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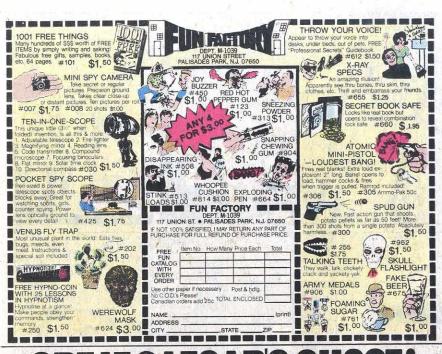
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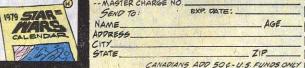








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575 Madison Avenue New York, New York 10022 MARV WOLFMAN EDITOR MARK GRUENWALD ASSISTANT EDITOR

What with Peter Parker's proposal of marriage to Mary Jane Watson and the reintroduction of Betty Brant Leeds, SPIDER-MAN #182-183 has triggered an avalanche of mail, even more than Marvel's most popular super-hero usually gets. So what say we dig right in , beginning with this acutely-critical communique...

Dear Marvel

When Spider-Man first appeared on the comics scene, he was immediately a smash hit because (If we are to believe the hype) he dared to do what had never been done before—to be unpredictable, to have that funky element of real life that you never know what's going to happen next. Spider-Man is still the same as he was back then. But this is not such a good thing. Spidey is still daring to be different, but different from what superheroes were in 1960. He was unpredictable back then, but he has now established a record of doing "unpredictable" things over and over again. Speculating about what will happen next in SPIDER-MAN is like wondering if the good guys will win on your seventh viewing of STAR WARS. Spidey has degenerated into a red-and-blue Mego doll; other than the fact that he's a nice package, he's the same as most of the other super-heroes around. He is no longer in the vanguard.

I was talking with some friends about issue #182 where Parker proposes to Mary Jaine. It was fairly obvious that she was gonna say no. I mean, when has Mary Wolfman ever exhibited the urge to change something so it shows? Still, we mused, Spider-Man's concept is that of radical change. Wolfman is the new writer, so maybe he's trying to bring back the old unpredictable Spidey. We were wrong. We were caught on guard.

After so long with Gerry Conway and Len Wein, I thought we might be seeing daylight with Marv. So maybe his SPIDER-WOMAN and NOVA mags aren't up to par. DRACULA certainly is. Maybe we'll see that tout characterization, those nice conflicts, in a super-hero mag. Maybe not. Blast! The idea of a married Parker, bouncing between a teacher's assistant job, the Bugle, home strife, and the usual plethora of super-villains, really appealed to me. It would open up a new vista of stories, guaranteeing that the writer would do something new. But, with MI's turn-down in #183, it is not to be.

I'm sure that Marv thinks he has gobs of "new, exciting ideas that"il really throw ya for a loop, effendis!" But I doubt it. You can't kill off another supporting character, and I'm sure readers wouldn't want you to. You've done it twice (Capt. Stacy and daughter), it won't be any good again.

But maybe you could clear up some of the long-running plot threads and replace them with new ones we're not expecting. Spider-Man's biggest gimmick is his cavalcade of personal problems. What's wrong with his life that hasn't been done before. A three-year old could clear up Parker's life. Take his "wanted by the police" shtick. That has not only been overused in Spider-Man, but in most of Marvel's other books as well, not to mention a few of DC's. Why not clear him?

Is Spidey in the forefront of the field today? When people ask that question, Marvel usually points to the sales figures and says, see, see, ain't he great? Well, that red-yellow-and-blue goon at DC has pretty impressive sales figures, too, but in no way is he in the artistic forefront of the industry. Which is where Spidey was back in the Stan Lee days. Spider-Man was once famous for his radical changes. Not traditional comic book "changes" that appear for about eight issues and fade away to be replaced by the standard. I mean lasting changes like Peter's high school graduation, his love life, and the Gwen Stacy affair. Something that will still be important fifty issues later.

This may seem a little emphatic and overemotional, but believe me, this letter has been building for some time. The Mary Jane affair was just the proverbial straw. Thanks for the chance to berate you like this. It may not help, but it makes me feel better.

