

# Spider-Man

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# GNIMS

# KING

**WITH A NEW GAME IN  
THE WORKS, NOT TO  
MENTION A MOVIE AND  
TV SERIES, SPIDER-  
MAN IS BACK IN THE  
SWING OF THINGS**

**BY JOHN DAVISON**

**S**trewn across a table at Activision's headquarters in Santa Monica, Calif., is a collection of items that stands as testament to Spider-Man's revival. We see a plastic figure that works like a Rock'em Sock'em toy. We see a newsletter from Marvel hyping the ride at Universal Studios in Florida and the impending reruns of the original cartoon series. Tucked behind a bunch of action figures from toy giant Toy Biz there's even a box of breakfast toaster things with Marvel stuff plastered all over the back. Factor in the new movie due to hit in the summer of 2001 and the new TV series scheduled to start on Fox in early October, and you have a pop-culture phenom in the remaking.

The announcement of the new game—due next June for the PlayStation—couldn't come at a better time. And its hero couldn't be more deserving of the mainstream street cred his game will bring. Spider-Man, originally conceived by Stan Lee and Steve Ditko, appeared in 1962 in the final issue of *Amazing Fantasy*. It immediately became one of the most successful comic book stories around, joining Superman and Batman in the annals of superhero history. That issue of *Amazing Fantasy* sold better than any other issue, and it helped Lee and Ditko assert their vision of a "different" kind of hero—a teenage kid who had to deal with many of the same problems as "normal" kids his age.

Riding the fortunes of parent Marvel Comics' history, Spider-Man saw some real highs and lows over the past 37 years. He has fallen victim to rampant commercialism. He

**PHOTOGRAPHY BY RAFAEL FUCHS**





## **SPIDEY SKILL #14** **Web Swinging**

Peter Parker, Spider-Man's boy-genius alter ego, designed wrist devices that shoot webbing when he double taps their palm-mounted activation buttons. Worn beneath his gloves, the web shooters squirt a sticky thread (similar to nylon but stronger) up to 60 feet, allowing him to swing around town and save hundreds of dollars a year on bus fare.





## **SPIDEY SKILL #27**

### **Wall Walking**

Spidey can mentally control the flux of inter-atomic attraction between molecular boundary layers. In English: He can stick to stuff with his hands and feet, even through thin materials such as socks, gloves or his spandex costume.





## Superhero Movies Make Lots of Cash

Batman and Superman pretty much have the superhero scene cynched when it comes to movie franchises. It is good to see that their domestic gross is ranked pretty much in order with the level of quality for each movie. And it's interesting to note that the most recent superhero flick, the appalling *Batman & Robin* (1997)...a travesty that saw Joel Schumacher plumb new depths (ice skates in Batman's boots?) with the imagery, made less than *Superman II*—a movie released in 1981.

Batman	\$251 million
Batman Forever	\$184 million
Batman Returns	\$162 million
Superman	\$134 million
Superman II	\$108 million

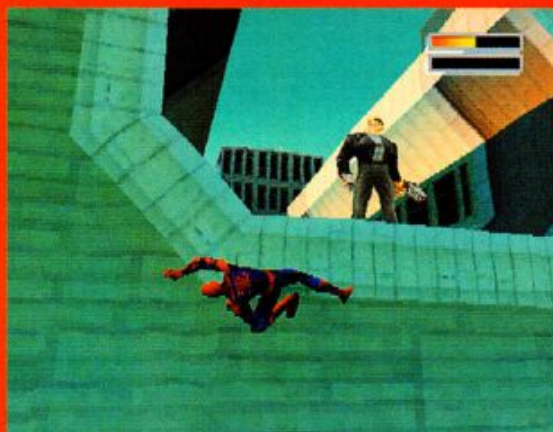
starred in numerous terrible TV shows (plus one that was decent, *Spider-Man: The Animated Series*, which ran on Fox between 1994 and 1997). He's the subject of one of the silliest, catchiest songs ever written (all together now: "Spider-Man, Spider-Man, does whatever a spider can"). And he was partly responsible for the making of another comic book legend, Todd McFarlane. The man behind *Spawn* and arguably the best action-figure line in the business, McFarlane was previously an artist at Marvel Comics who helped shape some of the finest latter-day Spider-Man imagery, including the awesome super-bad guys *Venom* and *Carnage*.

