



Marvel Comics editor-in-chief Joe Quesada.
Photo by Linda Obuchoska

Local comics fan's Marvel-ous career

BY IVAN PEREIRA

FOR JOE QUESADA, the fun started when he was a boy in Jackson Heights.

As editor-in-chief of Marvel Comics, he's in charge of the creative directions of Spider-Man, the Hulk, Iron Man and other famous superheroes.

Although he grew up admiring the work of comic legends like Stan Lee and Jack Kirby, Quesada's real influence stems from his childhood adventures on 95th St. There, the young son of Cuban immigrants spent most of his time playing around with his friends.

"It was a crazy melting pot and we were all part of our own universe on that block. If you were on 94th St., you weren't part of that," said Quesada, 34.

This strong sense of camaraderie is what translates onto the pages of his comics. Even though they fly through Manhattan and shoot beams from their eyes, Marvel's heroes spend most of their time struggling to be accepted in a complicated world.

"When I write about characters, I deal more with their personalities than their superpowers," he said.

Quesada's introduction into the superhero world began when his father bought him a special issue of "Spider-Man" that dealt with drugs. Ironically, that spawned his personal "addiction" to comics.

It was not the webslinger's adventures against Doc Ock or Sandman that fascinated Quesada the most; rather, it was the

down-to-earth tales of his nerdy alter ego, Forest Hills "resident" Peter Parker.

"With Peter, you saw someone you can relate to," he explained. "He had to pay the rent, he had girl problems, he had family problems, and so it felt more real."

Quesada soon decided to turn his passion for the comics into a career, and after graduating from Newtown High School in Elmhurst, he enrolled in the School of Visual Arts to perfect his technique.

Not long after graduating from there, he joined DC Comics, making a name for himself for his artwork on such titles as "Batman" and "The Question." In 1994, Quesada surprised his peers — and drew criticism from some — when he took a chance creating his own company, Event Comics.

"At the time, comics were not doing well, and so for me to do this, I put my money where my mouth was," he said.

The gamble worked. His comics impressed Marvel management, who bought his company and hired him as an artist and writer. When he was promoted to the position of editor-in-chief in 2000, Quesada felt that Marvel needed to bring back the charm that had excited him as a young man.

"After the Stan Lee era, we had comics with great art but mediocre storylines. I wanted to change that," he said.

Since then, Quesada has worked to reignite the interest of older Marvel fans — and introduce superheroes to a new generation of readers — with such comics as "NYX" and "Civil War."

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