Kurt Busiek 41 Somerset Rd. Lexington, MA 02173

And it makes us feel the same, Kurt, when we get a gantut of constructive criticisms on the direction of our books. Thanks for caring enough about SPIDER-MAN to get so worked up to write a letter as hard-hitting and sincere as you did. (We only wish we had more room to print your letter in full.) As you can see from issues present and immediately past, Mary and the rest of the creative team on SPIDER-MAN are making a real effort to bring this spirit of innovation and change back to Marvel's trend-setting superhero book. In issues past, you've indeed seen Spider-Man cleared of his police charges as you called for, as well as his graduation from college (for all intents and purposes). Mary in fact intends that each issue of SPIDER-MAN at least until #200 (!) contains a real development in Peter Parker's life. And while he obviously does not have in mind the marriage that you feel will send the book on a rosy path (don't you feel that Marvel has the concept of married super-heroes pretty well staked out elsewhere?), he does have some changes in the wind that will certainly make the book as unpredictable as it had been in the golden days of yesteryear. Check back with us in a few months, friend Kurt, and tell us if you don't agree.

Now for a handful of other reactions... Dear Bullpen

I have been a fan of Marvel for two years now, and I've seen great comics come and go. Let me get to the point: if Peter Parker gets married, I'll feel that another great comic has gone. I can't see Peter tied down with a wife to support and all that jazz. It would be boring. Keep Peter Parker single!

Robert Broswell 11304 Marlboro Pk. Upper Marlboro, MD 20870

Greetings Madmen:

...I find it hard to believe that even Mary Jane, as carefree as she is, would reject Pete's proposal by saying, "Proposal? Oh, that," and "See you around... sometime. We can still be friends, right?" That's inhuman! She's supposed to be a good human being with a strong, longtime friendship with Pete, I thought. Be realistic!

Lest you think I'm overly harsh, I must say that I'm glad Pete actually asked MJ to marry him, and I'm also glad she turned him down. Despite the actual dialog, it was a natural, believable progression of their relationship, and necessary in order to keep Spidey the forward-moving strip it has always been.

Will Hevelin 242 Louis #3 East Lansing, MI 48823

Dear Marvel.

I've just finished reading SPIDER-MAN #184 and the fact that Betty, Brant has reappeared is frightening. I'm afraid that Peter and Betty might get romantically involved. She shouldn't since she's married, and he shouldn't, because he doesn't need someone like her. Betty despises violence and Spider-Man—she could never understand Peter.

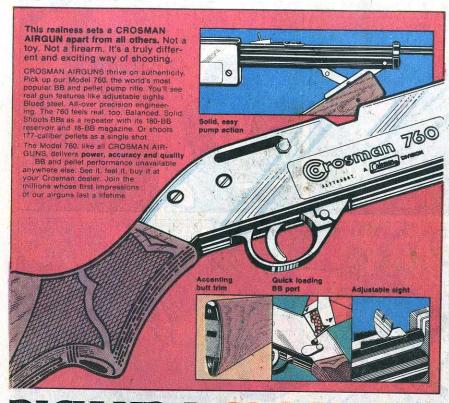
I am relieved that he and Mary Jane did not get married. I don't like her, she seems so shallow. Although I don't know much of her background, I don't trust her. I don't believe she ever really even loved Peter.

Peter Parker needs some new girlfriends. Someone understanding, patient, and willing to tolerate his sudden disappearances. Someone with a little mystery herself. In fact, someone like me. Consider it.

(no address given)

And so it goes. White the reactions to Mary Jane and Betty's upsets of Peter's life were diverse, they were, to a letter, forceful. Thanks for sharing your views with us, one and all—wonly wish we had room to print more of them! Keep writing, people, as this page attests we value your opinions, no matter how critical. Oh, and Kathy, if you remember to include your address on your ext letter, we'll be sure to pass it on to Peter Parker for consideration of your proposal. Okay?





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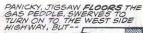




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## BULLPEN BULLETINS

#### STAN'S SOAPBOX

Y'know something? I thought I was making life easier for myself when I asked you to send me ideas for things to write about here in the Soapbox. But, you can't win! Now it takes longer to read all the letters than it used to take to think up my own subjects! But, I shouldn't really complain because some of your suggestions and ideas are really great. However, no matter how strongly you suggest it, I absolutely won't trade jobs with Irving Forbush-so stop sending those petitions, huh? (I didn't know of Irving had so many friendswho knew how to write!) Anyhow, here's a question that's cropped up in many many of your letters, so I might as well tackle it right now. "How do you explain the fact that mighty Marvel is so much better than its 'Distinguished Competition'?" (Boy, I dunno why I pick the tough ones!)

