

August 2012

Since 1926!

AMAZING STORIES



In This Issue

The Edgar Rice Burroughs Movie I'd Like To See
by John M. Whalen

I Was A Teenaged Bibliophile
by Pierre V. Comtois



David Hardy
Retrospective

Hardy

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FICTION

Aurora (excerpt).....10
by David A. Hardy

FEATURES

The Edgar Rice Burroughs Movie I'd Like To See.....6
by John M. Whalen

I Was A Teenaged Bibliophile.....13
by Pierre V. Comtois

The King Of Space Art:
A David A. Hardy Retrospective.....33
by Steve Davidson

DEPARTMENTS

EDITORIAL.....3
by Steve Davidson

CONTRIBUTORS.....50

EDITORIAL

Things To Come

by Steve Davidson

Things To Come. An absolutely fantastic film. Produced by Michael Korda, directed by William Cameron Menzies and written by H. G. Wells, based on his own works. I don't think that any science fiction author since has had such a wonderful opportunity and been gifted with such talent as working partners.

The film attempts to convey Wells' theme/conviction/certainty that the triumph of humankind is inevitable. Our better natures, our intellect, our unquenchable desire to look over the next hill will take us into and through adversity. Things may certainly get ugly along the way, but if we can just hang on a bit longer, the future will be bright, shiny and clean.

Right now, I'm trying to get Amazing Stories to that shiny, bright and clean future. The one were Raymond Massey offers up a choice of possibilities for mankind with the familiar words: "All the universe, or nothing. Which shall it be?"

Up to that point in the film, mankind's survival was a race between barbarism and extinction or civility, maturity and hope.

Which is kind of where I find myself right now.

I'm extremely grateful to all of those who have contributed materials for these two 'relaunch, prelaunch' issues. They've been little jewels of hope and progress along the path I'm taking with Amazing. They've provided an anchor in my on-going work of raising funds, licensing and extending the brand and in general trying to bring the old girl back to life. And they've more than achieved their purpose.

Unlike Raymond Massey though, I can't count on Wings Over the World or 'the gas of peace' to level the playing field and clear the path ahead. I'm still largely operating as a one man band and I can only get so much done in a day (inbetween everything else I'm juggling at the moment).

In order to get to the next phase, I have reluctantly made the decision that the Volume Zero issues will go into hiatus.

There's still work to do on them; I'm currently in the process of converting issue 1 into a PDF (and other e-book formats) for download. The same will take place for issue 2.

What I have to concentrate on now is preparing the video for September's Kickstarter campaign, finish up some documents for presentation, massage the cover for the relaunch issue into shape (Frank Wu's art is coming along nicely) and.



conduct a title design contest, begin work on the graphic story anthologies and fire up a couple of small but still important revenue-producing projects.

If I continue to try and solicit, edit, layout & etc., additional Volume 0 issues, I'll not have the time for any of the foregoing.

Which I think is more important than producing a few more issues.

I'm happy to be able to say that with the August issue I've published everything that has been submitted and I'm pretty pleased with the results. There's a lot of love for Amazing Stories out there and I hope that these two issues show it.

So to recap:

Downloadable PDF (& mobi?) copies of these two issues coming soon

Kickstarter campaign coming in September

Frank Wu's artwork for the first cover of the actual issue to be unveiled soon

The Amazing Stories Project blog to continue on a daily basis right here.

Please share, tell your friends and sign up with the site so that as things happen, I can keep you informed.



The happenings at this past Readercon are heating up the Geek-O-Sphere. My few words on the subject.

Readercon, long considered to be the industry's leading working convention (more authors, artists, editors and publishers per square foot than the Justice Department's anti-trust court room) has been an excellent event that I've managed to attend on several occasions. The panel subjects are wonderful, the parties grand, the gathering phenomenal (a tremendous diversity - more so than just about any other con I've ever been to) and the 'vibe' energizing.

Unfortunately, the convention has had its run-ins with "stalkers" and attendees who subject other attendees to unwanted attention in inappropriate ways.

Suffice to say that this year's Readercon board of directors walked right into it when they decided to NOT enforce their policies regarding such behavior (a lifetime ban) when it came to applying it to a high profile fan (whom some are referring to as a SMOF or Secret Master of Fandom; using that term in this case is unfortunate as there really is no such thing as a monolithic SMOFs group and it comes across as conferring more import to the individual in question than is deserved).

There are two discrete issues here. The first is the activity of rules writing. The second is how one handles inappropriate behavior. The former first.



No one should ever write a rule they (or someone else) may be expected to enforce unless they have run it through the ringer of 'worst case scenario' and found it to be acceptable. By this I mean, if you write a rule calling for a lifetime ban, you need to ask yourself: "Am I willing to enforce a lifetime ban against the publisher who just offered me a billion dollar advance for the first novel I ever wrote that isn't even finished?" Better yet: "Am I willing to enforce this rule against my significant other?"

If the answer is anything other than an absolute, unequivocal 'YES', then you need to re-think that rule. It is as simple as that. ALWAYS test your rules against the worst case possible. You'll quickly discover its flaws.

As to how one handles the kinds of situations that Readercon experienced this year, a few thoughts spring to mind; hire a security firm and stop relying on 'fans' to do the dirty work. (They can still supervise the dirty work, but it is a lot easier to say to a rent-a-cop "yes, they broke the rule, throw them out" than it is to say "you're banned for life" to a friend or colleague.)

Convention organizers (SMOFCON, I'm looking at you) need to get serious about creating some kind of robust, legal and workable information exchange. The more that is known about trouble-makers, the easier it is to prevent them from attending an event in the first place - which is of course the most desirable option.

Cons need to articulate good examples of what unacceptable behavior is at the beginning of each and every event. Advocates or Ombudsman or some kind of overseer class needs to be created, people with training in interpersonal relationships. Perhaps attending "how to act appropriately at a public venue" should become mandatory for every con-goer. Take it at one con, get your ribbon and you're good to go - carrying the burden of having been informed that your creepy behavior is not normal nor acceptable. It's a lot easier to kick someone out of a con when you know for sure that "they should have known better".

Right now we're on the cusp of figuring out how to attract and retain a much more diverse representation of the human race at our conventions. This is important and necessary for our future growth. Let's not screw it up because we're unprepared.

I'll close this by saying that I have asked that my name be added to the various petitions that are going around, asking Readercon to change their decision and asking them (and other cons) to come up with workable, sensible, effective policies and to enforce those policies equally across the board.

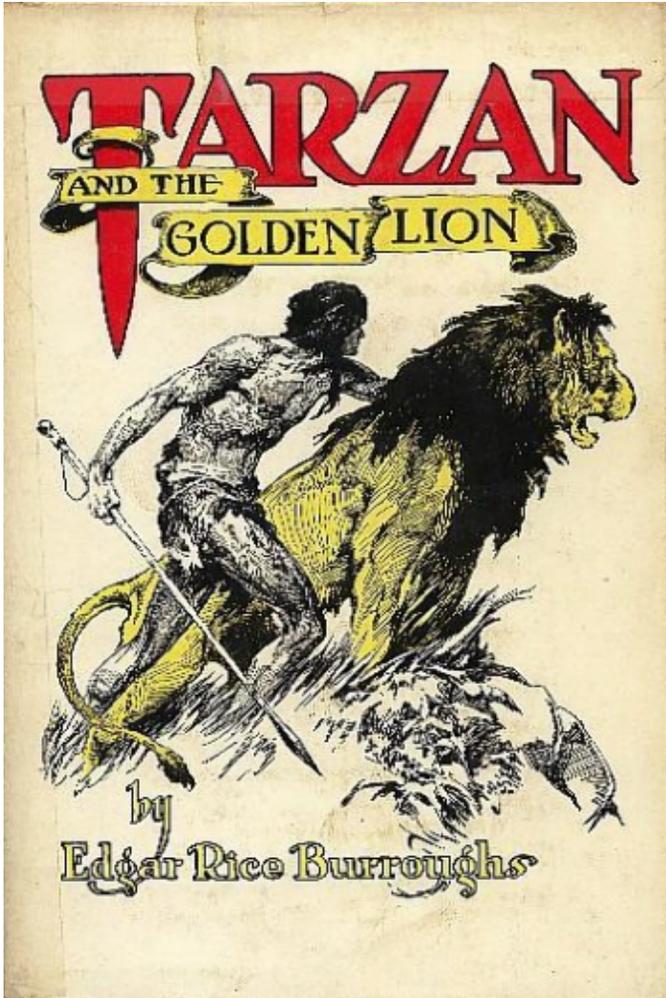
I'll also say that I won't be attending any convention that doesn't enforce its stated policies (regardless of what they are) equally across the board and cons that are obviously not making an effort to make ALL of their attendees feel comfortable and safe.

In 1926 Hugo Gernsback was reportedly "paying himself \$100,000 per year." That salary would be the equivalent of \$1.26 MILLION in today's economy.



THE EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS MOVIE I'D LIKE TO SEE

By John M Whalen



When I was a kid growing up in Philadelphia, my Uncle George, who liked to read and played stride piano by ear, came over to the house one day and gave my family a big cardboard box full of hardback books. One of the books was a novel by Edgar Rice Burroughs, *Tarzan and the Golden Lion*. I was already a Tarzan fan, having read the comic books and seen Tarzan at the movies and on the *Late Late Show* on TV. But I never knew anybody had written books about him. Being a naturally curious kid, and an avid reader, I dug into the novel and in ten minutes, I was hooked. And I was also shocked. Tarzan in the books was nothing like Tarzan in the movies!

This Tarzan was as savage as any of the ferocious animals he fought in the jungle, and lived well by plundering the gold vaults of the ancient lost city of Opar. He ate raw meat after a fresh kill! He had a son named Korak the Killer, for God's sakes.

He was the lord and master of the primeval world he lived in by virtue of his strength, ferocity and courage.

But he also spoke several languages, not Pidgin English, had an estate back in England, another estate in Africa.

I never got over the difference between the books and the movies and I've always yearned to see a film as good as one of the books. But it still hasn't happened. Add to that disappointment, the Disney Studios release of *John Carter*, another film based on a character created by Edgar Rice Burroughs. Burroughs' fans looked forward to it in eager anticipation, but it was a box office failure and got bad reviews from the mainstream press. The fans are about evenly divided---some loving it and others hating it. The bottom line seems to be that while the film comes close, like the Tarzan movies, it doesn't really didn't really capture the essence of Burroughs' writing.

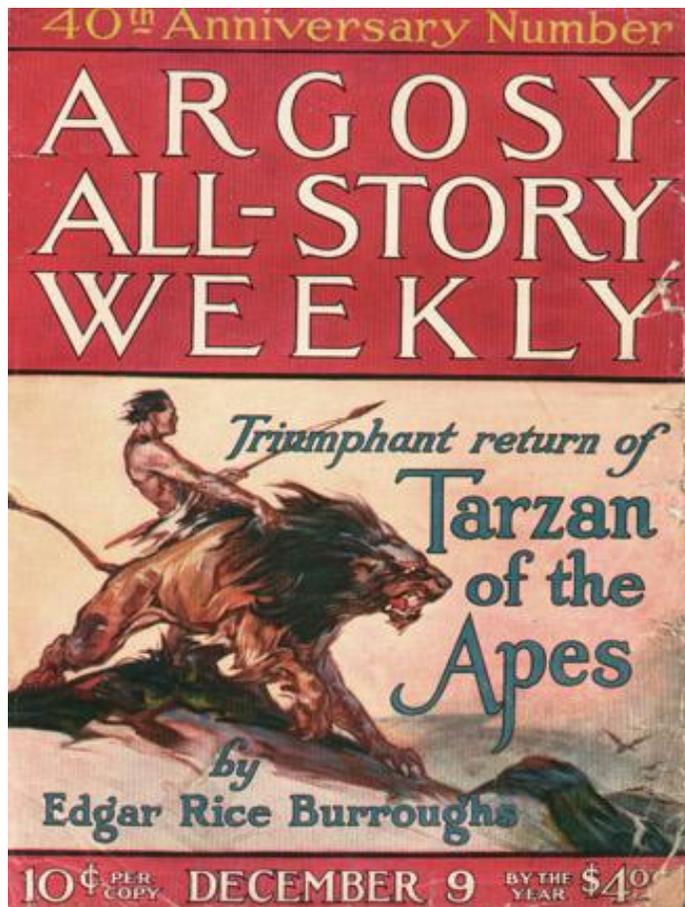


Hollywood has been trying for 96 years to get it right, as far as Edgar Rice Burroughs, is concerned---starting with the silent film version of *Tarzan of the Apes* (1916) starring Elmo Lincoln. Adaptations of some of Burroughs other novels haven't fared very well either. Film versions of *At the Earth's Core*, and *The Land that Time Forgot* tried to bring the stories to the screen as faithfully as they could, but were marred by low budgets and cheesy special effects. By far though, Hollywood's biggest investment in Burroughs' fiction has been the long list of films based on *Tarzan of the Apes*. And these movies are without a doubt Hollywood's biggest failure in terms of translating Burroughs from print to silver screen.

From Weissmuller to James B. Pierce.

Probably the best known Tarzan flicks are the films made by MGM and RKO starring Johnny Weissmuller. These movies are entertaining, especially the early ones made at MGM (*Tarzan Finds a Mate* in particular), and some of the later RKO's (*Tarzan Triumphs*), but they are light years away from the books. Other actors have portrayed Tarzan on film over the years, including Lex Barker, Jock Mahoney (who contracted Dengue Fever while filming on location in Thailand and lost 40 pounds), and Gordon Scott, (the first Tarzan in color, and a man who came to a very strange end, living his last days out in a wheelchair in the home of a fan who lived in Baltimore).

