

ROY THOMAS' CATAclysmic
COMICS FANZINE

Alter Ego

Forget **Batman!**TM
Long Live **CAT-MAN!**

FERAL FOCUS ON
GOLDEN AGE ARTISTS

L.B. COLE & JAY DISBROW



\$8.95
in the USA

No.117
June
2013

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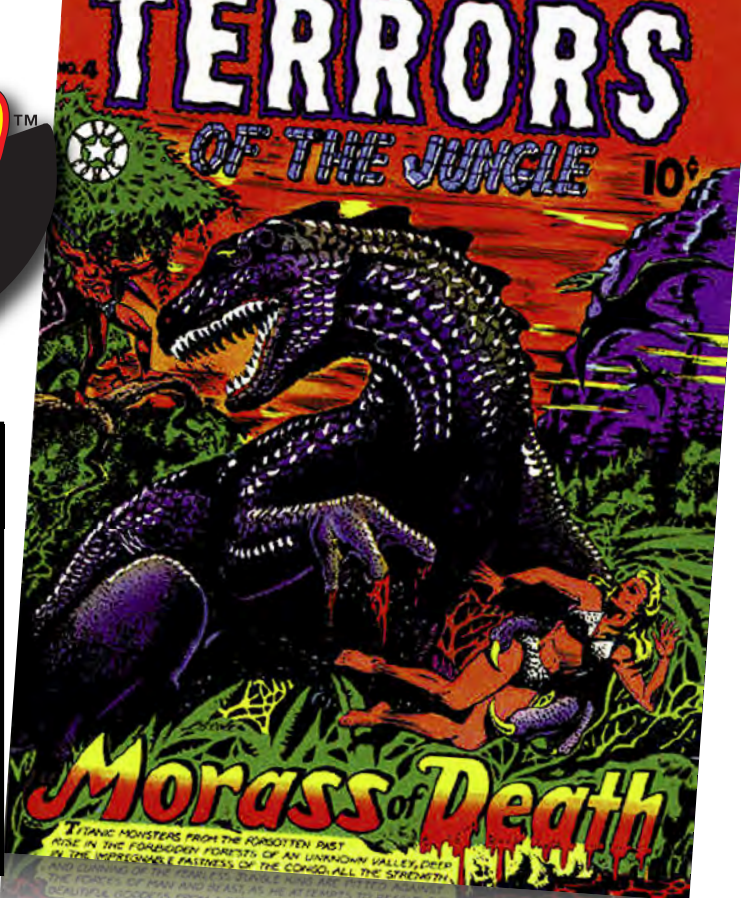
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A BELATED NOTE ABOUT OUR 3-D ISSUE (A/E #115):

Only when copies of *Alter Ego* #115 were shipped to the USA from the printer in China did we learn that the *cardboard viewers* polybagged with the magazines were designed so that the *red lens* fit over the *right eye*. In nearly all 3-D comics in the 1950s USA, the *red lens* needed to fit over the *left eye*. Only by re-bending the viewers could the proper 3-D effect be obtained. Sorry we couldn't inform most of our readers of this fact until now. Try 'em out on p. 15 of *this issue*.

—John Morrow & Roy Thomas



Contents

Writer/Editorial: Old King Cole—Long May He Reign! 2
L.B. Cole—Giant Of The Golden Age 3
Jay Disbrow's remembrance of a colorful Golden Age colleague—and memorable cover artist.
Meeting Lenny Cole 27
John Benson's brief 1979 encounter with L.B. Cole—and, incidentally, Harvey Kurtzman.
A Four-Color Dreamer 31
Ray Zone's conversation with 1950s comics artist Jay Disbrow.
Richard E. Hughes: Life After ACG 45
Michael Vance continues his look at recently unearthed artifacts of an important writer & editor.
Mr. Monster's Comic Crypt: Evil Twins! 53
Michael T. Gilbert on his favorite comic book cliché.
Of Graphic Stories & Wonderworlds 61
Bill Schelly concludes his talk with writer, publisher, & bookstore owner Richard Kyle.
Tributes to Martin Filchock & Jean Giraud (Moebius) 67
re: [comments, critiques, & corrections] 70
FCA [Fawcett Collectors Of America] #176 73
P.C. Hamerlinck & Roy Thomas host the final chapter from *Captain Video* #3.

On Our Cover: *Over the past couple of decades, the irrepressible L.B. Cole has loomed ever larger on the comics landscape, due primarily to the large number of distinctive covers he produced, especially for his own 1950s imprint, Star Publications. One of his most celebrated subjects was Continental/Holyoke's Cat-Man—whom he apparently never drew except on covers. Thanks to co-publisher John Morrow for turning the cover of Cat-Man Comics #31 (June 1946) into an equally striking Alter Ego cover! With thanks to John Selegue for the scan. [©2013 the respective copyright holders.]*

Above: *Another colorful Cole cover—this one for Star's Terrors of the Jungle #4 (April 1953). Inside was a jungle-lord story (the hero was named Taranga this time) by co-featured late Golden Age artist/writer Jay Disbrow. [©2013 the respective copyright holders.]*

This issue is dedicated to the memory of
**Leonard B. Cole,
Martin Filchock,
& Jean Giraud**



Alter Ego™ is published 8 times a year by TwoMorrows, 10407 Bedfordtown Drive, Raleigh, NC 27614, USA. Phone: (919) 449-0344. Roy Thomas, Editor. John Morrow, Publisher. *Alter Ego* Editorial Offices: 32 Bluebird Trail, St. Matthews, SC 29135, USA. Fax: (803) 826-6501; e-mail: roydann@ntinet.com. Send subscription funds to TwoMorrows, NOT to the editorial offices. Eight-issue subscriptions: \$60 US, \$85 Canada, \$107 elsewhere. All characters are © their respective companies. All material © their creators unless otherwise noted. All editorial matter © Roy Thomas. *Alter Ego* is a TM of Roy & Dann Thomas. FCA is a TM of P.C. Hamerlinck. Printed in China. ISSN: 1932-6890

FIRST PRINTING.

L.B. COLE— Giant Of The Golden Age

A Remembrance Of A Colorful Character— And Memorable Cover Artist

by Jay Disbrow

**“You’re Not Quite Ready For
A Career In Comics”**

Many aficionados of the Golden Age of Comic Books look back with fond memories upon the work of a true giant of that era: L. B. Cole. He was a man of extraordinary artistic ability and editorial excellence. He was an artist, a writer, and an editor of both comic books and specialty magazines. During a long and fruitful career, he produced a plethora of comic book covers, as well as covers for sporting magazines and specialty publications. During the 1980s he turned his talents toward creating full-color renderings for medical books and charts.

I first met him in the summer of 1946, when at an early age I made my initial attempt to break into the industry that had become my obsession. In an ornate building at 220 West 42nd Street in Manhattan were located the editorial



Sparks And Re-Creation

Leonard Brandt Cole in 1980, juxtaposed with his vintage cover for Continental (or is it Holyoke’s?) *Catman Comics* #29 (Aug. 1945)—his cover for Star Publications’ *Blue Bolt* #105 (April-May 1950)—and a re-creation of the latter, done several decades later and with a few interesting alterations, especially in the Green Sorceress’ attire. The *Catman* cover is reproduced from a scan of the color proof, with thanks to John Selegue; read more about this set of proofs on p. 29. The two versions of the *Blue Bolt* cover were sent respectively by Jim Ludwig and by Dominic Bongo, who retrieved the image from the Heritage Comics Archive. Photo sent by John Benson and printed by courtesy of photographer E.B. Boatner. [©2013 the respective copyright holders.]





Jay-Walking Through History
 Jay Disbrow in 1970—nearly a quarter of a century after he first met L.B. Cole, but hey, it's the earliest photo Jay could provide us! You'll just have to mentally extrapolate backward and picture him in 1946.

“A piece of cake,” I said to myself as I began. Little did I realize how difficult it would really be. Twenty minutes later I lay down my pencil and scanned the finished product. Subliminally I knew the project was a failure, but since I had accepted the challenge I had no choice but to show it to him.

While Cole studied my drawing, I studied his facial features, looking for a clue to his reaction. It was quick in coming.

“I’m afraid you’re not quite ready for a career in comics,” he said. “I recommend that you enroll in a good art school. Pick one that specializes in figure drawing. Once you master anatomy, the rest should come fairly easy.”

I thanked him for his time and consideration, and walked out of his office. That was the first time I met L.B. Cole. Five more years would pass before I would encounter him again.

“I Drew Horses Almost Exclusively For Two Or Three Years”

Leonard Brandt Cole was born in New York City in 1918. Both of his parents possessed artistic inclinations, but neither was willing to invest the time and effort that were necessary to bring those talents to fruition. In short, they lacked the drive for achievement their son possessed.

He exhibited artistic talent from his earliest youth. His specialty was animals, most specifically horses. In his own words in an article in the 11th Edition of *The Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide*: “I drew horses almost exclusively for two or three years.” Of course, he studied other animals as well, all of which stood him in good stead when he eventually settled into his career as comic book editor and illustrator.

offices of Continental Comics Publications. Within this plush art deco establishment, I met the great L.B. Cole for the first time. Of course, I had no idea who he was, nor the extent of his skills. I only knew he was the editor of Continental Comics, and he was one of those who possessed the means of launching my career.

He examined my comic page sample with a critical eye. Then he asked me, “What is your favorite subject? What do you like to draw the most?”

