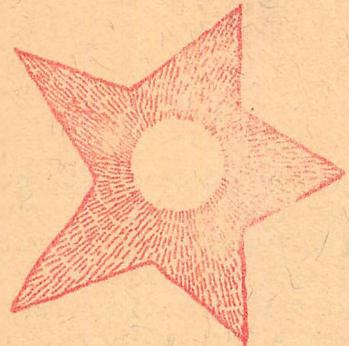


STARLING #30 was edited and published by Hank & Lesleigh Luttrell, 525 W. Main, Madison, WI 53703. It is available for 50¢; subscriptions are five issues for \$2.00. Starling is also available with fanzines or other publications in trade, or with contributions of cover or "fillo" artwork, a letter of comment, or anything else you can convince us is worth publishing. Back issues: 17, 24, 25, 27, 28, 30; \$1.00 each. The next deadline is May 17, 1975.
Weltanshauung Publication #138



cover -- James Shull

Notebookings (editorial) -- Hank Luttrell3

Metamorphosis -- Sandra Miesel6

With Malice Toward All (a column about books)
-- Joe Sanders9
Moscowitz replies13

Words from Readers (letter column).15

I Was a Big Band Groupie -- Leigh Couch.23

Great American Comics: Part VI
"Glx Sptzl Blx!" -- Lesleigh Luttrell29

backcover -- Grant Canfield



INTERIOR ARTWORK

- George Foster 33
- Alexis Gilliland 6, 7, 8, 10
- Jonh Ingham 19
- Doug Lovelace 16, 17, 21, 22
- Doug Lovenstein 28
- Hank Luttrell 30
- Bill Rotsler 14
- James Shull 2
- Al Sirois 24

NOTEBOOKKLINGS

+ Hank Luttrell +

Like any other craft, publishing a fanzine is always a compromise between what you would like to do, if you had the time and money and help, and what you are able to do. I've often been very pleased with what we've been able to publish in Starling, and with this issue I'm pleased to finally publish Leigh Couch's article on Big Bands. Reviewers sometimes have trouble finding labels for Starling, which is okay. Most of them seem to have recently settled on something like "popular culture fanzine" a label which I neither reject or embrace. I just work here. But like Bob Tucker's article in #27, Leigh's piece seems to be the best sort of "popular culture" material -- a story of a major popular art form from an entirely personal viewpoint.

I'm going to pass on a less-than-profound observation about this stuff called "Popular Culture." It is all around you! You can't escape! It just creeps right into your home through the air, over wires, and all over your books and magazines. In the course of putting together many issues of Starling, I've noticed some strange ways in which the contents seem to relate and dovetail. This happens all the time of course. It was just fate which allowed us to publish a relatively serious review of the Disney animated features along side a piece which in part considered the Disney Myths in a somewhat mystical manner. But when Leigh mentions the Muelbach Hotel in Kansas City and the Blackstone Hotel in Chicago -- as she does in this issue -- I get shivers down my spine. Why, I just spent a weekend in the Blackstone, at the Windycon. And the Muelbach Hotel -- well, you know what is going on there, don't you?

* * * * *

A remarkable event took place on the University of Wisconsin campus here in Madison recently. Bob Clampett came to town to take part in a wonderful retrospective of his work as an animator. The event took place in the Student Union, and it was free. Oh, the joys of living in a university city. For two evenings the Union's Great Hall echoed to the sound of Warner Brother's cartoon theme song. Lesleigh and I were only able to attend the Tuesday night sessions, but that was the important night, since it was Tuesday that Clampett spoke about his part in the history of animation. Clampett spoke with enthusiasm and wit, and with obvious love for his subject. He used a slide show to illustrate his talk, showing slides of fellow animators, their studios, story boards, style sheets and animation drawings. Periodically he'd have the stage spotlights dimmed and would show one of his cartoons -- like the first Warner "Tweety" cartoon, or an early Daffy or Bugs Bunny, or the very first Merrie Melodie.

Clampett's talk started with a nod to the great Windsor McKay, creator of the first commercial cartoon, "Gertie the Dinosaur." From there he progressed rapidly to the gang from Kansas City, The Disney Boys. Clampett had a job as a cartoonist for a newspaper before he graduated from high school, but his early involvement with the infant animation industry is remarkable. Clampett and his aunt collaborated on a

fabric doll based on Disney's brand new character, Mickey Mouse. Everyone who saw it agreed that they should make them to sell, but Clampett's father insisted that it couldn't be sold without Disney's approval. So Bob Clampett carried it into the then small Disney studios, and Walt loved it. It was to be the first of what became a multitude of toys based on his company's characters. Disney gave Bob and his aunt a little building which became "The Doll House" in which to make the Mickey dolls. But Clampett wanted to help make cartoons, so when a couple of Disney's original business partners pulled away to become Warner Brother's animated cartoon department, Bob Clampett became one of their original animators.

I feel a great deal of nostalgic affection for the earliest of the Warner's cartoons. I was born in the late 40's, and grew up in the 50's and 60's. This makes me a child of television rather than saturday afternoon in movie theatres. When I was younger, I couldn't afford to go the the movies very often. So I didn't see many of the Warner's cartoons from their heydays, instead I watched cartoons made in the 30's and early 40's on television. The later Warner's cartoon weren't offered to television until they were packaged as "The Bugs Bunny Show." When Clampett dimmed the lights to show the early Warner's -- well, I could hardly prevent the lump in my throat from forming when I saw Bosko and Honey tap dancing on a boardwalk for the first time in too many years.

My regard for the later Warner cartoons doesn't involve nostalgia nearly as much. Many of these I didn't see until they finally did reach television, and many others I've only seen recently on the 16mm campus film circuit, of which Madison is an important playdate. To me the best of the Warner's cartoons have a sort of wacko disregard for conventional attitudes and behavior which I hold dear.

Clampett's story included many of the most important men in the history of animation, Like Carl Stallings, who was a music director for both Disney and Warners. Ub Iwerks, the genius animator who seems to have been responsible for almost every important technical development which made the very advanced Disney style of animation possible. Chuck Jones, another fine Warners animator and director who, like Clampett, does very well for himself these days, even if he isn't as well known as the boy from Kansas City. Tex Avery was for a long time Clampett's boss at Warners, and who seems to have collaborated with Clampett and others in creating most of Warner's cartoon "Stars." And Mel Blanc. How can you write of Warner Brother's cartoons without mentioning Mel Blanc, who must have done 90% . of the voices.

One Clampett creation that was an important part of my childhood was Beany and Cecil the Seasick Seaserpent. Remember them? Beany and Cecil started as a short puppet show (Clampett had long been interested in dolls and puppets. . .), but I never saw the puppet shows. Perhaps they weren't broadcast in St. Louis. I did: see, and love, the cartoon show which grew out of the interest in the puppets. Clampett mentions that Cecil was the first puppet to have facial expressions, and that one of the main villains of the show was the first puppet to have a "real" hand. Both of these factors make me think that the Beany and Cecil puppets may have had a part in inspiring today's Muppets.

Any animator who was active in the heyday of American animation would have to be pretty cynical about today's excuse for cartoons, spooned out to the gullible public every Saturday morning. Clampett mentioned that recently the networks decided that as a policy they weren't going to consider any new "Funny" cartoon series, which meant that not even Jay Ward was able to sell a new show. As for his own Beany and Cecil, the distribution rights still belong to the network, and currently the show is doing very well all over the world, except the USA, where it isn't being shown.

5
In a short time, however, all the rights will return to Clampett, and he says that perhaps they will repackage them for reruns, or maybe even do some new material. Which would be a wonderful thing, don't you think?

* * * * *

I'm a regular shopper at newsstands, but usually I do more shopping than buying. I mean, most of the magazines and other periodicals I see don't have much interest for me, and even if there was something in one of those thick glossy publications full of elaborately posed pictures of naked people that I wanted to read, who can afford those kinds of prices? Even most of the books that we buy are used or remaindered -- or perhaps from a book club. I thought I'd better add that so the working writers in the audience won't feel too cheated.

But recently I ran across two new publications which I found interesting, and I think many Starling readers would like them, too. For some time the "underground" comic field has been but a faded memory of its former self. The official explanation was that supreme court rulings worried distributors and book stores, and diminished sales, but I'm sure that the tremendous glut of awful comics that were being published near the end of the underground comic boom had something to do with the bursting of the soap bubble. But whatever the reasons, the markets dried up for the good artists as well as the bad ones, so it is a pleasure to find new publications featuring some of their work.

The first publication which I noticed is called Comix Book, and is edited by Denis Kitchen, a fine artist and editor who runs Krupp Comic Works, one of the better publishers of underground comics. Krupp is still active, but less so than it used to be, so Comix Book is nice to have around. The first issue contains a fine page by Steve Stiles on the inside front cover, which should be enough recommendation for any Starling reader. There are also a couple of pages by Basil Wolverton, who was doing work in various 1940's "above ground" funny books that wouldn't be equalled in imagination and bizarreness until Bob Crumb started using some of Basil's best licks in the 60's. Also on hand are Justin Green, Ted Richards, Howard Cruse, Skip Williamson and others. There is a second issue out, but I haven't been able to pick one up yet.

The second publication to appear recently is The Funny Papers. This one is tabloid size, and some of the pages are printed in color just like your Sunday comics. The title logo says, "Lots of comics, games, puzzles, features and other nice stuff." Nice stuff indeed. The first issue features underground cartoonists like R. Crumb, Ted Richards, Vaughn Bode, Trina, Larry Todd and others, and even has a beautiful reprint of a Little Nemo page by Windsor McKay in color. The second issue should be of particular interest to Starling readers since it adds an excellent page by Jay Kinney. The features and puzzles are harmless, and many are entertaining.

* * * * *

DUFF: I'm happy to report that the Down Under Fan Fund is off to an excellent start. A number of fanzines have already distributed ballots, and many people have voted. Unless we get our wires crossed, you will either find a DUFF ballot with this Starling (if you haven't voted) or a DUFF Newsletter (if you have voted.)

* * * * *

Yesterday's mail brought a Minicon 10 report from those crazy Minneapolis fans, and I quickly sent off Lesleigh's and my registration fees. It looks like it is going to be a lot of fun, and we are looking forward to seeing many of you there. The date is April 18-20, and for more information I suggest you write to Cochairman Don Blyly, 343 E. 19th St., 5B, Minneapolis, MN 55404.

METAMORPHOSIS

+ Sandra Miesel +

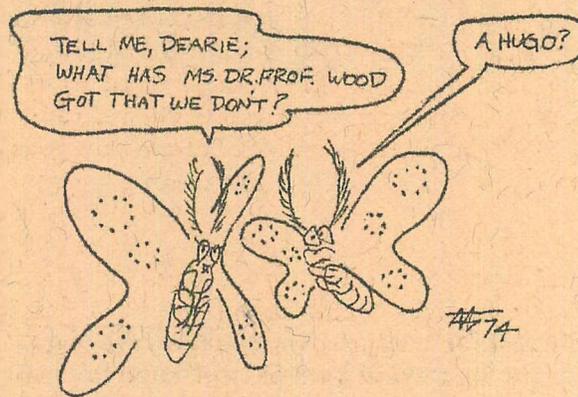
The army worm was on the march and all Manitoba trembled. The numbers and sheer swaggering insolence of these invaders was without precedent. The ruinous infestation of 1974 was the merest raid in comparison. Merciless battalions of caterpillars swept across the plains. They overwhelmed the wheat and ravished the rape-seed. They surrounded farmhouses, devoured kitchen gardens, denuded trees and shrubbery, and even attacked the scraps of bark that clung to fenceposts.