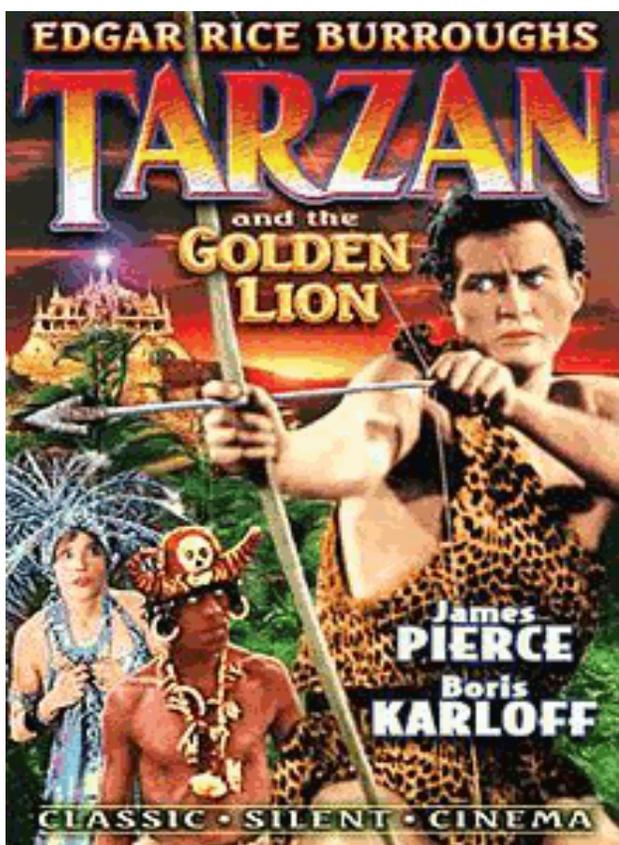
Ron Ely played Tarzan on TV in the sixties, and Bruce Bennett, aka Olympic shot putter Herman Brix, played the ape-man in *Tarzan's New Adventures*, a 12-chapter serial written by Burroughs, and filmed in Guatemala. Brix didn't catch any diseases, but Burroughs may have caught some kind of fever when he ran off during filming with the producer's wife, but that's another story. Jock Mahoney and Gordon Scott did some great stunt work in their films, though, and Scott's *Tarzan's Greatest Adventure*, which has Sean Connery (pre-James Bond) in the cast, is considered by some the best of the series. There were other attempts to get the ape-man up on the screen, including the stuffy *Greystoke*, a Bo Derek Tarzan vehicle, and the Casper Van Dien Tarzan film *Tarzan and the Lost City*.



Argosy, 1922, first serialization of 'Golden Lion'

In addition to Elmo Lincoln's Tarzan of the Apes, there were several other Tarzan films made during the Silent Era, including Tarzan and the Golden Lion, which is of particular interest to me, since it was the first Tarzan book I'd ever read. The film was written by Burroughs and it starred James B. Pierce, who was Burroughs son-in-law. Probably the two most interesting things about this film are the set design, and the fact that Boris Karloff appears in black face as a villain. One of the sets is a recreation of Tarzan's African estate. It is very accurate in reproducing the home as described in the books. It is big, lavish, including a grand piano, along with the Zebra skins on the floor. It's an interesting treatment of Tarzan, but more of a curiosity than anything else.

The Era of Movie Remakes



A 1927 Production (note Boris Karloff credit)

Here we are now, living in the midst of the Era of Movie Remakes and Reboots, and I propose that Hollywood finally do justice to ERB's character, and film a remake of this classic story. Given movie-making technology today, they could finally do it right. This, the ninth novel of the series, recounts Tarzan and Jane's return to their jungle estate, after it had been burnt to the ground by World War I German soldiers. On their way home, Tarzan finds a lion cub whose mother was killed by a Gomangani (Ape-speak for an African). Tarzan brings the cub along and when they get home they find that the faithful Waziri warriors have rebuilt the estate. Tarzan names the cub Jad-Bal-Ja, which in the ancient language of Pal-Ui-Don (another strange place in Tarzan's world) means Golden Lion.

The keyword in any Burroughs story line is "treachery." And there's plenty of that in this book. Most of it generated by a woman named Flora Hawkes, who once worked as a maid in Tarzan's London and African estates, and a group of adventurers, including Esteban Miranda, a Tarzan look-alike, who plot to steal the gold of Opar. The action commences two years after finding the cub. By now Jad's full-grown and follows the Lord of the Jungle around like a trained dog. Tarzan sets out for Opar himself, by sheer coincidence, to score some fresh gold, leaving the lion behind. The ape-man is captured by a wily high priest of Opar name Cadj, who wants to sacrifice Tarzan on the altar of the Flaming God. The ape-man is rescued by La, Opar's high priestess, (who's got a crush on the Lord of the Jungle---Jane has been called back to London to care for her sick father). Also



in the mix are humanoid gorillas who rule the Valley of Diamonds and control 3,000 Gomamjani slaves. I won't reveal anymore of the plot in case you haven't read it, but the story culminates with Tarzan inspiring the 3,000 Gomangani slaves to rebellion against their gorilla oppressors. And Jad-Bal-Ja, of course, shows up in time to join the mayhem. There are battles, traps from which the good guys seem unlikely to escape, and the final battle against the evil high priest and his followers back in Opar. Sure there are creaky plot devices involving amnesia and doppelgangers and at least one ethnic stereotype that would have to be eliminated, but this novel could be turned into a great film, if done right. In addition to the spectacle it deals with themes of the honest savagery of the jungle vs. the hypocrisy of civilization; treachery vs. loyalty; truth vs. deception; and the never extinguished desire for freedom that lies in the heart of every suppressed people.

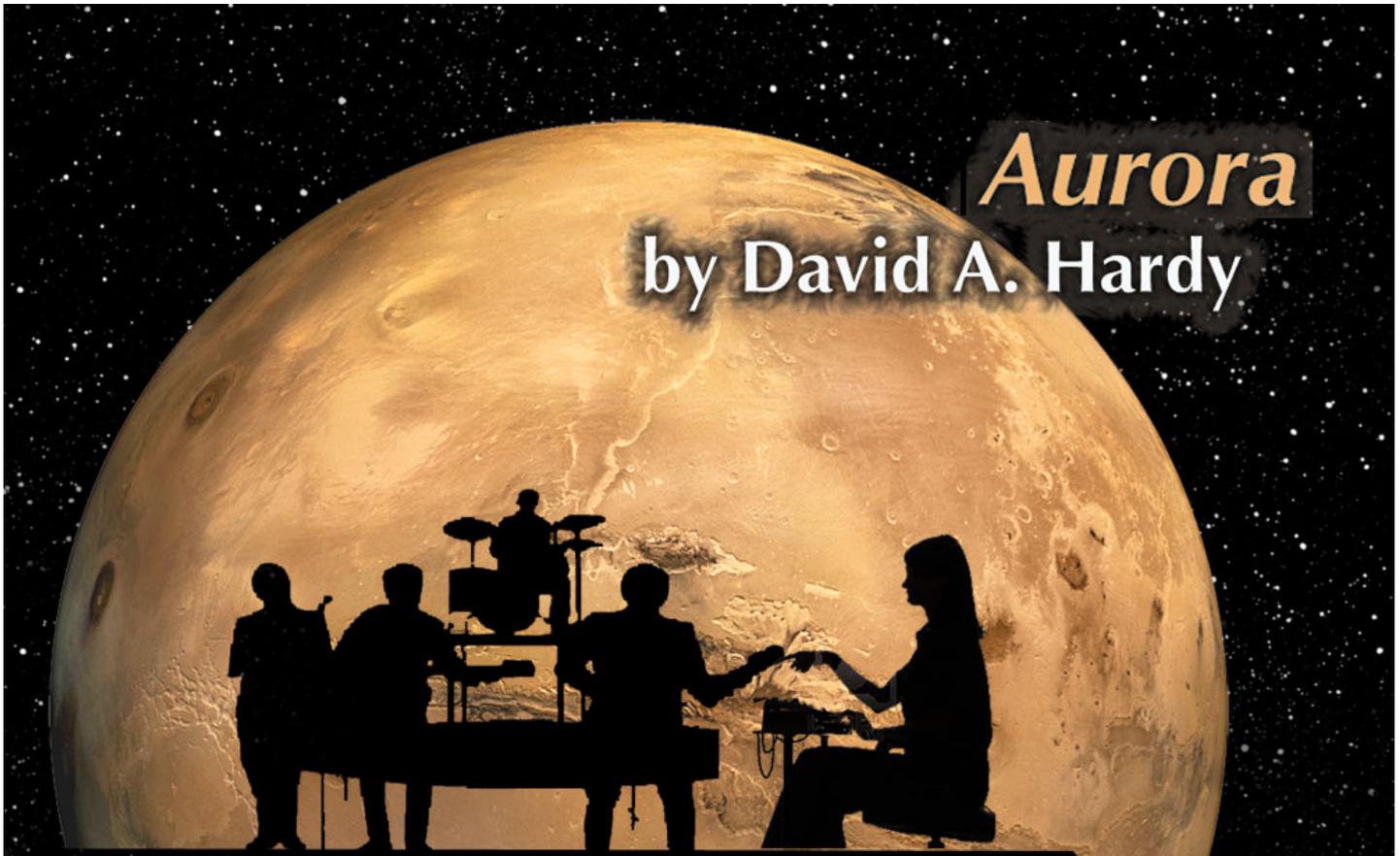
I still have the book that Uncle George gave me. The binding is shot and pages fall out, so you can't really read it anymore. It's wrapped up in plastic on my bookshelf. It was my first introduction to Burroughs, and it opened the door to a world I never dreamed of. Tarzan and the Golden Lion is the Edgar Rice Burroughs movie I'd love to see.

[Editor's Note: A large number of Tarzan properties are currently in the public domain and available for download: The New Adventures of Tarzan can be found at Archive.org, starting with the [first chapter](#); the original film [Tarzan of the Apes](#), [Tarzan the Tiger](#); another early serial (based on Tarzan and the Jewels of Opar). Many of the original novels are available on Project Gutenberg as well, including the story that began it all [Tarzan of the Apes](#).]



The 'new adventures', considered a cut above the average Tarzan flick.

John M. Whalen can be found at his new [blog](#), where he can be found dragging the old into the new. His first novel – Jack Brand – is available in both print and e-book on [Amazon](#).



Who was the mysterious stranger who helped injured Londoners during the Blitz-- and then vanished? Who was the beautiful blonde girl who blazed like a supernova on the 1970s psychedelic rock scene for a few weeks--and then vanished? How could an astronaut have reached Mars decades before the first manned expedition to the planet finds her body there? Have all humanity's dreams of a majestic ancient Martian civilization been more than just dreams? Is the future of the human race at stake? In the grand tradition of Arthur C. Clarke, a stunning hard sf novel--the first from internationally known astronomical artist David A. Hardy--that will stretch your imagination in ways you've never experienced before. A science-fictional tour de force, now revised and expanded in a stunning Second Edition! - Wildside Press

"Ladies and Gentlemen . . . Guys and Gals . . . Let's have a big hand for . . . the Gas Giants!"

The curtains rolled back and there was a scatter of clapping as sound began to fill the auditorium. Most of the audience had never heard of the band. It was only the support group, after all. The bar remained full to bursting. Latecomers straggled in and stumbled along the rows of seats, forcing grumbling sitters to stand.



The stage was bathed in ripples of violet, blue, green, yellow light which changed and pulsed with the music. Herbie had proved to have no mean talent with electronics now that Synth no longer monopolised the equipment, and his second guitar seemed no longer needed. He operated a kind of keyboard which produced changes of light instead of sound. The band had broken with the convention of patched jeans and T-shirts, and all wore close-fitting black, including Aurora; though her costume was more in the nature of a cat-suit, against which her bright hair shone.

The audience hardly noticed. At first this was because they were talking among themselves, as they normally did during support acts. But very shortly there was a chorus of "Ssshhhh!" and the late arrivals started getting angry glares. In no time the listeners were being carried away on wave after wave of soaring sound, lifting every one of them out of their humdrum, everyday existence, making them forget troubles, ills, quarrels petty or serious, and at the same time welding them into one great corporate entity which was part of the music.

There were no separate pieces of music or songs this time, nor need for applause. For the two thousand people in the theatre, each in his or her own way, gave back as much as they received. But the music changed and flowed, so that at times everyone present was silent and sad, at others joyous, bright-eyed. Management, usherettes and bouncers stood at the sides, relaxed; for, despite the electric, emotion-charged atmosphere, there was no hint of rowdiness. A BBC television crew, setting up cameras for the headline group, hastily started filming.

Not everyone agreed on what happened next. To some, it remained a really great concert, the best music they had ever heard, with an unusually good rapport between musicians and audience. And even those who saw the "visions" did not all agree on what they saw. But to most of the latter:

The music was a mighty silver waterfall, leaping and cascading down, down, amongst the crags of a tall volcanic mountain whose peak was lost in the clouds. It crashed, it rushed, it roared, and then it split into myriad streams which splashed, gurgled, tinkled between moss-covered rocks.

The stream which was the music entered a dark cave, where it flowed in echoing darkness for a while, then light reappeared, emanating from globular shapes – fungi? – on the walls of the cavern: blue, green, purple. As the light brightened, the rivulet widened and figures became visible, bathing naked in the now-warm water. Other tributaries swirled in, half-seen through wisps of steam, from gulleys among the rocks. Strange, fern-like plants sprang from the banks.

In a sudden glare of sound the torrent sluiced straight down a hillside in the full light of day; yet this daylight had an unearthly quality. The stream broadened, and meandered through open countryside. Trees lined its banks, trailing yellow-green leaves in its swirling surface. On the left, the land rose to a huge, flat-topped hill. Many white-robed people were making their way up its slopes. Among them ran nude and



bronzed pale-eyed children, youths and girls, laughing and dancing. The music seemed to swell as though joined by an orchestra and choir from outside itself, rolling down from the rim of the hill . . .

