

MARVELMANIA INTERVIEW

Joe Sinnott

INTERVIEWERS:
MARK EVANIER and
TONY ISABELLA

DO YOU EVER GET "THROWN A CURVE"? DO THE PENCILLERS GIVE YOU MATERIAL WHICH MIGHT LOOK GREAT IN PENCIL WITH ITS GRADATIONS OF GRAY, BUT CANNOT BE INKED PROPERLY? Naturally, there's always a panel which might give an inker a problem, from time to time. Even Kirby did that once in a while. But considering all the work I'd done on Jack, there were really very few problems. I used to change his heads a little bit...the ears or the eyes--Just little small changes that I felt were an improvement and Stan told me to keep doing it. He said they liked the way I'd been inking Kirby's work. He said Kirby does a tremendous job, but he thought I was improving on it. That was long ago, and since nobody ever said anything else about it, I kept on inking Kirby my way. On the other hand, when I inked Gil Kane on two stories, I really didn't enjoy it that much. We weren't compatible. Maybe it was because I'd done Kirby and it was so easy inking Kirby...But I just didn't feel Gil and I worked well together. At the time, I thought there was something I could do to improve the pencils but in looking back, I'm not sure. Before they gave me that assignment someone at Marvel called me--I think it was Sol--and I was asked to fix up Cap's shoulders. Gil was making them too narrow, they felt.

DO THE PENCILLERS EVER RESENT YOU MAKING CHANGES IN THEIR WORK AS YOU INK? I KNOW KIRBY LIKED WHAT YOU DID... I don't know if Kane resented my inking his shoulders differently...You know, if an artist turns in a job, he won't generally feel there's anything wrong with it. I feel the same way sometime. I remember when I used to work with Tom Gill I would pencil an ear and when Tom would ink it, he'd ink it the way he does ears and I'd think he was ruining my work--I was always proud of the way I drew ears. I wouldn't blame any penciller for feeling that way about an ink job. Looking back now, a kid came up to me last year and asked me how I liked inking Gil Kane and I said I'd never inked Kane--I'd actually forgotten about that job. I remember that when I got the pencils, I'd thought I had to put black areas into it because they looked devoid of blacks. I

mean, Kirby--There's no problem. He has nice black areas spotted all over. Kane had them too but they weren't apparent--you couldn't see them in the penciling. But, as I inked, they came out at me.

SAL BUSCEMA SAID IT WAS HARD TO INK JOHN BUSCEMA BECAUSE IF YOU MISSED HIS LINES SLIGHTLY, YOU RUINED THE DRAWING... That's true...You have to follow John's lines exactly because everything is just so beautiful and if you don't follow it, you ruin it because you can't draw nearly as good as John can draw. And he has his black areas put in very well. There are no two lines when John draws. There isn't an inker, I don't think, who would not rather ink John's work because it is a pleasure to work on and a pleasure to behold when it's completed. But you've got to be careful. It's hard to really ruin Kirby but that Heck job was difficult. His pencils were so sketchy that I couldn't believe this was the same man who did such tight, fine inking on his own pencils.

DO YOU REMEMBER WHEN YOU INKED TUSKA? No, I don't--Isn't that funny? You know George Tuska once beat me out of a syndicated strip job. It was around '57 or '58...I got a call and I was asked to do up some Buck Rogers samples. And I had forgotten completely what Buck Rogers is like. I didn't know what color his hair was--whether it was black or blond. The man told me he had to have it soon...It was a matter of one or two days. And I went home that night and I must have had five or six strips done by morning--pencilled and inked. I've never worked so hard in all my life. I got them out to him maybe noon of the next day and I got an answer back that he liked the way I'd drawn him but that Buck looked a little too much like Flash Gordon. Not knowing exactly what Buck looked like, I'd made him look like Dan Barry's Flash Gordon. I think I also had the hair color wrong on Buck--I should have drawn a helmet on him. So this man--John Dille--had me do some more samples up and he told me that he'd let me know after Labor Day...when they got back to work. So I waited for a week after Labor Day and finally called the office and they told me that John Dille had passed on and his sons were in charge and they had chosen George Tuska. I was disappointed, of course, since I'd felt that Dille was favoring my work and his sons were favoring Tuska's. Looking



back at those samples, though, they were awful. Tuska did a nice job on it. He'd kept the art simple and I'd gone way overboard with detail. Tuska is a pro and he just put so much down and it was real good artwork. I'd followed his work on the old Crime Does Not Pay comics.