Urban areas fared no better. Small children and pets huddled indoors rather than venture forth on lawns blanketed by quivering masses of gray and yellow wormflesh. Public parks became public deserts overnight. One especially intrepid detachment of the pests invested a Loblaw's supermarket in downtown Winnipeg, tripped the electric eye mechanism to open the door, and consumed all the fresh produce before outraged employees repulsed them. Human counterattacks were, on the whole, ineffectual. The agricultural riches of the entire province had disappeared down the alimentary tracts of the conquering larvae before they retreated to be transformed into pupae.

At the appointed time these hatched into a host of underwing moths too vast for any man --even an agricultural agent -- to number. These nondescript gray moths posed a grave threat to continued human occupation of Western Canada. Government entomologists frantically explored ways to annihilate the creatures before they could reproduce on fresh range and expand their territory. Yet in the end it was Nature herself who provided the ultimate weapon.

Just as the moths commenced their breeding season western breezes bore ineffably erotic pheromones to their ciliated antennae. These subtle dryadic essences, these hints of preternatural greenery utterly ensorcelled the males. As with one will they all spurned the females of their own species and took wing for Regina, the source of the fabulous emanations. For a while the questing flock hovered above the city like a cloudbank, emperiling air traffic. Then it pinpointed its target and descended.





Professor Susan Wood was only two blocks from her apartment building when the first scouts settled on her blond hair. These merely tickled. But as swarms of their comrades fluttered down upon her face, arms, clothing her initial amusement dissolved into panic. She flailed about with a notebook but the ecstatic moths alighted faster than she could brush them away. She fled screaming into her doorway with clouds of suitors in pursuit. (A pious old Ukrainian woman was observed crossing herself at the uncanny spectacle.)

Had Ms. Wood's windows not been closed our tale would have ended there and then. But the distraught woman's respite was all too brief. Enough pheromone-laden air seeped out around the loose-fitting windows to guide the moths directly to her apartment. Legions of amorous insects hurled their frail bodies against the window panes. Soon the glass was completely covered with sticky gray layers of smashed moths. The coating thickened rapidly as a seemingly inexhaustible host of victims sought immolation. The young literature professor was their seul desir.

Meanwhile, the moths opened a second front by penetrating the building's ventilating shaft. Clouds of them erupted into Ms. Wood's living room and drove her into a closet. Faint but piteous wails led firemen to her hiding place several hours later. Still, they might never have extricated her alive from the moth-filled room had not a bottle of Je Reviens shattered during the commotion. The moths' scent receptors were temporarily stunned. They fluttered about the apartment in aimless confusion, while Ms. Wood made her escape.

Hourly drenching with the perfume sufficed to keep her besiegers at bay while scientists contemplated her plight. Quick relief was imperative before local supplies of Je Reviens (graciously donated by Regina's leading department store) were exhausted.

The entomologist who proposed the Final Solution later went on to head the provincial department of agriculture. If all the male underwing moths were destroyed, he reasoned, they could not beget a new generation and the threat of invasion by their larvae the army worm would be averted. Rather than try to mask Ms. Wood's irresistible attractiveness to the moths, he urged exploiting it to lure them to racial doom. Impassioned appeals to patriotism and visions of Our Fruitful Land preserved forever against future assaults by these lepidoptera eventually won her consent to cooperate in the extermination scheme.

Unfortunately, the sorely distressed Mrs. Wood failed to notice the scientist's remark, "It is expedient for us that one woman should die for the wheat." She meekly allowed herself to be conveyed from Regina in a sealed van. Neither did she protest when they staked her out in a huge wheatfield between two batteries of insecticide sprayers. (The deployment of flame throwers had been proposed but was rejected as inhumane.)

Sun and wind soon dispersed the last protective traces of perfume. Lustful moths by the millions descended upon her only to perish in the steady crossfire of insecticide. Within a few hours the last male Mamestra reticulata lay dead upon the field. But incredible as it may sound, when the vast mound of moth bodies was shoveled aside, no trace of Mrs. Wood was to be found. (However there is absolutely no basis to the legend that a Moth Man appeared during the slaughter and bore her away through the air.)

A lone maple tree with commemorative plaque attached now marks the spot where this heroine of Canadian agriculture so nobly gave up her life. We whose harvests are safe from the army worm owe her our profoundest gratitude.

Yet a handful of moths must somehow have avoided the fate of their brothers. Their species did not become wholly extinct although it remains rare to this day. In recent years a new "golden" variation has been reported in central Saskatchewan. It has blue eyes.



WITH MALICE TOWARD ALL

+ Joe Sanders +

Hyperion Press Classics of Science Fiction

- A Columbus of Space, by Garrett P. Serviss; \$3.95
The Messiah of the Cylinder; by Victor Rousseau; \$3.85
A Round Trip to the Year 2000, by William W. Cook; \$3.85
City of Endless Night, by Milo Hastings; \$3.95
Marching Sands, by Harold Lamb; \$3.75
In Search of the Unknown, by Robert W. Chambers; \$3.75
Darkness and the Light, by Olaf Stapledon; \$2.95

If nothing else, this series shows that stf has Arrived as an academic subject. Hyperion Press has no hopes whatever of selling paperbacks to a general audience at this price. The real market clearly is libraries and scholars. That, in fact, is how I got a look at the books: My college library, at my scholarly request, ordered several, and I've read the ones listed above. Two questions suggest themselves, then: How successful are the books at what they set out to do, and how successful are they in deserving the wider audience they've been advertised for in the prozines? Or, to put it another way, are they worth money from serious/scholarly readers, and are they worth reading time from fans? So this review will break in two corresponding parts. If you're not especially interested in the first question, skip on.

I. First of all, let's establish ground rules. Assuming that we're willing to pay extra for a special edition of a book that is otherwise unavailable and unlikely to come out in a cheap reprint, what do we deserve for the money? A dependable text, first of all; that should be basic. We should be able to count on what we read being the work of the writer, rather than the second guesses of an editor or the fumbings of a typesetter. If we have a text that is as close to the author's intention as reasonably possible, we can read it and draw our own conclusions. An edition designed to give us more help in reaching intelligent conclusions supplies other material, usually an introduction. The introduction's primary task is to establish essential facts about the writer and his works, especially the publication of this work; again readers can form their own opinions on that basis. In addition, the introduction may go on to offer what the writer considers a sensible interpretation of the book, depth and breadth varying with the circumstances.

By these minimum standards, the Hyperion Press series is not well done. The editorial work shows many signs of having been hastily done and poorly coordinated.

Consider A. Langley Searles' introduction to A Columbus of Space (1909) which comments that "One touch of gruesome verisimilitude may be cited; on the return trip one of the voyagers is hurled to his death outside the spacecraft, and then follows it as a ghostly satellite in full view of his living companions." Actually, in this edition a dog-creature the travellers are bringing back from Venus starves to death, is thrown out of the craft, and is promptly left behind. Clearly something has gone wrong. As I happened to be visiting my home in Indiana, I called on Jim Handlaco, a neighborhood friend and gargantuan stf collector, who recalled that the Serviss novel had been reprinted in Amazing Stories back in 1926, checked through that version, and found that it matched the Searles' introduction. Jim also discovered that the conclusions of the

two versions differed in other major ways.

The situation was further complicated by the fact that the copyright page of the book I read bore the information, "Published in 1894 by G. W. Dillingham, Publisher, New York," although the edition reprinted was published by D. Appleton and Searles and gives 1909 as the date of composition. Utterly confused, I wrote to Sam Moskowitz, the series editor. Here's his reply.

When I received your letter I checked all known printings of A Columbus of Space by Garrett P. Serviss. Your friend is quite right, the book version was substantially revised from the magazine. The Amazing Stories version (August to October 1926) is a reprint from the original magazine version, All-Story Magazine, January to June, 1909. Apparently Hugo Gernsback purchased reprint rights from the Frank A. Munsey Co. and not from Appleton who published the book. Therefore, they had to reprint the unrevised first magazine publication. The 1894 Dillingham notice in the book was intended for Journey to Mars by Gustavus W. Pope, M.D. and Hyperion made a production error in placing it in the book.

Searles did indeed read the Amazing Stories version in preparation to writing the introduction, because he sold his hardcover several years back. He was unaware that there were differences and actually reread the novel to refresh his memory. In checking the two I find that in the magazine version, the Man, Henry, opens a port and jumps into space as a form of suicide. In the book, a companion dog dies on the trip and its body is sent spinning into space. Since Searles refers to the body of a "voyager" in orbit around the ship out in space, he is semantically correct, even though he was unaware of the change. ((Not really, since the body orbits only in the earlier version.))

Obviously since the book is the later edition, it represents the authors final intention (and the rewrite lessens the air of juvenility of the novel). If the book should go into another printing, I will recommend changes to bring the introduction in line with the text.

As far as texts go, then, there has been some confusion, at least by the people doing the introductions. Moreover, in selecting texts for reprinting, Searles seems to have picked mainly the first edition that could be photographed easily. That's justifiable economically, but it means that Hyperion's edition of A Round Trip to the Year 2000 is a facsimile of the 1925 edition (published as a cheap paperback), though the story first appeared in 1903; it also means, for one more example, that Merritt's The Metal Monster is a facsimile of a cheap paperback published in 1946 though the story was first published in 1920. I mention the reprinted editions being cheap paperbacks, not because of snobbery but because those are the editions least likely to be accurate. Ask Ben Bova or Anne McCaffrey. So if an editor chooses such a text to reprint, he



must check it carefully against the original. There is no indication that this was done for the Hyperion reprints. Actually, of course, no edition is absolutely dependable. That's why scholarly editions are often loaded with textual notes, sometimes to the point of lunacy. At least, though, such paraphernalia shows that the editors care about the most essential thing -- giving their readers a reliable text.

But texts aren't the only problem here. Serviss' novel was the first one of the Hyperion series that I read, and it made me wary of other confusion. I found some. For example, Moskowitz's introduction to A Round Trip to the Year 2000 (1893) says that part of the book's major distinction "is that it introduces a major, well-thought-out presentation of a world served by robots that leads them to revolt." That last statement is untrue. The robots are controlled by the subconscious rays of one man, and it is his decision that makes the robots run amok. To judge by a passing reference in the introduction, I'd guess that Sali is confusing events in this novel with events in the sequel -- but how the blazes can anyone be sure? Another confusing thing occurs in the introduction to In Search of the Unknown, in which Sali mentions that the book originally appeared as separate magazine stories, but only indicates where two first appeared. Were they the only two published in magazines? It's impossible to tell from the introduction.

When discrepancies like these leap out at me, who knew nothing about most of these books before I sat down to read them, I can't help but wonder how accurate is the other information I have no way to check. Perhaps, then it is not really condemnation to say that several of the introductions don't pretend to be thorough. They just list a few biographical facts, throw in a few random comments about the author's works, and simmer for a few pages; that's all. A reader may lack the useful help that an introduction can supply, but at least he's not burdened with additional problems of interpretation.