The people in the auditorium blinked, collectively, as the music seemed to falter. The scene blurred. There were low metal buildings, an interminable flat expanse of sand. Some of the audience felt they were being carried in strong arms. Then the view tilted upward, up over curved metal plates.

Confusion.

Noise.

Pressure.

Red darkness.

Black darkness.

For a long time, total lack of sensation.

Sudden shock, pain. A surge of movement, forward; then falling. Somewhere far off, as though seen through crystal, violent blasts of light: red, yellow, white, red again. Darkness. Falling, falling. Gentle hands lifting, lowering. A jolt, a hard surface below.

Noise!

Fear!

There was a startling crackle and a shower of sparks, and the music stopped abruptly. Aurora reeled back from her instrument, fell into the drums and was caught by Doug, as limp as though she were a rag doll. The curtains were hurriedly lowered. There was a cursory announcement that someone had been taken ill.

After a long and uneasy pause the main band came on and played their usual set. It was one of their best performances, but they played to an apathetic and unresponsive house.

Next day the critics in the musical and national press virtually ignored them. They wrote of the incredibly talented debut performance of this unknown support group, and of the unfortunate collapse of their beautiful young female keyboards player (whose age was given as 16). A few mentioned the almost psychical effect upon the audience; others, practical men and women at heart, wrote of the effective pre-recorded orchestral and choral tapes which had augmented the live performance, and of what must surely be a breakthrough in back-projection, suggesting a new holographic laser process producing lifelike and three-dimensional moving images of scenes and people.





For years, Pierre's life was ordered around comics etc. First he couldn't live without the Amazing Spider man and the FF, Tom Swift, Tarzan, then it was the most obscure Cthuluh Mythos story, and later missing paperbacks that later could be found with a simple Google search.

It all began innocently enough...

I Was a Teenaged Bibliophile

By Pierre V. Comtois

It's hard to believe now, but at one time Lowell was a veritable Mecca for lovers of the written word with books and magazines available almost everywhere you looked: in the variety stores that dotted every street corner, in tobacco and fruit stores downtown, in drug stores, and of course new and used book stores themselves. And if you happened not only to be somebody who loved to read, but loved the science fiction,



fantasy, and horror genres too, well, Lowell was the place to be in the mid to late 1960s when I grew up.

Before National Parks, before urban renewal, before even computers and the internet, Lowell in those days still had the appearance of an old mill town down on its luck. Oh, there were still a few manufacturing concerns going (remember them?) but they were running down and the area's first mall, a harbinger of the future that would sound the death knell of all the cool places that we'll be visiting later in this piece, would only open its doors after the turn of the decade. In the 1960s however, Lowell was still pretty much a provincial place with its neighborhoods divided along ethnic lines: the Greeks here, the Portuguese there, the Irish up here.

For the French, a lot of them were concentrated in lower Centralville over against Dracut. That's where I lived, a location that would prove providential as my interest in reading and books grew and my personal horizons expanded. Sure, it was Jack Kerouac's old stomping grounds (just as most of the rest of the city seemed to be) but it was also centrally located among an axis of establishments that would prove crucial to me when I was in grade school: Marie's Variety on Lakeview Avenue, the Dracut Public Library at Dracut Center, and Hovey Square Variety on Pleasant Street in Dracut.

As far back as I can remember, my life has been ordered around reading and writing. Exactly how it all began is a mystery that I've often tried to figure out. My best guess is that it all started at St. Louis Elementary School in Centralville. There, the nuns that taught us had access to something called "Scholastic Book Services" which sold affordable paperbacks to students. The way that the company would get you to buy what they had to sell was by offering discounted product to the school and encouraging kids to read by winning points toward free books. For instance, ambitious students who read 10 books would receive a free membership card that entitled the bearer to special discounts. Those who read 20 books could earn a free book, etc. Although the targets became increasingly difficult to reach after a certain point, it usually didn't matter because by then either a kid lost interest or was so hooked on reading that winning free books no longer was any incentive. As things turned out, I fell into the latter category and in so doing had my earliest exposure to books whose themes would later come to dominate my teenaged years including Jules Verne's *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*, Katherine Savage's *History of the Second World War*, and *11 Great Horror Stories* (which included my first fateful encounter with the writings of H.P. Lovecraft; more on him later).

Yes, looking back, the Scholastic Books' incentive program was surely a major contributing factor in my nascent bibliographic interests. But at a time when different media were beginning to intersect with each other, it couldn't have been my sole influence. For example, favorite television shows would yield frequent visits to Marie's Variety in search of bubble gum cards that tied in with shows like *Lost in Space* and *The Outer Limits*. Other card sets featured super hero characters like Batman and Capt. America that in turn tied in to my growing interest in Marvel Comics.



Also influential were Hollywood films of the golden age which dominated television at the time. Saturday afternoons at my friend's house became a battleground when we settled in to watch war movies that would later be reenacted in the backyard. But I soon discovered that watching and reenacting wasn't enough to satisfy my interest in the subject. My friend and I had already become familiar with the Dracut Public Library with regular trips there to take out volumes in the Tom Swift book series (more interested in the fantastic, we preferred the series to that of the more down to earth Hardy Boys) so it was a natural progression for me to make the trek there to seek out books on World War II. Eventually, I managed to read most every book the library had on the subject and still craving more, I moved on to World War I, then Korea, then the Vietnam War before branching out into biographies of generals and political figures (I really began to scrape the bottom of the Library's barrel when I read *Mein Kampf* by a guy named Adolf Hitler!)

But I'm getting ahead of myself.

Of even more interest than war movies to my friend and I were science fiction movies. From the dinosaurs of RKO's original King Kong to Universal Studios' trinity of Dracula, the Wolfman, and Frankenstein we loved it all. But what grabbed us the most were the out and out science fiction films beginning with those featuring giant monsters created by effects wizard Ray Harryhausen. Films like *It Came From Beneath the Sea*, *The Beast From 20,000 Fathoms*, and *20 Million Miles to Earth*. Beyond Harryhausen there were a raft of gleaming SF films that concentrated on ideas rather than monsters, movies like *Forbidden Planet* and *This Island Earth* (whose color tones we failed to appreciate due to the fact that nobody had color TVs at the time). Those films more than anything else, fired my imagination and drove me back to the library to find books that would transport me to those imaginary worlds even when TV wasn't available. Unfortunately, the Dracut Library's collection of SF proved thin. Beyond a few books by writers that (to this day!) I've never heard of, all they had were a few aging collections down in the stacks. That's where I undoubtedly read for the first time stories by such classic authors as Isaac Asimov, Ray Bradbury, and Robert Heinlein.

But as I said, the 1960s were a strange time where pop-culture was meeting with increasing acceptance and began insinuating itself into various media. Comic book characters for instance branched out to television and trading cards and even paperback prose adaptations and for most of that, Hovey Square Variety turned out to be a veritable nexus of pop-culture in our neighborhood and the cradle of my burgeoning interest in books.

Here, the journey that would eventually take me out of Centralville to explore the far reaches of downtown Lowell looking for favorite comics, magazines, and books began. It was 1964 and I'd only recently been introduced to Marvel Comics and its line of colorful superheroes but in no time at all, I was an addict. I became totally engrossed in the episodic nature of the various titles and the complex personalities of the heroes. It was my first introduction to character development and how such a thing could pull a reader into a



story no matter how farfetched it was. In short, I had to have every one of Marvel's half dozen major superhero titles (which often were interconnected) and to do it, began to scour the neighborhood for bottles I could return for deposit and



Marvel Comics

Although Marvel Comics had its origins in the 1940s, the company had become moribund by the early 1960s when editor Stan Lee and artist Jack Kirby came up with the Fantastic Four. Their new approach to comics that featured fast paced, action filled stories with characters who seemed to live in the real world with accompanying real world problems appealed to youthful readers and soon, a whole new group of super hero characters appeared most notable among them Spider-Man. So successful would the new approach to super heroes be, that by the end of the decade, the company would overtake its chief rival and the industry's top publisher of comics, DC Comics.

Not helping my finances was the fact that my interests were far ranging as well as expensive for a 10 year old kid. In addition to comics, Hovey's also had bubblegum cards, Aurora model kits of which me and my friend had to collect all of those featuring the Universal monsters, and any number of yoyos, kites, and candy. Then disaster struck in the form of the store closing up due to construction of a supermarket across the street. Suddenly, I was at a loss as to where I could buy new comics. I panicked and asked everyone I knew if there were other stores that sold them. I heard rumors of some and began a weeks long effort riding my stingray bike all over Centralville checking every variety store around. Finally, I found one located in a renovated

garage on Ludlum Street where the proprietor clipped the new comics on a line stretched across the ceiling with clothes pins. You pointed at the one you wanted and he'd pull it out of a stack from behind the counter.

Meanwhile, my desperation for cash having outgrown what I could earn depositing bottles, I got a paper route delivering the Lowell Sun newspaper to homes in Centralville. As part of my routine, I walked down to the paper's offices on Merrimack Street downtown at the crack of dawn Saturday mornings to pay for my papers and collect my meager earnings. Although my friends and I had been in the habit of going downtown to attend Saturday matinees at the Strand Theater on Central Street, riding our bikes down had prevented me from paying too much attention to my surroundings. That must have been the reason why I missed Dana's Fruitland.

How to describe Dana's Fruitland and its mind blasting effect on a kid whose brain was primed by movies, comic books, and Tom Swift for take off into the unbounded realms of imagination?

On the face of it, Dana's didn't look like much, certainly not a launching pad for a budding fantasy fan and future writer. It was located in downtown Lowell on the corner of Bridge and French Streets with its entrance set katty corner facing a big warehouse across the street and in sight of the Lowell Sun building. Outside, large display windows overtopped with withdrawn awnings were steamy with condensation but not enough that the bins of fruit and vegetables couldn't be glimpsed if you pressed your face close to the glass. If you stepped inside the store on a bright day, it was dark and gloomy at first until your eyes adjusted to the dim lighting so that the first thing your senses picked up was the smell of tobacco and the sound of bubbling over where the grape drink dispenser rested on the counter. As your sight returned, the first things you'd notice was the dusty wooden floorboards and tilted wooden crates along the walls filled with fresh produce. The center of the store was crammed with refrigerated cases, freezers, and shelving holding bread and other sundries. But to me, at 12 years old, what immediately drew my attention was the double section of shelving at the back of the store that held a display of comic books! But what in the world had possessed me to even check out such an unlikely venue in the first place? I can only guess that in those days, I was always on the lookout for places that sold comics, no matter how remote the possibility. Anyway, Dana's proved to be a gold mine that carried every single Marvel title (most stores only sold some of them so that I had to ride my bike all over lower and upper Centralville checking a half dozen variety stores to make sure I got all the titles that came out in any given week). Thus, every Saturday morning after paying my bill at the Sun, my first stop was at Dana's. Eventually, the proprietor came to know me and when the new comics hadn't been put up yet, would hand me the wire clippers and let me open the bundle and count them out for him, picking out the ones I wanted as I went.

But comics weren't the only thing that was cool about Dana's.

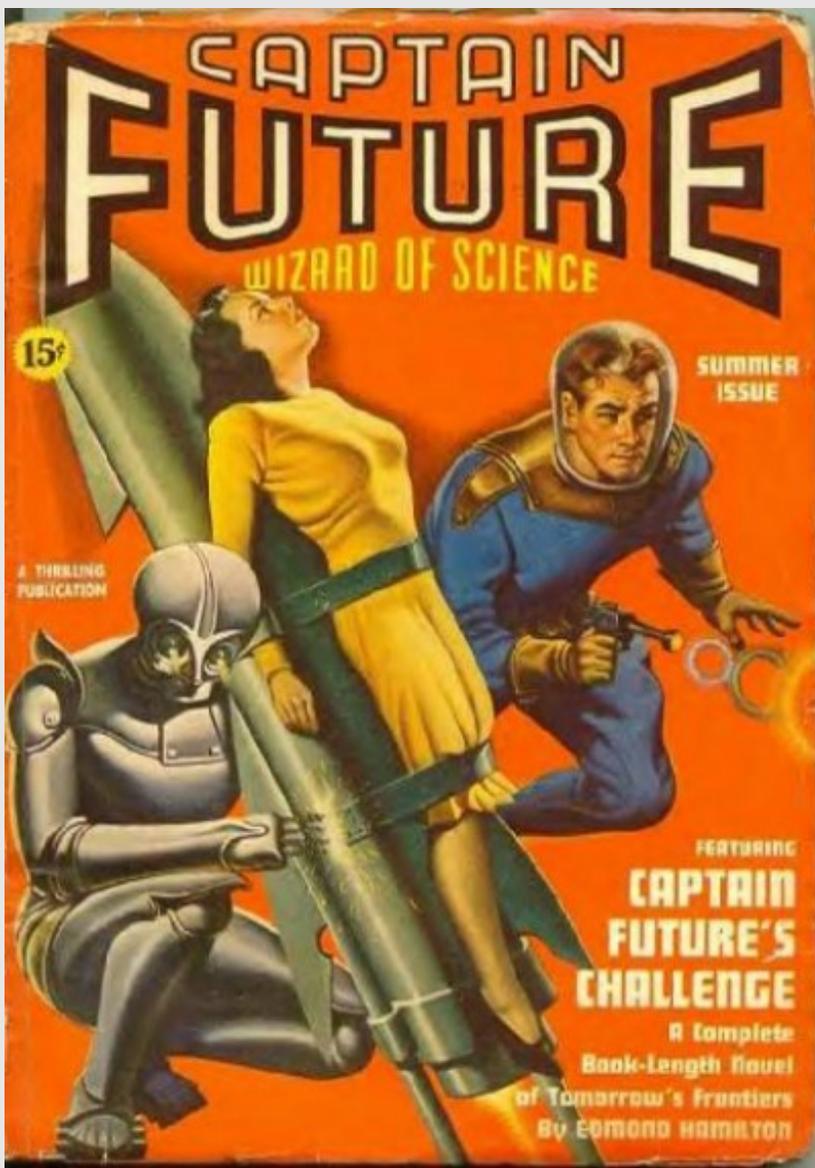
There was another, even bigger wall of magazines on the other side of the frozen food cases. At the time, my



interests hadn't extended to magazines yet so I only gave the section a cursory examination now and then noting mostly a ghoulish set of cheaply produced black and white comics magazines that specialized in over the top gore and dismemberment...not my cup of tea...and besides, even then I could tell the difference between good and bad art and those mags must have paid incredibly low rates to have such poor art. Nevertheless, in checking out that magazine section, I stumbled upon a spinner rack filled with paperbacks