“Figures,” I said without hesitation. “My specialty is drawing people in action situations.” Ah, the brash confidence of youth.

He sat me down at a drawing table in the corner of the room. He then provided me with a sheet of bristol board, a pencil, and an eraser. Upon a small stand beside the drawing table he placed a two-foot-tall plaster model of a male figure, molded with all the muscle formations in sharp relief.

“Make a drawing of this figure,” he said, “and when you’re finished, bring it to me. Take your time and do your best. Then bring it to my desk.”



The Pen Is Mightier Than “The Sword”
 To Ace Periodicals, Cole contributed this double-page splash for a story of “The Sword,” in *Super-Mystery Comics*, Vol. 3, #6 (Oct. 1946). Thanks to Jim Ludwig. [©2013 the respective copyright holders.]



Doing The Continental

(Above left:) Cole's cover for Continental's *Suspense Comics* #8 (June 1945). His first cover for this series was for #4; after that, he illustrated all remaining covers for the 12-issue run of the "horror-suspense" series, whose cover star was a character called—Mr. Nobody.

(Above center & right:) After doing a number of *Captain Aero Comics* covers for Continental that showed U.S. warplanes attacking Japanese forces, climaxing with #24 (Nov. 1945), Cole suddenly had to switch gears after V-J Day, and his covers immediately got more science-fictional in nature. Thanks to Jim Ludwig and John Selegue, respectively; the latter cover is reproduced from a cover proof. [©2013 the respective copyright holders.]

The 1944 photo, taken in the Et-Es-Go/Continental offices, shows (l. to r.) Cole, editor Ray Herman, and Jack Grogan perusing a copy of *Captain Aero* #14. The pic was provided by Cole in 1995 to *Comic Book Marketplace* #30. Incidentally, although Herman's first name is often spelled "Rae" in articles, she apparently spelled it with a "y" instead. Grogan, who'd drawn funny-animal features for *Timely* in 1942, would draw "The Hood," "Red Cross," "Mr. Nobody," et al. for the related companies Continental, Et-Es-Go, and Holyoke. Photo credited to Sheldon Levens.



But before he entered the comics field full-time, he spent a number of years in advertising. For the truly creative artist, advertising can be the bane of his existence. But at times, it's necessary to pay the bills and provide the necessities of life. Of course, if one has access to a few big accounts, advertising can be a very lucrative enterprise. For Leonard Cole this proved to be the case. But the money he was taking in could not compensate for the lack of artistic expression that he longed for. That did not come until he took the headfirst plunge into the comics.

After a short time of freelancing, in 1942 he was hired by Frank Temerson, publisher of Continental Comics on 42nd Street. He was brought in as editor and art director, and immediately set about upgrading the output of that publishing company. Later, Cole's wife, Ellen, was brought in as staff letterer. After a little practice, she proved as proficient in lettering as he was in illustrating comic book covers.

Of course, lettering proceeds at a faster pace than penciling and inking comic pages. Since Continental published at least five different titles per month, Ellen never lacked for assignments. The fact is, she was often hard-pressed to keep up with the demand.

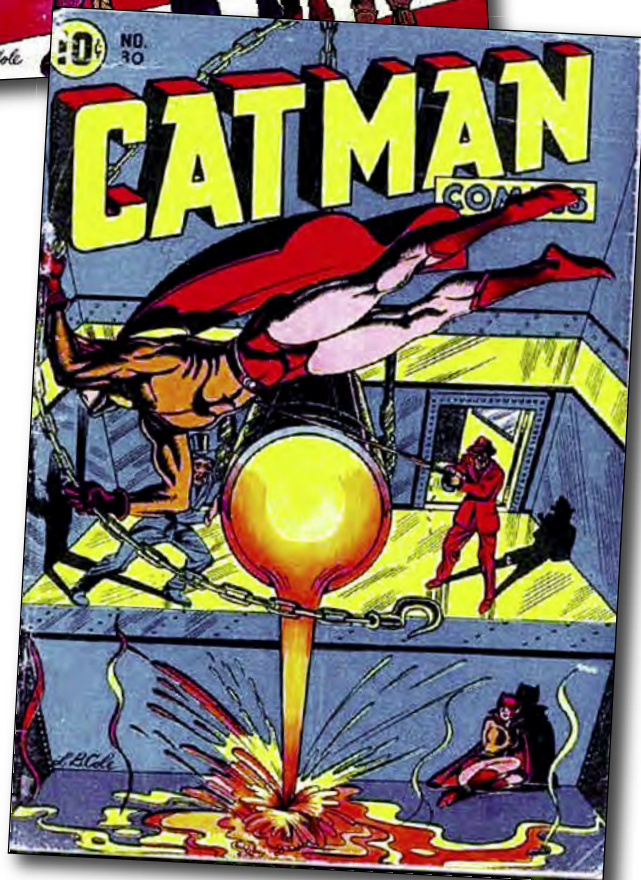
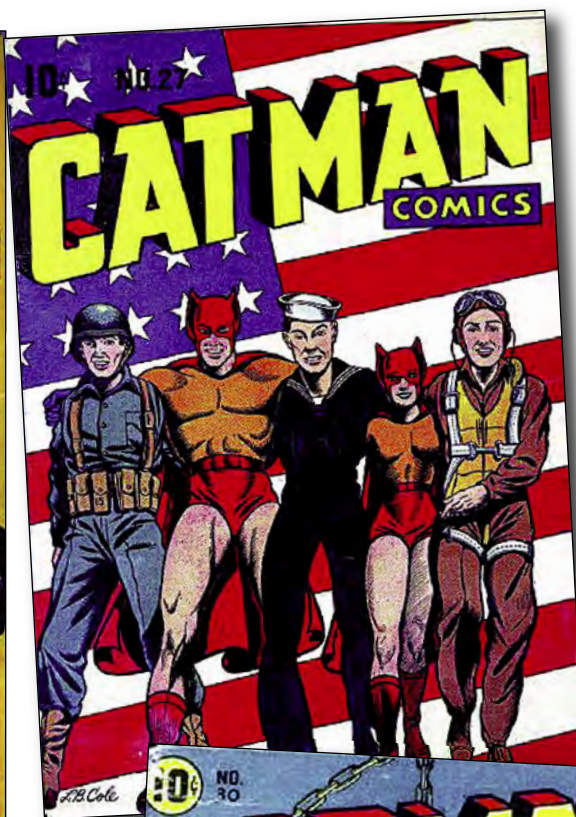
But fortunately there were other letterers to pick up the overflow which she could not handle.

The comics that Continental published were *Suspense*, *Captain Aero*, *Contact*, *Catman*, and *Terrific*. Besides these ongoing titles, the company published numerous one-shot publications over the years. When one considers that in those days each comic book contained 64 interior pages, it becomes obvious that five titles per month amounts to a large annual output. To be precise, it represents 3,840 pages, plus 60 comic book covers. With annual one-shot titles included, the annual page count would probably exceed 5,000. Quite an output for a small comic book company.

In those days, Leonard Cole was most closely identified with the *Cat-Man* character. He helped to mold the hero's persona, and he wrote many of *The Cat-Man's* adventures.

[Continued on p. 10]

A/E Special Section:
Forget BATMAN!
Here Comes The *CAT-MAN!*



Hep Cat-Man

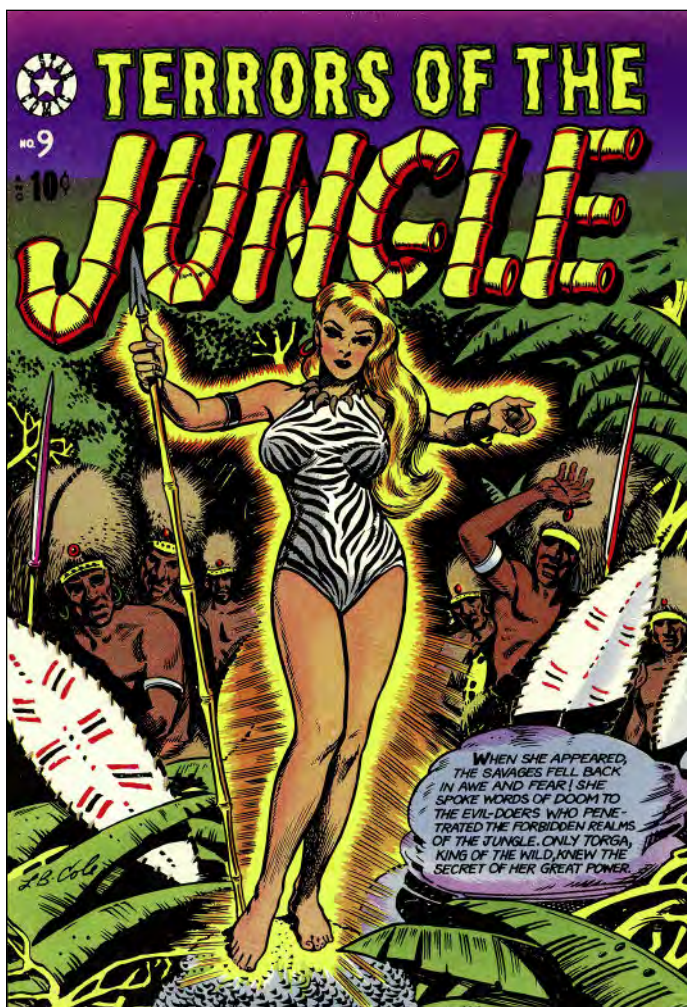
L.B. Cole was rediscovered by fans in the late '70s and early '80s—and yet again in the '90s, when the magazine *Comic Book Marketplace* featured him in several issues in the mid-1990s. Especially celebrated have been his covers for *Catman Comics*. Seen here, clockwise from top left, are the ones for *Catman*, Vol. 3, #2 (Nov. 1944), #27 (April '45), and #30 (Dec. 1945).