The best of the introductions I've read are the ones to Darkness and the Light, The Metal Monster, and Wyler's Gladiator; they are more carefully written than many of the others, and they have some shape as essays. But these introductions are really chapters sliced out of Moskowitz's Explorers of the Infinite -- a rather strange procedure on several counts. First of all, Explorers is reprinted as part of this series, so taking chunks from it seems unnecessary. Secondly, since they are intended as surveys of a man's entire life and work, these chapters give little space to the particular novel; that means that a reader does get to see the work in context, but he doesn't find much about it by itself. Finally, the chapters/introductions haven't been altered since their first appearance in 1963, which evidently means Sali has had no second thoughts, no new ideas -- nothing he would like to change in 11 years. I find that rather horrifying. (Even more striking cases are Sali's introduction to Keller's Life Everlasting, (reprinted from the first edition of 1947) and Thryill L. Ladd's introduction to Cummings' The Girl in the Golden Atom (largely a reprint of 1948 fanzine article.)) It's the same attitude I see in the treatment of texts; find something fast and get the project done. I can empathize with that. I've rushed through some projects too. But one really can't count on straightening problems out in the next edition. There may not be another edition. Certainly if these books are worth reprinting at all, they deserve better treatment than this. All the people involved should have taken the time and the effort to do things right the first time.

II. The real question, I suppose, is whether the books are worth reprinting. Whatever their supposed importance in the development of science fiction, can they still be read with pleasure? The answer, based on the sample I've read, is a qualified yes.

The one stinker on the list, to get it out of the way first, is A Columbus of Space. I've heard the book described as an example of early stf's admiration for the scientist, but that's not really so. It's just that the scientist is the only character who behaves

at all like an adult. Naturally, little kids -- four years old, to judge from their actions--trust a grown-up. But how he stands the twirps, narrator included, is more than I can imagine. The characters go through a series of predictable actions, told in a leaden style. Avoid it.

On the other hand, City of the Endless Night is well worth reading. For a 1920 stf novel, it holds up remarkably well. Hastings was not a polished novelist, but this book makes me regret very much that he didn't write more novels. The tone of the book wavers between creaking melodrama and tongue-in-cheek social extrapolation--but a good portion of the satire is genuinely funny. The characters, too, are usually stereotyped but are capable of coming at least briefly alive in sudden revelations of real human feeling. And Hastings' extrapolation of state-controlled eugenics is careful and-- read after Hitler--chilling. In all, this is a book we can gladly claim as part of stf's heritage. I just wish we could have claimed Hastings as a steady writer of stf. It would have been good for him to develop his skills. It would have been good for stf, too.

The Messiah of the Cylinder is another carefully extrapolated anti-utopia, quite worth reading. I liked it less than City of Endless Night, partly because of its poisonous brand of fundamental Christianity, partly because that faith is used to justify a spontaneous rebirth of spirit among the degenerate mass of humanity that must be miraculous because it's utterly unconvincing as a natural occurrence. But the novel's future world is well depicted and the story is smoothly told.

Marching Sands is also well told, though almost utterly lacking in content. It's extremely enjoyable, though, on its own simple-minded terms as another lost race adventure. The hero never becomes more than a cardboard cutout, for example, but he's an awfully well-tinted sketch, with enough limitations to make his victories exciting. So turn off 95% of your mind and have fun.

In Search of the Unknown is fun, too--light, cotton-candy tales more often tongue-in-cheek than not. Chambers never really took the trouble to tie the stories together or to develop his ideas; the result is a series of sketchy preparations for a glimpse of some marvel, then a fast dissolve to avoid the responsibility of doing anything with the subject. But it's all charmingly told and doesn't pretend to do anything more than pass the time amusingly.

The same could be said of A Round Trip to the Year 2000, except that it's less well written and that Cook is looking just a bit more thoroughly if not much more seriously, at his ideas. There are some interesting notions here. However, the story is basically slapdash adventure which never really stops to think for more than breathing space between chases. (One thing quite apparent in both Chambers' and Cooks' work is that they are not writing in isolation. Chambers refers several times to the prevalence of scientific romances in magazines. Cook mentions a glut of utopian novels. Both books could not exist without the host of other works they're spoofing. So if one purpose of the Hyperion series was to show that stf was alive and well before Hugo Gernsback appeared on the scene, it succeeds.)

Darkness and the Light is a special case. Its survey of thousands of years of two alternate human futures lacks any characterization, detailed extrapolation, etc. Yet it's a fascinating book. I disagree with quite a few of Stapledon's specific extrapolations--and considering the general distinction between light and darkness, I picture D.H. Lawrence guffawing at the book's conclusion. Other parts--especially the section dealing with the motivation of the enslaved world's ruling class, which strikingly suggests Orwell's 1984--is most impressive. Overall, the book reminds me of the maps I used to draw to fill dull junior high study halls. I used to erase and redraw borders, planning wars, living through brilliant invasions and valiant defences, all on a few sheets of Goldenrod tablet paper. Stapledon's work possesses the same fascination, even if it

bears the same relation to actual geography.

So that's a fast sampling of Hyperion's Classics of Science Fiction. Overall, despite very serious flaws that limit their usefulness for serious readers, it's good to have these books handy again. Hyperion's shoddy production, however, makes me wonder: What new wonders await us all as stf becomes just another field for fast-buck merchandising? I'm sure we'll find out soon. . .

* * * * *

Moscowitz replies

I am happy to see the books reviewed and of the seven so treated, Joe Sanders seems to like six which is better than the average of new books. However, there is a real or pretended ignorance of this type of book publishing that is almost unanswerable coming from a college man.

The criteria he sets up for judging the value of these books are of his own creation and not the standards utilized by the colleges and libraries who evaluate the thousands of titles offered to them of this type and select those which they feel of value to them. The criteria for selection is far more complex than the points listed.

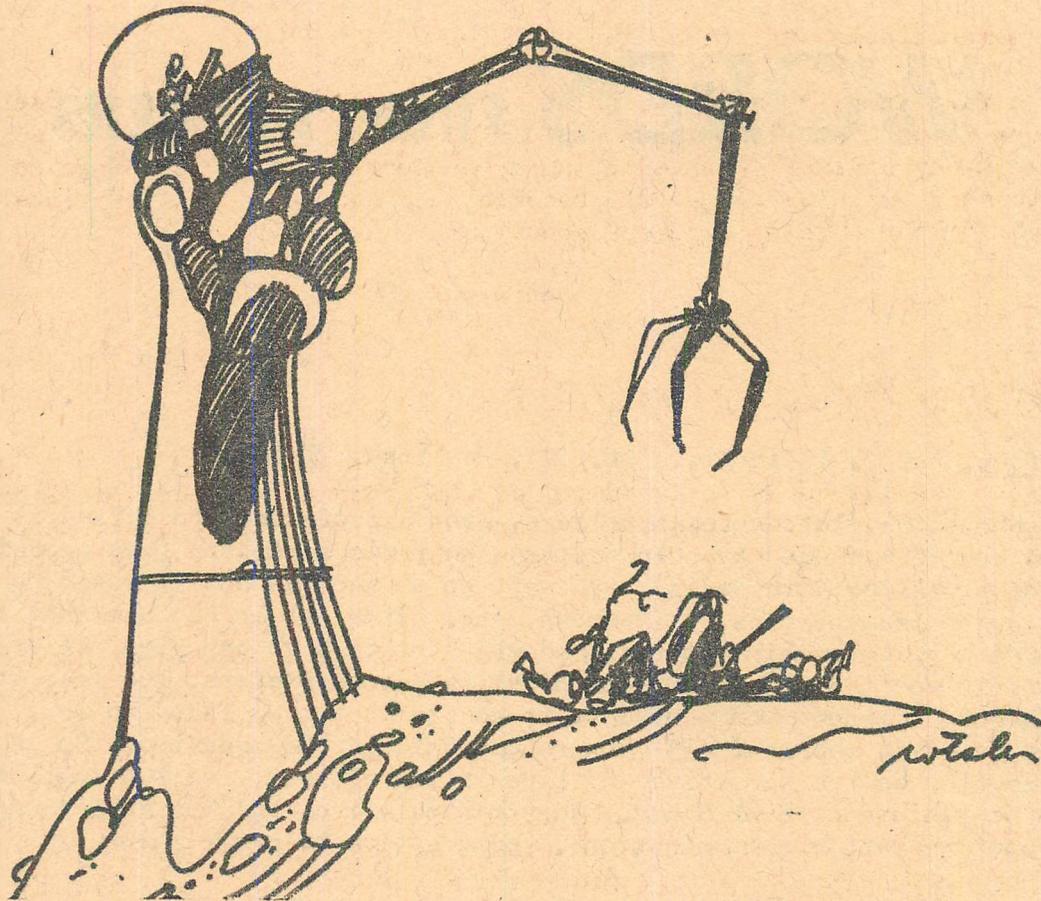
The device of finding an error (in this case a contradiction) and then going on to discredit an entire book (in this case an entire series) on the basis of this is sophomoric and obviously an egotistical ploy to display how bright the reviewer is since he had previously been given a personal, courteous acknowledgement. Nowhere in soliciting this reply did he indicate it was for incorporation in a review. The scrambling for other points to quibble about to try to buttress a feeble case is readily apparent.

The truth is that there is a reprint industry that offsets out-of-print books that are often very difficult to obtain. Some of these are printed in editions as small as 100 copies. It is obvious that they cannot be set from new type and that no man can be paid vast sums to write definitive backgrounds and interpretations of these works.

The Hyperion Press series is one half to one third the average price of books of this type. It is different inasmuch as it is published both in hardcover and soft cover. Many of them contain introductions written, paid for and set in type especially for these volumes. Some contain additional new typeset material. The Cook, Hastings, and Chambers volumes that are reviewed contain very extensive new facts, printed nowhere else previously, about the works and the authors.

Of other such reprints by other houses, not even 5% include any material that was not part of the original edition. On this count, Hyperion books are superior volumes. Where my essays are reshot from Explorers of the Infinite, they are in most cases still the most definitive pieces on the particular authors to be had.

The first printing of the William Wallace Cook was a serial in Argosy and not any type of book -- hard or paper -- that could be shot. The Metal Emperor was the final revised version of A. Merritt's, the first publication of the story as a book of any type was the Avon edition from which it was shot, and the major purpose of reissuing it was to put it into hard covers for the first time anywhere.



There are more reasons for reprinting a work than how it compares with current modern fare. In the case of Columbus of Space, it is a milestone work, historically important in science fiction for a number of reasons, and not available in any form since 1926.

Hyperion's productions are not shoddy from a book-publishing standpoint. The paper is chemically treated to last 200 years, the signatures are sewn (even in the paperbacks), the bindings are fine quality, the original illustrations appear in the volumes. The quality of paper, production and binding is the same in the paper as in the hardbacks; they are truly soft-covered books.

When Sanders states in Cook's book that the tendency of the robots to revolt was "untrue," he failed to read the statement on page 136:

"When the Head Center begins to fail," pursued Lumlet, "when he finds it impossible to hold a moral reign on the subconscious rays, then these muglugs might be guilty of any excess."