Edmond Hamilton and the Hero Pulps

Pulp magazines were the chief form of popular entertainment before the age of electronics having their origins in the late nineteenth century. Made of the cheapest grade of pulp wood paper that tended to disintegrate after a few years, pulp magazines provided an endless stream of penny a word fiction for an increasingly literate population. At one time there were hundreds of titles on the newsstands covering every genre with those starring particular characters the most popular. With the arrival of radio in the 1920s, those characters migrated to their own shows broadcast regularly to eager listeners. Sales of pulp magazines soared especially for characters like The Shadow and Doc Savage. They had their many imitators including a science fiction character named



Captain Future penned by Edmond Hamilton who led the field of SF authors specializing in galaxy wide adventures of alien invasion and planetary destruction.

and though I'm sure much of the product featured such series as the Destroyer, Doc Savage, and the Avenger,



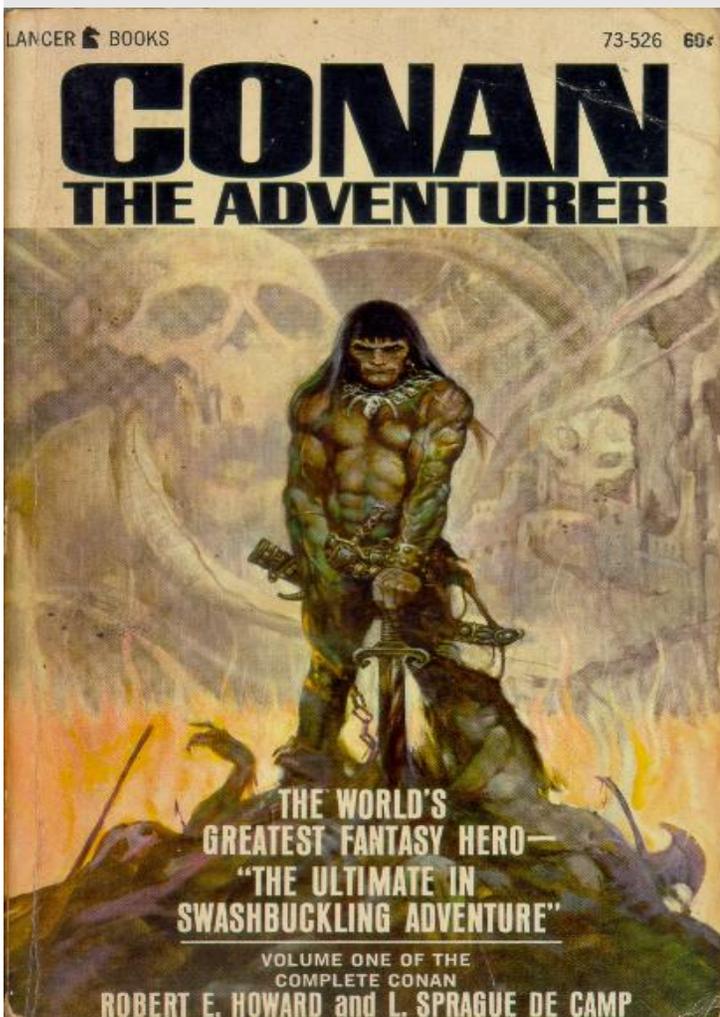
my attention was drawn to another series character who would become a mania with me for the next several years: Captain Future! As a budding science fiction fan, this series came at just the right time written as it was by that old world destroyer himself, Edmond Hamilton who managed to cram all kinds of aliens, ray guns, and planet threatening super menaces in stories like *Captain Future and the Space Emperor* and *Captain Future's Challenge*! So suddenly, comics ceased to be my sole abiding interest as I became an avid book collector for the first time. Every couple of weeks it seemed, a new Captain Future novel would appear on that spinner until I went away to boarding school in the eighth grade. There I met a kid who told me his father worked in the plant that published the Captain Future novels. Of course I didn't believe him until one day he showed up with a bag full of novels I never saw before! In spite my Catholic upbringing, I think it was only then that I really came to believe in the essential goodness in human nature!

Remember those cross currents between pop-culture and the media I mentioned earlier? Well my visits to Dana's Fruitland came at about the time a new trend at Marvel Comics began, one that would launch me in a completely new direction in my book collecting enthusiasms.

It was 1970, the year when my literary interests were about to come into full flower with trails to be followed in any number of directions. The first came with a new comic series from Marvel called *Conan the Barbarian*. A radical break from the superhero fare that the company had been offering all through the sixties, Conan was a barbaric anti-hero who spent his time fighting, drinking, and whoring across a fantasy landscape first dreamed up by writer Robert E. Howard. Of course, the whoring part was never made explicit just as it was merely implied in the original stories when they first appeared in pulp magazines of the 1930s. Nevertheless, with solid scripting by Roy Thomas and dazzling art by Barry Smith, my imagination was immediately captured by the strip and as soon as I found out that it had been based on a series of short stories, I had to read them! Thus it came to pass that I made my first solo visit to Prince's Bookstore on Merrimack Street in downtown Lowell. I say solo as I may have gone there with my mother when I accompanied her on her weekly shopping trips downtown (remember what I said earlier about there being no malls in the sixties?) But the Saturday morning when I walked into Prince's and picked up *Conan the Buccaneer* with the eye catching savagery of its Frank Frazetta cover, was one I've never forgotten. So overjoyed was I about finding a Conan book that I never noticed that *Buccaneer* had not been written by Howard but by a couple characters called L. Sprague DeCamp and Lin Carter! Although I liked the book, it was only after getting the rest of the series by mail order and reading the Howard originals that I finally saw how pale DeCamp and Carter's pastiche was compared to the blood curdling originals! Needless to say, I devoured that series!



Robert E Howard and Conan



Robert Ervin Howard (1906–1936) began writing when he was a teenager and by the time of his death was among the highest earners in the small west Texas town of Cross Plains where he lived. Although he is best known today as the creator of Conan the Barbarian, he invented many other characters including Solomon Kane, King Kull, and Breckinridge Elkins. Mastering the requirements of pulp era editors, Howard wrote stories in every genre from horror and fantasy to sports and western. But it was his natural storytelling ability that has enabled his reputation to survive over the years with Conan his most famous character. The Conan stories, about a free spirited barbarian roaming a fantasy land populated with monsters, wizards, and beautiful slave girls,

were first collected in hardcover in the 1950s before being issued in a more accessible paperback version in the 1960s. From there, the character was optioned by Marvel Comics for a long running comics series and later developed by Hollywood for a pair of lackluster films.

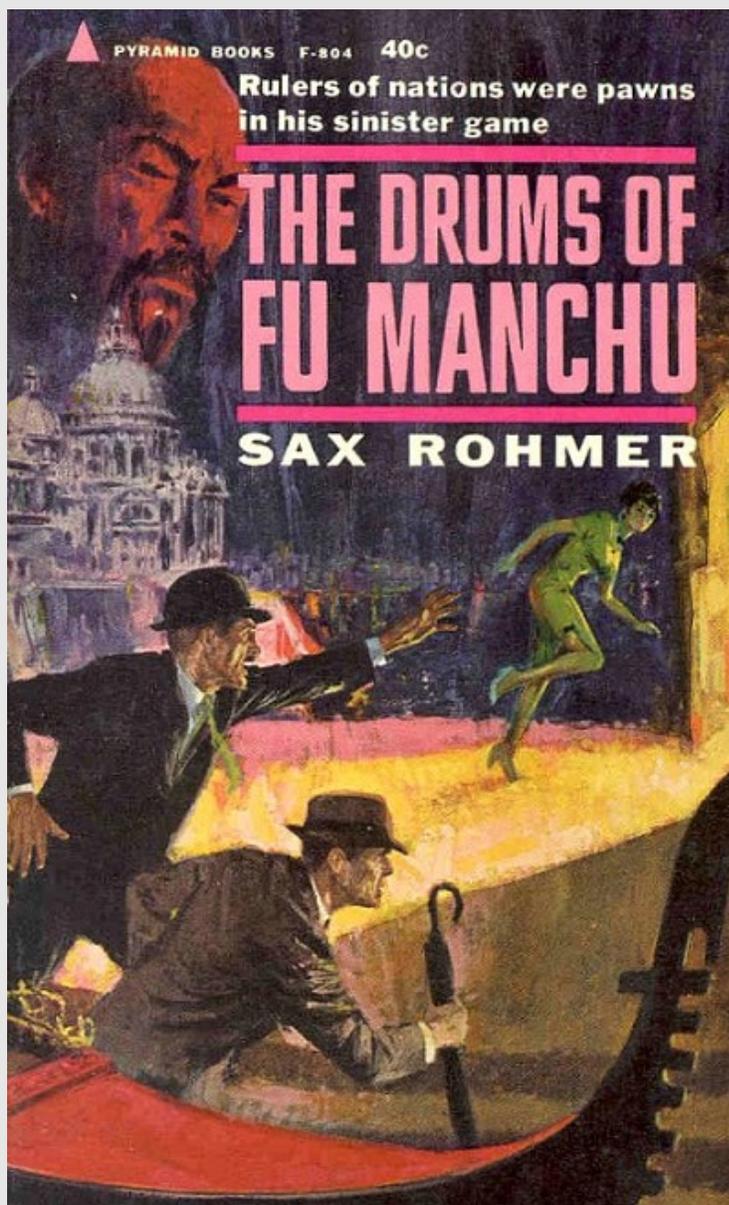
Similarly, I discovered writer Sax Rohmer through a Marvel Comic called *Shang Chi, Master of Kung-Fu* (an attempt to cash on the martial arts craze launched by the *Kung Fu* television show) some of whose elements were based on the author's most famous creation, Fu Manchu. Unfortunately in that case, Rohmer's books were out of print so Prince's wasn't going to be any help. That made a Saturday morning visit to Harvey's Bookland on Central Street downtown a foregone conclusion. Now, Harvey's was not a new discovery for me by the early 1970s; in fact, I'd been there a number of times to sell comics that my father didn't want me reading during the school year. But when I went, my attention had been primarily drawn to the store's large stock of used comics. Now, I was going to look for books and that's when I finally noticed what a treasure trove of literature Harvey's was!



Books lined every square inch of the store which stretched deep into the Saab Building with shelves seemingly disappearing into distance somewhere overhead where presumably the ceiling was. Bookcases overflowing with hardcovers and dog eared paperbacks with the spines broken filled the narrow space between the walls and everywhere stacks of books and magazines sat around on the dusty wooden floor. One section consisted of bins holding used LPs (remember them?) and way in the back, divided off from the rest of the store, was Harvey's huge collection of porn magazines. Along the right hand side of the store near the entrance stood an old fashioned refrigerated case decorated in the Coca Cola logo and beyond that stretched the long service counter behind which Harvey Bison and his wife sat spending their time putting price

The Yellow Peril

Sax Rohmer's (real name: Arthur Henry Sarsfield Ward, 1883–1959) creation Fu Manchu is only the most famous of a slew of Oriental fiends that populated American pulps as well as British tabloids during the first part of the twentieth century. Born out of the opening of China in the nineteenth century and the Boxer Rebellion that climaxed in 1901 with the siege of Peking, the densely populated nation had an inordinate influence on the doubts and imagination of Americans who feared what could happen should those yellow skinned hordes be loosed on the West. Rohmer's first story dealing with the struggle between British secret agent Denis Nayland Smith and the insidious Dr. Fu Manchu, the personification of the Yellow Peril, was published in 1912. It proved so popular that it spawned a half dozen sequels and a number of imitators who continue to make their appearances on television and film to this day.

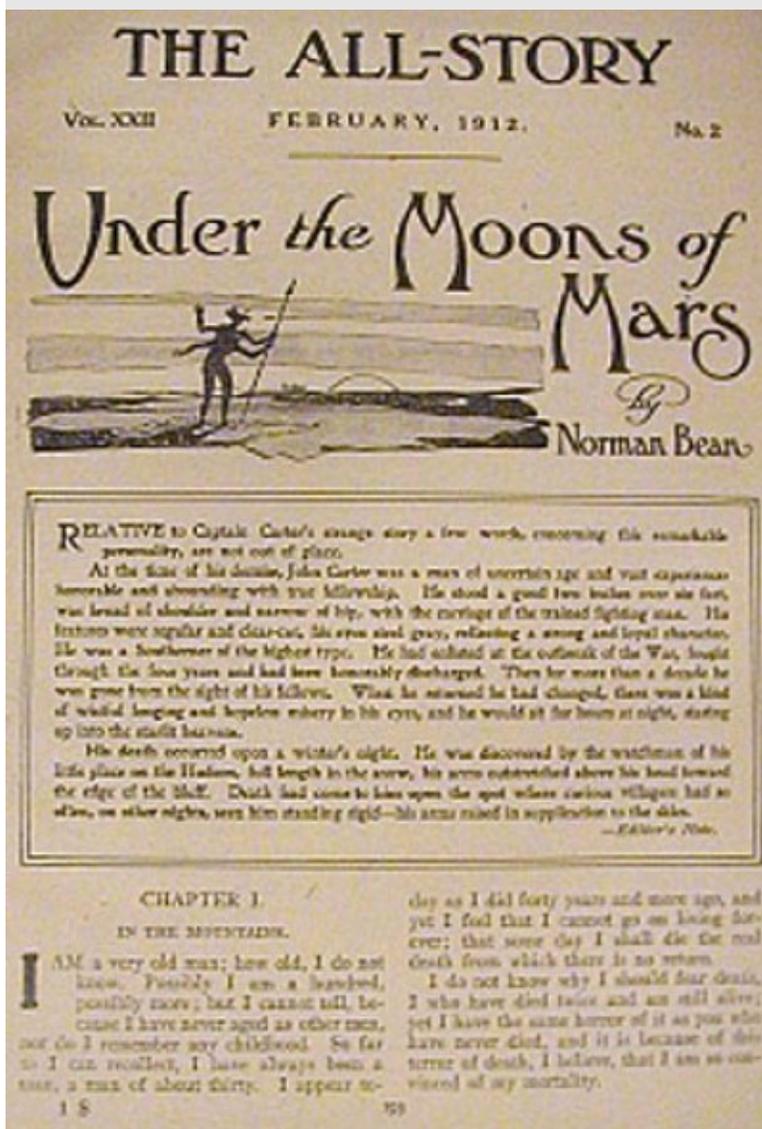


stickers on new arrivals and talking local politics with customers when they weren't eating lunch from paper bags brought from home. For years, I could go into Harvey's, ask about some latest literary interest I had and bingo! Harvey would find it for me somewhere on his crowded shelves (or at his home which must have been even more wondrous than his store!) and the time I went looking for Fu Manchu novels was no different: he had them in spades! The whole paperback series in fact from *The Insidious Fu Manchu* to a brand new edition of the never published *Wrath of Fu Manchu* by DAW Books! I was in raptures for days after that find!