But what of the game? Like so many other merchandising ventures, Spidey's previous forays into the game world have been fraught with mediocrity. "No one's ever really done him justice," claims Joel Hewitt, president of developer Neversoft. "He's appeared in various forms over the years, but he's certainly never been seen in a 3D environment before."

Neversoft is a relatively small development studio contracted to Activision and based in Woodland Hills, deep within the hot and sweaty end of the valley in L.A. Previously they've enjoyed the dubious honor of getting to finish off an earlier "big" project for Activision, the Bruce Willis-packin' shooter *Apocalypse*. And just down the hall from the team working on *Spider-Man* you'll find a bunch of guys putting the finishing touches on the *Tony Hawk* skateboarding game (note that *Spider-Man*'s graphics engine is the same one used in *Tony Hawk*). Neversoft's offices are unassuming, quiet and populated by a group of dedicated guys and one large, fluffy, white Samoyed dog called Logan, who likes to sit and watch people play video games all day. Fortunately for him, the team's latest creation is well past its early R&D phase and is now running on a large TV in the company's conference room, as we all sit around admiring the inherent Spider-Man-ness of the whole thing.

"We've really looked at this as putting Spidey into a 3D cartoon environment," explains Dave Stohl, executive producer on the project and the man who runs things from Activision's end of the deal. Although still very early in development, the first level is pretty much complete and serves as a way of illustrating some of the ideas that we can expect to see when the game is released next June. As the level begins, Spidey stands atop a building looking out over the skyline of New York.

Something immediately looks "right" about the way he stands, the way he shifts his weight, the way he gently bobs up and down. He looks springy, sticky even. "Getting him right was a real challenge from day one as we took the game through R&D," says Chad Findley, lead designer. "Originally we looked into working with motion-captured moves for him, but after some playing around we realized that if we wanted to capture the whole Spider-Man look, we weren't going to





A full-page photograph of Spider-Man in his classic red and blue suit, standing on a city sidewalk and holding a yellow New York City taxi car high above his head with one hand. The taxi is a classic sedan with "N.Y.C. TAXI" and "9 M17" on its side. A taxi fare sign is visible on the door. The background shows a city street with a building, a subway entrance, and a large Evian water bottle advertisement. The sky is clear blue.

## **SPIDEY SKILL #8**

### **Superhuman Strength**

Just 'cause he's not buff like the Hulk doesn't mean Spidey's a lightweight. With his proportional spider strength, Webs can bench press about 10 tons. Combine that with his hyper reflexes and Spidey's just about unstoppable.





## Character Recognition

Recent research, produced by marketing research agency Alden & Associates for Activision while they were working on the deal to sign Spider-Man, revealed some interesting facts concerning which superheroes are the most recognized. The percentages reflect how aware the total group polled were of each character.

Batman	99.8%
Superman	99.5%
Spider-Man	99.5%
X-Men	98.3%
Incredible Hulk	92%
Wolverine	90.3%
Captain America	79%
Spawn	72.8%
Fantastic Four	68%
Blade	31.8%



be able to do it with some guy in a mo-cap studio. Those poses you see in the comic books...you can't get a real guy to do that kind of thing. Even a gymnast is going to have trouble shifting his weight about and getting into some of those really dynamic poses."

