



# SPIDER-MAN

## ON SCREEN

Feature by Sam Deli

"Greatest of all today's comic book heroes . . .". "He appears on the covers of more than six million comic books a year, and his adventures are recorded in an additional ten million." "The world's most popular fantasy figure."

Is It A Bird? Is It A Plane? Is It Superman? No . . . it's the amazing Spider-man!

While the Salkinds debate exactly how many films they can make out of one script, and the special effects wizards puzzle over how to make him fly, the Man of Steel is being beaten to the screen by his biggest nemesis of all. Not the nefarious Lex Luthor, or the villains of the Phantom Zone, but Marvel's Spider-man.

Of course, to rush a project through, with a tv movie budget at that, means cutting a few corners. But while **Superman 77** (as it was originally titled) plods on, Britain is going to first see the screen adventures of old webhead instead.

DC (publishers of Superman comics) have been bitten before, though. They've already suffered from camped-up over-exposure. The audiences suffered too. So, after an initial boom in sales for Batman comics, the title almost died when 'camp' went out. And Adam (Bruce Wayne) West still hasn't been able to get away from the image.

Hence with Superman, they check. And double check. They approve. And double approve.

But Marvel, still suffering from the narcissus complex, step in where DC fear to tread.

And . . . instant MCA tv movie for America. Plus extra profit by making Europeans pay cinema prices to see their end product.

Truth to tell, their (live action) **Incredible Hulk** tv movie did so well, sequels are in production, along with tv live action versions of such stalwarts as **Captain America**, **Doctor Strange**, **Sub-Mariner**, **Ms Marvel** (Marvel Comics are pretty hip to today's social issues, they even have a Puerto Rican superhero). But the most outrageous up-

coming superhero tv movie has to be **The Human Torch** (can't wait to see him flame on).

So, while we wait for a pretty sure of a tight, well-made, star-studded piece of cinema in Superman from Warner Brothers, let's see what Columbia can offer in Spider-Man.

Spidey's creator, writer/editor/publisher Stan Lee tells us . . .

*power of a hundred men, OK—so you'd be able to lift heavy weights and out-wrestle King Kong; but that doesn't mean you still wouldn't have to worry about dandruff, or acne, or hemorrhoids. And suppose you could crawl on walls and ceilings like a human spider. Wouldn't you still be concerned about postnasal drip, or warts, or the heartbreak of psoriasis? Wouldn't you still have trouble*



*Spiderman makes his largest leap of all, from the pages of Marvel's comic books to the live-action cinema screen.*

*"I decided to depict him as a bumbling, real-life teenager who by some miracle had acquired a super-power. He'd be bewildered, insecure, inept, ungainly, and often out of step with those around him. He'd be my kind of teenager. A loser . . . After all, who said that extra strength, or talent, or ability has to make a guy a winner?"*

*"If you suddenly gained the muscle*

*balancing your checkbook, or scoring with a girl who doesn't happen to dig costumed wall-crawlers?"*

So, that's the premise. A superhuman hero with super-normal problems. Whether anyone would want to identify with a hero who has postnasal drip, warts, dandruff, acne, hemorrhoids and the heartbreak of psoriasis remains to be seen.



The idea is that Peter Parker, 97-pound weakling, school genius, supposed joe average kind of guy, is bitten by a radioactive spider and suddenly gains the powers of said creature.

He can climb walls, has super-strength, and has a 'spider-sense' to warn him of impending danger. Being smart, he invents a pair of mechanical web-spinners, that spew forth untold gallons of plastic fluid (no one explains where he stores gallons of the stuff, but that's comic books).

The story has Peter Parker (*Nicholas Hammond*) as a student scientist becoming Spider-Man, making his garish costume, and scuttling off to try out his

new-found powers.

Some of the Superman legend seems to have got tangled in Spidey's web, however, as the press handout tells us he can not only scale walls but also leap over skyscrapers. But it's the same handout that has the quotes this feature opened with. Somewhat dubious facts, but that's show business.

While trying out his powers, Spider-Man attracts the lovely Judy Tyler (*Lisa Eilbacher*—terrific stage name, that). Judy has been seeking out help to exonerate her professor-father from criminal charges.

The film's producer, Edward Montagne believes the great popularity of



Top Left: Marvel Comics internationally-famous superhero. Above: The live action screen version scurries down a building wall. Above Right: Nicholas Hammond as the Amazing Spider-Man.



Spider-Man is due as much to his incompetence as to his super-deeds. "He's a relatively new kind of folk hero," says Montagne. "He's not perfect. As a matter of fact, he's not always sure what to do with his super-powers. He makes mistakes."

... Let's hope Marvel Comics haven't made a mistake in trying to move their number one hero from a four-colour comic book to the live action big screen.

Nicholas Hammond (as *Spiderman*); Lisa Eilbacher (*Judy Tyler*); Michael Pataki (*Captain Barbera*); David White (*J. Jonah Jameson*); Jeff Donnell (*Aunt May*); Hilly Hicks (*Robbie Robertson*); Thayer David (*Byron*).  
Directed by B. W. Swackhamer; Produced by Edward J. Swackhamer; Written by Alvin Boretz; Script Consultant Stan Lee. Released by Columbia Films. Certificate U.