Another book series that Harvey's was indispensable in helping me out on was one that I discovered outside comics. It all began in the dim mists of time when I was visiting a cousin's house and found a box of books in a storeroom. Already somewhat of a bibliophile, I began going through them to see if there was anything of interest. I found one called *Tarzan of the Apes*. Of course, I'd heard of Tarzan, who hadn't? But it never occurred to me that there were books written about his adventures. I thumbed through the one I'd found not sure if I was interested until I came to the end which featured an "ape-English dictionary." That did it! I had to read this strange book that needed translation for an ape language! I took it home...and I'm sure this is beginning to sound redundant but...I devoured it! I thought that was it for Tarzan's literary adventures until one day on a visit to the Dracut Library seeking out more Tom Swift books, I discovered four more Tarzan novels on the shelf. What a shock and delight that was! I wasted no time taking them out one at a time and loved them all as much as I did the first, maybe moreso as Tarzan's adventures rapidly grew more weird and exotic filled as they were with lost cities, dinosaurs, cave men, and beautiful princesses in need of rescue. But again, I thought that was it for Tarzan's literary adventures. Then came a book discovery that literally turned my head around: *Edgar Rice Burroughs, Master of Adventure* by Richard Lupoff. I found it during one of my Saturday morning excursions to Prince's and as soon as I realized it was a biography of the author of Tarzan I scooped it up. I was not disappointed! Not only was the non-fiction book almost as excitingly written as any of Burroughs' novels, but it revealed to me that far from writing a half dozen Tarzan novels, the author had written scores of books with the 24 Tarzan books only the tip of the iceberg! In addition to the ape man, Burroughs had written a number of adventure series including Pellucidar (adventures inside the Earth), Venus (on the second planet of the solar system natch), and Mars (the fourth planet in the solar system of course!). A convenient order form in the back pages of *Master of Adventure* allowed me to get all of Burroughs' major series by mail order and when the big package finally arrived, I...you guessed it...devoured them all at once over a few months. I don't think I've ever felt a literary rush like that again! Talk about heady!



Edgar Rice Burroughs



Edgar Rice Burroughs (1875–1950) burst upon the popular imagination at the top of the heap with his first novel, *Under the Moons of Mars*, appearing in one of the top selling fiction magazines of the early 20th century. Although the story was successful (spawning 11 sequels), it wasn't until the author's second book, *Tarzan of the Apes* or a *Romance of the Jungle* appeared in *All Story Magazine* that Burroughs' reputation and fortune were made. Its success made Burroughs one of the most popular writers in history producing an endless stream of *Tarzan* novels as well as developing other science/fantasy series such as those based inside the Earth (*Pellucidar*), or on Venus and Mars. A natural storyteller, Burroughs effortlessly transported his readers anywhere his

imagination cared to send them. Over the 60 years since his death, his works in one form or another have never been out of print with *Tarzan of the Apes* even achieving the status of an American classic.

But at about the same time as I found *Master of Adventure*, there were other key books that served as surveys covering different aspects of fantasy literature that I latched onto in those years, many picked up at Prince's (who the heck was ordering books for that store anyway? Whoever it was definitely had a finger on the pulse of my interests!) One was called *Science Fiction: What It's All About* by Sam J. Lundwall that covered the history of the genre as well as its filmed incarnations. As I mentioned earlier, I'd already managed to read some of the classics including Asimov's *Foundation* series (which I also found at Prince's) but those early reads only served to open the window a crack on the wider world of SF. I was only waiting for a book like



Lundwall's to open it all the way and it did just that! I underlined every story and author listed by Lundwall and spent years hunting them all down. Another book picked up at Prince's that opened up a whole new avenue of interest for me was *An Informal History of Pulp Magazines* by Ron Goulart. Now, I'd been reading all kinds of pulp fiction for years without ever really knowing where it all came from. This book opened my

The Pulps

Pulp magazines earned their nickname from the cheap pulp paper upon which they were printed. Their origins began in the latter half of the nineteenth century when they were known as "penny dreadfuls" providing affordable if blustery entertainment for an American population that was becoming increasingly literate. By the early part of the twentieth century, the dreadfuls moved from larger than life tales of actual living figures such as Kit Carson and Davy Crockett to fictional heroes like detective Nick Carter which by the 1930s eventually included such classic characters as The Shadow and Doc Savage. By that time, the pulps had reached their golden age with hundreds of different titles crowding newsstands covering every conceivable



taste. But with the rise of the paperback book together with television, the demise of the pulps was inevitable and except for a few holdouts that had been transformed into digest sized magazines such as Ellery Queen's *Mystery Magazine* and *Analog*, the glory days of the pulps had vanished by the end of the 1950s.



eyes to a vast, heretofore unknown universe of imaginary worlds from those of hero pulps like Street & Smith's *Shadow* and *Doc Savage* magazines to those covering romance, western, detective, flight, war, horror, fantasy, adventure...you name it and there were a couple dozen pulp magazines that covered it. It was almost too much to take...the vistas of possession seemed to stretch out ahead of me into infinity. Because at this point, I was a collector as well as a reader...I needed to own everything I read! Getting a book at the library and having to return it was anticlimactic. When I finished reading something, I needed to see it physically on my own shelves where I could reach up and take it down whenever I had a hankering to.

With my desires for the printed word as fired up as they were by the time I entered high school, my search for books, comic books, and magazines reached the point of barely repressed eagerness. Weekdays dragged by attending classes at St. Joseph's High School on Merrimack Street and working part time on my father's Mr. Softee ice cream truck (earning the dollars I needed to support my habit) until Saturday mornings when I'd walk downtown to make the rounds of places where books could be found. The routine began around 1970 where I'd drop in at Dana's first before heading over to Kresge's Pharmacy on the corner of Merrimack and Central Streets. Kresge's was my first stop for books for two reasons: it opened early at 9 a.m. and had a huge selection of paperbacks displayed on several long rows of wire racks stretching almost the length of the store. I never usually found anything much good there as they mostly stocked bestseller and romance type novels but now and then they surprised me with something like *Wolfshead*, a collection of stories by Robert E. Howard with the by now expected Frazetta cover. Wow! What a great find that was at a time when all I could find by the author were his Conan tales. It would soon prove to be only the tip of the iceberg because little did I suspect that the paperback industry would be entering a golden age (golden age for fantasy literature enthusiasts like myself that is) in which practically everything by the greatest writers of the pulp era would be collected in scores of soon to be released anthologies). As a sophomore at St. Joe's, books like *Wolfshead* with their monsters and skimpily clad Frazetta women sitting atop my desk would give me a reputation for strangeness and earn me the coveted "class bookworm" award come graduation time!

Anyway, after killing time at Kresge's, I next moved down the street to Prince's and then to Harvey's. I finished up the morning by treating myself to a club sandwich at the lunch counter in the Woolworth's store back on Merrimack Street.

It was about that time, when I first started my weekly rounds downtown that I discovered fantasy lit; and I'm not talking about fairy tales or even sword and sorcery of the Conan variety, but what was called at the time "high fantasy." For years, I'd been drawn to a volume of J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* that sat on a shelf at my friend's house for as long as we could remember. Finally I asked if I could have it (it belonged to his mostly absent older brother) and brought it home. It turned out to be the second volume of the trilogy, *The Two Towers*, but it hooked me from the first page to the last! Its epic sweep, larger than life characters, and high flown language that evoked a lost time that was yet pregnant with vast, historic meaning just swept me



completely away. I had to have the other two volumes! The next Saturday, I was at Prince's and scooped them up. In no time, they were devoured and I was back at the store searching out anything else by the author (which didn't turn out to be anywhere as good as LOTR: *Farmer Giles of Ham* for instance). Luckily for me, however, I'd discovered Tolkien at just the right moment. As it turned out, Tolkien had already made his big splash earlier in the decade and as a result, one publisher by the name of Ballantine decided to cash in on the sudden interest in "adult fantasy" and had just launched a new line of...you guessed it...adult fantasy literature bringing back into print many classics of English fantasy by such authors as William Morris, E.R. Eddison, Arthur Machen, Mervyn Peake, and Lord Dunsany. I bought them all. Many were tough going reading wise as they were often written in highly personal, verbose, and even archaic styles. But with covers by Gervasio Gallardo and Bob Logripo, they easily captured my imagination and slaked my thirst for anything of a fantasy nature.

The Adult Fantasy Series

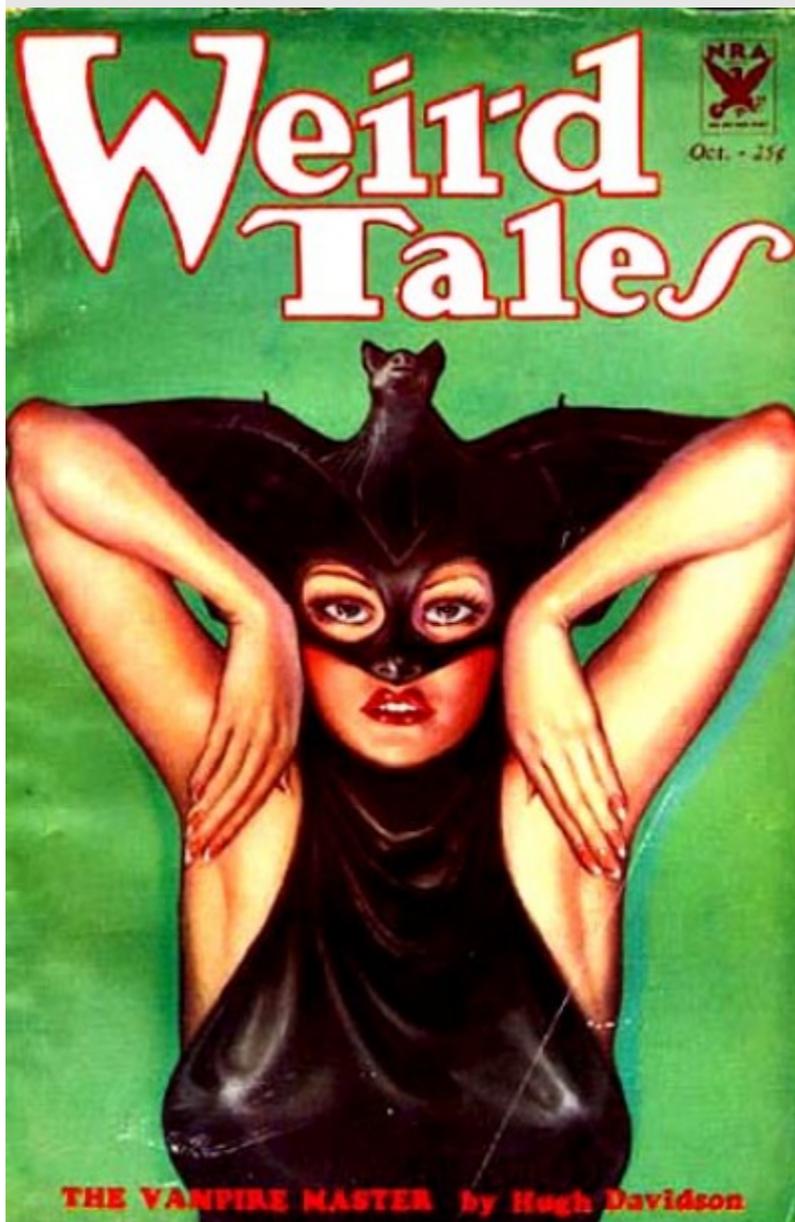
The Adult Fantasy Series published by Ballantine Books in the 1970s came about due to the unexpected popularity of J.R.R. Tolkien's Lord of the Rings trilogy that had arrived on American shores in the mid-to-late 1950s. As sales for Tolkien's book held steady, Ballantine decided to issue paperback editions of other classic works of English fantasy including *The Worm Ouroboros* by E.R. Eddison. Sales were encouraging so Ballantine hired fantasy writer Lin Carter to edit a new line of fantasy books that would reprint classics as well as original entries. Called the Adult Fantasy Series, the AFS was given its own unicorn headed imprint and over the span of about 10 years bestowed on the public dozens of the greatest fantasy novels ever written from William Morris' *The Well at the World's End* to Mervyn Peake's *Gormenghast*. Adding to the series' distinctiveness were a number of modern artists such as Gervasio Gallardo and Bob Logripo who executed some of the most distinctive fantasy imagery of all time for the covers.