[©2013 the respective copyright holders.]

Incidentally, as Mike Bromberg assures us, the hyphen in the hero's name was not always part of the mag's indicia, but *was* often indicated, especially in story logos—so we've chosen to refer to him as "Cat-Man" in most instances—except in the case of the comic's title. Call it a quirk.

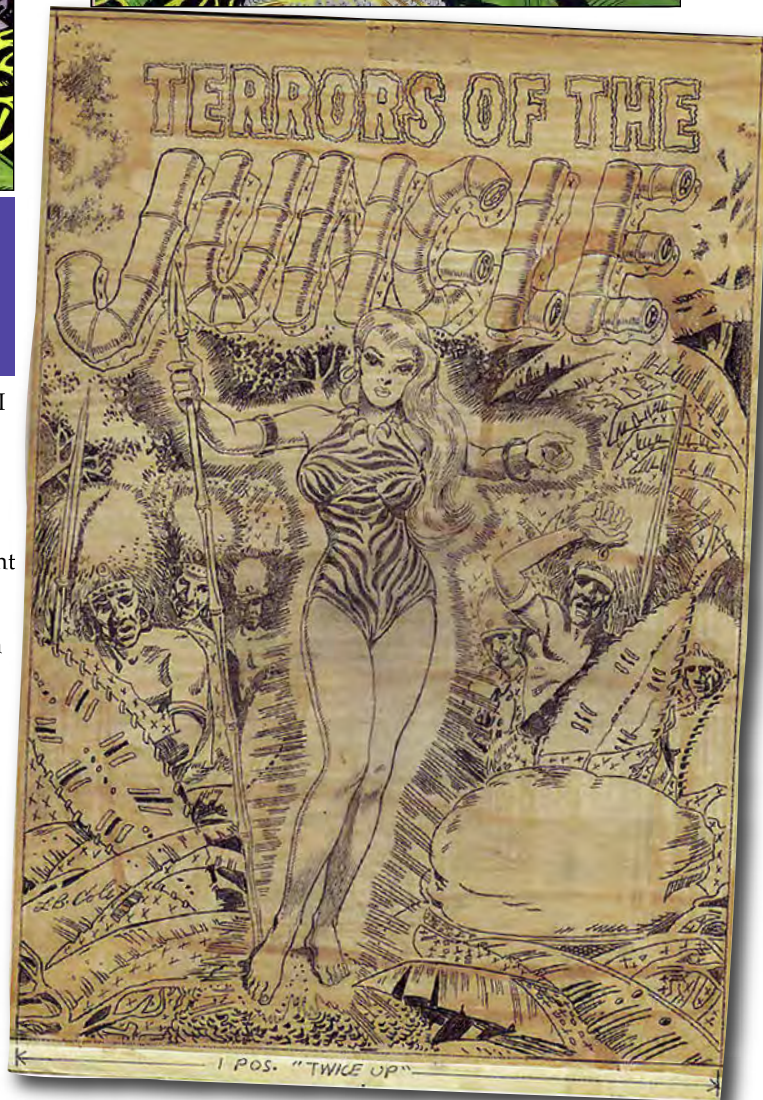
The two digest-sized color issues of Mike B.'s *Cat-Man Collector* fanzine from a few years back are out of print, but are worth seeking out for their mix of reprinted stories and well-researched articles on the series.

Trust us on this!



Tropical Pulchritude

The printed cover of *Terrors of the Jungle* #9 (June 1954), repro'd from a color proof—and two stages in Cole's re-creation of it several decades later. Somewhere along the line, the young lady switched to a bikini. Thanks to Shaun Clancy. [comic art ©2013 the respective copyright holders; re-creation art ©2013 Estate of L.B. Cole.]



stories I created outnumbered the dramatic and adventure stories I produced. I soon found myself drowning in a sea of simulated romance.

Then one day a brilliant idea came to me. I was so weary of creating stories of handsome young men who fell in love with beautiful girls; I wanted to try something totally different. I thought of the legend of Cyrano De Bergerac, as immortalized by the novelist Edmond Rostand. Of course, Cyrano had been an actual historical personage, a man with a brilliant intellect. But he had an enormous physical defect: his nose was so large that it marred his appearance. To be precise, he was ugly. The great actor Jose Ferrer brought this all out in perfect detail in his 1951 film on the life of Cyrano. I would create a story of a modern Cyrano De Bergerac. There would be no swashbuckling dueling scenes, of course, because the story would be set in the 1950s.

I discussed this concept with Leonard Cole, and he thought it would be a great change of pace. So I composed the following scenario: The hero is a young man named Gary Simmons. He was born ugly and was shunned by his neighbors and school mates. Because of his physical impairment he lived a lonely life. In college, he worked twice as hard as the other students to prove his worth as a human being. He graduated from college with

L.B. COLE Checklist

[The following Checklist is adapted from information found in the online edition of Who's Who of American Comic Books 1928-1999, established by Jerry Bails (see ad on p. 26). Names of features which appeared both in comics of that name and in other magazines are generally not italicized. **Key:** (w) = writer; (a) = full art; (p) = pencils only; (i) = inks only; (e) = editor; (ad) = art director.]

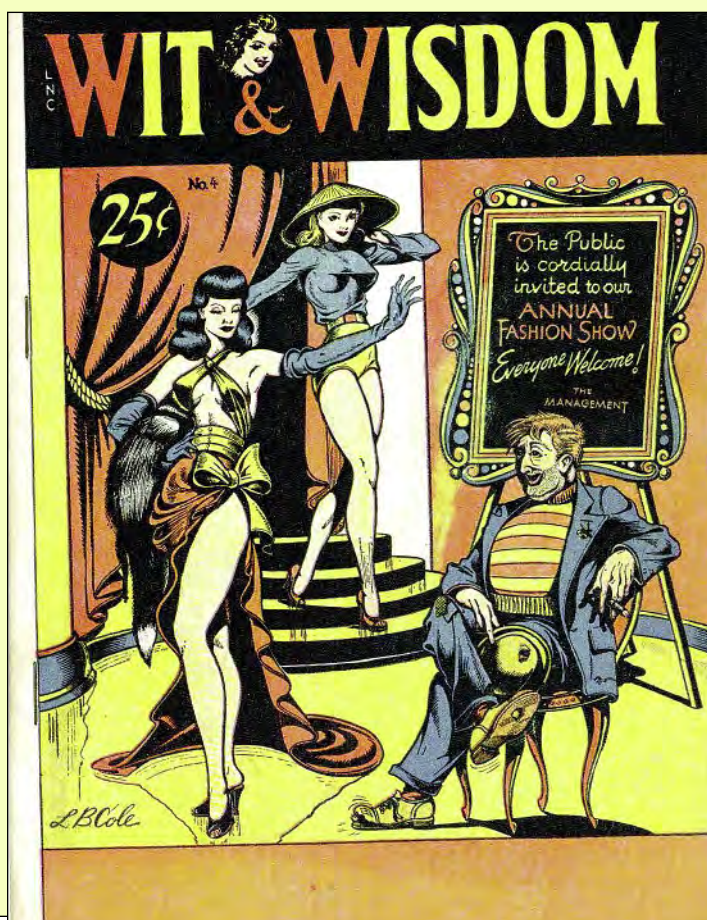
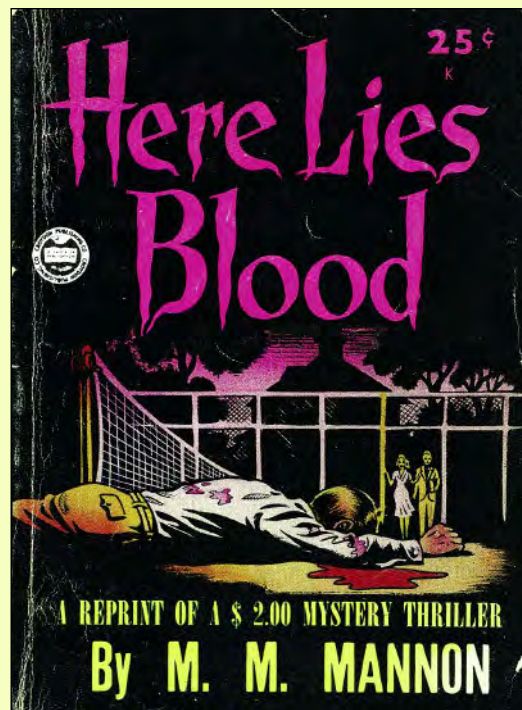
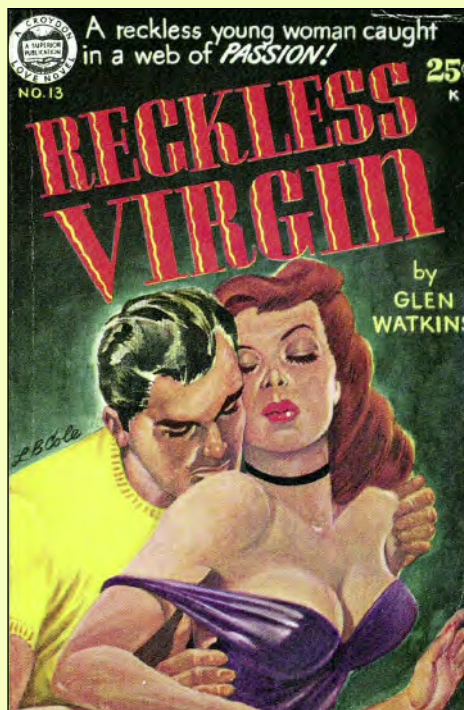
Name: Leonard Brandt Cole (1918-1995) – artist, editor, art director, publisher

