

MYSTERY MENACE Loeb and Lee will introduce a brand-new villain during their *Batman* run. Who is this guy? The Unknown Collar?

SUPERFAN FOR ALL SEASONS

Jeph Loeb talks about Batman, Smallville, inspirations and his love of comics

--A. Jaye Williams

Let's always wonderful to hear when one of your favorite comic book writers is also a huge fan of comic books themselves. And that's how it is with writer Jeph Loeb, who's riding an incredible high in comic books and television.

"I'm a fan... I go to the comic book store every Wednesday, even when Marvel and DC send me the books at the end of the month. I want them now! And as a fan, if I can get another reader excited--that's pretty cool," Loeb told WizardWorld.com.

The writer has scripted an impressive list of titles, including many critical and fan favorites. "Let's work backwards," Loeb said, recalling the characters and books he's crafted: "Spider-Man: Blue, Superman monthly, Daredevil: Yellow, Batman: Dark Victory, Superman, Captain America, The Avengers, Batman: The Long Halloween, X-Force, Cable, X-Man, Uncanny X-Men... Okay, that's enough."

Of course, Loeb's current big project is his super hot, top-selling, 12-issue stint on DC's Batman, along with artist Jim Lee. The first issue, #608, hits the stands on October 23. Loeb explained the reason for joining the project as, "No reason(s). One reason. Jim Lee. And it's been a blast."

Aside from his and Lee's work on Batman, Loeb's schedule is literally jammed packed with other projects and assignments. "Well, I'm wildly busy right now and that's a very good thing. Tim Sale and I are finishing up Spider-Man: Blue and starting Hulk: Gray," he said.

"We're doing a short (six-pager) Hawkman story for DC, Peter Tomasi and Geoff Johns. Batman, of course. And then I have this day job working as a writer/consulting producer on a little show called Smallville. I know a lot of people haven't heard of it, but maybe some folks could start watching," Loeb said with a wink.

One of Loeb's greatest works to date is Batman: The Long Halloween, as well as the very successful and skillfully crafted sequel, Dark Victory. Of those works, and others, his fondest memories are of the people he worked with and the response of the fans. "I think it's all great," he said. "I'm very proud of the work and the people I've been lucky enough to work with. Most of them have become very good friends and that's worth more to me than anything in the world--like Tim and Hip Flask Creator Richard Starkings. As I said, I'm a fan. If I can make another fan happy, that's a smile. And at the end of the day, that's all it's about..."



THE DARK KNIGHT: BATMAN

As for other characters, Loeb recalled, "Holiday and the whole Falcone

empire running around in The Long Halloween and Dark Victory was great fun because of how great Tim Sale made it all look. X-Man was my first really big thing that launched into his own book, although after issue #4 I would've taken him in an entirely different direction.

Blaquesmith in Cable started out as a very small character who grew into part of that mythos."

On a personal note, Loeb confessed that the most important aspect in writing a solid script or comic book story is one thing: "Emotion, emotion, emotion. 'Even An Android Can Cry'-- Avengers #58, Roy Thomas and John Buscema--still is a benchmark in that regard," he said.

In all of his work, Loeb said that he's more concerned with the stories he's woven rather than the characters he's created along the way. "I don't really think of characters--more like the stories themselves," he commented.

JEPH LOEB ANSWERS SMALLVILLE QUESTIONS FOR KRYPTONSITE

As announced yesterday, Superman comics writer Jeph Loeb will be a consulting producer and writer for Smallville for the second season. Mr. Loeb was kind enough to answer some questions for KryptonSite. His answers are below:

KRYPTONSITE: How did you get involved with the project?