So how did they get around it? Neversoft's art director, Chris Ward, picks up the story. "We looked at the artwork from the comic books, built the model and animated it all by hand," he tells us in his thick Yorkshire accent that many of his co-workers find difficult to comprehend. "But that wasn't half of the problem. Once we'd worked out how he was going to look and move, we had the whole problem of moving him around in a 3D environment." As the demo continues, Spidey leaps into the air on screen and moves into a signature web-swinging animation. As he swings from skyscraper to skyscraper it begs the question: What does the webbing stick to when he does that? "We watched the

old cartoons and it always appeared to be firing up into the clouds," Ward says, smirking. "We're working on a game, not a Spider-Man simulator, so after a lot of dicking about, we eventually stopped worrying about things like that."

The game's web-swinging action is quite dramatic though, and we spend the next few minutes just zipping about and sticking to walls. We also eyeball some great effects as we examine the cityscape—one of the buildings looks like it's fully reflection-mapped, so that you can see the city in its mirrored windows, while in the distance there's a huge skyscraper with a number four on the side of it. "We've got some great ideas for some Easter eggs," Stohl tells us as we put two and two together and realize we're looking at the Fantastic Four's building. "Peter Parker and Johnny Storm—you know, the Torch guy from the Fantastic Four—well, they're supposed to be like best friends. So if you head over to the Four's building a few





### **SPIDEY SKILL #38**

#### **Spider Sense**

A tingling sensation at the back of Spider-Man's skull warns him of impending danger—whether it be punches, bullets or the Kingpin's helicopter come to slice him from the sky. Spidey can also use this sense to track signals from his "spider-tracer" devices.





times, it'll switch to a scene where the two of them are just hanging out and stuff."

Findley explains that Spidey's web slinging isn't the most problematic portion of the game's development. "We soon realized that the biggest problem we were going to face with this was that he can go absolutely anywhere within the environment," Findley says. "Normally with a 3D action game you can pretty much control where the player goes and you can shift the camera to follow him. What the hell do you do with Spider-Man though? He can crawl across the ceiling, up the walls—you name it, he can do it."

To illustrate this point, Findley takes Spidey to the top floor of a skyscraper, crashes down through a skylight in the roof and immediately drops us into one of the game's internal environments. The camera pulls down behind the hero before sliding back and panning up high as he leaps and sticks to the ceiling. The team has made use of some clever transparent textures to make sure that they can always keep the camera on Spidey if he gets into difficult-to-see places. Jump up onto the ceiling and you see transparent ceiling tiles for Spidey to cling to as he crawls along facing you. It takes a while to get used to at first—but it seems to work remarkably well. "Once we'd played with the camera for things like that," explains Lead Programmer Dave Cowling, "we then had the issue of moving him from one surface to another...we've got him on the ceiling, but now we've got to let him go anywhere."

Once the issue of Spidey's travels in 3D space is addressed, we come to the matter of the game itself. With a physically challenging subject like Spider-Man as a study, it's a wonder the team has had time to look beyond the physics and think about the game mechanics. After all, crawling around and sticking to stuff isn't the only thing that the red-and-blue friendly neighborhood chap can do.

"The Spider-sense is obvious...we'll have the Dual Shock vibrate when he's near danger," Findley explains. "As for the webbing...when we looked through the comics we discovered that over the years they've let him get away with pretty much anything," he laughs. "You can see him do the obvious stuff like firing the stuff and swinging with it, but he also gets pretty crazy—you see him make shields out of the stuff, he cocoons himself up in it, he ties up the bad guys with it, fires projectile webbing. If you can think of it, they've probably done it in the comic. We had to really take a step back and think about how we were going to handle it."

To illustrate his point Findley fires a line of webbing at a passing bad guy and yanks him toward Spidey, who subsequently lays out a quality head-butt, dropping the bad guy to the deck. Cool. Findley fires again. This time the webbing is used to swing a bad guy into a nearby wall, knocking him unconscious. "The only rule, and this is something that's enforced by Marvel, is that you can't kill anyone," Findley says. "You can knock [bad guys] out, tie them up, mess them about—but you can't kill people." This