Education: Doctor of Anatomy & Physiology, University of Berlin (Germany)

Family in Arts: Ellen Cole (wife, letterer)

Print Media (Non-Comics): Art director – *Alfred Hitchcock Magazine* 1956-58; art director – Consolidated Lithography c. 1943; artist – advertising 1957-59, children's magazines (no date), medical illustrations (no date), Thriller Books (paperbacks) 1947, Stork Original Novels (paperbacks) 1950; editor & artist *Cosmos Science Fiction* (magazine) 1953-54, *Field & Stream* (magazine) no dates, *Rod & Gun* (magazine) 1956-58; producer & artist – anatomy books 1990s

Commercial Art & Design: Instructional materials – audio-visual for University Films 1964-c. 1979



Lustful Colors

(Above:) A pair of paperback covers painted by Cole for Croyden, a.k.a. Superior. Whether those are other names for the companies listed in the *Who's Who* as "Stork" or "Thrilling," or a third company, we're not sure. Thanks to Shaun Clancy. [©2013 the respective copyright holders.]

Honors: Inkpot Award (San Diego Comic-Con) 1981

Comics Studios/Shops: Chesler Studio (a) late 1930s; Ferstadt Studio (a) c. 1942-43; L.B. Cole Studio (head) 1943-48

Other Career Notes: paintings – re-creations of his comics covers c. 1980+

COMIC BOOK CREDITS (Mainstream or Related U.S. Publications):

Ace Periodicals: Captain Courageous (a) 1943; Hap Hazard (i) 1944; Lash Lightning (a) 1942; Magno (a) 1943; Paul Revere Jr. (a) 1943; romance (a) 1949, 1953; The Sword (i) 1944; The Unknown Soldier (a) 1943

American Comics Group: various features (a) 1951

Aviation Press: Black Venus (a) 1944-45; Black Venus & Tommy Tomahawk (?) 1944; *Contact Comics* (e) 1945-56; covers for *Contact Comics* (a) 1944-46; Dogfight (p) 1944; Flying Tigers Bomb Japanese Airfield (p) 1944; Golden Eagle (p) 1944-45; Tommy Tomahawk (p); Warhawk (a) 1940s

The Wit and Wisdom Of L.B. Cole

(Left:) We're not quite certain *what* category this Cole cover should come under from the Checklist. "Anatomy books," perhaps? Thanks to Shaun Clancy. [©2013 the respective copyright holders.]

Meeting LENNY COLE

A 1979 Encounter With L.B. COLE— And, Incidentally, HARVEY KURTZMAN

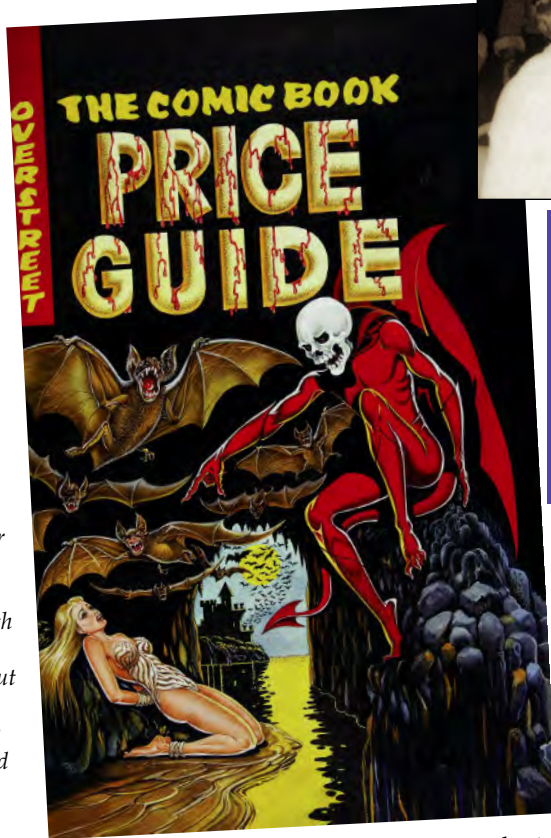
by John Benson

I first became aware of Leonard Cole in late spring, 1954, when I bought a copy of *Unsane* #15 (the one and only issue) with a Cole cover. And I must admit that, years later, when I saw them at conventions, I was also intrigued by all those brash, artless, colorful covers that he did for *Star* in a style that betrayed his cigar-box-creation beginnings. I became aware of Cole as a person when I talked to *Mad* creator Harvey Kurtzman and artist Gil Kane in 1972 about their earliest days in comics, when, as teenagers, they had worked in the Louie Ferstadt shop. For a time, Cole had worked there,

too. Cole, six years older, would use his age and life experience to play mind games with the innocent, naïve, 18-year-old Kurtzman. As I listened to Kurtzman and Kane talking about Cole... how shall I put it... it was evident that they did not have a high opinion of him.

The only time I met Cole was on June 30, 1979. It was at one of Phil Seuling's New York Comic Art Conventions at the then-named Statler Hilton Hotel in New York. E.B. Boatner and I had arranged to meet with Kurtzman in his room to record his comments about *Two-Fisted Tales* for inclusion in the notes for Russ Cochran's slip-cased reprints of that EC title. When we arrived at his room, he warned us that we might be interrupted, because he'd seen Cole downstairs and had to invite him up. He was plainly dreading the meeting and made several negative remarks about Cole. When there was a knock on the door, Kurtzman said, "I'm expecting a friend. I hope this is my friend and not Leonard Cole!" (It was neither.) Later, when Cole did arrive, Kurtzman jumped up to welcome him in a hearty tone that, to us who had heard his earlier comments, seemed rather hollow. The two then engaged in small talk about their current activities and mutual friends. Cole was not near the recorder and another conversation was going on in the room simultaneously, so much of this small talk is inaudible on the tape.

KURTZMAN: There he is: Lenny Cole! How've you been? [Boatner takes a picture.] We immortalized that moment. [laughter.] You're still fishing, I see.



Over Hill, Over Dale, Overstreet

(Above:) L.B. Cole looks on as Bob Overstreet (seated at left) shakes hands with *Mad* creator/editor/writer/artist Harvey Kurtzman at the 1979 New York Comic Art Convention. Thanks to John Benson and photographer E.B. Boatner.

(Left:) A tangible result of the Cole/Overstreet confab: the former's painted cover for the 1981 *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide* (Vol. 11)—a re-creation of one of his many Star Publications horror (or was it jungle?) covers. Retrieved from the Heritage Comics Archive by Dominic Bongo. [©2013 the respective copyright holders.]

COLE: Absolutely. How are you?

KURTZMAN: Pretty good. How've you been, how's everything, how's your wife? [Cole's response inaudible.] Oh, yeah? No kidding. What are you doing now?

COLE: Publishing... [inaudible]

KURTZMAN: [enthusiastic] You're publishing! [more inaudible banter] We were just talking about when I first came here and I was looking at your book; it's terrific stuff! Your fishing book. You've done more than one, I think. I remember you were fishing...

COLE: Even then. [long inaudible comment]

KURTZMAN: You know, [laughs] it reminds me of a story... which I won't tell right now... of a lemon meringue pie in a Horn and Hardart's.

COLE: Those were good days, Harvey—those were the good old days, believe me. They're better now.

KURTZMAN: Down from Lou Ferstadt, God rest his soul.

COLE: You guys finish up [your interview]. I have to use your facility.

A Four-Color Dreamer

The JAY DISBROW Interview

Conducted & Transcribed by Ray Zone

A/E EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION: *The following relatively short interview was conducted in 1981 and has never had previous publication in any form. At the time the conversation between Jay Disbrow and Ray Zone took place, the former was still working on his history of the Iger Comic Shop, which was published in 1985.*

With the rise of the adventure comic strip in the 1930s, there was a new American dream. It was nurtured by the illustrative genius of Alex Raymond with his graceful renderings of other worlds in the panels of *Flash Gordon*. It was further elaborated by Burne Hogarth and Harold Foster with *Tarzan* and *Prince Valiant* as a continuous, exotic, and highly detailed form of graphic storytelling.

The work of these graphic storytellers gave the artistically disreputable media of newspaper comic strips and comic books new status as an art form. The four-color stories reached an enormous audience and the artists became new American heroes.

Jay Disbrow got caught up in the dream. He is a native American dreamer, a writer and artist of visual narratives infected with the lure of the four-color comic medium. In the eighth edition (1978-1979) of *The Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide* he confessed to "a mania for adventure comic expression" that began in "early childhood." For him the comics "represented an inner compulsion that demanded expression. Adventure comic story plots," he wrote, "were bred within the very fiber of my being and they struggled incessantly to get out of my psyche and into print."

