



FURTHER REVIEW

By Charles Apple | THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

A brilliant scientist, his girlfriend, her younger brother and the pilot of their spacecraft found themselves transformed by cosmic rays into super-powered heroes. Their tale kicked off the modern era of comic books and transformed their creators into comic book superstars.

The first issue of “The Fantastic Four” carried a cover date of Nov. 1 but it hit newsstands on Aug. 8, 1961 — 65 years ago.

THE BIRTH OF ‘THE WORLD’S GREATEST COMIC MAGAZINE’

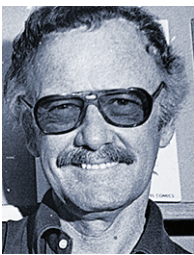
By 1961, comic book publisher National Periodicals was doing well with its line of Superman and Batman books. One of its chief competitors — Timely Comics — not so much. Owner Martin Goodman, primarily a publisher of pulp magazines, was considering closing down the company.

Goodman called in one of his writers, Stan Lee, and suggested Lee give it one more try — this time, perhaps, with a team of superheroes to try to compete with National's new Justice League comic. Lee had a slightly different

twist with his work. Disappointed with the comics industry, Lee had considered taking his skills elsewhere. His wife encouraged him to stick with it and write the type of comics he wanted to, rather than pandering to what was popular.

Instead of amazing feats of strength and superpowers, he preferred to focus on personal relationships and the self-doubts and neuroses such super beings might still possess.

His concept: A team of four who fly into space, are affected with radiation and then return to Earth to find



Stan Lee



Issue No. 1 of “The Fantastic Four”

they have strange, new abilities. Lee took his outline to talented — and speedy — staff artist Jack Kirby, who then fleshed out a look for the four heroes and to give a visual flair to the internal dramas Lee had dreamed up.

The result was different from most comic books of the day. For starters, the heroes didn't wear costumes. They didn't dress their parts until issue No. 3.

And yes, the four argued among themselves. Reed, the leader, tended to get absorbed stretching the limits of science. This made Sue feel ... well, *invisible*.

Her brother, Johnny, enjoyed his new “flame on” powers and the attention it brought him. But poor Ben, the pilot, was transformed into a terrifyingly powerful rock creature. He became

wracked with angst about his lost humanity.

With publication of “The Fantastic Four” #1, Timely became known as Marvel Comics. And Lee and Kirby's method of collaboration to

place more emphasis on visuals became known as “the Marvel method.”

It wasn't until 1977 that National Periodicals officially changed its name to DC Comics.



Jack Kirby

THE FANTASTIC FOUR ON THE BIG SCREEN

1994
“The Fantastic Four”
Roger Corman made a film but only to keep the film rights to the characters. It was never released. Reed Richards: **Alex Hyde-White**; Sue Storm: **Rebecca Staab**; Johnny Storm: **Jay Underwood**; Ben Grimm: **Michael Bailey Smith**.



CONSTANTIN FILM

2005 and 2007
“The Fantastic Four”
A pair of movies did well at the box office. Both also featured cameo appearances by Stan Lee. Reed Richards: **Ioan Gruffudd**; Sue Storm: **Jessica Alba**; Johnny Storm: **Chris Evans**; Ben Grimm: **Michael Chiklis**.



20TH CENTURY FOX



20TH CENTURY FOX

2015
“Fantastic Four”
A reboot portrayed the four as teens assisting in a project to build a gate to another dimension. Reed Richards: **Miles Teller**; Sue Storm: **Kate Mara**; Johnny Storm: **Michael B. Jordan**; Ben Grimm: **Jamie Bell**.



MARVEL STUDIOS

2025
“The Fantastic Four: First Steps”
Another reboot — this time, set in a technologically-advanced 1960s. Reed Richards: **Pedro Pascal**; Sue Storm: **Vanessa Kirby**; Johnny Storm: **Joseph Quinn**; Ben Grimm: **Ebon Moss-Bachrach**.