## WANT MORE INFO ON SPIDER-MAN, HIS UNIVERSE OR HIS GAMES? SWING BY THESE SITES...

**Marvel's Official Page:**  
[www.marvel.com](http://www.marvel.com)

**Sam Ruby's Spider-Man Page:**  
[www.samruby.com/](http://www.samruby.com/)

**Scott Haley's Spider-Man Page:**  
[www.msu.edu/user/haleysco/spiderman/index.html](http://www.msu.edu/user/haleysco/spiderman/index.html)

**The history of Spider-Man games:**  
[www.videogames.com](http://www.videogames.com)

**More info on everything Spidey:**  
[www.sigma.net/spiderman/](http://www.sigma.net/spiderman/)



is something of a problem for the game's early design, as while we were swinging about on the rooftops we kicked a number of bad guys off the ledge so that they plunged to their deaths. "Yeah...we've got some ideas to get around that," says Findley, smiling. "We're thinking either parachutes...which could be a bit stupid but funny...or we're thinking that Spidey could fire a web at them and just leave them hanging there."

But will we see the sort of funky web-fashioned projectiles, cocoons, tools, etc., Spidey wields in the comic? "We're going to try to get a lot of stuff in," Findley says. "From the beginning you'll be able to swing about, tie people up, pull them toward you and fire projectiles...but as you go on we'll introduce some special button combos that'll let you do some other cool stuff too."

As a study in bringing a 2D comic book character into a 3D world on the PlayStation, the Spider-Man project is already shaping up very nicely. But the game is still nearly a year away from completion, and Neversoft is keeping quiet on much of the plot and gameplay goals. "We don't want to give away too much, but we've managed to come up with something that will pull in all of the major bad guys from the comic books," Findley says. It looks as though the final game will bring in all of the major elements of Spider-Man's history—cloning, symbiotes, the old bad guys and the new. "We've got a bit less than a year to go on this," explains Findley. "All of the basic stuff is done—we know we can make it work. We've got a solid engine, and some cool tricks up our sleeves, so now we can just concentrate on level design."

So is this an all-out action game, or are we going to see something a bit more "detective" like? Maybe something more akin to the stories in the comic book? "The action is important, and that's why we've got all of the combat stuff nailed down," Findley explains, "but we want the level design to reflect the spirit of the comic book. There's going to be some sneaking around, there's going to be some humor...we've got to get it all right." Although early, the initial level design seems to place a certain amount of emphasis on sneaking around in an almost Metal Gear Solid kind of way. Major locations are guarded by bad guys, but Spidey can get past them without engaging them if he crawls around and flicks switches with his webbing. Once the team working on the Tony Hawk game is finished, a lot of the staff at Neversoft will move over and begin working on level design. "We've been through hundreds of ideas already," Findley says, "so now we've just got to narrow it down to, I dunno, maybe 30 or so for the final game. Everything's in place, it's just a case of piecing it all together and then testing it now."

As contributions to franchise revivals go, the Spider-Man game is certainly looking more impressive than most. For some bizarre reason the majority of superhero games have sucked the big one—just ask anyone who's played Superman 64 or any of the appalling Batman games unleashed in the past five years. If Neversoft remains true to early indications, it could well snag a lot of new fans into the series. The next couple of years should see Spidey appearing all over the place. Forget the '60s series coming out on video, or UPN running it in its Super Hero Block. Forget the toy line or the fact that he appeared in the Rosebowl parade. You can even ignore the kid's meal at Carl's Jr. The good stuff is yet to come—the new TV series in October, the movie in 2001 (if it ever becomes untangled from its legal problems) and the game when it's unleashed next June—and Spidey fans are going to love it.









# OLD-SCHOOL WEBSLINGING

## *The History of Spider-Man Video Games*

Our sister Web site, [www.videogames.com](http://www.videogames.com), recently looked back on Spidey's spotty video-game history. Here are a few standout titles from the past 16 years of console webslinging.

### SPIDER-MAN

**Publisher:** Parker Brothers

**System:** Atari 2600

**Release Date:** 1983

**Spidey-Who?** The webbed wonder launched his video-game career on this ancient Atari 2600 cartridge, which had him doing the usual comic book stuff. He'd climb buildings with his webbing, rescue hostages and defuse the Green Goblin's bombs. Success earned him extra webbing fluid.