"Now you've got your finger on the fight button," said Tibilus. "The present Head Center is wearing out. The Muglugs are getting away from him. Yesterday a house automaton knocked its master to the floor, trod out his life with its steel shoes, and then jumped from the house-top and dashed itself in pieces.

"And this was only one of a hundred cases more or less serious."

The robots in revolt are checked from killing humans, but the destruction they reap is of their own devising. Control is eased on them to bring the workers back in from the farm, and it succeeds, but the classic pattern of the revolt of the automaton servants and their capability of independent action is established.

WORDS FROM READERS

Jerry Kaufman, 622 W. 114th St., Apt. 52A, New York, NY 10025

I learned about the Plot Genie in college, from a professor who called it the Matrix. He told us how it was used by pulp writers and radio scripters (you needed one hell of a lot of plots for both media), and went on to show us how it could be used for anything, even documentaries, talk shows, etc. It's all in the elements you choose. Lets say you have an evening to fill and you want to have comedies all evening. Well, not only would you set up lists of different characters, locales, etc., but also different audiences you wanted to reach and what they liked to see. So you might want to reach people 25-35 who are uppermiddle and educated. So they like artistic people who are sensitive and live in big cities. You then pull out a bass player in Boston who is Paul Sands. Very manipulative, but the Prof seemed to think he was promoting better communications, and creative tv programming.

Susan Wood, 2920 Victoria Ave., Apt. 12, Regina, Sask, S4T 1K7

Rick Day's "How to Write Swell" was chucklesome. Ken-in-the-next-office, who teaches Creative Writing and gets paid for not publishing his novels, went around muttering about getting him a Plot Genie. . . The idea of a "C&W Maoist picker," though, was lethal. Jim Turner columns should carry some sort of warning, like cigarettes: "Reading this in public may be dangerous to your dignity." "Far north!" I kept giggling, breaking up again.

Having had the pleasure of meeting Synthia (not to mention Leigh and Valma) at Discon, I was fascinated by Leigh's article. I wish, though, he'd elaborated on the idea of "programmed music (people controlling but not playing instruments.)" My friend Reg, who works for the local newspapers, has been complaining about the new typesetting technology they've had installed. Instead of bashing out stories in the approved Crusading Reporter style on an old manual, he now has to use a special modified Selectric typer, and produce a story without seeing it come out on paper. He says it played hell with his style for weeks. He's been a reporter for years, and a good one, but suddenly he (and everyone else) was writing incomplete sentences, rambling sentences, non-sequiters: gibberish. The new tool, and his lack of direct control, messed up his writing. I guess he had to learn to "programme" news stories.

Ross Pavlac, Apt. B-10, 4654 Tamarack Blvd. Columbus, Ohio 43229

I stumbled across The Plot Genie while meandering through the stacks at Ohio University in 1970. . . the book was so successful that he did some sequels to it, one as I recall was specifically aimed at murder mysteries. Added lists included a list of 180 murder weapons (he left out the icicle!) and, I think, lists of possible suspects

with colorful backgrounds. Walter Tevis (author of The Hustler and instructor at 16 Ohio U.) claims that The Plot Genie really did get used by a lot of pulp writers, but I haven't seen any evidence anywhere linking specific authors to use of the Genie.

Leigh Edmonds' article on synthesizers read like a combination of a quick music history lesson and a grumping editorial. It left me hanging -- okay, so Leigh doesn't use the synthesizer to play tunes with -- just what is it used for, then? I'd like to see a followup explaining in more detail just what Leigh is doing with the synthesizer to balance "Electrolux Music," which discussed what isn't done with a synthesizer.

Roger Sween, 319 Elm St., Kalamazoo, MI 49007

Leigh Edmond's article "Electronic Music" reminds me of a discussion I was having one time with a friend in the music department. It began over a specific piece but turned into an effort to define what music is. I had the peculiar sensation afterwards that I had been upholding the value of music as an art form, while my friend, the professional musician, deserted the central concepts of his own field.

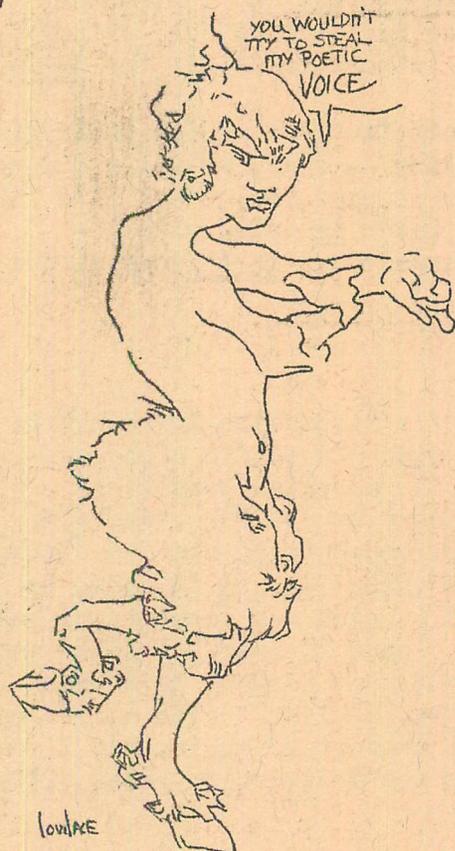
+Well, first of all, Leigh's title was "Electrolux Music" -- and it seems to me +pertinent that you missed this joke/comment. While Leigh was visiting, I asked +him if he knew that Electrolux was the name of a vacuum cleaner. I hated asking +such a stupid question, but for an instant I thought that perhaps that brand +name wasn't well known in Australia. ## For my part, I might try to define what +kind of music I like, or what I like about a certain sort of music, but I would +never try to define the basic values of music -- since individual tastes differ +so widely. -- HL

He had argued, much as Leigh has done, that the history of music demonstrates with proof positive the increasing role of dissonance. I maintain that music is a succession of sounds that are put together in such a way as to make a melody, or "tune" in Leigh's words, and that great music is the skillful development of these musical ideas. I recognize that there has been increasing tension and invention and experimentation within melody. But to depart from melody is to give up music for noise. If this departure is the backbone of electronic music, then it is no more valuable than going to a street corner and gathering the sounds one finds there.

I don't pretend to understand the complexities of electronic music, and I certainly don't know much about music in general. But it seems to me that just because one has increased the range of instrumentality by electronic means, one should not give up the artistry that has been used to devise musical statements. (This is analogous to the abandonment of plot in literature or the absence of form in plastic arts -- two parallel trends to the waning of melody in music in this century.)

I have heard little electronic music. Switched on Bach is interesting, seeming to have a kind of formal purity, but it lacks the timbre that is achieved by Bach's own instrumentation. What little Varese I have heard, I do not understand, but some choral works by Ussachevsky I have found haunting. It may be that such music is in its infancy. Thirty years ought to have been enough time to come to grips with it unless the infinity of sound, the complex technology, and the expense have mitigated





against mastery. Or it may be that electronic music is not more recognized because the means of making it tenable art have been forsaken.

Harry Warner, Jr., 423 Summit Ave., Hagerstown, Maryland 21740

There is one big difference between previous musical revolutions and the one that Leigh Edmonds thinks the synthesizer is creating. People, both the upper classes and the hoi polloi, accepted with enthusiasm the revolution that Monteverdi brought about as well as the later revolution created by Wagner which Leigh doesn't mention. The synthesizer is being promoted by a tiny coterie of university people, scientists, theorists, and a handful of just plain listeners and the bulk of the people couldn't care less unless it's used in some elementary way like the Switched on Bach record. There's also the problem that synthesizers aren't really new, as far as their effect is concerned. The very first music must have consisted of nothing but rhythmic use of noise-producing objects, and down through the years people have synthesized all sorts of sounds from things like saws, tissue paper over combs, willow whistles, and so on. Such things had only moderate success because the bulk of the listeners have always

taken less interest in timbre than in combinations of pitches based on some accepted set of intervals. (The potential for quarter-tones, eighth-tones, and so on has always been there, in vocal music, on kazoos, on all unfretted stringed instruments, on trombones and some other conventional instruments.) I think music exists for the sake of people, not for the sake of theorists, and if the people don't take an interest in synthesizer music, then it isn't a revolution, just a local insurrection that fizzled out.

Juanita Coulson exaggerates somewhat in her complaint that there were not records for kids when she was growing up. But she does a good job of painting the popular music picture as it really existed in the 1940's and the attitude that a lot of people took to it. I was a terrible snob in that decade about popular music and paid next to no attention to it, except for a fondness for Benny Goodman that I wouldn't even admit to myself. Now I have trouble resisting the impulse to start buying records and books about the big bands like all the other nostalgia buffs. This means that if I should live to the Biblical allotment of three score and ten, I'm almost sure to go wild over rock music some time in the 1980's. In fact, I've just about decided to start buying rock records at garage sales where they usually go for a quarter a piece; those lp's will undoubtedly be enormously expensive collector's items by the time I have caught up with my cultural gap and have started to want to listen to them all the time.

Al Shrois, 533 Chapel St., First Floor East, New Haven, CT 06511

I happen to be a big fan of synthesizers, for what that's worth. I can't play one (I can't play anything melodic except guitar, sorta -- my instrument is drums) but the sound lifts my head off. If the instrument has limitations, no one has found it/then yet. Keith Emerson! I've seen him play synthesizer several times, and it's

just amazing. Synthesizers are not simply a matter of switches and keyboard. You have to know your electronics as well as your music if you truly expect to be creative on a synthesizer.

+I'm glad to have found a synthesizer fan who isn't a member of tiny university coterie, if not exactly hoi polloi. --HL

douglas barbour, 10808, 75th avenue, edmonton, alberta, canada T6C1K2

i wish i was a night person without a daytime job: then i could stay up & watch those late night musicals on TV. i thoroughly enjoyed That's Entertainment. i was rather awestruck by what a studio could do -- & the lengths to which theyd go to do it -- in order to allow Ester Williams to dive into some water.

i enjoyed Junnita's article, too, & tended to agree with it. i always liked small combos better than big bands. exceptions like Duke Ellington, of course, but really only later. by the time i started to buy records -- the late fifties -- i was listening to Miles Davis, Monk & Mingus especially, & continued with those cats until the Beatles & Stones remade popular music -- at which point, coincidentally, jazz did seem to be losing touch with rhythm & beat & melodic improvisation. the newer jazz men, again led by Davis, & such people as Chick Corea, Keith Jarrett, etc., are taking good things from rock & other rhythmic music & mixing it with stingingly good improvisation, & im listening to it again. but also to rock, the music of good old fashioned sex.

one thing about Leigh Edmonds' interesting article. It appears to imply that the 3 periods of music he speaks of are mutually exclusive. not so, of course, since all three co-exist in the world & in our ears today. for which variety, much thanks.

Eric Bentcliffe, 17, Riverside Cres., Holmes Chapel, Cheshire, OJ4 7NR United Kingdom

I enjoyed Junnita's "Dance to the Music" but as an inveterate fan of the 'Swing Era' and occasional jitter-bugger (when my rheumatism allows), I can't let certain of the assumptions go by without reply.