A LOT OF PENCILERS LAID THEIR WORK OUT IN BLUE PENCIL AND A LOT OF INKERS HAVE HAD TROUBLE WITH IT AT TIMES. "DID YOU...?" Yes--I've had problems with it. I don't know why...Maybe it's a little confusing to ink. I inked a Sub-Mariner story by Marie Severin and, at first, I couldn't get into it. She used that blue pencil. But once I got it done, I thought it had come out pretty good. Unfortunately the only book they don't send me is Sub-Mariner, so I've never seen it printed. I had a real tough time inking Buscema on Silver Surfer because of blue pencil. He did it on a plate finish paper and he'd used a blue-grease pencil to block figures out. After I inked it, I began to erase the pencils underneath, and everything...the inking...the lettering began coming off the page. It was John's very first time using blue pencil and I called up Sol and told him that I'd let him worry about it. They took care of it. A lot of my finer ink lines didn't take so John started using a different pencil.

HOW ABOUT STERANKO? The only reason I didn't like to ink over Steranko was financial--it took much longer than I should have spent on any one job. But I wouldn't cut a corner. I wouldn't leave out a hair of Jim's work. Whatever he had there, I inked. There's nobody with an imagination like Jim's... Kirby's like that, too.

SOMETIMES IN STERANKO STORIES, IT DIDN'T LOOK AS IF YOU'D INKED SOME OF THE DRAWINGS WITH WEIRD VISUAL EFFECTS INVOLVED, SUCH AS ZIP-A-TONE OR DOUBLETONE... That's right. Sol would have a note not to ink certain panels--Jim would do them and I was glad to have him do it. There was one time Jim did foul me up. Marvel was on his back to get this Captain America in and he got it to them the day before Christmas and I had to work right through the Christmas holidays since it had to be done the day after. I believe Marvel was even harder on Jim to get the book in. I thought Jim's work was great but it took so long to ink that I finally asked to be taken off it.

DID INKING COLAN GO QUICKER? Yes--And Colan himself must be very fast at pencilling himself. When we were on a tight deadline, I'd get three or four pages a day to ink and his pencilling is very complete. He uses a gradation type of pencilling--He'll go from line shading into solid black. His old war stories were tremendous. Nobody could draw a Chinaman like he could. When I had to do a Navy story, I'd use his destroyers, aircraft carriers, and uniforms for reference. I always thought that his work on Daredevil inked by Giacoia was a fine

combination. I don't know why they ever broke that up.

JACK ABEL DID A NICE JOB INKING HIS EARLY IRON MAN STORIES... Well, I love the way Abel inks Curt Swan over at D.C.

DAN ADKINS IS INKING SWAN NOW... Oh, Adkins is another fine inker. But I thought Abel was so consistently good on him. I guess they didn't like it at DC.

YOU GAVE UP INKING CAPTAIN AMERICA... Yes, I had a chance to do some commercial comics for Radio Shack and the opportunity was so good that I couldn't turn it down. I asked Sol to let me off Captain America for it and he said he wished he could do something like that.

HE IS...THAT'S HIS NEW BUSINESS--COMMERCIAL COMIC BOOKS, AMONG OTHER THINGS... Yes--Well, I pencilled the first one for Radio Shack and they wanted me to ink it but I didn't have time. So I suggested, a good friend--Dick Giordano--to ink it. He did a splendid job just as he did on that Beatles comic I did. The deadline was, like, tomorrow and he pitched in by pencilling the Ringo chapter--By far the best part of the book. It's a shame the other Radio Shack comics haven't yet materialized because they looked good. The backgrounds were by Jack Abel.

BUT THAT WAS ONLY FOR A MONTH OR SO... Yes--But when I went back to Marvel for more work, someone else was doing Cap. I didn't want to cut in on someone else's work--it wasn't Ayers at that time...

WAS IT FRANK GIACOIA..? That's right. Well, you can't do better than Giacoia!

GIACOIA DOES A GREAT JOB INKING KIRBY... Certainly...And another one's Bill Everett. He inked Kirby the way Kirby ought to be inked--exactly as pencilled. I saw Bill at a meeting a few months ago and I asked him why he was taken off Thor...He did such a fine job. He didn't know why and he said that he was just doing some coloring now for Marvel. Everett does a clean, crisp and bold ink job and it's a shame to have him doing coloring.

DO YOU LIKE THE WAY YOUR WORK'S COLORED? Usually, except when I knock myself out putting detail into something and then a dark purple's put over it. Actually, I think the best color is white. A lot of colorists feel you have to fill up every square inch, but when you leave a lot of white around a character, it makes that character really stand out. Marvel will sometimes put a grey tone on a cover and it will break up the black lines it's on top of. I remember one of the best covers I ever inked of Kirby's was an F.F., a few years back. It had Reed hanging off a mountain and Jack drew all of his rocks so nicely. It's fun to ink Jack's rocks. I think he's a frustrated brick-layer. □