From the time he was 14, Jay wrote and drew adventure comic stories "at a furious pace. I made up the plots as I went along," he explained, "filling in the narration and the dialogue panel by panel.... As a teenager I sent my comic pages to Alex Raymond, Hal Foster, and Burne Hogarth for criticism. These titans of the syndicate world who were my heroes graciously took their time to encourage me in the pursuit of my chosen career." Disbrow applied himself to studying the construction of the human figure and the riddles of perspective. He was in the process of developing one of the most unique styles in comics, art so individualistic it has been called "esoteric."

After high school graduation Disbrow spent three years in



Bantor—Rhymes With Tantor

Jay Disbrow (in a 2002 photo) end one of his beloved jungle-lord creations: Bantor, with his mate Zentra, seen here in the splash page he drew (and probably wrote) for Star Publications' *Terrors of the Jungle* #6 (Sept. 1953). Thanks to Jim Ludwig for the comics scan, and to Jay for the photo. [©2013 the respective copyright holders.]

frustration attempting to gain a foothold in the comic book industry. In January of 1950 he landed a job as an inker at the Iger Studios. "For about three weeks I lived in a dream world," he wrote. "I was now on the inside. I had at last become a professional."

At the Iger Studios Jay worked on the comic book "production line." Eventually he was doing the pencilling for such popular Fiction House hero-features as "Sheena," "Kaanga," "Firehair," and "Long Bow."

After he had been with Iger for over a year, Jay decided "the time had come to launch out into that vast ocean of freelance opportunity." Going to the office of Star Publications, he met (actually for the second time) Leonard B. Cole, the editor of Star and an artist of surpassing talent himself.



Cole liked Disbrow's samples and he gave him an assignment drawing a teenage comedy story. In the spring of 1951 Jay proposed to Cole that he write as well as draw some stories for the Star comics. Cole gave Jay the premise for a story about a man who fell into a subterranean world and was transformed into a monster. Disbrow then proceeded to write, pencil, letter, and ink the story. It appeared in *Blue Bolt Weird* #112, with the title "The Beast from Below."

For 3½ years after that, Disbrow wrote and illustrated over a hundred stories and fillers for Star Publications; they appeared in comics with such titles as *Blue Bolt Weird Tales of Terror*, *Spook Detective Cases*, *Terrors of the Jungle*, and *Unsanse*. Disbrow's comic book collaboration with L. B. Cole produced many works that are rare collector's items today.

One such classic story, entitled "Night-



Success Has Many Fathers...

On p. 11 were printed L.B. Cole's cover and Jay Disbrow's splash page for "The Beast from Below," the audition story that Disbrow scripted and illustrated for Star's *Blue Bolt Weird Tales of Terror* #112 (Feb. 1952). At left is a key page from the story; thanks to Jim Ludwig. [©2013 the respective copyright holders.]

Monster," appeared in *Ghostly Weird Stories* #120. It is an autobiographical fantasy told by a comic book artist named Ray Alexander (a tribute to Alex Raymond). The character of an editor named "L. B." also figures in the story. The editor tells the artist, "Weird stories are the hottest things on the newsstands today. The public is demanding them. People have a subconscious desire to be frightened." The artist is then told to create as grotesque a demon as he can imagine.

Disbrow also produced a one-of-a-kind comic book for Star Publications, called *Picturescope Jungle Adventures*. It is a black-&-white coloring book and comic with one large panel on each page simulating an effect of great depth. *Picturescope Jungle Adventures* was produced to capitalize on the 3-D trend in comics of the early '50s and features the adventures of Jahka, Lord of the Jungle.

While producing comic stories for Star Publications, Disbrow continued to do freelance work on the side. He created a classic story for *Crime Detector* #5 entitled "Ultimate Destiny - A Study in Suspense and Horror." The story tells of a man who violates an



G'Night, Sweetheart!

Disbrow's splash and Cole's cover depicting "Night-Monster" in Star's *Ghostly Weird Stories* #120 (Sept. 1953). Interior script & art by Disbrow. Thanks to Jim Ludwig for the splash scan. [©2013 the respective copyright holders.]

RICHARD E. HUGHES: Life After ACG

Part II Of A Study Of A Major Comics Editor & Writer

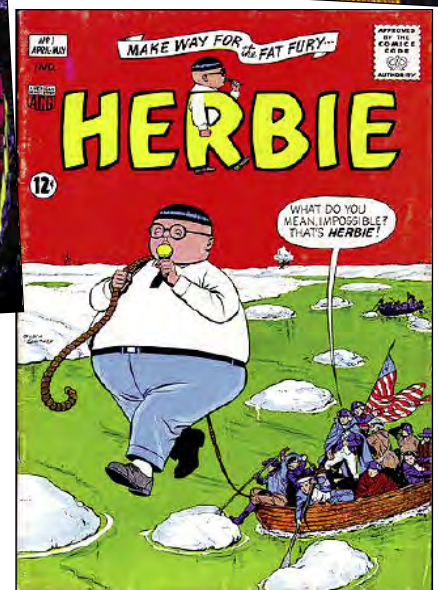
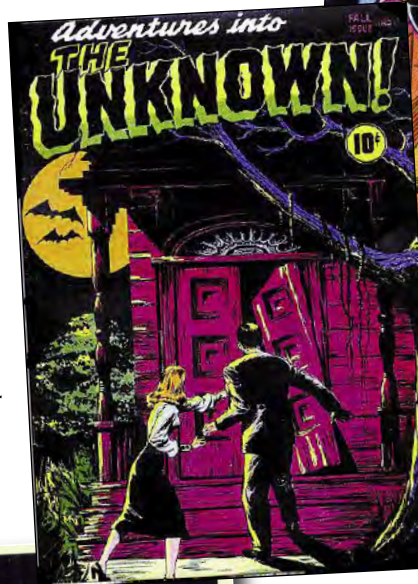
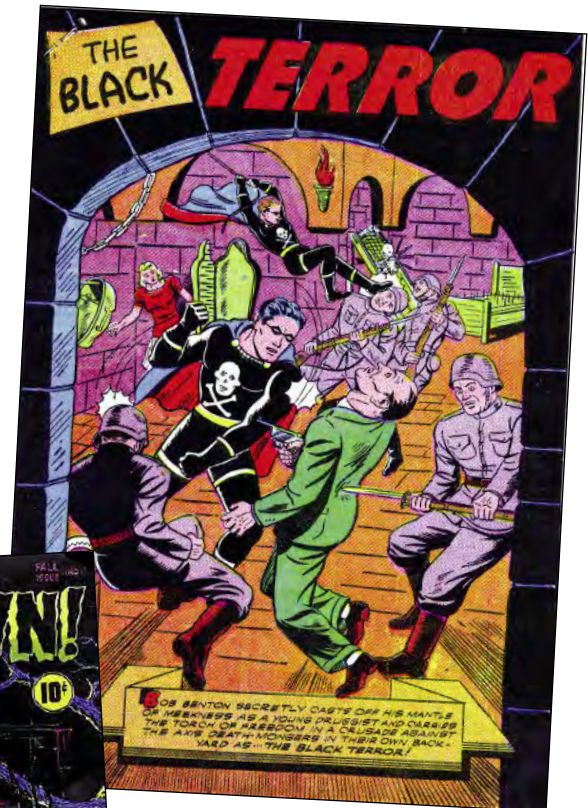
by Michael Vance

A/E

EDITOR'S NOTE: As noted in Part I of this piece (in issue #112), a long-unsuspected cache of materials related to longtime comic book editor

and writer Richard E. Hughes (real name: Leo Rosenbaum) was purchased two or three years ago by Yonkers, NY, resident Joseph Eacobacci. Joey has generously made it available to Ye Editor and to Michael Vance, author of the 1996 book *Forbidden Knowledge: The History of the American Comics Group, which was serialized in A/E #61 & 62. These papers were apparently given some years ago by Hughes' widow Annabel to a man she was dating and contained numerous photos and papers; he later sold them to Eacobacci.*

In this issue, Michael Vance continues his guided tour of these artifacts, which add considerably to what we know about the life of the man who (for the B.W. Sangor Shop in the early 1940s) co-created such Standard/Nedor heroes as *The Black Terror* and *The Fighting Yank*, among numerous others—and who from 1948-67 was the editor and a major scripter for Sangor's American Comics Group (ACG), publisher of *Adventures into the Unknown*, the first regularly published horror comic book. Hughes also co-created "Supermouse" and "Herbie," ACG's offbeat super-hero of its final decade; no fewer than three never-published "Herbie" scripts found among the Eacobacci trove were touched on and even partly illustrated in A/E #112. Now, Michael shows us that the Hughes/Eacobacci cache has yet another surprise or three to unveil....



Hughes Was Huge!

Richard E. Hughes, smoking his omnipresent pipe in an undated, previously unpublished photo from the Joseph Eacobacci Collection, regards three of his major career milestones. (From the top:)

"The Black Terror," drawn here by the Nedor feature's original artist Elmer Wexler for *America's Best Comics* #6 (July 1943)—scripter unknown, but Hughes created the hero with Wexler as part of the Sangor Shop...

Edvard Moritz's cover for ACG's groundbreaking horror title *Adventures into the Unknown* #1 (Fall 1948), edited by Hughes...

...and Ogden Whitney's cover for ACG's *Herbie* #1 (April-May 1964), which Hughes both wrote and edited. [©2013 the respective copyright holders.]