First of all, while I appreciate the implication inherent in the question, I must—in all fairness—reject it. We do our stories in a certain style, and they do theirs in their own way. To call one style "better" or "worse" is just a mat-

ter of opinion. Our competitors, and that includes Archie Comics, Harvey Comics, and Gold Key, as well as D.C., all have tremendously talented and capable artists and writers producing their books. In fact, many people working for other comicbook companies used to work for us at one time or other, and may do so again. A great many of them are long-time personal friends of ours. Some have learned their trade in the Marvel Bullpen, and some have helped to teach us ours.

I guess what I'm trying to say is, sure we want Marvel to be your favorite comicbooks, and sure we'll knock our selves out to produce the best stories and artwork in the field. But we don't wanna succeed at anyone else's expense. We don't want you to feel you have to knock the other guy in order to be loyal to us. The better our competition is, the more it'll keep us on our toes—and the more you'll profit by it!

Okay, now that I've finished putting in my pitch for all the great guys and gals who toil in our little storybook world, let me admit that no one enjoys some friendly rivalry and spirited competition more than we do—just so long as you remember that the watchword is "friendly". Our competitors aren't the "bad guys". They can't help it if Marvel leads the way! (Whoops! There I go gasin!)

Anyway, now that I've ended my exemplary expiation, I promise that next issue I'll give you a serious opinion as to the real difference in editorial approach and attitude between our competitors and Marvel. Remember, it'll just be one guy's opinion, but I think you may find it interesting. So, till then remember—we all need each other. Even a superhero can't do it alone!

Excelsion

Stan

P.S. After I got this whole thing written, I remembered I said, last ish, that this time we'd answer the question "Is Irving Forbush a real person?" And now there's no room! Well, never fear. We'll get to that after next month's column— that'll give me two more months to figure out the answer myself!

ITEMI Did you hear that Marvel's latest entry in the humor field is becoming the magazine sensation of the year? Fans describle PIZZAZZ as sort of a cross between Crazy and the Lampoon. PIZZAZZ was regionally planned just for the younger teenage reader, but you can't keep a dynamite idea under wraps for long—so\_now everybody's getting into fif It may sound like. "Bizza" with a couple of extra "25", but if you really want to blow your mind with the most colorful slick-paper mag in town, just call for PIZZAZZI Only 75d! Hurry, before we come to our senses!

ITEM! Let's face it-nobody hits a home run every time he goes to bat. Even the mighty House of Ideas can't claim to be perfect. Every single issue of, say, DAREDEVIL or even the FANTASTIC FOUR, flagship of our line, isn't always going to turn out to be as wonderful as we'd hoped. Under the awesome pressure of monthly deadlines, every once in a while, something just doesn't work out right, and we have to settle for a triple or a double instead of the four-bagger. It isn't for lack of trying, guys, believe us! And, of course, it makes us feel all the more proud and happy when the creative combos are clicking, and we do come up with a real bases-loaded circuit blast! Like what, for instance, you inquire? Well-I-II We're so glad you asked!

ITEMI Marvel Super Special #7, featuring the comics adaptation of box office blockbuster JAWS II is without a doubt the most dazzling comics magazine produced in recent history. It may well be the most beautiful comics magazine ever created! That's quite a statement, we realize, and yet we make it with utter confidence. In fact, we're so delighted and proud of this masterwork of our craft that we're going to dispense with the hard sell and take the space to thank those responsible. Our sincerest to Gentleman GENE COLAN for his powerful pencilling; to Ingenious IRV

WATANABE for his neat, precise calligraphy; \* to Terrific TOM PALMER for his superb inking, and for his stunning, masterful airbrush coloring the like of which we have never seen. Thanks also to Battlin' BOB LARKIN for the inspired cover painting, and special thanks and congratulations to offset editor Rakish RICK MARSCHALL who not only coordinated the free-lancers' efforts with the not-inconsiderable contributions of the Marvel Creative Staff, but found time to write the adaptation as well, JAWS II, in full, glorious color is on sale everywhere now! We wish we could just give everybody a copy, we're that proud, but go ahead, spend the \$1.50. You won't regret it.