**Remember when...** If Spidey missed a building with his webline, he'd tumble streetward and stain the ground with a satisfying kersplat.



### SPIDER-MAN

**Publisher:** Sega

**System:** Coin-op

**Release Date:** 1991

**Superfriends:** One of the more successful games to run on Sega's System 32 Board, the Spider-Man arcade title featured slick graphics and four-player action. Once fighting over who got to be Spider-Man had ended, three other players could choose from Sub-Mariner (aka Namor), Black Cat or Hawkeye. All the characters had the usual punching, kicking and midair attacking techniques, as well as projectile weapons.

**Remember when...** Spider-Man was released shortly after Konami's successful X-Men arcade title, thus giving Marvel's premiere characters a major presence in early '90s arcades.



### SPIDER-MAN/X-MEN IN ARCADE'S REVENGE

**Publisher:** LJN

**System:** Game Gear, Game Boy, SNES, Genesis

**Release Date:** 1992

**Good, not great:** Released on four systems (the Super NES version was the best), this game had a lot of potential. Cyclops, Storm, Wolverine and Gambit are all kidnapped by the sinister Arcade, and it's up to Spidey to rescue them. After you save 'em, these X-Men become selectable characters, each with unique abilities (adamantium claws, optic blasts, etc.). The gameplay was simple: Run around in a 2D maze collecting flashing icons in a specific order while avoiding robots, laser fire and other pitfalls.

**Remember when...** This would have worked great except for one excruciating flaw on the part of Spider-Man: He couldn't shoot his webbing while in midair.





## SPIDER-MAN VS. THE KINGPIN

**Publisher:** Sega

**System:** Genesis, Sega 32X, Sega CD

**Release Date:** 1994

**Spidey at his best:**

Unlike the constant fighting in *Maximum Carnage*, the action in this Sega title was true to Spider-Man's character. Instead of simply scrolling and punching, you had to navigate a series of two-dimensional mazes while defeating bad guys. Skill in web swinging and wall climbing was paramount; the levels couldn't be completed without using Spidey's superpowers. Spidey also had a limited number of web cartridges. To increase his amount of webbing, the Peter Parker persona had to take shots of Spidey in action. The more dramatic the shot, the more money J. Jonah Jameson would pay.

**Remember when...** Spidey would fatigue as the game progressed and would need to rest back in his apartment in the loving arms of Mary Jane.



## SUPPORTING ROLES

When he wasn't bashing bad guys in his own games, Spidey was helping out superpals as a bit player in several hero-themed titles. No doubt you've seen Webs in Capcom's fighting games, but do you remember his between-level appearances in LNJ's *Punisher* on the Game Boy? Or how about Spidey's strangest cameo of all—as a Boss in Sega's *Revenge of Shinobi* for the Genesis? (Turns out he was an imposter posing as Spidey.) Here's the rundown of games guest-starring Spider-Man:

- *Marvel Super Heroes*—Arcade, Saturn, PlayStation, 1995
- *Marvel Super Heroes: War of the Gems*—Super NES, 1996
- *Marvel Super Heroes vs. Street Fighter*—Arcade, Saturn, PlayStation, 1997
- *Marvel vs. Capcom*—Arcade, Dreamcast, 1998
- *Punisher*—Game Boy, 1991
- *Revenge of Shinobi*—Genesis, 1989