The 'Big-Bands' are only such in retrospect, they were just bands that have acquired the former label since to distinguish them from the smaller groups which gained in popularity as the Big-Band's faded. I'm not going to attempt to define all the different kinds of bands which were around in the 40's and 50's, but the kind I enjoyed most were those which played Swing. . .variously described as the 'white-man's Jazz music' and 'the only-sound-around.'

The bands played all kinds of dance-music; some of it was pretty terrible, as is a fair percentage of all popular music, but the best of it was far more musically interesting than almost anything before or since -- to me. Most of the numbers that fall into this category were originally 'flagwavers' -- to use the terminology of the times, and Feature Spot items rather than strict dance tempo items. Most of you have probably seen the sort of thing I mean in hoary old tv movies . . .if you can't recognize them musically you can recognize them by the way the crowd stops dancing and gradually gathers round the bandstand. These are also the numbers which still get played today, are still popular today. I'll mention a few. . .Charlie Barnet's "Skinner," Benny Goodman's "Sing, Sing," Dorsey's "Marie," Kenton's "Intermission Riff," Miller's "Moonlight Serenade."

'Pop'/mass music now runs in sequences, each sequence lasting only until it starts to become musically involved. The record-buying public gets younger all the time and each new mini-generation wants a simple (musically) but exciting sound to writhe to.

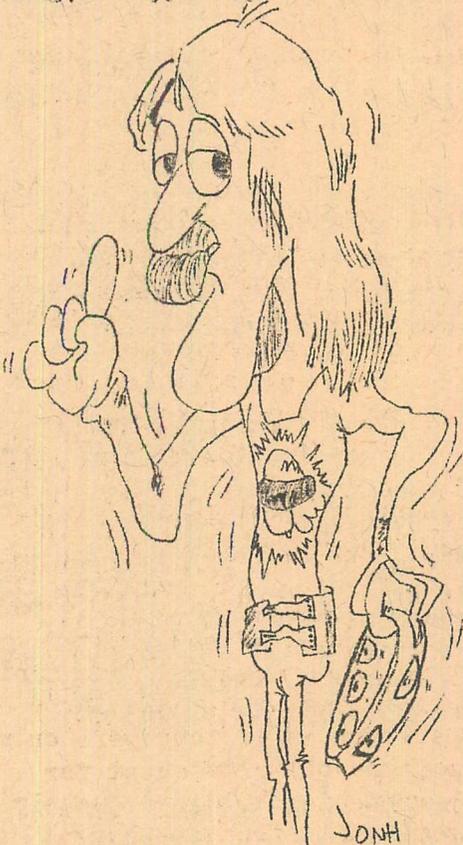
Swing, Big Band Sound, or whatever you want to call it, was around long enough to develop musically and become interesting enough in its arrangements to last. As has most forms of Jazz.

The Big Bands, despite not being the modern media for popular dancing, are still very much around. Benny Goodman, Count Basie, Harry James and quite a few of the other old-timers are still fronting outfits for the occasional concerts and recording-dates. Other musicians who grew up during the era of Swing and Big Band Jazz: Nelson Riddle, Sy Oliver, Shorty Rogers (among others) have continued the idiom by providing themes and music for TV and movies, and by providing backing for vocalists.

Whilst the examples of Big Band Swing I've used are relevant, they aren't necessarily favorites. Listen to Glen Gray and the Casa Loma Orchestra playing "No Name Jive" if you want to hear my kind of music.

Jonh Ingham, 4A Salisbury Rd., London W13, England

It strikes me odd that Jannita thinks of big bands as products of the 40's, when quite clearly that was the decade of their decline as a creative musical force. If one looks to the big band music of the Thirties it is fantastic, especially people like Andy Kirk and 12 Clouds of Joy, who seems to have originated the standard swing jazz riff that everybody uses when they want to point to that era. Granted Glen Miller is pretty awful, but his hits like "String of Pearls" and "In the Mood" I find far more seductive and pleasing than any comparable balladeer of any sort from the past ten years. And something like Benny Goodman's Carnegie Hall concert in 1938, which has deservedly passed into legend, must be heard to be believed. That is a band whose only rock comparisons are the Stones or The Who. I would particularly like to see Walter Carlos of "Switched on Bach" fame tackle something like "One O'Clock Jump" or "Sing, Sing, Sing."



With reference to Rick Dey and Wycliffe A. Hill (and I would dearly love a copy of that book), I would say that what is important is knowing how to give the appearance of a plot. This conclusion comes from just having read Chandler's Playback, which was his last novel. Throughout the story there is every appearance of a wild, engrossing action story, which upon analysis just doesn't go anywhere. It's an incredible story, with Harlowe sitting through an amazing exposition of Heaven and Hell and the inhumanity of God if he exists from an old man.

Re Lesleigh's piece on musicals. There is a fore-runner of the Broadcast films, known as The Big Broadcast, which is Bing Crosby's second film. He is the star singer of a radio station who is mucking up his job because of a dame. The station is also bankrupt, and bought by a Texas millionaire whose daughter falls for Bing. In order to save the station, they have a Big Broadcast featuring Kate Smith, Cab Calloway -- who demonstrates the ingestion of cocaine in an incredible song about "Down in Chinatown, Where the cookies go," and a host of others. There is also a fabulous scene with a shoeshine boy in which Crosby sings "Shine" to the slap of the cloth. Very surreal to think of Crosby as once being a jazzier with

Paul Whiteman.

And although MGM may not have had that much in the way of musicals, you must admit that Esther Williams was a whole art form in itself, and that scene in That's Entertainment where the camera just keeps moving up that never ending staircase of women, with a lone singer about two thirds of the way down -- that's just the best use of excess I've ever seen. What's the film?

+If the number you're thinking about is "A Pretty Girl is Like a Melody" the +movie is The Great Ziegfeld. I believe excess was Ziegfeld's middle name --LML
 +Busby Berkeley had a part in making two of William's water spectacles,
 +Million Dollar Mermaid and Easy To Love. Those two, at least, I would like to
 +see. He also directed Williams in another film, Take Me Out to the Ball Game,
 +in which she apparently never enters the water! --HL

Mike Deckinger, 649 16th Ave., San Francisco, CA. 94118

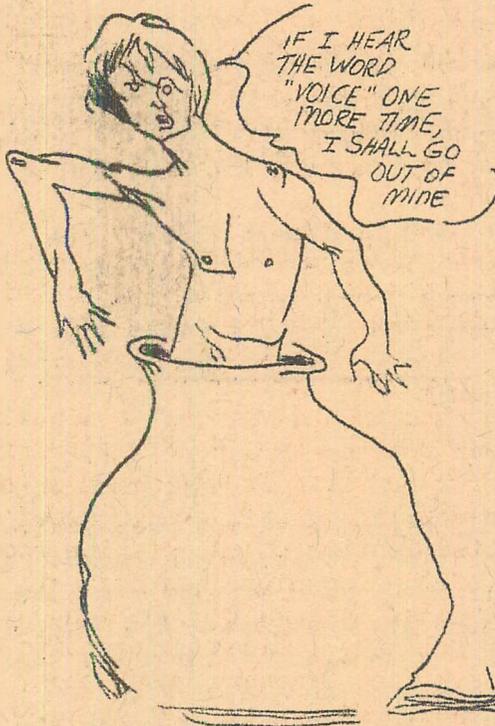
Even though Joe Sanders noticed that Malzberg and J. J. Pierce have not been photographed together, be assured they are two separate entities. Neither one thinks very highly of the other. When J.J. Pierce's original anti-New Wave manifesto was issued, it was distributed through FAPA, the SFWA, and to anyone else publisher Sam Moskowitz felt would be interested in it. Malzberg read it, became incensed and hastily sent a fiery letter, right to John R. Pierce. John R. Pierce is a sometimes fact and fiction writer, under his own name and "J.J. Coupling," and also happens to be the father of John J. Pierce. He in no way shares the views of Pierce the Younger. Malzberg was quite mortified to learn he had written to the wrong party, and that, coupled with his irritation over the manifesto, form the basis for his dislike of John J. Pierce. The later doesn't care much for Malzberg's fiction.

I met Malzberg on one occasion, and was surprised to learn th t he and I have a lot in common. We both, for instance, are fans of the former Kuttner/Moore duo. That, in fact, is the origin of his pen-name: K(uttner) M(oore) O'Donnell. (We all know who Lawrence O'Donnell was.)

Rick Dey, 43 Grove, Highland Park, Mich. 48203

Of the books Joe Sanders reviewed in this issue, I've only read F.M. Busby's Cage a Man. I was especially interested in this novel because it is a first novel by one of the germinal Fans -- Buz Busby, one of the shapers of the legendary Cry of the Nameless. Strange that I should call this zine legendary when I don't know a single legend about it -- I guess I'm just given to extravagance in my assessments. Busby and others have been reminiscing about Cry in Loren MacGregor's Taking Stock so effectively that I got all misty-eyed without ever seeing a single issue. Anyway, as an SF novel, Cage a Man seemed to embody the best and worst of the old & new SF.

I bought this in h rdbound from the SF Book Club hoping for the kind of fat, action-oriented, Planet Stories Man vs. Hostile Aliens kind of novel the club blurbs suggested, & was bitterly disappointed. Instead of the anticipated overdose of solid space opera, I found myself ODed on New Wave cliches. Cage a Man turned out to be an old-fashioned, ham-fisted Man vs. Insuperable Odds & Triumphs kind of novel that didn't believe enough in itself. The novel gets down to business quickly enough with the capture & kidnapping of the hero, Barton, by the lobsterlike Demu. His three years or so of imprisonment & torture by them are skinned over as if they were only three weeks in order to leave room for an existential parable of man's quest for identity & purpose in a universe of chance. There is a wrenching but inadequately developed relationship between Barton and an almost-human female from another



planet who has been vivisected & rebuilt into a pathetic parody of the Demu race & then reconstructed into a semblance of her old self by scientists on earth after the two make good their escape.

The novel builds toward a good, old-fashioned ending in which Barton prepares to return to the Demu's home planet with an invasion fleet from earth & beat the crap out of them, but Busby apparently assumes that we're too grownup & sophisticated for this sort of thing & ends the novel before the battle the entire book has been building up to take place. Joe thought that Busby was saving up for a sequel, but I got the overall impression that like many other young SF writers, Busby is disinclined to give a good story its head.

Lesleigh's "We're in the Music" survey of the old Warner /Busby Berkeley movies was a pleasant reprise of the continually

recycled director-oriented musicals of that studio. Just this week I watched and dozed my way through a late-night Fred Astair film festival of the films he and Ginger Rogers appeared in during the same period (1933-37). There is a striking difference between these RKO musicals and the Warner ones, & I hope that Lesleigh will be able to survey them sometime. The Astair films share two common qualities with the Powell/Keeler/Blodell films -- a sort of stock company that appeared regularly in each series, & silly plots dealing with show biz and high society. Eric Blore, a classic portrayer of gentlemen's gentlemen was almost always Fred Astair's valet & Edward Everett Horton almost always a fussing & fretting manager, friend or advisor. Helen Broderick was usually on hand to advise Ginger Rogers. The difference was in the focus of the film -- on the principles during the plotted sequences & on Fred Astaire during the dance numbers -- no chandelier shots, no camera trickery, no extreme closeups, just Fred Astair skimming over the furniture, doing bits with his hat & cane, & tapdancing as though his legs would have to fly off his trunk at any moment. He turned top hat, tie and tails into a ballet costume.