Custom Comics

The success of the American Comics Group under Hughes' management led to a separate imprint, Custom Comics, also called Culver Comics (1954), which Hughes did not create. His post-comics résumé described Custom as an arm of the American Comics Group that produced "special purpose magazines for major commercial companies and governmental agencies. Purpose: public relations and sales promotions. Write major portion of such materials."

And Hughes did so through 1967; but copies dated as late as 1977 prove that Custom Comics remained a viable property even after his early-'74 death and into the 1980s, as confirmed by then-ACG publisher Frederick Iger (1924-?). These comic books were produced for police and fire departments, Buster Brown Shoes, the U.S. Air Force, and dozens of other institutions; they were given away free or as product premiums.

Joseph Eacobacci's collection contains seventeen copies of these advertising booklets and one related trade magazine. They include: *Skating Skills* (Chicago Roller Skating), *Success* (Grit newspaper), *Once a Champion* (Soap Box Derby), *Don't Be a Fizzle* (New York City Fire Department), *We Want to Tell the Story* (early American life), *Great Moments in Steer Wrestling* (three different books, Wrangler Jeans), *Howard Johnson's Children's Menu #2 & #13*, *Your Friend the Policeman* (1963 and 1968, New York City Police Department), *Your Friendly Druggist Coloring Book* (Dristan), *You'll Be A Winner* (political race), *Massachusetts Men against the Sea*, *El Otro Pueblo* (in the Spanish language; the title starred Foxy the Firefighter), *St. Louis...Let's Do It Nov. 8th!* (St. Louis Improvement Bonds Committee), *The Baltimore Colts* (National Football League), and *Wings of Adventure* (Braniff Airways). They are of different page counts and sizes, and are drawn by various uncredited artists, with art by Kurt Schaffenberger (1920-2002) featured in the majority of titles. Hughes had stapled a small rectangle of paper to the cover of each comic book with a typewritten description of its intended use.



It's An Old (Spanish) Custom

Three of Custom Comics' many commercial comics-style publications. The first two, which dealt with the New York City Fire Department (8 pages) and Braniff Airlines (16 pages), were drawn by Kurt Schaffenberger; the former was also printed in Spanish, as was *El Otro Pueblo* [*The Other City*]. [©2013 the respective copyright holders.]



Hughes' Familiar Haunts

(Left:) A recent photo (from a real estate website) of 331 Madison Avenue in New York City, which 50 years ago housed the offices of the American Comics Group. How much this or the following building(s) may have changed in the interim is not known.

(Right:) A current Google photo of 23 W. 84th Street in the Bronx, the last residence and neighborhood of Richard and Annabel Hughes. Thanks for both pics to Michael Vance; unless otherwise noted, all scans utilized in the remainder of this article, including those from the Eacobacci Collection, were done by MV. [©2013 the respective copyright holders.]

As an example, the copy for *Success* reads:

GRIT, a weekly newspaper of national proportions, is sold and delivered by boys. Enlisting boy salesmen, essential to their big operation, was becoming increasingly difficult... until we started producing books for them. Since then, they've ordered and reordered constantly, using many different books to present their message in many different ways.

The Copy for *Skating Skills* reads:

If you owned a Roller Skate Company, how would you foster good and profitable public relations? Probably as CHICAGO ROLLER SKATE did... through an interesting and informative book on the "ins" of roller skating, such as this one!

The Feb. 1961 issue of *Advertising Requirements*, the trade magazine in this collection, featured an article on comic books. It includes amazing facts about Custom Comics. In it, the number of copies of Buster Brown promotional comics distributed is listed at 50 to 75 million. Yes, *million*. They had been produced by Custom since 1959. Hughes and his crew had also produced 35 Wrangler Jeans promotional comics since 1957, totaling 45 million copies. These distribution numbers are staggering, outstripping the sales of any newsstand title, and Richard E. Hughes edited all of them, and wrote most of the books.



THEY'RE HERE! THEY SNEER!
GET USED TO IT! THEY'RE...

EVIL TWINNS!

MY FAVORITE COMIC BOOK CLICHÉ?
"EVIL TWINS" BY A LANDSLIDE! CALL
ME CRAZY, BUT NOTHING BEATS WATCHING
GOOD AND EVIL BATTLE--WITH THEIR
FISTS! AND THE WACKY VILLAINS' COSTUMES
(OFTEN WEIRD VARIATIONS OF THE
HERO'S UNIFORM) JUST ADD TO THE FUN!

NEARLY EVERY COMIC BOOK
CHARACTER HAS FACED HIS EVIL TWIN
AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER, AND
MR. MONSTER IS NO EXCEPTION!

I FINALLY DID MY OWN TAKE ON
EVIL TWINS RECENTLY IN A MR.
MONSTER DARK HORSE PRESENTS
STORY CALLED "DARK STEARN!"

IN HONOR OF THAT, HERE ARE
SOME FAVORITE EVIL TWIN STORIES
FROM DECADES PAST. SO BRACE
YOURSELF, KIDS. THERE'S DOUBLE
TROUBLE AHEAD!

YOU CAN'T HOLD ME!
NO ONE CAN!!!



Mr. Monster's evil twin
from *Dark Horse Presents*.
[©2013 Michael T. Gilbert.]

Evil Twins!

by Michael T. Gilbert

My first "Evil Twin" sighting was late in 1959, when I was eight years old. A classmate had brought a "hot off the presses" *World's Finest* #106 to school. It featured "The Duplicate Man," a clever crook with a gizmo that let him split himself into twins. Whenever Superman or Batman was about to catch a twin, The Duplicate Man clicked his fingers and merged with his other half, who was waiting across town. The two heroes finally captured the slippery felon by working together.

Before the first bell rang, I tried to work out a trade for the comic, but the tiny twerp turned up his nose at my copies of *Wonder Woman*. Would I ever find out what happened to The Duplicate Man? Luckily, fate stepped in.

Now you have to remember comics were strictly a no-no in schools back then. We traded 'em on the "down-low" before the teacher came in. And on that day, the little scofflaw with the *World's Finest* got caught red-handed.



RRRIP! Two Comics For The Price of One!

Writer Bill Finger's "The Duplicate Man," drawn by Dick Sprang and Shelly Moldoff. Note the ripped pages in this copy. [©2013 DC Comics.]



Oh, The Humanity!

Curt Swan and Stan Kaye's cover for *World's Finest Comics* #106 (Dec. 1959).
[©2013 DC Comics.]

Our teacher grabbed his comic and stuffed it into a drawer filled with yo-yos, baseball cards, and other illegal contraband. When school ended that day, our teacher took out the comic, tore it in half—and tossed it into the trash!

Oh, the humanity!

My younger self didn't catch the irony of a comic about a crook who could split in half being split in half itself. But there's a silver lining in every tragedy.

While the rest of the class grabbed their coats and headed for their buses, I lagged behind. Then, with a pounding heart, I rescued both halves of that precious comic from the metal wastebasket. Once home, I carefully put it back together with a couple of tons of Scotch tape. It wasn't pretty, but that wonderful comic was finally mine! And there's an amusing postscript to all this.

Flash forward to 1999, when I attended a Seattle comic convention. As luck would have it, the great Dick Sprang, who had drawn "The Duplicate Man," was sitting next to me. Seizing the opportunity, I pulled out my taped-together copy. I shared the vintage tale with Mr. Sprang and asked him to sign it, which he graciously did. . . with a chuckle.

And that's why "The Duplicate Man" remains my favorite Evil Twin story of all time!

“Of Graphic Stories & Wonderworlds”

A Conversation With Writer, Publisher, & Bookstore Owner RICHARD KYLE—Part 2

[This is the 8th installment of our 9-part series devoted to Fandom’s 50th-Birthday Bash held at Comic-Con International 2011 in San Diego. Richard Kyle was one of the guests of honor at that event.]

by Bill Schelly

Introduction

Here is the second part of my conversation with Richard Kyle, which took place in March 2011, about three weeks after Part 1. Last time, as recorded in *Alter Ego* #115, Richard discussed reading comic books in the late 1930s, quitting school when he was 13, some juvenile attempts at writing, and his involvement in science-fiction fandom. Then we covered his entrance into comics fandom through the pages of Dick and Pat Lupoff’s fanzine *Xero* and his entry in the “All in Color For a Dime” series, called “The Education of Victor Fox.” Now Richard and I discuss his increasing participation in comics fandom in 1964, both in the pages of *CAPA-Alpha* and in Bill Spicer’s fanzine *Fantasy Illustrated*.

I would like to simply add that it was really a kick to be able to talk at length with Richard, after having been a fan of his writing since I encountered it in some of the first fanzines I purchased as a teenager. Our talk was transcribed by CFA stalwart Brian K. Morris.

BILL SCHELLY: In 1964, *Xero* ended, but by then you’d linked up with Bill Spicer and *Fantasy Illustrated*. I’m curious how that occurred.