*(Contributed by Doug Trueman of Videogames.com)*

## SPIDER-MAN GAMEOGRAPHY

- **Spider-Man**  
Parker Brothers, Atari 2600, 1983
- **The Amazing Spider-Man**  
Rare, Game Boy, 1991
- **Spider-Man**  
Sega, Arcade, 1991
- **The Amazing Spider-Man 2**  
Rare, Game Boy, 1992
- **Spider-Man: Return of the Sinister Six**  
LJN, NES, Game Gear, 1992
- **Spider-Man**  
Acclaim, Genesis, 1992
- **Spider-Man/X-Men in Arcade's Revenge**  
LJN, Game Gear, Game Boy, Super NES, Genesis, 1992
- **The Amazing Spider-Man 3: Invasion of the Spider Slayers**  
LJN, Game Boy, 1993
- **Spider-Man vs. The Kingpin**  
Sega, Genesis, Sega CD, Sega 32X, 1994
- **Spider-Man: Web of Fire**  
Sega, Sega 32X, 1994
- **Spider-Man/Venom: Maximum Carnage**  
Acclaim, Super NES, Genesis, 1994
- **Spider-Man/Venom: Separation Anxiety**  
Acclaim, Super NES, Genesis, 1995





# ANATOMY OF AN ARACHNAHERO

## SPIDEY'S DUDS

Peter Parker silkscreened his costume's classic design on a spandex bodysuit soon after he got his powers. No word on where he keeps his keys, though.

## WEB SHOOTERS

Peter Parker's wrist-mounted contraptions can shoot three types of webbing: a thin line for swinging; a thicker, more complex web; and a thick goop for making bad guys stay put.

## CARTRIDGE BELT

Webs' brass belt holds 30 web-fluid cartridges, which he snaps into his shooters when he needs a reload. The buckle doubles as a handy Spider-Man-face flashlight.

## SPIDER-MAN FOR REAL?

Sure, Peter Parker's transformation from supergeek to superhero wasn't a terribly complex process. You know the deal: A common house spider that had been irradiated by a particle beam bit poor Parker when he attended a lab demonstration on the safe handling of nuclear waste. The bite endowed Parker with the proportional speed and strength of a spider, and he was bound for superhero superstardom. Simple, huh?

But before you Spidey wannabes scour laboratory dumpsters for radioactive arachnids, bear this in mind: Spider-Man is a comic book character, and real life just ain't that exciting. "Nothing would happen to you if you were bit because a spider is so tiny," Alex Lindsay, laboratory manager of the Florida Institute of Technology's biological sciences department, told us when we inquired about the consequences of a real-life bite from an irradiated bug. "The amount of radioactivity in the bite would be so miniscule that it wouldn't hurt you or affect you at all—unless it was a Black Widow or other poisonous spider."

So, if you do decide to don spandex and fight crime the Spidey way, you'd better wear a safety harness. The only surface you'll be sticking to otherwise is street concrete when you slip and go kersplat.



# VILLAIN GALLERY

## Four Fiends from the New Game

### SCORPION

**Real name:** Mac Gargan

**Superskills:** Scorpion possesses the same wall-sticking abilities and superhuman strength as Spider-Man, as well as an armored, spiked tail that can shoot bio-electric blasts, tear gas and acid.

**Why he's a bad guy:** Spider-Man antagonist J. Jonah Jameson inadvertently created his own worst enemy when he paid Mac Gargan to undergo an experiment that would endow him with super powers. Jameson hoped to unleash Scorpion on Spider-Man and thus rid the world of the web-headed menace. The experiment, however, drove Gargan mad. He's now fueled by his hatred of both Jameson and Spidey.



### RHINO

**Real name:** Unknown

**Superskills:** Rhino's an indestructible bruiser capable of bench pressing 80 tons when he gets really, really mad.

**Why he's a bad guy:** Rhino was just a small-time crook when foreign spies experimented on him to create the ultimate assassin. Months of chemical and radiation treatments augmented his strength, while his skin-tight bodysuit was crafted from composites nearly impervious to damage.



I'LL FIND HIM AND THIS TIME  
I WILL MAKE SURE HE'S  
DEAD!

## DR. OCTOPUS

**Real name:** Otto Octavius

**Superskills:** Doc Ock wears a harness with four extendable metal arms capable of lifting three tons each that can strike with the force of jackhammers.