The difference is that Dick Powell & Ruby Keeler needed all the help they could get while Ginger Rogers and Fred Astair didn't. The outlandish plots of the Rogers/Astair films were more believable because the audience is thrust more closely into it -- Fred meets Ginger, Fred offends Ginger, Fred finally gets Ginger. The two of them dancing -- even on a ballroom floor -- was a more intimate thing than a Busby Berkeley extravaganza in which the pattern was more important than the people. I hate tap dancers & musical comedies as a rule, but the great Warner musicals have always delighted me because they were always so splendidly overblown. This is also true of the great Astair films, but with a special something which happens during an Astair dance -- a kind of pure & intense joy -- something that I can't really put into words & has always choked me up and brought tears to my eyes. Excuse me while I go blow my nose.

+Anybody could make a fairly good musical with Astair and Rogers. But Berkeley +did it with Dick Powell. . .--LWL

Juanita Coulson makes me ache with pleasure & pain with her reminiscences of the 1940's, this time with her recollection of the big dance bands of that era in all their

manifestations. Going to the Greystone Ballroom to hear Kay Kyser or Harry James would have meant DANCING, which would have meant (gulp) GIRLS, so I never gave that a serious thought. I recall another source of hearing the big bands & vocalists during the 40's that Junnita didn't mention -- a big machine resembling a metal, floor model television set found usually in penny arcades & bowling alleys that flashed musical numbers on the translucent screen via an internal movie projector at 10¢ a number. Today's 25¢ porno peep shows derive from this.

I've yet to see a Starling cover that wasn't outstanding -- Ken Fletcher's whimsical star stealers for #29 & Don Steffan's delightful Daffy Duck cover for #28 certainly maintain this tradition. In #28, Lesleigh's "Funny Animals of North America" was delightful -- my only regret was that she didn't make it longer & include many of the other famous & now endangered species in her field guide. For instance, she only scratched the surface in her coverage of the domestic, housefound animals, rodents & fowl: after a brief career as a superhero, Super Duck retired to a home in a residential area with his nephew Fauntleroy, & Fow & the Crow now live in seclusion in their respective country home & tree. In her account of insect life, Lesleigh discussed a strictly second-banana do-gooder -- Billy Bee, & omitted mention of the champion good-guy insect of all time: Bucky Bug. Also, any mention of the Brownies should in all fairness be followed by an accounting of the Teeny Weenies. And what of my own obscure favorites, the Hepcats -- those jitterbugging felines, canines and rabbits -- all of them well into late middle age? I'll have to ask Jack Bradbury about them, as well as many other animals whose lives & loves he recounted for so many years.

Speaking of Fox and Crow, in the last issue Fred Patten mentioned John Davis. The person he means is Jim Davis, an artist & art director of considerable importance in the animation & funny comics business.

+That was my typo, not Fred's --HL

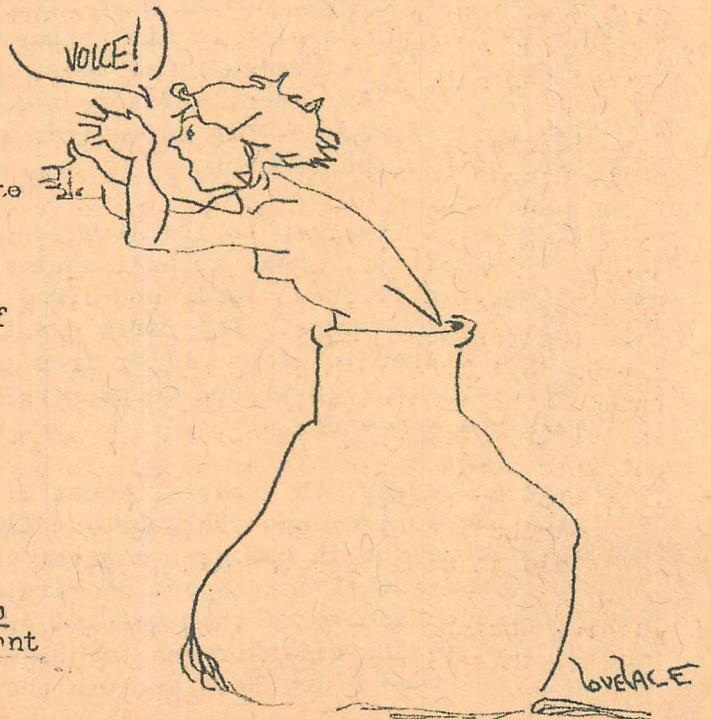
I think I'll share a Jim Davis gem with all of you:

"My own evaluation (of the old funny comics field) is that a great many men with some natural talent made a poor decision when they started with Disney & carried on from there. They thought they were entering a business that held great promise & would yield much satisfaction. God knows Disney prospered. He was a genius exploiter of art work and artists. But the creative guys by & large were just exploited & didn't share in the rewards as they should have. The true artists probably accept that, feeling that the enjoyment of creativity is enough. If that's true, then my own conclusion is that in this cross world a true artist is pretty goddamned stupid."

WAHF: Cory Panshin: "Hey, does anyone out there in popular cultureland remember a late 50's comic called Sugar and Spike? When I was about ten and giving up comics in general, I thought this was pretty hot stuff. I wonder if it was?" +Well, as a matter of fact, Lesleigh has been meaning to write about Sugar & Spike for some time.+

George Fergus: "Don D'Amassa's letter questions the attribution of the "Richard Stark" pseudonym to Donald Westlake. The original 1966 edition of The Seventh has Westlake's own name on the copyright."

Michael Carlson, Creath Thorne, Bruce D. Arthurs, John Carl, Sheryl Birkhead, Sandra Miesel, Wally Stoelting, Don D'Amassa, Grant Canfield, Mike Glicksohn, Sean Summers, Fernando Quadros Gouvea, Jeff Kipper.



I Was a Big Band

GROUPIE

+ Leigh Couch +

"Ah, the jim-jam-jump
is the jumpin' jive
Makes you nine foot tall
when you're four foot five.
Hep hep. Hep hep."

The year I was born the Kansas City Night Hawks fronted by Coon-Sanders were broadcasting from station WDAF and the Muelbach Hotel. For almost 30 years everybody in the United States danced, not just kids, and I grew up with that. Music belonged to everybody, and if the older folks liked Jan Garber and Guy Lombardo, while we liked Artie Shaw and Woody Herman, why that was okay. It was all music and it was a big part of everybody's life.

In the twenties Capone ran Chicago and The Purple Mob ran Detroit. Speakeasies thrived and bootleg liquor made fortunes and fostered the Chicago style of music. While Rudy Vallee and Meyer Davis were very big with the older whites, the young white musicians in Jean Goldkette's orchestra were learning New Orleans jazz and turning it into something else, jazz. In the late twenties and early thirties bands multiplied fantastically and ballrooms opened in all major cities. Hotels and supper clubs tried to outbid each other in booking bands. Americans wanted to dance, and they came out in droves. A big push for the success of these places came in 1933 when F.D.R. repealed Prohibition and former speakeasies became night clubs and hotels could make enough money on liquor to book the best bands.

The beginning date of swing took place at the Palomar Ballroom in Los Angeles when Benny Goodman broke through and sent the crowd wild. It was 1934. Benny's music was grounded in black roots, and he used Fletcher Henderson as his arranger and Mary Lou Williams and Lionel Hampton in his orchestra, all black musicians. Over the next few years bands became either swing or sweet with some interesting hybrids around, some comic groups like Kay Kyser, and some remaining Dixieland like Bob Crosby and His Bob Cats. When I bought "Big Noise from Winnetka" we played it about 20 times straight on my hand cranked phonograph.

I really began to be "hep to the Jive" in about 6th grade and that was in the last half of the thirties. But, mutha', what a time to be alive! Harry James, Gene Krupa, Woody Herman, Artie Shaw, Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey, Charlie Barnet, Glenn Miller, and, above all, Benny Goodman. The radio was the primary way that we learned about these bands. We listened to Glenn Miller from the Long Island Casino every week, and no matter what evening you turned on your radio, you could hear some famous, or on the rise band from somewhere.

When I was a 7th and 8th grader I doubt if I would have believed anyone who told me that there was a time when the jukebox didn't exist. We used every excuse we could think of to hang out in the drug stores, greasy spoon restaurants, and confectionaries that had jukeboxes. I once spent 50¢ listening to Artie Shaw's "Frenesi" after school with my friends and one of them pointed out that I could have bought the record for that amount. In the mid-thirties the big three record companies were Victor, Columbia, and Decca. I liked Decca best because they sold for 35¢ but I was perfectly willing

to pay 50¢ for Tommy Dorsey and Glenn Miller. It took all my allowance to buy records, needles, cokes and Chesterfields when I got to High School. 24

I don't know exactly when Disc Jockeys evolved. There were request programs on local radio stations but the announcers who ran them were regular announcers and we really didn't pay much attention to them. I don't think they liked that part of their jobs. I was something of a purist even then and I would spend two hours calling up the station to request Cab Calloway's "Jumpin Jive". Where were my parents? They were divorced and my mother was out on a date, dancing. I couldn't understand a friend of mine who called up 25 times to request Judy Garland's "Over the Rainbow".

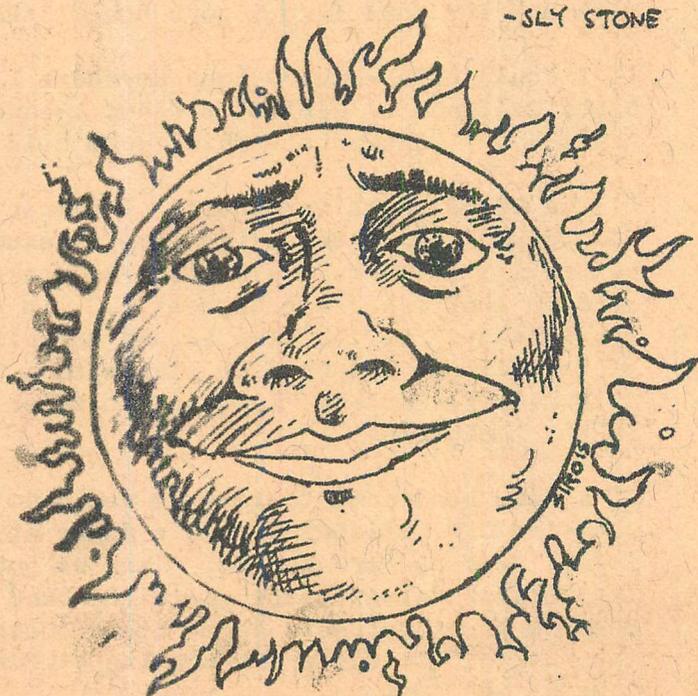
In 1939 I went to High School, a year early by special dispensation because I was one of the smart ones, and I was big for my age. I was now a teen-ager and that was a brand new category in the U.S. The biggest news of the year was that Glenn Miller was coming to the Fox Theater in St. Louis. Four of us got there at 3:00 Saturday morning and were first in line. Back then nobody's parents would let them wait in line all night; morals and manners hadn't changed yet. The theater opened at 11:00 and we got front row seats. Of the five of us, one went out to the candy stand for cokes because we were all dying of thirst by then. We knew from reading 'Downbeat' that if you were going to stake out a theater for front row seats you couldn't drink anything from about noon the day before. I bought the biggest cokes they sold.