At the same time, I'd also begun getting into horror writer H.P. Lovecraft some of whose work crossed over into the Adult Fantasy Series. As I mentioned earlier, I first came across Lovecraft in grade school when I read "The Dunwich Horror" in *11 Great Horror Stories* but the author left little impression on me at the time. It wasn't until I picked up the AFS edition of *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* that he really caught my attention. Next came *The Survivor and Others*, part of a triptych of Lovecraft volumes also published by Ballantine that my interest in all things Lovecraft really took off. Very quickly after that, I ordered all of Lovecraft's work that the publisher had anthologized in an earlier series and became hopelessly hooked on horror fiction. Not long after discovering Lovecraft, I found another survey type book by AFS editor Lin Carter



called *A Look Behind: The Cthulhu Mythos* and once again had the scales fall of my eyes as I discovered that Lovecraft had a whole group of “disciples” who also wrote stories in his universe of horrible monsters out to take over the Earth. That in turn led me to *Weird Tales*, a pulp magazine published in the 1920s and 30s that was an incubator of some of the greatest horror and fantasy writers in America. That discovery led me on a decades long quest to find everything ever written by the writers who appeared under the *Weird Tales* banner and I haunted Prince’s for every horror anthology that appeared on its shelves hoping that they would include classic stories that I’d only heard of in books like the *Look Behind* volume.

H.P. Lovecraft and *Weird Tales*

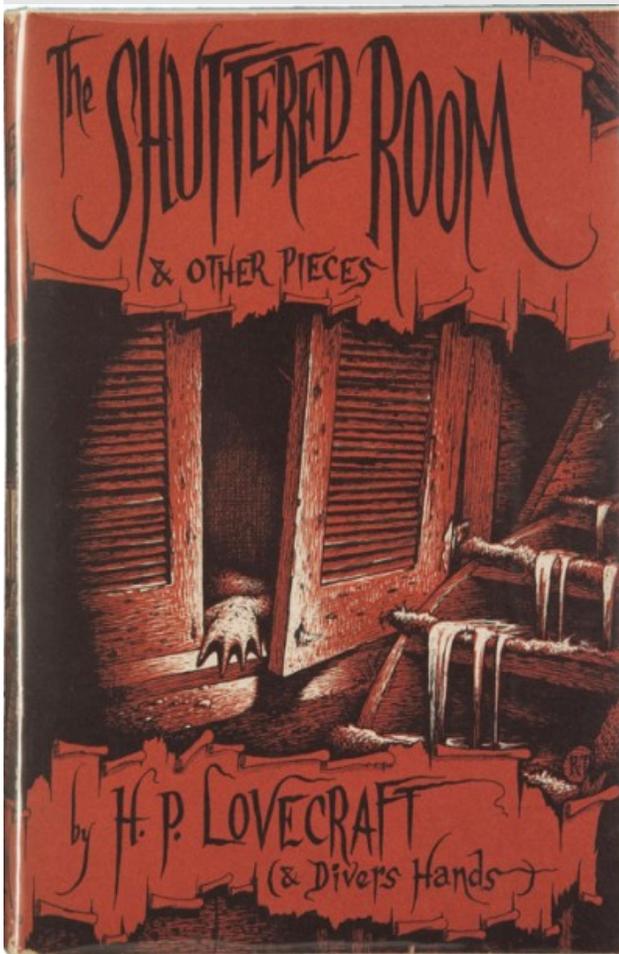


Weird Tales magazine was one of the most long lived of pulp magazines and the most famous among fans of horror fiction. It became the incubator for most of America’s best horror and fantasy writers of the twentieth century including Clark Ashton Smith, Robert E. Howard, August Derleth, Robert Bloch, Henry S. Whitehead, and Ray Bradbury. But perhaps the most famous of *Weird Tales* alumni was Providence born writer H.P. Lovecraft (1890–1937) who became a favorite of readers with his invention of the “Cthulhu Mythos,” a series of interconnected stories dealing with the efforts of powerful alien creatures who were banished from Earth millions of years in the past but who are constantly attempting to return and regain their position of mastery over mankind.



By the time I was getting into the *Weird Tales* crew, my avid literary interests were coinciding with that paperback renaissance that I mentioned earlier. Books collecting the output of many of the classic pulp authors that I loved were coming out hand over fist even to collections of their juvenalia and stuff that had never seen print at all! Books like *Pigeons From Hell* and *The Book of Robert E. Howard*, *Xiccarph* and *Poseidonis* by Clark Ashton Smith, *The Boats of the Glen Carrig* and *The Ghost Pirates* by William Hope Hodgson, *The King in Yellow* by Robert W. Chambers, and *Tales of Horror and the Supernatural* (in two volumes!) by Arthur Machen. References in Marvel Comics letters pages led me to Arkham House, a specialty publisher of expensive (at the time) hardcovers reprinting stories from *Weird Tales* authors and small press magazines devoted to the likes of Lovecraft, Smith, and Howard. For someone with the money, it was a cornucopia of fantasy literature. Unfortunately, I didn't have enough money to buy everything I wanted. I began mowing lawns to save extra cash to order the occasional Arkham House book but mainly, I confined by book buying to downtown Lowell.

Mail order



Even with the availability of bookstores and magazine stands, it was still impossible in the 1960s for a fantasy fan to find everything being published or that had been published by a favorite author. Thus other avenues of collecting had to be explored with the most reliable being that of mail order. The simplest form of mail order was to send away for a publisher's catalogue and using a handy order form, send a check or money order for the needed books. When that avenue was exhausted or the books needed became too esoteric for a mainstream publisher to carry, the small press was the next avenue that a collector could resort to. For the horror/fantasy fan in the 1960s, that meant Arkham House, a publisher founded by Lovecraft friend August Derleth to preserve between hard covers the work of the major *Weird Tales* authors. Beyond Arkham House, the truly dedicated collector could enter the underground world of independent publishing populated by other collectors, fans, and would be writers who managed to publish rare or hard to find stories, letters, juvenalia, and even doodles by favorite authors in oddball formats like

limited run pamphlets, crude fanzines, club newsletters, or fly by night digests.



Even as my interest in book collecting grew, my interest in comics continued apace. By this time, however, I'd moved on from Dana's and found an even better source at Elias Bros Tobacco on Merrimack Street only a few blocks down from St. Joe's. I never learned anything much about the proprietor except that he smoked huge stogies while standing in the doorway to his store watching traffic go by on the street. The new comics came out on Wednesday's and there was no way I was going to wait three days till the following Saturday to pick them up on my regular trips downtown! By then, comics were my lifesblood. The wait between weekly deliveries was agonizing and the month long wait between issues of particular titles an infinity... particular between issues of my favorite book, *Conan the Barbarian*. (So much so that I once even subscribed to *Conan*; unfortunately, the issues that came in the mail often arrived weeks after they appeared on the newsstand and not being able to wait those extra agonizing weeks, I ended up buying them in the stores). Believe it or not, Elias Bros had an even greater selection of comics than Dana's did and they received their new comics a day or two earlier... (my loyalty to a store was paper thin as I would switch from one to another at the drop of a hat if one got the new comics in even a few hours earlier than the other!)

Inside, Elias Bros was quite a bit different than Dana's. There, the scent of tobacco was heavy on the air and aside from the zillion brands of cigarettes, cigars, pipes, snuff, and for all I knew, chewing tobacco, and a few snack items like Hostess cakes and Lays potato chips, and refrigerated cases of soda, the rest of the store was dedicated to magazines and newspapers... lots and lots of them! They must have stocked every title of magazine in existence including a spinning rack of comics whose pockets were over stuffed with product. So much so, that when I went there looking for the new issues, I had to flip through everything to make sure I didn't miss anything and if I did find what I wanted, had to make sure to pick a copy from as far back as possible as most of the issues in the pockets were dog eared or had their spines broken.

By the time I'd discovered Elias Bros., Marvel Comics had begun to branch out into larger sized black and white magazines that weren't stocked with the regular comics but on the magazine rack along with sports, auto, and women's magazines. And so, for the first time I had real reason to begin paying attention to parts of stores that I never did before. Spotty distribution and limited space in smaller venues like corner variety stores made it unlikely that I'd find magazines like *Savage Tales* in places like Marie's Variety or Henry's Self Serve in upper Centralville but Elias Bros was a whole different animal! They had *Savage Tales* (rated M for the mature reader... it said so on the cover!) displayed alongside *Mad*, *Sick*, and a handful of other exploitative horror mags where I found it one day while on lunch break from school. Bringing that puppy back to school with me, you can bet it drew more than the usual stares in religion class when classmates spotted its lurid cover depicting Conan fighting a dragon with a semi-clad beauty hanging around his waist!

With my attention being drawn to the regular magazine racks, I soon began paying more attention to digest sized fantasy magazines such as *Fantastic Stories* and *Analog*, the last pitiful remnants of the great pulp empire that once ruled American popular literature. With the classic SF authors past their creative peak by the



early 1970s, the digests never had much that I was interested in but once, *Fantastic* did serialize a new Conan novel by Carter and DeCamp that I picked up. Of more interest was a reincarnation of the old *Weird Tales* magazine that published a mix of classic reprints by the likes of Smith, Lovecraft, and Howard, as well as newer, less interesting tales. Unfortunately, the magazine folded after the fourth issue. I also kept an eye out for a digest sized horror magazine purportedly released by Marvel but even Elias Bros' deep stock never came up with that one.

Another area I found myself fascinated with was that of movie special effects. I was still in love with my favorite SF films of 50s and 60s and periodically bought surveys of them like *Science Fiction in the Cinema* by John Baxter but it wasn't until I picked up a book on the making of the *Star Trek* TV show that featured whole chapters on how the effects were done that I became fascinated with the secrets behind the screen. So imagine my delight and wonderment when I found an early issue of *Starlog* magazine that was almost wholly dedicated to articles on special FX! From that point on, I haunted the magazine racks as much as I did the comic spinners!

Over the years since I'd begun to collect Marvel Comics, I eventually picked up on the fact that the company had a particular delivery schedule that once known, allowed me to predict with fair accuracy, which titles would be released every week. What I didn't realize was that the comics were monthlies and since some months had five weeks in them, the extra weeks were skipped. But not knowing that, I usually panicked when the fifth week would come and none of the comics I was expecting would show up at my usual source. That would trigger a predicted response in me: canvassing all the stores I knew that sold comics looking for the expected issues just in case something went wrong with the distribution system. As I grew older, I went farther afield looking for new places that sold comics and eventually found myself, no doubt like many other fans in Lowell (whom I never encountered by the way), at the notorious Tower News located at the top of Central Street.

Notorious to me at least as the only thing I knew about it was that Harvey Bison would complain about his store being raided by the police for selling porn while Tower got away with far worse. In a lowered voice, Harvey would tell me he suspected that the police were paid off by Tower to look the other way. Be that as it may, it took no little courage for me to overcome my aversion of even going near such a sordid establishment (if my mother ever found out...!) but with the store's reputation for having a huge stock of magazines it was the most likely place other than Elias Bros to have comics that came up missing on "skip weeks." Not unselfconsciously, I'd take my trusty 10 speed Columbia downtown and lean it carefully against the entrance to Tower's so that I could see part of the rear wheel from inside the store (to prevent theft natch...Tower wasn't located in the most secure part of town after all). I was somewhat surprised the first time I went there. Just inside the entrance, the store looked no different than any of the variety stores I'd visited around town. One side of the store featured refrigerated cases of cold drinks, shelves of bread and sundries and at the back,



there was a counter with register and tobacco products. The magazine rack stretched along the left hand wall and though it did hold quite an assortment of magazines, surprisingly, there were few comics. I was disappointed. I had hopes that the store would prove to be a cornucopia of all the weird stuff that by then I was always searching out: books, comics, magazines, digests, even newspapers (the *Monster Times* and *Rolling Stone* for instance sometimes ran articles about comics). As it turned out, I'd already discovered Lowell's number one outlet for all that stuff: good ole Elias Bros! Following that disappointment, I hardly even noticed the doorway at the end of the magazine rack that gave access to Tower's main claim to fame: it's fabulous collection of pornographic publications and peep shows. Partly because of its remote location and its limited magazine offerings, I never made more than a couple subsequent visits to Tower News. Soon after, a friend at St. Joe's bought a car and immediately, the whole world it seemed opened up for us (he was a reader too) and I spent less and less time in Lowell hunting down books and magazines as we were able to visit better stocked bookstores in the malls that had begun to pop up in Chelmsford and Methuen. But by that time, the golden age of my book buying excursions in Lowell was drawing to a close

One by one, all the stores that had provided my greatest finds and satisfied my earliest cravings for fantasy literature began to close. It was the mid-1970s, President Jimmy Carter was in the White House, and the country was entering into a period of malaise. Long lines at gas stations would become the visual hallmark of the era while in downtown Lowell, Woolworth's and Kresges shuttered their doors in the face of rising big box chains followed soon by Prince's which eliminated its bookstore half and became for a brief time, solely an office supply outlet before even that vanished just as the computer age began. By then, corner variety stores had become extinct and Dana's Fruitland and Elias Bros Tobacco were history. Finally, the closing of Harvey's Bookland marked the end of books for sale anywhere in Lowell. Oh, sure, as the year's passed a stray "Annie's" used bookstore would open in adjacent towns, but their content would be light years from the eclectic fare fantasy fans like myself were interested in. By the 1980s all that remained of the golden age when Lowell could satisfy the most hard core bibliophile was the questionable and doubtful fare of Tower News. Never again would I find any book of real interest in Lowell. Never again would I rely on a store in Lowell to offer a deep back stock of magazine titles. The final irony being, that for those handful of books that I searched high and low for, always hoping that they might turn up with my next Saturday excursion downtown, would finally be found on something new called the "internet" with a few keystrokes. I'd spend decades looking for books like the almost legendary AFS edition of G.K. Chesterton's *The Man Who Was Thursday*, volume 2 in yet another *Weird Tales* revival this time in paperback form, or E.P. Berglund's anthology *Disciples of Cthulhu* expecting to pay a small fortune for any one of them due to their scarcity only to find them on Ebay or Amazon for modest prices.