**Why he's a bad guy:** Dr. Octavius, a brilliant atomic researcher, invented his chest harness to handle nuclear materials. When a freak lab accident exposed him to radioactive organic liquids, his harness bonded to his skin and nervous system. The blast drove him criminally insane, and one of Spidey's oldest nemeses was born. Note that Dr. Octopus has since died in the comic series and a new Dr. Octopus II has begun making the rounds. But that story line involves Spidey clones and other complicated plot twists not covered in the game or movie, so we'll not worry about them either.



## LIZARD

**Real name:** Dr. Curtis Connors

**Superskills:** Lizard's powers are comparable to Spidey's. He's slightly stronger but not as fast, and he can climb walls with his clawed hands and feet. Lizard can also summon and control reptiles within a mile radius.

**Why he's a bad guy:** Dr. Connors served as a surgeon in the Army until he lost his arm in an explosion. Determined to regrow his lost limb, Connors studies reptiles for their regenerative properties. He devised a serum that not only grew back his arm but also frequently transforms him into a ravenous lizard beast.

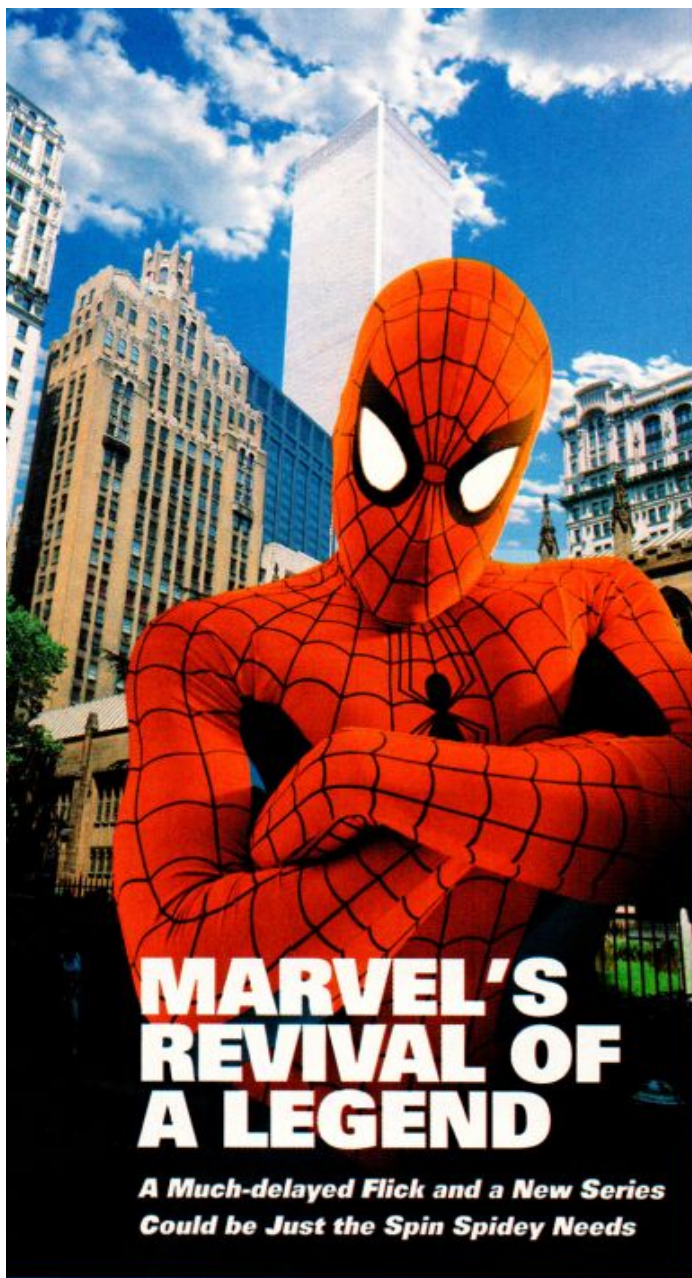


SOMEHOW I DON'T THINK  
HUMAN CIVILIZATION WOULD  
HAVE GOT WHERE IT IS IF  
WE SPENT ALL OUR DAYS  
SUNNING OURSELVES ON  
ROCKS!