We all absolutely fell out when "Moonlight Serenade" began and the curtains slowly pulled back. We watched the movie the first time, then slept through it the second time and I don't remember what we did the third time. I know I hated Greer Garson when I came out of that theater that night at about 9:00. Bands in theaters were something new to St. Louis and the management didn't have the moxie yet to throw us out. They started to on the second day of the band's engagement and the newspapers started taking pictures, but we were there on the first day. The newspapers were really our enemies then. Bands often opened on a Weds. or Thurs. and we cut school to go and see them. I had the best out of any of my friends, I could call school and say I was sick and they knew my mother was at work and they couldn't check. Pictures in the papers caused a lot of kids to get suspended from school.

I got suspended and I got my picture in the paper, but it was for something else, wearing blue jeans to school. Women had started to wear something called Beach Pajamas in the 30's, daring women that is. Blue jeans were being worn on both coasts but not in St. Louis. I suppose the time was right for St. Louis and my friends and I had the reputation of being the damndest bunch of freshmen to hit Maplewood High School ever. We went to Golde's department store, marched into the men's department and almost sent the salesman into cardiac arrest by demanding blue jeans to try on. We bought them, took them home and took them apart to alter them because a boy's waistline is different from a girl's. We all got the giggles over the zippers.

"EVERYBODY IS A STAR..."

-SLY STONE



²⁵
The next day seven of us went to school in blue jeans and oversize flannel shirts. By the end of the first period we were all in the office talking to a horrified principal. I still don't know who called the papers, although I suspect the seniors did. We sat in the office all day and the photographers were waiting when we came out to get on the bus. My mother didn't find out about it for years because she was at work during the day and they never could contact her. After three days they finally called me and told me I could come back to school, if I would promise to wear skirts and dresses. It did a lot for our egos.

There were two dance halls in St. Louis, the Casa Loma Ballroom and Tune Town. Casa Loma featured sweet bands like Ted Weems, Hal Kemp, Vincent Lopez, etc. and yuk! We wouldn't be caught dead there! Tune Town was our kind of place with Woody Herman, Stan Kenton, Charlie Barnet, Hal McIntyre, and Jack Teagarden. When Big T was in town I managed to get there four nights in a row by selling some of my records. We first went to Tune Town when we were sophomores. You were supposed to be 18 to get in but we were never even questioned. There weren't any I.D. cards then. For us it was heaven, a dark barn of a place with a revolving mirrored ball and our kind of music. We wouldn't dance with anyone, all we wanted to do was to sit or stand near the bandstand and listen to the music. If we were broke, which was a lot of the time, we went to each others' homes after school and danced to records. Everybody spent a lot of time at my house or at the home of two sisters who had an understanding mother. We all got an extremely large charge out of a New York psychologist who said, "Swing is dangerously hypnotic because it is cunningly devised to a faster tempo than the human pulse," and that, "young people exposed to it will probably break down conventions." That wasn't to happen until a lot later on.

Jitterbugging was our dance and there were endless variations. It was a monster hybrid that had evolved out of the Charleston, the Lindy Hop, the Maxixe, and gawd knows what else. The Big Apple was the most popular ~~step~~ jitterbugging, but everybody knew truckin', peekin', the shag and the Susie-Q, to mention a few. Sweaters got longer and skirts got shorter, the better to dance with. And when you bought new saddle shoes you rubbed them in dirt to make them look old. Of course you wore expensive angora socks with them. Boys' jackets got longer and pants became more and more pegged. The guys togged out as zoot as their parents would let them get away with and the more farout guys bought their clothes at Joe's Clothes Shop in the ghetto.

If I could have somehow gone anywhere I pleased then I think it would have been to the Savoy Ballroom in Harlem on Lenox Avenue to see some real jitterbugging. Maybe on the night Benny Goodman and Chick Webb held a battle of the bands.

All we cared about was music. I almost failed my sophomore year because of it. I had to grudgingly set aside time to study and I found that three nights a week would get me A's and B's. My advisor had taken me into his office for some hard talk and told me that I had the highest I.Q. in the school and should really get a college scholarship. At the time I wasn't really sure what an I.Q. was and I didn't want to go to college, I wanted to sing with a band. So to keep everybody quiet I studied, with Charlie Barnet's "Redskin Rhumba" or Benny Goodman's "Sing, Sing, Sing" playing in the background.

If a name band came to town we would do almost anything to get to hear them. On the week-end Cab Calloway played a dance at Meadowbrook Country Club we got dressed up in formal gear and crashed it. When we got a suspicious look we kept moving all around the outdoor dance floor where the band was playing. We left after three great hours when we were obviously about to be questioned. There were eight couples and we spent the rest of the night car-hopping at Parkmoor and telling our amazed friends about what we had done.

By the time my friends and I were seniors most of the boys we had dated were gone to college or gone to war. Our love for music hadn't changed but our social life had. Then we discovered something fantastic, musicians were guys like other guys and they were anxious to talk to us and take us out. This is how it happened. Glen Miller's Service Band was to play at Kiel Auditorium and the price of admission was a \$100 war bond. We were determined to go. I got two tickets from a politician my mother knew, and Pat got three more from friends of her dad. We were in! My musical idol was pianist Mel Powell. We had long since progressed to a wide knowledge of side men and musical styles. We grieved when Bunny Berrigan died, we thought Pete Condoli was pretty good, we had original records of Albert "Pinetop" Smith, and I owned one record on which Bix Beiderbecke had a short solo. We were into haunting second hand stores for collectors items and sometimes had to pay \$1.00 per disc. I worked from time to time to support my hobby.

The piano was the in the groove instrument for me at the time, and Mel Powell was the best. We waited at the stage door after the performance and discovered that the band was staying at the Jefferson Hotel. We walked the eight blocks to the Jefferson and found Capt. Glenn Miller and Mel Powell in the lobby. Being a nerdy chick by that time, I walked up and introduced myself and told him that he was the absolute most and had it all locked up. We got invited to breakfast in the coffee shop. It was an incredible two hours because all the talk was about music.

I suppose I had always known that it was possible to get to know musicians. We went to see anybody and everybody who was in town (except for sweet bands, ugh!) So when Kay Kyser played the Fox Theater, we went. We thought Ish Kabibble was fun but we didn't take this kind of music seriously. Dr. Hook and The Medicine Show would be comparable today, and I don't know anyone who takes them seriously. We waited by the stage door for autographs, and when they came out I asked Sully Mason for his. I thought I might be able to trade it to some square kid who liked Kyser. Mason signed and then asked me to go out with him. I cringed away because he had to have been all of 40 years old! In the next year I went out with a lot of musicians and had a great time. Only once did I get put down but good. Some of Gene Krupa's musicians and me and my friends went to a black night club in mid-town St. Louis after the gig and I got my date taken away from me by a beautiful brown girl who had some grass stashed in a private room in the back. It seemed forever until the bus came to take me home.

Most of the musicians I knew used grass and drank either scotch or beer, and this was before anyone in the Midwest drank scotch or had even heard of grass. Anyone who used a needle or smoked opium was looked down upon; most of the young musicians I went out with were basically small town boys who only used grass occasionally and usually drank beer. They were very different from the rock stars of today.

During the war I worked at the USO and no one who worked there was allowed to date a service man they had met there. You could get bounced for that. I sometimes wonder if that's where Hugh Hefner got the idea for his bunnies? That rule suited me fine because I just mainly wanted to hear the musicians. Most of the good musicians were in uniform and it was surprising how many turned up at the USO. It was here that I met Bob Gibson, bassist with Mal McIntyre and we went together for 8 months. He wanted me to come to Florida and marry him when he got transferred. I really cared about him but I wasn't ready to do that. Several years ago I saw him with a studio orchestra on daytime TV. He looked so fine.

I didn't know it then but events were conspiring to bring my era and my music to an end. The first blow was when James C. Petrillo called a musicians' strike and for 15 months there were no new records, just "Jeanie With the Light Brown Hair". After that was settled, a shortage of shellac made records scarce and expensive.

When I graduated from high school I got a job with the Frisco Railroad and began a dreary existence. When after 6 months it got to be too much I used my employee's discount to buy a ticket to Chicago, packed my bag and left. It was a wide open city, the Big Apple, the Main Stem of the Midwest, and it was wartime. I soon found that I couldn't get a regular job because of Wartime regs. I had left a "frozen" job and couldn't get another respectable job. So, I took what I could get, first as a waitress in a Chinese restaurant, and when I got completely full of Chow Mein, a job running a dice table in the Loop. It was simple to do and very boring, and I wasn't interested in the men in uniform who liked to shake the cup.

Henry "Red" Oliver and his band were playing around the corner on Lake St. I got off at 2:00 and headed over. They were fantastic! I stayed until the place closed and found myself leaving just as the intermission pianist did. We went together for the balance of the year that I was there and we saw every musician of any importance who came to town. Whether they appeared at the Aragon or Trianon Ballroom, the Blackstone Hotel, the jazz clubs on the near north side or were passing through town and met in the south side clubs after hours for jamming that lasted until dawn, we were there and for 8 months it was music 24 hours a day. Then Marty got a long term contract in a supper club in Detroit and wanted me to go along. But a funny thing had happened, I had gotten homesick and had decided to go to college. I probably made that decision because I hadn't been able to get a job singing with a band. Charlie Ventura told me once that my voice sounded fine but it was too thin and I couldn't project it enough. I believed him and was crushed, but I slowly gave up the idea.

In looking back over some of this I realize that I've left some things out. The movies for one thing. We went to the movies two or three times a week and especially if the movie had a band in it. We saw "The Fleet's In," "Sun Valley Serenade," "Orchestra Wives," "Jam Session," "New Orleans," "The Fabulous Dorseys," "Make Believe Ballroom," and "Young Man with a Horn," to mention a few. We went to see some real bummers just because they featured musicians.

During the 50s the big bands died, and there was a lot of debate about what caused it. Some said the introduction of vocalists who went on to independent stardom when the cost of bands outpaced the money to be made. It seems funny that some of those great performers like Anita O'Day, Peggy Lee, Marion Hutton, Paula Kelly and the Modernaires, Frank Sinatra, Perry Como and Dick Hynes could have contributed to the decline of the bands that made them famous.

Television undoubtedly helped to deliver the death blow by elimination of radio as night time entertainment. TV never seemed to know what to do with bands and usually presented them badly. People forgot how to dance and watched the tube instead. A generation grew up that didn't even know that their parents could dance.

Swing gave way to progressive jazz and finally be-bop, both undanceable. This is the way Stan Kenton finally went before oblivion. It seems strange that Lawrence Welk's Orchestra which began in the mid 20's is still going strong. He says that he never forgot the dancers.