I had come a long way from that first consciousness expanding discovery of Marvel Comics at Hovey Square Variety to my eventual break out from the streets of Lowell in high school, but in my mind the



memories of those golden years when the city's varied outlets for the printed word kept pace with my youthful passion for imaginative literature will remain a place where I can reconnect with those places that first acquainted me with the wonder and excitement of first discovery.



I Was A Teenage Bibliophile was first published in the Sons of Liberty Press anthology [River Muse: Stories of Lowell and the Merrimack Valley](#) and is reprinted here with the author's permission.

Hey Kids!

**Command Your Own
GIANT LASER TANK!**

**DEFEND! Your Planet From
Planetary Invasion**

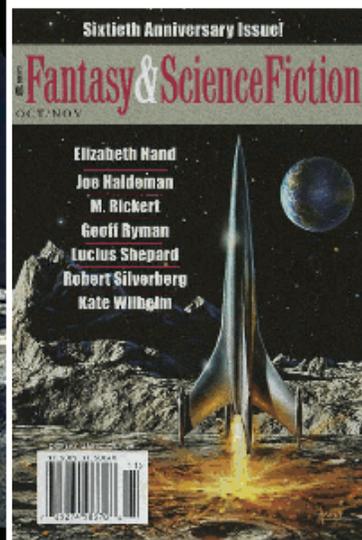
**GIANT LASER TANK
©2012 AMAZING STORIES
AND FRANK WU**

**3D Keychain model coming soon from Amazing
Stories & Award Winning Artist Frank Wu**



DAVID A. HARDY: THE KING OF SPACE ART

In case the cover of this month's issue looks familiar it is because it is a slight re-working of a cover that David A. Hardy - the subject of this present art retrospective - prepared for the Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction, the 60th anniversary issue of that iconic magazine to be exact (Oct/Nov 2009).



Mr. Hardy's artwork gracing the cover of F&SF's 60th birthday is unsurprising considering the large body of his work that had already appeared there. Anyone familiar with that magazine will be familiar with Hardy whether they know it or not, including his whimsical space alien Bhen.



Bhen was co-designed with cartoonist friend Anthony Naylor and was first featured on the cover of F&SF in 1975. He was frequently seen putting NASA hardware to unorthodox uses on nearly a dozen covers between 1975 and 1994.

But let us back up for a moment to earlier days, days filled with dreams of space and promise. Towards the end of WWII an architectural illustrator and matte painter named Chesley Bonestell had begun selling his illustrations of space to a number of popular magazines such as Life and Coronet. Bonestell's work was so scientifically accurate and offered readers visions of worlds they were just becoming familiar with that were so breathtakingly inspiring, that he eventually began working with real rocket scientists such as Willy Ley and Werner von Braun, illustrating their projects, plans and ships, making them real for a public that was just beginning to think of space as a place they could go.

In 1949, Ley and Bonestell published *The Conquest of Space* (a book that should be familiar to any baby-boomer). Bonestell's illustrations were so realistic and convincing, Ley's presentation so straight-forward and seemingly pedestrian that it helped to launch the popularization of space exploration. (With many of us wondering why we couldn't leave tomorrow!)

The timing couldn't have been more perfect for an English lad named David A. Hardy, who was at that "golden age of science fiction" – or just about ten, or eleven, or twelve years old. That age when we are still able to accept that there is wonder in the world and old enough to be able to appreciate it.

David was inspired by Bonestell's work and would begin illustrating shortly after being exposed to it. In 1954, he landed his first book, illustrating *Suns, Myths & Men* by the english astronomer Sir Patrick Moore. David was 18 at the time, beginning a long and successful career that continues to this day. Theirs was a relationship that would continue to endure to this day; David still appears on Sir Patrick Moore's BBC television show *The Sky At Night*.

David strives for astronomical accuracy in his work, consulting all of the latest reports and findings and working them into his illustrations. In 1952, when David was 15, there were no rocketships, no space probes, no space telescopes. What little was known about the Moon and



other planets was restricted to ground-based astronomy. Nevertheless, David turned out this illustration of a Moon landing for a proposed British Interplanetary Society project.

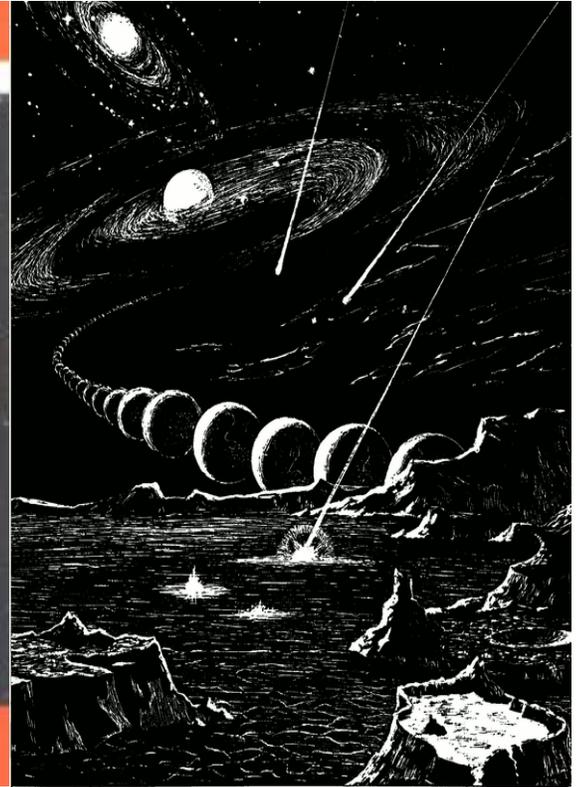
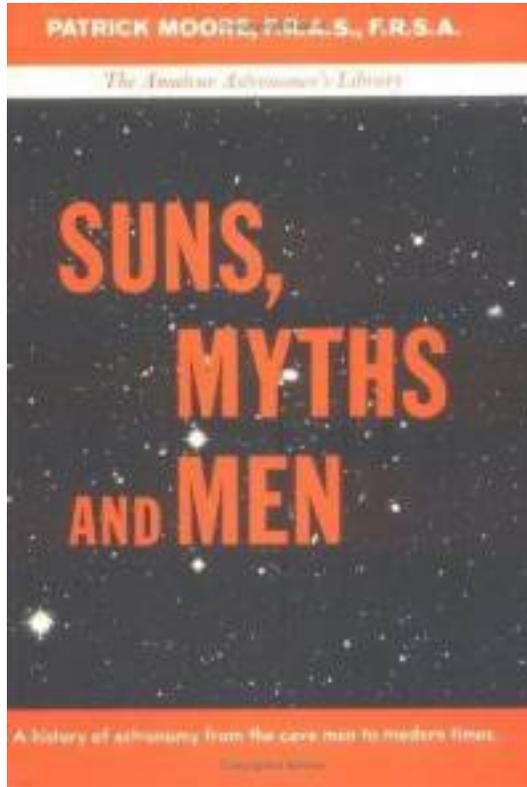
MOON LANDING – 1952



The lander is stunningly LEM-like for its time; it would be nearly another 6 years before Sputnik would beep around the world, 17 before Apollo 11. This is also David's first published work, appearing in a local newspaper along with the title "*David Has Some High Ideas.*"



David's work on *Suns, Myths & Men* provided him with stellar (pun intended) credentials. Sir Patrick Moore was and remains the UK's most prominent space popularizer. David would go on to work on several other titles with him over the years, including *Fifty Years in Space* (2006), *New Challenge of the Stars*, *Mars The Red World*, helping to establish him as a go-to artist for scientifically accurate depictions of space.



Suns, Myths & Men, 1954, interior scratchboard illustration by Hardy - the artist was 16 at the time

David would later become a member of the International Association of Astronomical Artists, serving as its President in 1996 and receiving the Lucien Rudaux Memorial Award from that body in 2002. Today he remains a Fellow of the association and serves as its European Vice President.

Illustrating space is not without other-worldly rewards either: In 2003, the asteroid 1998 SB32 was officially renamed for the artist - asteroid Davidhardy.



During the years intervening between his start in 1954 and today's illustration of *Amazing Stories'* cover in 2012, David has traveled around the globe numerous times. (indulging his passion for volcanoes among other things); his work was favored by *Amazing Stories* alumni including Isaac Asimov and Arthur C. Clarke (he supposedly just missed out on an opportunity to illustrate the Clarke/Kubrick collaboration 2001: *A Space Odyssey*) and Carl Sagan among others. He is also currently a VP of the Association of Science Fiction and Fantasy Artists and has been nominated for their Chesley Award numerous times; has received the Best Cover



Art Reader's Award from Analog magazine, been nominated for the Best Artist Hugo Award, and has received both the Sir Arthur C. Clarke award for Best Written Presentation and the Best European SF Artist award.

David A. Hardy is, in fact, the King of Space Art, having been at it longer than any other artist currently practicing in the field, and it is easy to see why.

I think it important to express how critical the artist is to both the scientific exploration of space as well as to science fiction. Human beings, it is said, are visually oriented creatures. We can't really gain a true understanding of something until we've seen it with our own eyes - which presents problems for trying to understand things we can't see or that don't yet exist. This is where artists like Hardy enter the picture.

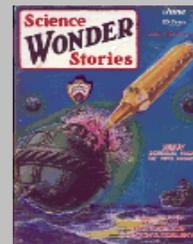
No one knew what the Moon really looked like down on the surface until artists like David began illustrating it for us, and then we all wanted to go. And of course most of science fiction is concerned with things that are not yet of this world; authors can be extremely effective in conveying images, but as they say a picture is worth a thousand words.

David is keen to express the difference between the two disciplines, as he did during this interview with [UniverseToday](#) earlier this year:

“I do feel that it’s quite important for people to understand the difference between astronomical or space art, and SF (‘sci-fi’) or fantasy art. The latter can use a lot more imagination, but often contains very little science — and often gets it quite wrong. I also produce a lot of SF work, which can be seen on my site, and have done around 70 covers for ‘The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction’ since 1971, and many for ‘Analog’. I’m Vice President of the Association of Science Fiction & Fantasy Artists (ASFA; [www.asfa-art.org](#)) too. But I always make sure that my science is right! I would also like to see space art more widely accepted in art galleries, and in the Art world in general; we do tend to feel marginalised.”



Hugo Gernsback would found and publish three more SF magazines after *Amazing Stories*: *Air Wonder Stories* & *Science Wonder Stories* in 1929 and *Science Fiction Plus* in 1953.



Examples of the attention to detail – and his ability to imagine the non-existent – are amply illustrated here.

After serving in the RAF (during which time he continued to illustrate), David did a stint as a commercial artist for Cadbury, the candy company and then struck out on his own in 1965.

Since that time David has provided illustrations for television shows – including Blakes 7

A UK based show. David was asked to illustrate the planets that would appear in the background and through ship portals during the show's second season.

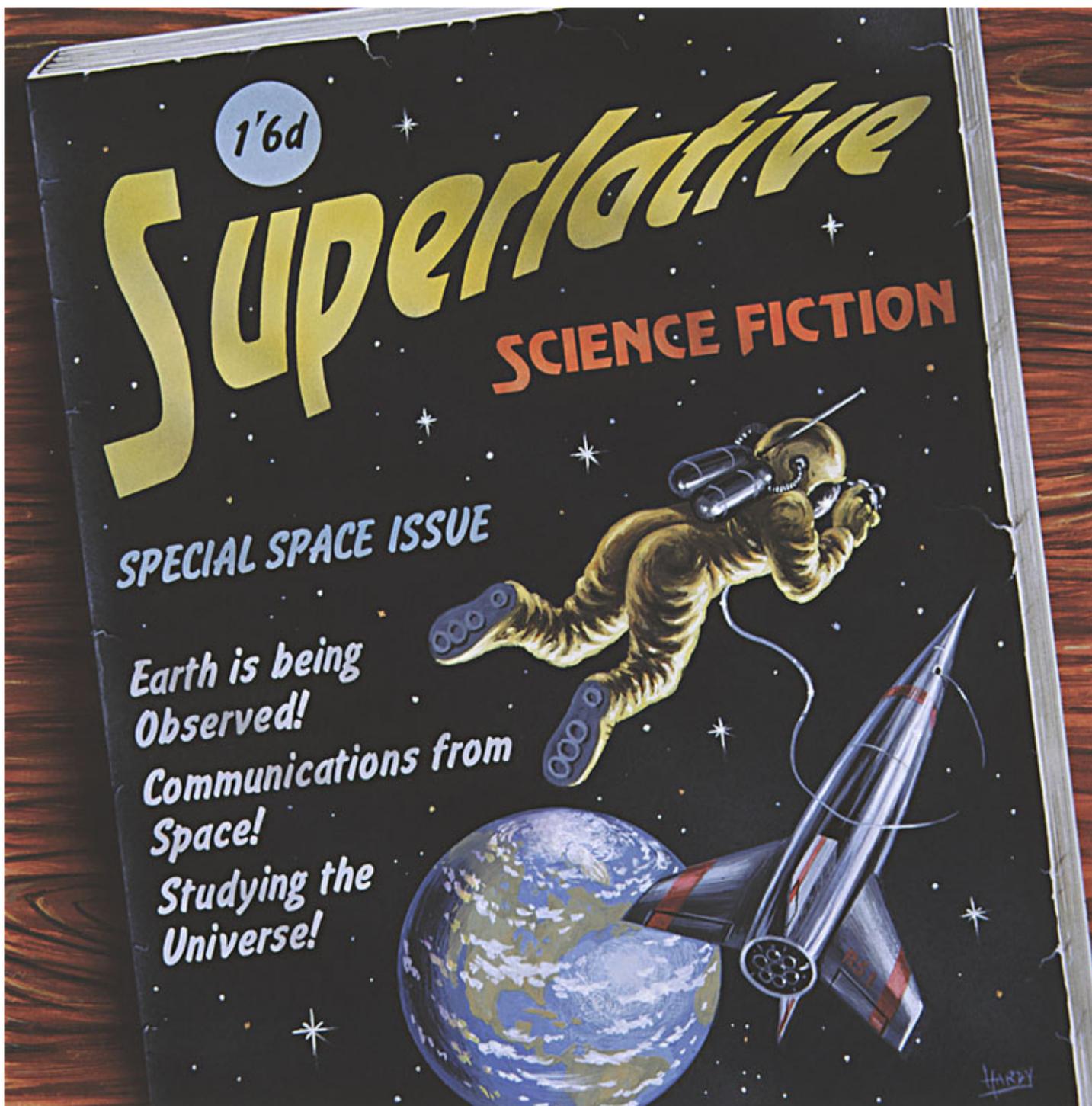




He has also been asked to illustrate some of science fiction's most iconic images, including Dr. Who and the Daleks. This image showing Westminster and the invaders was created for *Dr Who: The Dalek Invasion of Earth* by Terrance Dicks. Why the Daleks choose to invade at 3 is something you'll have to ask David.