SPIDER-MAN!  
HOW DID  
YOU FIND ME...!!!







# MARVEL'S REVIVAL OF A LEGEND

***A Much-delayed Flick and a New Series  
Could be Just the Spin Spidey Needs***

The announcement of the game for PlayStation (and also probably other systems at a later date) is just a small part of Marvel Entertainment's plan to help bring back Spider-Man as a mainstream character that's at the forefront of everyone's mind. You've probably seen some of the recent efforts such as the "Got Milk?" campaign (which you may have seen in the pages of *EGM*) and the ads on TV for the ride at Universal Studios, but over the next few years we'll see a lot more.

To get the skinny on everything Spidey we spoke to Marvel Enterprise's head-honcho Avi Arad, the president and CEO who's in charge of guiding the franchise back toward the light. Arad is a busy man and managed to squeeze some time in with us between engagements as he travels through Boston. "There's definitely a revival of our major franchises," he tells us. "Spider-Man is one of the most recognized superhero characters in the world, and he is our number two property after the X-Men, which we are also developing at this time."

So what of the revival? The much-anticipated movie has



## 3D Bomb Lobbin' from Hobgoblin

Adding to Spidey's pop-culture resurgence is the new Amazing Adventures of Spider-Man ride at Universal Studios Florida. Watch a CG Spidey duke it out with Doc Ock in 3D while environmental effects like heat and mist blast in your face.

been through a lot of problems in recent years, and was even described by *L.A. Times* writer Michael Hiltzik as the "Hope diamond of the movie business, cursing many of those who have laid claim to it." At one point there were five lawsuits pending before L.A. Superior Court Judge Valerie Baker, with as many as 18 separate written agreements at issue. Many of the companies associated with the deal have gone bankrupt, including Marvel Entertainment itself. Many famous names have been associated along the way, including James Cameron, whose \$3 million film treatment produced in 1991 is claimed to be "brilliant" by all that have seen it, including Spider-Man creator Stan Lee.

Arad believes the Spider-Man flick's curse is behind Marvel now. "The Spider-Man movie is still in bondage at the moment, but Sony Pictures will be releasing it in the summer of 2001. They still have some copyright issues to clear up right now though." This sounds very hopeful considering the whole thing has been a complete mess for more than 13 years. "The screenplay is pretty much done, and it has been written by David Koepp who wrote the screenplays for *Jurassic Park* and *The Lost World*," continues Arad, "although we are yet to sign any talent to play the lead role. We want someone who can bring the spirit of Peter Parker and Spider-Man to the screen. We also want someone who will sign on to the franchise for some time...we don't want a situation like they had with Batman." When pushed on who he'd like to see in the role, Arad didn't evade the issue. "Someone like Leonardo DiCaprio or Ryan Phillippe would be perfect," he said.

Although the movie is still in the future, the new animated TV show is due any day now, premiering on Fox Kids in the first week of October. "It's called *Spider-Man Unlimited*," explains Arad, "and it's something a little bit different to what you'd expect." How so? Spidey has been through so much in the past 37 years, could anything really be a surprise? "The whole show is based on a 'counter Earth' where a bestial race is dominant and the humans are the underdogs. Peter Parker has to go there because of J. Jonah Jameson, but once he's there the show is going to deal with a lot of different issues. He's going to have to deal with not fitting in...he's rejected by the bestial race because he's not all spider, and the humans reject him because he's a freak. It's going to be different from how you've seen Spidey before...he looks basically the same, although his suit is going to have some of the symbiote qualities like it had in the Secret Wars."

Sounds a bit different from previous Spidey animated shows—especially since *Spider-Man Unlimited* has a defined beginning and end. "The show has a definite life cycle," Arad said. "It will be 26 half-hour shows, and at the end of the series he will return to Earth. By then it will have dealt with a lot of issues, from human rights to friendship. We'll then start a new animated show after the movie in 2001."