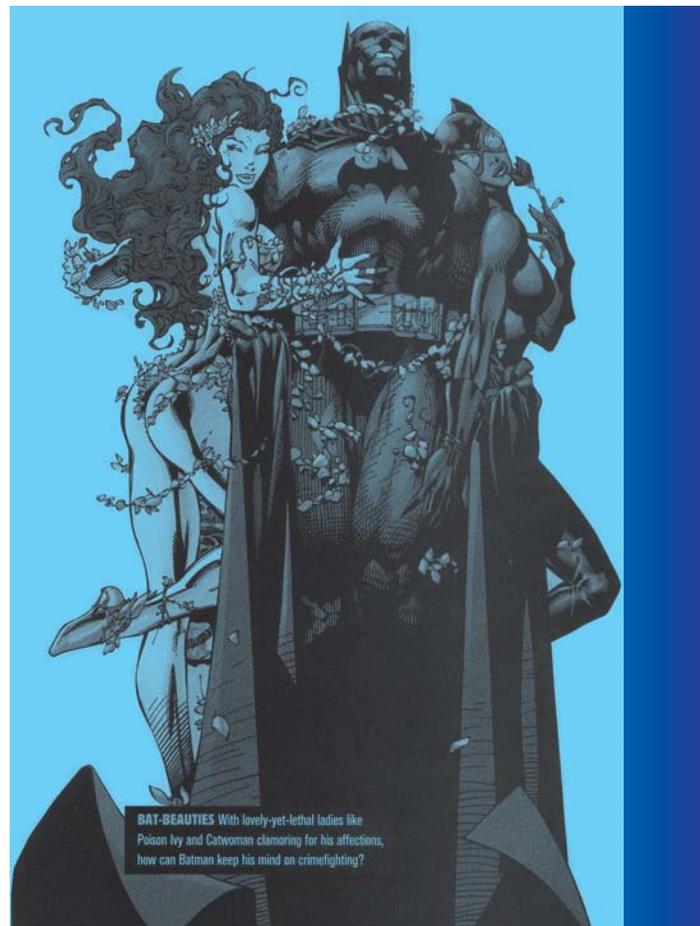
JEPH LOEB: I've been a fan of the show since Day 1. Actually before Day 1 because I saw a very early cut of the show and really fell in love with the characters. Then, as the show progressed, there were little winks here and there from the comics and from SUPERMAN FOR ALL SEASONS. The most flattering was/is that the bridge that Luthor drives off of in the pilot and hits Clark? It's called The Loeb Bridge. How could you NOT love a show with a bridge named after someone who has the same name as me! Recently, the guys (Al Gough and Miles Millar, the show's creators and executive producers) wanted to meet me to talk about general stuff -- the characters, how I saw the show, things like that. By the time the meeting was over, I told them that either I had to come work for them or I had to stop watching the show since I couldn't keep my brain thinking of new episodes and character bits. I think it was more of a mercy hiring than anything else. Al and Miles just couldn't see me in a mental institution or they didn't want to lose a viewer, I'm not sure which. In any event, it had a happy ending.

KS: How would you compare writing the TV Clark Kent to the one that you've written in the past for the comics?

JL: Well, they're very different and at the same time, the same. I know that sounds odd, but for the most part, I've written Clark as an adult, and married to Lois Lane. I suppose the closest thing to the show is in SUPERMAN FOR ALL SEASONS – but even then, that is my interpretation and not Al and Miles'. So, while I bring with me a fountain of knowledge about the character, who I love and admire, the joy of writing and thinking about SMALLVILLE is that Clark is a young man who is learning what the road is like to becoming the world's greatest hero. The best part is being able to play in this incredibly fertile ground of the Clark Kent/Lex Luthor dynamic when they are young men that doesn't exist in the present day comics. That's a pure creation of the show and the guys. It has wonderful dramatic irony whenever Clark and Lex get together. My favorite moment comes at the end of the episode called "Hug" when Luthor comments that their friendship will be the stuff of legends. Amazing.

KS: Would there ever be a possibility of seeing characters that originated on the show, such as Chloe Sullivan or Whitney, seen or referred to in the comic?

JL: That's more of a question for DC or for Superman Group Editor Eddie Berganza. I know that they have a Smallville Special planned and I assume that Chloe will appear there since it runs true with the show. I hope that DC puts out more Smallville comics – it's a sure fire hit!



JIM LEE TOPS WIZARD'S 'TOP 10 ARTISTS' LIST

Writer Jeph Loeb comes in at #3

With Batman #608 coming to comics shops on October 23, the November issue of Wizard puts Jim Lee at the top of the artists' list in the "Top 10 Creators" column. This is Lee's first appearance on the list in three years.

"This is a real honor," said Lee. "Look at the company I'm in and you'll know what a thrill this is for me. Of course, I have to give a lot of the credit for this to Jeph Loeb who not only writes the scripts for Batman but works closely with me to come up with what's going to be in those issues."

Loeb appears on the writers' list of "Top 10 Creators" at #3.

"In case anyone thinks otherwise, this is yet another indication that Jim is at the top of his game," said Loeb, "and what makes it even more exciting is that we've only just begun. If this keeps up, we might have to stick around past 12 issues. I wish we could show you his Superman, his Joker, his Nightwing--ack, I've probably said too much!"

"Watching Jim bring this story to life has been absolutely amazing," said Loeb. "Working with him has already been incredibly exciting, and we've still got a lot of stories left to tell."