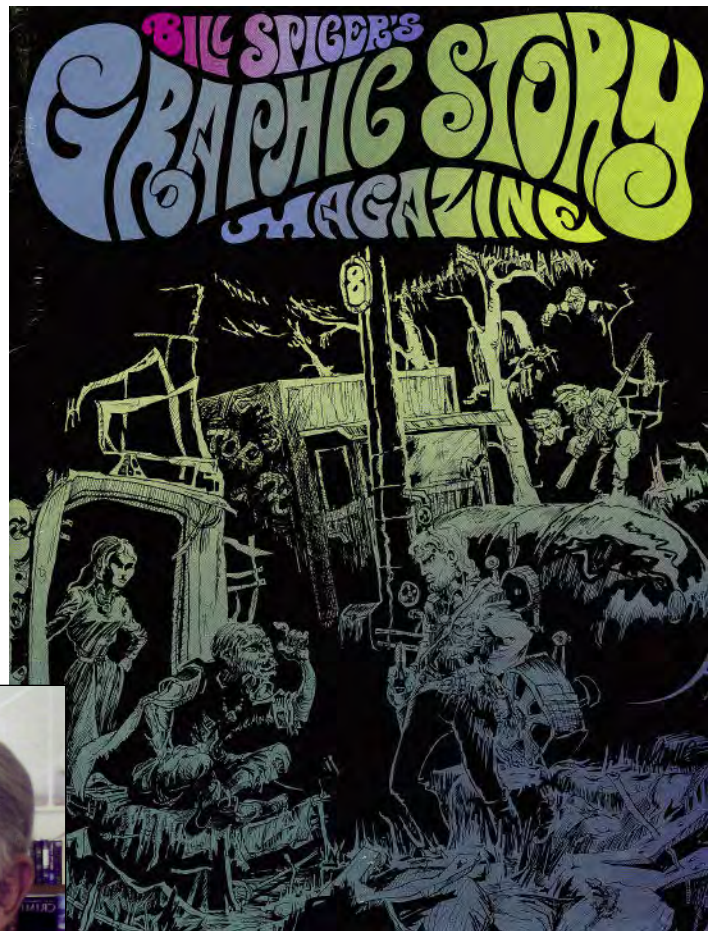
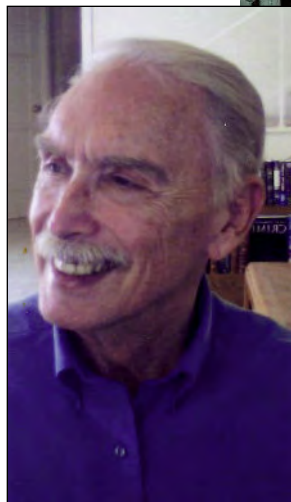
RICHARD KYLE: I don’t know. I don’t remember whether I ordered Bill’s magazine or what.

BS: He may have just written to you because he liked your Fox piece, and that somehow led to you getting a column in *Fantasy Illustrated*.

KYLE: Independent of me, he and Bruce [Berry] had been corresponding, and he had gotten Bruce to draw the adaptation of the Adam Link story [“Adam Link’s Vengeance” in *Fantasy Illustrated* #1 and 2]. That brought me back in touch with Bruce.

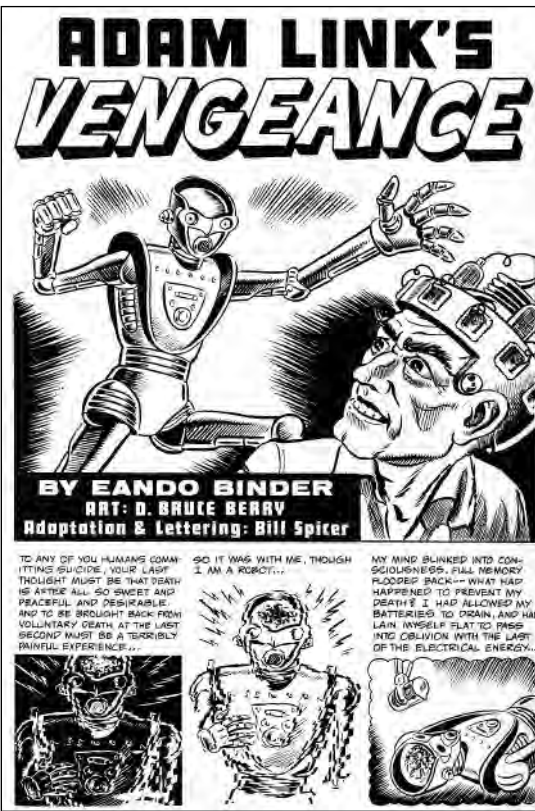
BS: And right into the middle of comics fandom. *Xero* was really a bridge between science-fiction and comics fandom

KYLE: Yeah, yeah. Bill asked me to do a column in *Fantasy Illustrated*. I had created a column for *CAPA-Alpha*—you know, the Amateur Press Association—and I was one of the original founding members. And at first, I was just really an enthusiast of the old comics because they awakened so many emotions in me.



What’s In A Name?

(Left:) Richard Kyle, in a recent photo. (Above:) By the fall 1967 (#8) issue of *Fantasy Illustrated*, editor/publisher Bill Spicer had become so enamored of Kyle’s term for cartoon continuities that he renamed his fanzine *Graphic Story Magazine*. Even those who didn’t read Kyle’s article in it were hit with the title in the advertisements in the adzine *Rocket’s Blast-Comicollector*, which spread the term “graphic story” far and wide. [Cover art ©2013 George Metzger.]



Links With EC

(Left:) Landon Chesney's remarkable cover for *Fantasy Illustrated* #1 (1964), the fanzine that was named after the erstwhile EC Picto-Fiction magazines. Bill Spicer's fanzine brought back most of the genres of EC stories from the pre-Code era, as created by the most talented writers and artists in fandom. [Art ©2013 Estate of Landon Chesney.]

(Right:) Since the EC's science-fiction title *Weird Science-Fantasy* never got around to adapting Eando (Otto) Binder's classic robot story "Adam Link's Vengeance"—the next in the Link series after the tales that they did adapt in mid-1950s issues—Bill Spicer sought to remedy the omission by producing a spectacular adaptation in collaboration with the dazzlingly talented artist D. Bruce Berry. This was possibly the finest graphic story to emerge from fandom's early days. From *Fantasy Illustrated* #1. [Art ©2013 D. Bruce Berry; adaptation text ©2013 Bill Spicer; original story ©2013 Estate of Otto Binder.]

BS: Can you describe how you invented the terms "graphic novel" and "graphic story"? Was that because "comics" seemed like it wasn't properly or sufficiently descriptive?

KYLE: Well, it wasn't that it was insufficient. It's like the term "undertaker." What does an undertaker undertake, you know? It's a phrase or a term that seems to describe something but in fact doesn't. And "comics" was that way. All the references that people had were to things that were distasteful or silly or certainly unserious. Yet here I was, reading stories—say, the ones at EC, but it was also true of some from other comic book publishers—by guys who were very highly skilled. It wasn't as though they were trivial people. I was really concerned about it, because I saw these people doing what I recognized as serious work, whether it was necessarily humorous or not. In some cases it was. Some, it wasn't. But it was work of importance. I rebelled at the idea that any art form couldn't be serious just by the nature of it. That bothered me and it bothered me increasingly. I'd read comments, "Well, that's comic book s***," "It's only comics," or other similar statements. I can remember, one night, thinking about it before I was going to bed.... "Well, what *would* you call them?" I immediately thought of "graphic story" and subsequently, "graphic novel."

BS: That was when you were lying in bed at night?

KYLE: I wasn't even in a state of reverie which, you know, would be conducive to something like that. I was just thinking about

having to get my CAPA-Alpha contribution done and get it sent off so I'd be on schedule. "What am I going to talk about?" That was the first thing that popped into my mind—so I'd obviously been thinking about it.

BS: Of course there's the term "the graphic arts." Is that what spurred you to use the words "graphic art," or "graphic story"?

KYLE: My first thought was "graphic story," because I was familiar with "graphic" as in "graphic arts" or "graphic display" and that sort of thing. Then I went to my dictionary, which happened to be *The Merriam-Webster New International Dictionary, Fifth Edition*. It has the most wonderful, exact, and precise definition of "graphic" that I'd seen anywhere. [Reads from the dictionary:] "Graphic: 1. Well delineated; vividly described; also describing clearly and vividly. 2. Of or pertaining to the arts (graphic arts) of painting, drawing, engraving, and any other arts which pertain to the expression of

ideas by means of lines, marks, or characters impressed on a surface." That settled it. If that isn't the perfect description of what a comic book story is, I don't know.

BS: I agree. So the next day, you put that in your "Wonderworld" contribution for CAPA-Alpha, and within a few weeks it was out for discussion.

KYLE: Yeah, and nobody bothered discussing it. [chuckles]

BS: Oh?

KYLE: I did four or five "Wonderworld" contributions to *K-a* and never got a single response from any of them. So when Bill Spicer offered me a column in *Fantasy Illustrated*, I jumped on it—and dropped out of CAPA-Alpha. Eventually, as you know, Bill changed the name of his fanzine to *Graphic Story Magazine*. My column was called "Graphic Story Review," and it did attract quite a bit of interest, and Bill got letters in response. [Richard's column debuted in *Fantasy Illustrated* #4, 1965. —Bill.]

BS: I remember one particular discussion which happened after you likened the editor of a comics story—or graphic story, excuse me—to the director of a movie. Can we explore that idea a bit?

