchelor details Lee's life as a child, his parents struggling to make ends meet. Moving on, we find out about how he was hired as a gofer for Joe Simon and Jack Kirby at the age of 17 to work at Timely Comics. We see his years working at Marvel all the way through 2016 and appearing in his 29th superhero movie. It's a great look at the guy who "Made Mine Marvel".

Received an advance copy from the publisher and NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

Jay Sandlin says

Cultural Historian, Bob Batchelor's, unauthorized biography Stan Lee: The Man Behind Marvel, provided an intimate look into the life and times of the man who built Marvel comics and inspired generations of artists and writers. Aside from creating epic superheroes and astonishing tales, Batchelor delved into the profound way Stan Lee changed the culture itself by challenging the public's perception of tawdry comic magazines in the 1960s. Readers will love this book even if they know the outcome of Stan's story. The thrill of this biography is not in Lee's triumphs but in following the Voice of Marvel through decades of doubts, frustrations, and professional dissatisfaction before he achieved his status as an American icon.

Daniel says

This review originally published in Looking For a Good Book. Rated 4.0 of 5

Like many baby-boomers, I grew up reading comics and thinking of Stan Lee as that crazy but lovable uncle who knows how to talk to kids. Plus, he worked in comics - how cool is that?!

While I was big into comics for much of the 1970's I didn't really stay with it, but I did hear rumors of frustrations between different members of the artistic staff (writers and artists) and Marvel - and by extension, Lee. Bob Batchelor's biography addresses some of this, which I found interesting, and typically seemed to relieve Lee of any wrong-doing (though it does mention that the memories of those days may not be the most clear in anyone's memory).

I enjoyed getting the scoop on Lee's early days, particularly his war years, which was something I had never known about. First - I didn't even know there was such a thing as 'playwright' as an official Army designation.

Even as a teen reader of comics, and despite my appreciation for all things Lee and Marvel, I was never a fan of Lee's actual stories. He seemed, to my teen mind, too obvious and gregarious. But reading through this biography I have a new appreciation for the quickness by which he wrote, practically keeping Marvel running single-handedly during some of its earliest days.

It takes a great deal of hubris to be able to run a company the way Lee managed to do, especially in the early days, and we see that hubris later on as Lee lends his name to new companies - including one that appeared to be nothing more than a ponzi scheme to capitalize on his name. While his cameo appearances in the Marvel movies are a truly fun nod to the early Marvel days and lead a new crop of Marvel fans to meet that crazy, fun uncle, there is a certain amount of excessive pride going on there as well.

The book is easy to read and Batchelor moves through the different periods of Lee's work life quite smoothly.

What we don't get, however, is almost as interesting.

We don't get much of Lee's early life, other than how it seemed to inevitably lead to his taking a job with a publisher. We don't get much of his personal life other than that he married. In this sense, the book isn't so much a biography of Stan Lee the man, but Stan Lee the driving force behind Marvel and a comic renaissance. Maybe there is no difference?

All in all, a good read, though I can't imagine it will be the last or most definitive look at the comic/pop icon.

Looking for a good book? Bob Batchelor's biography *Stan Lee: The Man Behind Marvel* is a nicely written and well-researched look at the man who, in his mid-nineties is a living pop icon.

I received a digital copy of this book from the publisher, through Netgalley, in exchange for an honest review.

Allen Adams says

<http://www.themaineedge.com/buzz/exce...>

There's a compelling argument to be made – and many have made it – that comic books serve as the mythology of contemporary American culture. These brightly-colored, spandex-clad archetypes of good and evil have become ubiquitous, a pop culture pantheon that serves as a common reference point spanning generations.

None have contributed as mightily to that mythology as Stan Lee. As the driving force behind Marvel Comics, the characters that he brought to the fore - the Fantastic Four, the X-Men, the Incredible Hulk and, perhaps most impactful of all, Spider-Man – have become utterly interwoven with the American cultural experience. While DC characters such as Superman and Batman – with the advantage of a few decades – might have a bit more reach, there's no disputing that Lee's creations taken together take the cake with regards to cultural cachet.

Cultural historian Bob Batchelor offers up a longer, lingering look at Lee's life with “Stan Lee: The Man Behind Marvel.” He follows Lee from his youth as Stanley Lieber growing up in Depression-era New York City through his midcentury comic book successes all the way to his current place as a sort of elder statesman of superheroes.

Born in 1922, Lee grew up as a child of the Depression, watching as his father Jack – a dress cutter – struggled to find work. Seeing the strain that lack of employment placed on the relationship between his parents imparted to Lee a tireless work ethic that would help turn him into a creative dynamo who would continue working well into his 90s.

Lee was just a teenager when he wound up working as an assistant at publisher Martin Goodman's new Timely Comics. A nepotistic hire – Lee's cousin was married to Goodman – he started out doing low-level stuff, filling inkwells and whatnot. But he soon found himself thrust into the world of comic book writing, penning his first story – some filler for a Captain America issue – in 1941. Not long after, when editor Joe Simon took his leave, a 19-year-old Lee found himself in the editor's chair.

He spent some time in the Army during World War II, working on comics the whole time. Comics weren't all about superheroes back then – he did westerns, romances, horror books ... really, whatever Goodman thought might help him make a buck.

It wasn't until the early 1960s when Lee, working alongside comic art legend Jack Kirby, would enter into perhaps the most impactful creative stretch in the last century of popular culture. In rapid succession, Lee would create (for the company now known as Marvel Comics) iconic characters like the Fantastic Four, the Hulk, Thor, the X-Men, Doctor Strange ... and a lonely teenaged bookworm named Peter Parker who was bitten by a radioactive spider and turned into your friendly neighborhood Spider-Man.

(The ongoing debate regarding credit for the creation of these characters and how it should be distributed between Lee and Kirby is touched on here; Lee's version has proven malleable over the years and Kirby is no longer with us to offer his side. Suffice it to say, both men had a hand and Lee's contribution, while maybe not all-encompassing, is undeniably significant.)

From there, we follow the rising and falling of Lee and the Marvel empire. We watch as Lee becomes the face of Marvel, a real and tangible connection between the company and the fans that contributes mightily to the publisher's popularity. Even as the company struggled through the collector boom-and-bust of the early 90s and the bankruptcy of a few years later, Lee remained part of the picture, a sort of elder statesman.

And of course, in his twilight years, Lee has become an icon in his own right, a living piece of comics history whose omnipresence in the films featuring his creations has introduced the man to whole new generations of fans.

“Stan Lee: The Man Behind Marvel” gives fans a glimpse at the nuts and bolts of Lee’s rise to the top of his industry. It’s an opportunity to understand just what it took to bring this roster of heroes to life – the risks necessary to capture the reward. His efforts to bring comics into the mainstream span over half a century; it’s safe to say that without him, our pop cultural landscape today is a very different place.

Batchelor looks at Lee’s relationships with his colleagues and his characters; he also explores the nature of America’s connection with comic books and how superheroes have become an integral part of the American mythos.

“Stan Lee: The Man Behind Marvel” is a bright, easy read. It’s engaging, candid and informative; Batchelor does a good job of avoiding any dip into hagiography. Instead, we get a vivid and readable portrait of a man whose decades-ago vision continues to shape mainstream culture in ways he never could have anticipated.