ITEM! Not content with merely one boxoffice smash adaptation, somehow in the midst of our usual chaos, we managed to fit in another full-color Masterpiece! We'll give you a hint: it's about the hottest rock movie of the year, featuring stars like Peter Frampton, The Bee Gees, and George Burns; it's magical, musical and was inspired by the greatest rock group of all time! Those of you who guessed The Jasha Heifetz Story can go back to dusting their Rachmaninoff albums. Those of you who correctly assumed we meant SGT. PEPPER'S LONELY HEARTS CLUB BAND. please step to the head of the class, then out the door and to your newsstand! Take a buck and a half with you, ask for Marvel Super Special #6, and don't take no for an answer! We can't wait to hear your reaction to the wonderful work of DAVE (the Dude) KRAFT, GEORGE (Pacesetter) PEREZ, JIM (Madman) MOONEY and the rest of our crack creative team!

ITEMI Yes, there's more—the most requested encore in Marvel history to be exact! Once again, it's KISS, the fieriest, most fabulous, most frantic rock group ever, appearing in Marvel Super Special #5! It's in full, blazing

color, natch, and you guessed it, it'll set you back a hundred and fifty pennies, but the Bob Larkin cover alone is worth the price. Inside, Reliable RALPH MACCHIO, Jet-propelled JOHN ROMITA, JR. and Trailblazin' TONY DEZUNIGA have combined to create a sizzling story with absolutely unbelievable visuals! We've sworm not to reveal the stunning shock-ending of the tale, but we didn't promise not to tell about the magnificent bonus fold-out-poster in each and every copy. You've got to see it to believe it, but unless you hurry up and grab one, they'll all be gone!

ITEM! Still more? You bet! We've got yet another Super Special (#8) coming out any minute, but the whole project is so darn secret we dare not to do more than mention it! A word to the wise—watch your TV listings and your local newstand for BATTLE-STAR GALACTICA! Nuff said!

ITEM! Just in case you think we've forgotten our roots, we hasten to reassure you that yes, we still publish our regular line of 35¢ color comics-and make no mistake, we love 'em best of all! We haven't lost our sense of wonder, nor our pride in the magnificent magazines that made Marvell Check out Daredevil #156 if you don't believe us, and prepare to be dazzled by the Gene Colan/ Klaus Janson art! And there's a whole new team giving BLACK PANTHER #13 a whole new look that's really worth a look! FAN-TASTIC FOUR #202 features the most demanded quest-penciller ever, (quess who!) and it's just plain great! And if you haven't noticed X-MEN lately, you're missing the most talked about ever-unfolding epic since the Iliad! In this day and age, who'd have believed that 35¢ could still buy all that excitement! So what are you waiting for?

## GADTAIN MARYEL

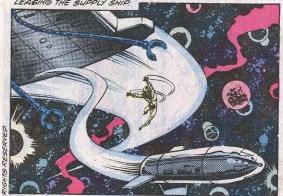
## MEETS DREADNOUGHT

THEY DID IT AGAIN, CAPTAIN MARVEL! THE DREADNOUGHT RAIDER JUST HWACKED ANOTHER AUTOMATED SUPPLY SHIP TO THE





EXERTING HIS TREMENDOUS STRENGTH, THE KREE WARRIOR PROPELS THE RAIDER SHIP INTO ANOTHER GALAXY, RE-



CAPTAIN MARVEL, YOU'VE DRIVEN THE DREADNOUGHT RAIDER OFF... OUR SUPPLY SHIPS WILL BE SAFE IN THE FUTURE



BUT MOST OF ALL, YOU RESCUED OUR SHIPMENT OF MOSTESS® FRUIT PIES. I THOUGHT WE'D NEVER ENVOY THESE APOLE OR CHERRY PIES AGAIN.



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CHERRY

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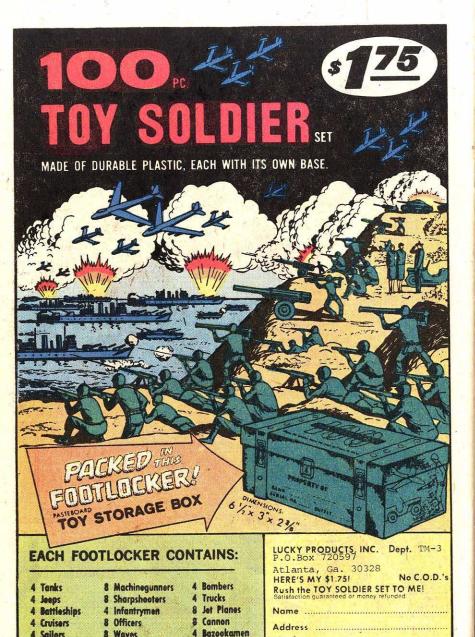






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