KYLE: It enraged a lot of people, and I can understand and not understand it at the same time. When you touch a sensitive button for people at times, they never really read everything that you've

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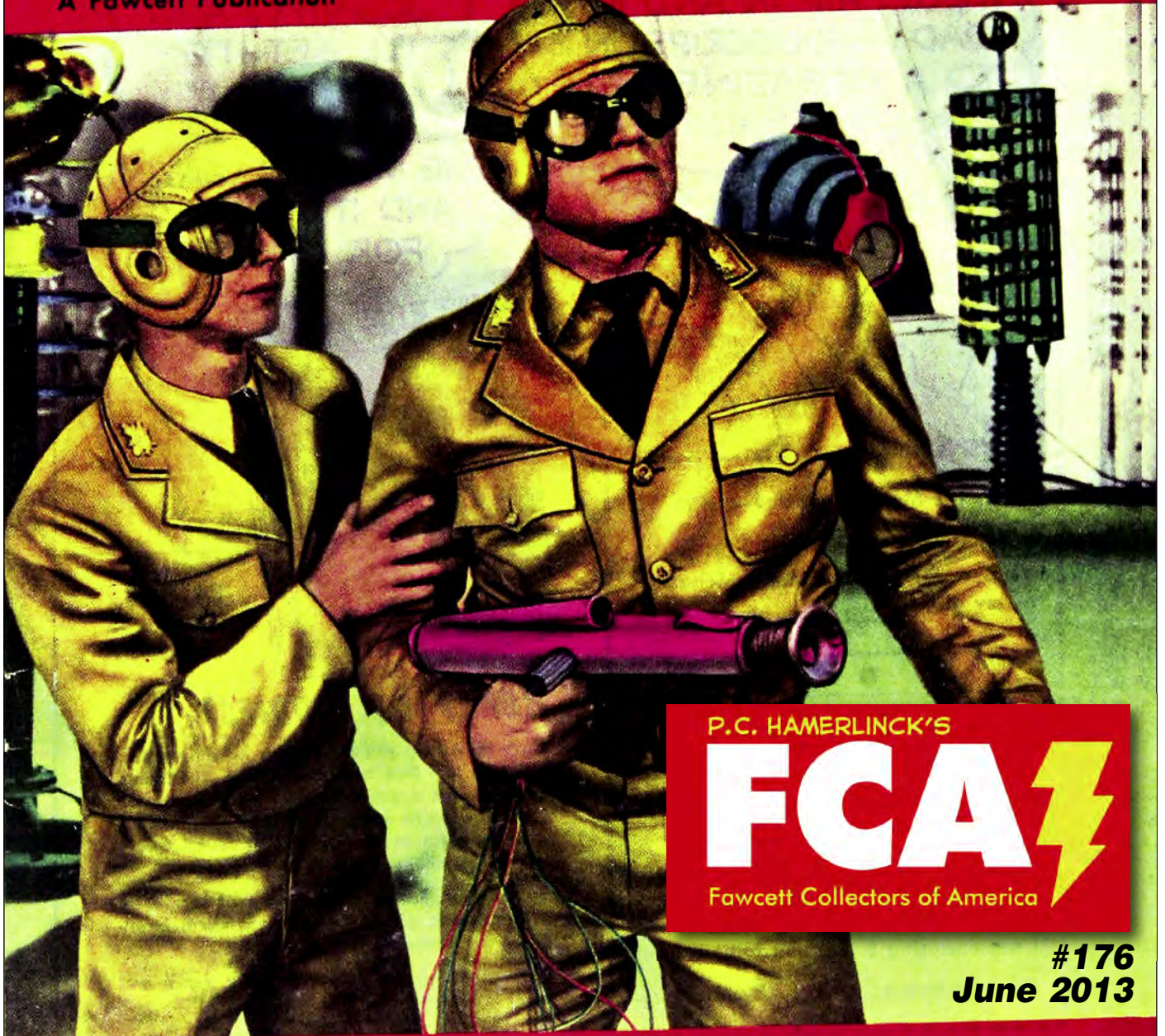
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Captain VIDEO

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Fawcett Collectors of America

#176

June 2013

IN THIS ISSUE: **SCHOOL FOR SPIES**

Video-Grams

A Look At Captain Video And His Video Rangers

by James Heath Lantz, with Roy Thomas

[Abridged from the hardcover volume Roy Thomas Presents Captain Video, published by PS Artbooks, 2013—but originally prepared for this issue of Alter Ego]

Vini, Video, Vinci!

Between its birth in 1946 and its death in 1956, the DuMont Television Network gave home audiences such classics as *The Ernie Kovacs Show* and *Cavalcade of Stars*, the show that introduced *The Honeymooners*. The network was an offshoot of DuMont Laboratories, a company that manufactured television equipment—including TV sets. Launching its own network was presumably one way of selling those early sets!

And nothing on the DuMont Network was quite like *Captain Video and His Video Rangers*.

Ostensibly set in the year 2254, *Captain Video* (for short) aired from June 27, 1949, through April 1, 1955. Its 7:00-7:30 p.m. time slot from Monday through Friday made the series popular among both children and adults. It had all the staples of children's programming of the day—including moral lessons and the use of film clips—even while it capitalized on the nascent adult interest in the possibility of space travel. The show ushered in science-fiction on television, a genre that would later include *The Twilight Zone*, *Star Trek*, *Doctor Who*, et al. Unfortunately, only about two dozen of *Captain Video's* more than 1000 have survived, and fewer still of those are available at present on DVD.

Captain Video could claim a lot of firsts.

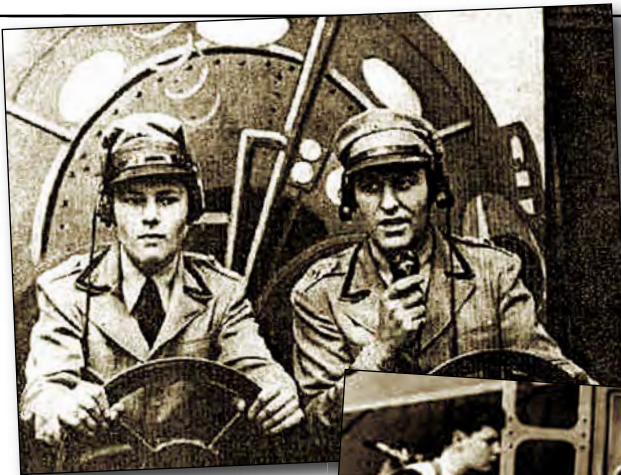
It was the first space-adventure program transmitted on live American television. The mechanical menace Tobor (played by 7'6" Dave Ballard) was the first automaton to appear in science-fictional TV, although he (it?) later reformed; "Tobor," of course, is "robot" spelled backwards. *Captain Video* was also the first space show to spin off a TV series—two, in fact, as noted below. It inspired the first and indeed the *only* movie serial adapted from a TV program. The "Captain Video" board game released by Milton Bradley in 1952 was the first game of that type based on a TV series. The show also led to one of the first examples of TV cross-advertising, when, in one *Honeymooners* episode, Ed Norton (Art Carney) even tricked Ralph Kramden (Jackie Gleason) into moving the TV aerial so he could finish watching *Captain Video*. Both were on the DuMont Network, of course. What, they should've been watching Milton Berle over on NBC instead?

One more first: In 1951, Fawcett Comics published the six-issue *Captain Video* comic book series. It was Fawcett's first, though not last, TV license.

First, though, re the TV series:

Video On Video

Captain Video and his Video Rangers operated from a secret mountain base. The Captain (portrayed first by Richard Coogan,



First Men In Space?

From the DuMont Network's TV series, here are shots of Captain Video and the Video Ranger—in their uniforms, and in space gear. That's obviously Don Hastings as the Ranger—but we're not certain if the Captain in these shots is first CV Richard Coogan or the later Al Hodge. You'll have to compare their mug shots on p. 76. [©2013 the respective copyright holders.]



then by Al Hodge), the Video Ranger (Don Hastings), and their more sporadically seen colleagues received orders for missions from the Commissioners of Public Safety, acting on behalf of the Solar Council of the Interplanetary Alliance. The Rangers defended time and space from such evildoers as Mook the Moon Man, Prince Spartak, Princess Arura, Clumsy McGee (ace funnyman Arnold Stang, who also played Jughead on radio's *Archie Andrews*), and Norgola (Ernest Borgnine, before his big break in the movie version of Paddy Chayevsky's *Martí*). But no villain in the Captain's rogues' gallery was as menacing as Doctor Paul, the mad scientist archnemesis.

Being so popular, *Captain Video* was the first space show to spin off a TV series—two, in fact, as noted below. It inspired the first and indeed the *only* movie serial adapted from a TV program. The "Captain Video" board game released by Milton Bradley in 1952 was the first game of that type based on a TV series. The show also led to one of the first examples of TV cross-advertising, when, in one *Honeymooners* episode, Ed Norton (Art Carney) even tricked Ralph Kramden (Jackie Gleason) into moving the TV aerial so he could finish watching *Captain Video*. Both were on the DuMont Network, of course. What, they should've been watching Milton Berle over on NBC instead?

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Captain Video and his Video Rangers operated from a secret mountain base. The Captain (portrayed first by Richard Coogan,

then by Al Hodge), the Video Ranger (Don Hastings), and their more sporadically seen colleagues received orders for missions from the Commissioners of Public Safety, acting on behalf of the Solar Council of the Interplanetary Alliance. The Rangers defended time and space from such evildoers as Mook the Moon Man, Prince Spartak, Princess Arura, Clumsy McGee (ace funnyman Arnold Stang, who also played Jughead on radio's *Archie Andrews*), and Norgola (Ernest Borgnine, before his big break in the movie version of Paddy Chayevsky's *Martí*). But no villain in the Captain's rogues' gallery was as menacing as Doctor Paul, the mad scientist archnemesis.