David is capable of humor as well, as illustrated by this faux SF magazine.



that graced the cover of a CD from the British National Space Center. (The 'spooof' was that while it looked like a pulp magazine, the contents was all serious science).



David's work has also been admired (and purchased) by members of the rock community, including The Rolling Stones and Queen. He was originally asked to illustrate Jeff Wayne's musical version of the Well's story and produced what has become one of his most recognizable pieces – Martian Tripods attacking the HMS Thunderchild. (In the novel, the ship sacrificed itself while successfully protecting civilians who were escaping London.)



I have to admit that this is certainly one of my personal favorites. Until the advent of this picture, I considered Frank R. Paul's illustration of a similar scene on the cover of *Amazing Stories* to be the best I'd seen for Wells' novel. Now I just put them side-by-side and don't bother trying to pick one over the other:



Paul's illustration is frenetic, over the top and mechanical. Hardy's (benefiting from several decades of intervening knowledge) shows us a smoother blending of the real and the fantastic, as do these other pieces:



Lift Off, a frequently reproduced illustration, is the perfect evocation of science fiction's sensawunda.



Where is this?

What was the ship doing there?

Why is it leaving now?

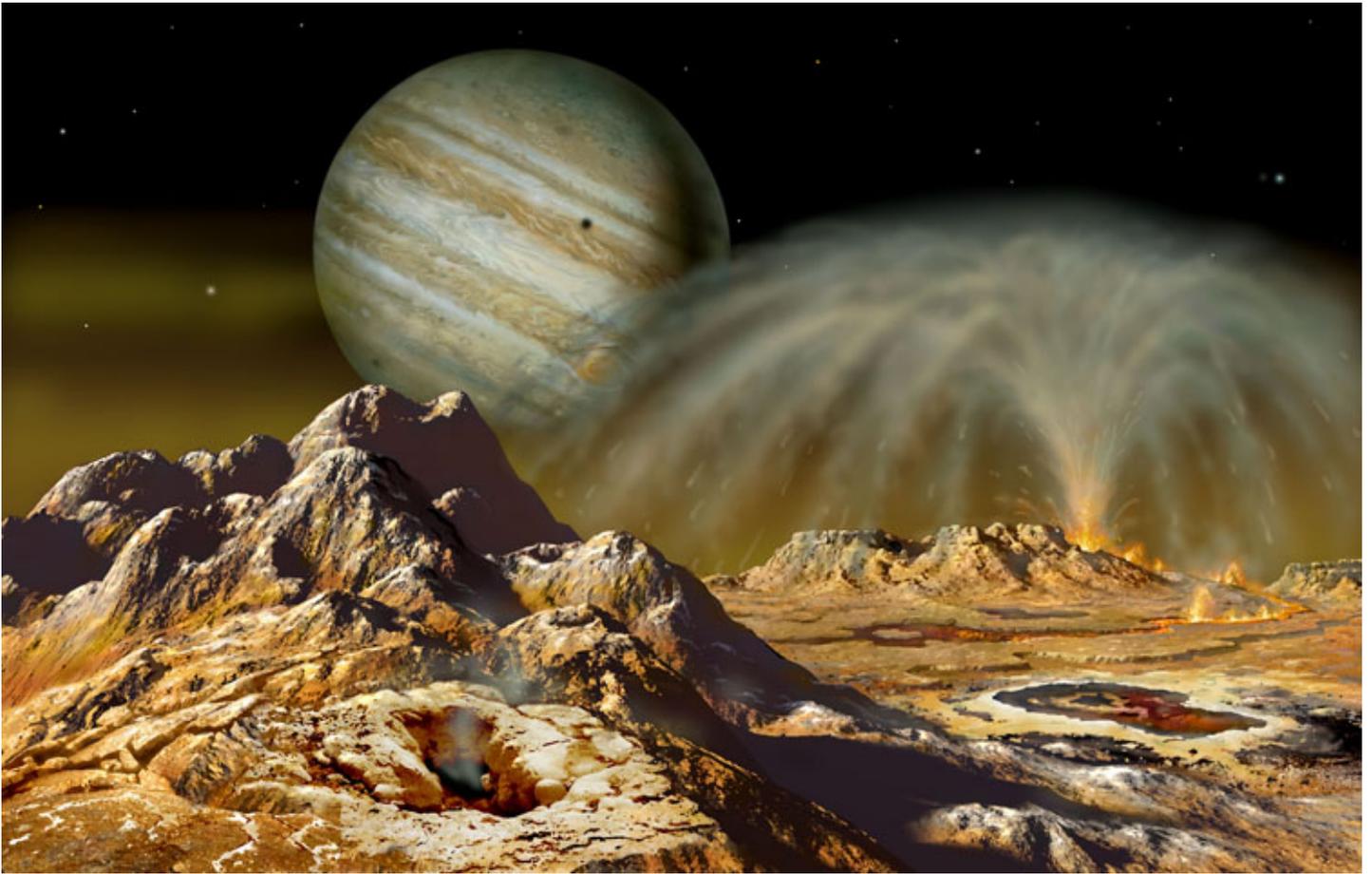
Where is it going?

We'll never know the answers, but that's at least half the fun.



The following mission has not happened yet, but this illustration – Comet Probe – occupies the middle ground in David's work, straddling the divide between fantasy and reality.

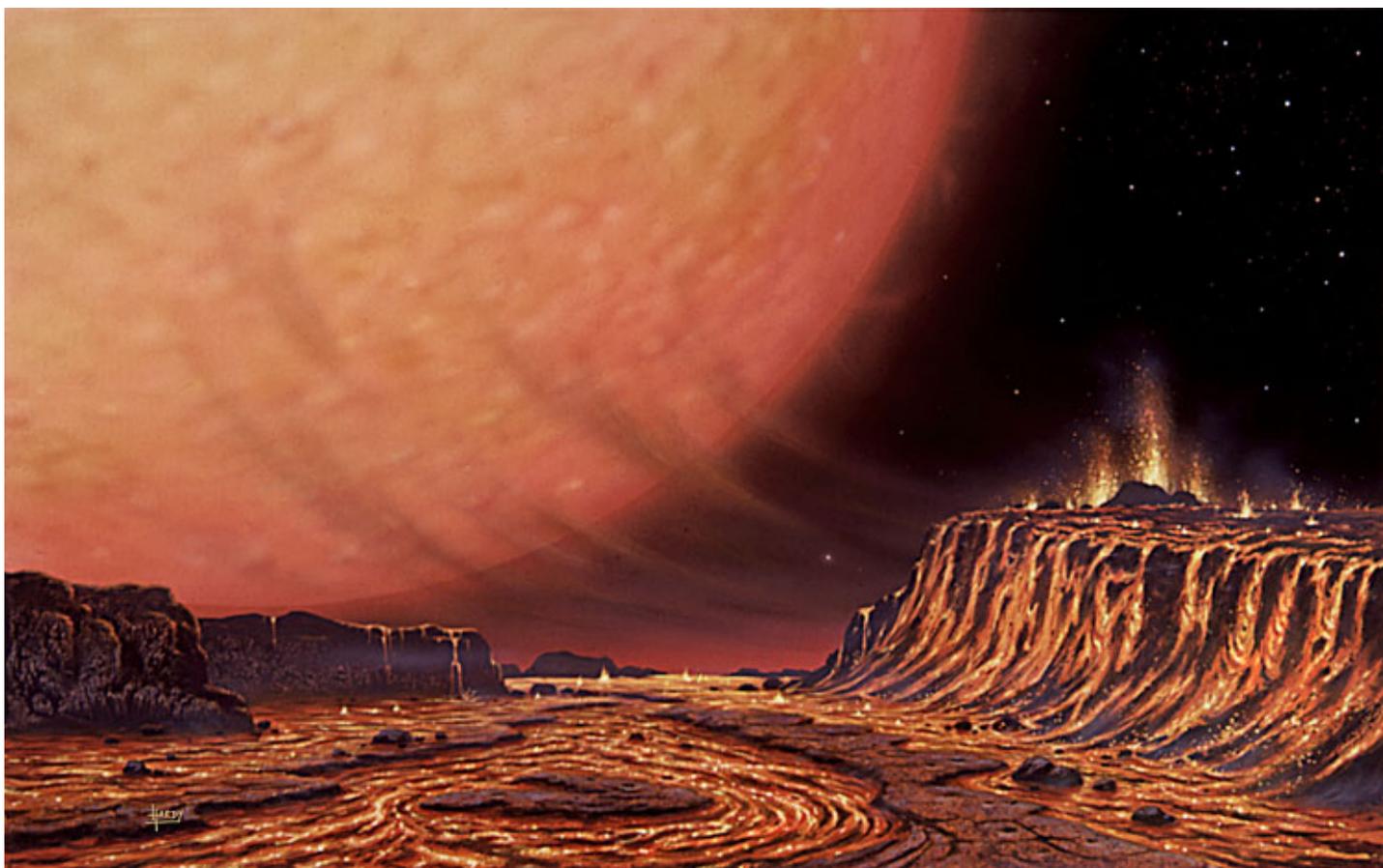




Several years ago it was discovered that Io (one of Jupiter's Galilean satellites) was an active planet; several planetary probes caught "ice geysers" in profile against the planet's rim. We learned that such things happened for real, but it took David Hardy to give us a much better idea of what it would look like from ground zero:



It also takes an artist to show us what the future holds for our solar system –



and to give us some idea of where we may go someday:



All of the illustrations here were generously provided by David for this article; he even touched up the graphic that heads up the excerpt to his story [Aurora](#) that appears elsewhere in this issue.



David A. Hardy has recently revamped his website and offers prints of nearly all of his works (for extremely reasonable and affordable prices). That site can be seen here - [AstroArt](#).

There are also several interviews and gallery displays of Mr. Hardy's work on the web, including:

a biography on [SS3F](#)

a 2004 interview on [UniverseToday](#)

a more recent interview and gallery on the [same site](#)

a gallery at [Outer Space Art Gallery](#)

and a small gallery and prints on [Nova Space Art](#)

I hope you all enjoyed this trip through David's work and choose to pay him a visit on his website.



CONTRIBUTORS

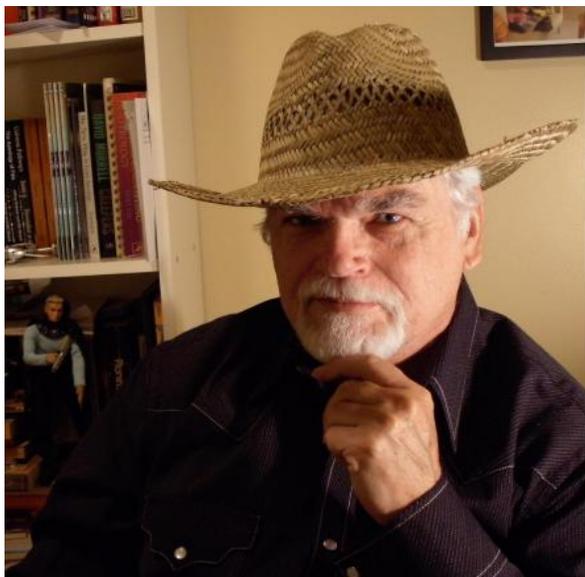
David A. Hardy



Needs little introduction here, following an issue in which his recently re-released novel – Aurora – and his artwork (dating from 1952 until the present) are presented. David A. Hardy is the longest-established living space artist having produced his first astronomical work around 1950.. He continues the traditions of scientifically accurate portrayals of space and astronomical objects first pioneered by Chesley Bonestell. His works can be viewed and purchased on his website <http://www.astroart.org>.



John M. Whalen



John M. Whalen is author of *Jack Brand*, a spacewestern novel published by Pill Hill Press. His science fiction, sword and sorcery, steampunk, and western horror tales have been published in dozens of anthologies and magazines in print and online. His latest novel *Vampire Siege at Rio Muerto* will be published Fall 2012. Whalen's articles on film and television and travel have appeared in *The Washington Post*, *Filmfax/Outre*, *Mystery Scene Magazine*, and the *Washington Times*. You can find out more about him on his blog: <http://johnmwhalen.wordpress.com>.

Pierre V. Contois



Pierre V. Contois is the author of *Marvel Comics in the 1970s: An Issue by Issue Field Guide to a Pop Culture Phenomenon*, published by Twomorrows Publishers, the recently released novel *Sometimes a Warm Rain Falls* and is the editor of *Fungi*, the Magazine of Weird Fiction. You can learn more about his works at his website <http://bypierrecomtois.webs.com>





*Don't miss the latest news and information about Amazing Stories –
visit the [Amazing Stories Blog](#)*