A look at record sales is enlightening. Best sellers in 1940 were:

- | | |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| 1. I'll Never Smile Again | Tommy Dorsey |
| 2. The Breeze and I | Jimmy Dorsey |
| 3. Imagination | Glenn Miller |
| 4. Playmates | Kay Kyser |
| 5. Fools Rush In | Glenn Miller |
| 6. Where Was I? | Charlie Barnet |
| 7. Pennsylvania 6-5000 | Glenn Miller |
| 8. Imagination | Tommy Dorsey |
| 9. Sierra Sue | Bing Crosby |
| 10. Make Believe Island | Mitchell Ayres |

Best sellers in 1950 were something else again:

- | | |
|------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Goodnight, Irene | G. Jenkins & the Weavers. |
| 2. Mona Lisa | Nat King Cole |
| 3. Simple Melody | Gary-Bing Crosby |
| 4. Sam's Song | Gary-Bing Crosby |
| 5. Tzena, Tzena, Tzena | G. Jenkins & the Weavers |
| 6. Bonaparte's Retreat | Kay Starr |
| 7. Can Anyone Explain? | Ames Brothers |
| 8. No Other Love | Kay Stafford |
| 9. Nola | Les Paul |
| 10. Count Every Star | H. Winterhalter |

Believe me, I lost interest and played my own old records.

Disc Jockeys rose to prominence and power during the 50's and they did not play band records. Producers of Rhythm and Blues records were romancing the jocks with gifts, etc. culminating in the payola scandals of the late 50's. Things had gotten so bad on the radio during the late 50's and early 60's that I really almost gave up listening to the radio.

But the later 60's, oh the later 60's!

The music came back again but in another form. It was for listening and for dancing and it was really something new, but growing out of the old. I could listen to the radio again and I could buy records again.

It was down to Kiel Auditorium again, and this time it was to hear The Jefferson Airplane, fantastic incredible talent. I went to the Fox Theater and this time it was to hear The Grateful Dead. At Baycon I spent a lot of time in our room listening to the San Francisco stations. What incredible richness of music! When Woodstock happened I thought that it was like the Trianon Ballroom with 10,000 people either inside or trying to get in. Remember, we were fewer in number then. I understood why they were there and I really dug the music. It's going a little sour lately, but there have always been commercial bands mixed in with the really good ones. In the 40's there were bands like Freddy Martin and Frankie Carle, real nothings. And today we have Three Dog Night and Grand Funk Railroad so things haven't changed a lot as far as quality is concerned.

I wouldn't change any of it, my life long preoccupation with music. I don't begrudge a penny or a moment I spent on it. I would do all of it over again. It has never lost its fascination for me. Now I'm trying to fathom "Tales from Topographic Oceans" by Yes and I think it is going to take me some time to absorb it. The last concert I went to was Dylan but luckily on Friday and Saturday nights they show concerts on TV and I can stay up late and watch.

I don't know where we're going from here but I'll be interested and they'll be "playing my song."

Hi De Hi De Hi
Ho De Ho De Ho
Floy Doy Floy Doy



Great American Comics: part 6

"GLX SPTZL BLX!"

+ Lesleigh Luttrell +

"When the publishers of the D.C. Magazines asked me to work up a comic book about children, I took a look at my own two kids for ideas, because the best ones always come from real life. . .When Merrily was twenty months old, L. Lanney was just learning to crawl, and neither of them could talk anything but baby-talk. . .I noticed that when they put their heads together, they seemed to be having a conference. It almost looked as though they understood each other, especially when they'd figure out ways to help each other out of the play-pen and go wondering gaily around the house. I made quick sketches. . . and that's how Sugar and Spike were born."

This is how Sheldon Mayer explains his creation of some of the youngest of comics' funny kids, Sugar and Spike. As Mayer indicates, the basic idea behind the Sugar and Spike stories is that baby talk really is a language and that his toddlers really do understand each other.

"Listen to them chattering away at each other in baby-talk! Harvey says he could swear they understand each other!"

"That's what my husband says too...Frankly I don't believe it!"

The readers do believe it, though, as numerous letters in the Sugar and Spike letter column attest. Even Sheldon Mayer says: "Recently I made a study of our neighbors' kids, and I'm almost convinced babies DO understand each other in baby talk, but I can't prove it." This premise is not unlike the one put forth by P.L. Travers in the Mary Poppins books. As Travers' readers know, babies do understand 'baby-talk' and can talk to each other, to animals, and to occasional very special people, like Mary Poppins. Sugar and Spike, in fact, have talked to baby animals on occasion, and sometimes are able to talk to those few people who have entered their second childhood. But so far they have avoided the unavoidable tragedy, mentioned by Travers, of growing up and forgetting. So for the last 15 or 20 years, anyone who has learned that talking toddlers are no more unbelievable than talking animals has enjoyed the exploits of Mr. Mayer's little kids, Sugar and Spike.

Sugar and Spike stories attempt to look at the world from a baby's eye-view, and they do a pretty good job of it. The baby-talk vocabulary (thoughtfully translated by the author) is quite descriptive and contains the kids' own terms for such things as cookies ('eating wheels') and telephones ('yak-yak baxes'), as well as baby expletives, like 'Banana Mush!'

In the early books, adults are shown only from the waist down, about as much as a 2 foot tall toddler normally sees of their parents. The parents are constantly confused by the antics of Sugar and Spike because, besides not knowing that babies can understand each other, they just don't understand baby logic. They spend many a sleepless night wondering how or why Sugar and Spike managed their latest exploit.

Of course, Sugar and Spike are just as often confused by the actions of grown-ups.

"Hey, Doll-Boy. . . Did you ever wonder where our Daddies go every morning?"

"Home, I guess. . ."

"They are home, Stupid! They live here!"

"You're kidding!"

The adults are really only minor characters in Sugar and Spike, though; there mainly to be outwitted (if possible.) The important characters are the kids. Sugar Plumm is a brash, bossy, bad-tempered but very intelligent little girl. She's the one who asks the questions and gets most of the ideas. Spike Wilson is a more passive character, generally willing to follow Sugar's lead and carry out her plans. But he is the more sensitive and intuitive of the pair. Their personalities are the exact opposite of what one would expect from their names, and from the stereotyped behavior expected of little boys and girls in the pre-feminist era. But Sugar and Spike are too young to have been pushed into the mold yet. Sheldon Mayer has created in them a fairly realistic picture of the behavior of young children, where the faster-maturing girls are more than likely to take the lead if given half a chance by their parents and male friends.

Although Sugar and Spike are best friends and constant companions, they are perhaps more opposites than equals. Their relationship lacks some of the depth created by John Stanley in the friendship between Little Lulu and Tubby. Still, Sheldon Mayer shows their likings for each other in Sugar's efforts to extricate Spike from predicaments (generally of her making) and Spike's attempts to protect Sugar when she is threatened with having her picture taken (she is afraid of cameras. In fact, Sugar's parents have only pictures of Spike dashing in front of her and sticking out his tongue at the camera in the family album.)

Sugar is constantly making new discoveries and plans, like the time she discovers that using a few words of grown-up talk can make her mommy forget whatever mischief she's been up to. This discovery leads her to think of all the things she can now get away with. As she explains to Spike:

"I Sawwy. . . I think it means The Cat Did It!"

"The poor cat's gonna spend the rest of his life in the corner!"

"You ruined my whole day. . . You got me feeling sorry for the cat and spoiled all my plans!"

Actually, Sugar needn't have felt so bad about it, since Whiskers had gotten the kids into trouble at least once, in "Temptation and the Table's Apron!" Sugar and Spike have decided that pulling the table cloth off the table really isn't worth it, and anyway, resisting the temptation really does make them feel good. Then Whiskers gets the same idea. As Sugar observes:

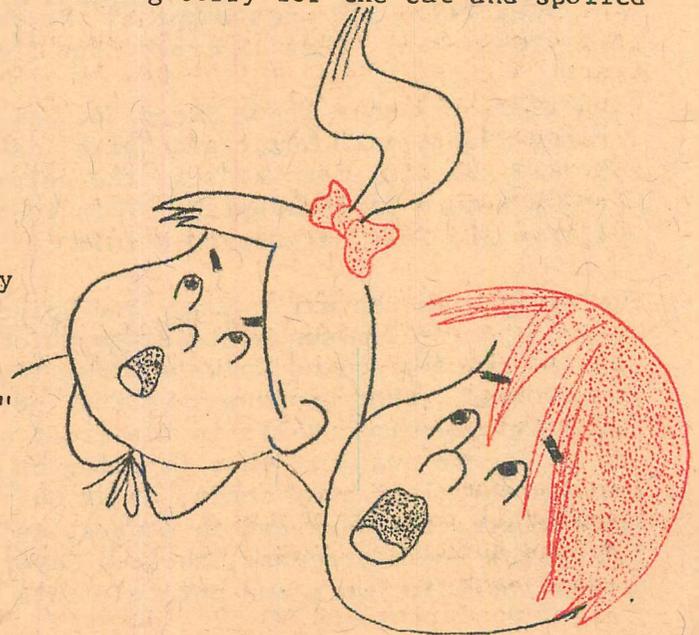
"...He knows he'd love to stick his claws in the table's apron and yank on it!"

"But he knows he shouldn't! Look at him walking around and thinking it over!"

"He can't bear to look at it!"

"I understand his problem perfectly!
Poor old Whiskers!"

"Look! He's weakening!"



"Oh, no! Hey, Whiskers! Don't DO it! Be strong! Leggo!"

"I think he needs help! He's in no condition to make his own decisions!"

"Then let's help him! Let's grab him by the handle!"

Poor Sugar and Spike! Not only do they get in trouble for pulling the cat's tail, but they later get blamed for the mess when Whiskers, who is after all only a dumb animal, breaks down and pulls the 'apron' off the table, breaking all the dishes.

Sugar and Spike's problems aren't limited to misunderstandings with their parents. For little kids grown-ups are just people who are hard to understand. But bigger kids are a real problem. Little Arthur is Sugar and Spike's particular nemesis. In "Meet Little Arthur" he is only 4, but that is old enough to have learned to pick on younger kids. As the books continue, Arthur grows up a little, mainly getting bigger, fatter and uglier. Sheldon Mayer has created a pretty realistic picture of the kind of animosity that can develop between slightly older and slightly younger kids in a neighborhood. Little Arthur can't stand Sugar and Spike, perhaps because he had been forced to play with them several times by his mother (mothers never seem to understand how playing with younger kids can bruise the ego.) Anyway, Arthur views Sugar and Spike as little nuisances, good only as the object of practical jokes and tricks. But his gleeful "Here's where I have some fun with the little dope!" usually precludes a trick that backfires.

Unfortunately, Sugar and Spike's parents are no help when it comes to outwitting Little Arthur. Spike's mother says, "It's a tough world and he may as well learn to face Little Arthur like the rest of us!!"

Little Arthur has his problems too -- bigger kids. Like the time he loses the motor to Big Joe's toy robot. He decides the only way to escape Joe's anger is to get a baby who can fit inside the robot. But Sugar and Spike are with a babysitter who is wise to Arthur. He tries to get in by offering Hilda, the babysitter, a heart-shaped valentine box, but is quickly repulsed. Seeing this, Spike begins to feel sorry for Little Arthur.

"...For the first time in his life, I think he was trying to be nice!"

Sugar isn't convinced, until she sees that Arthur really does have a box of candy.

"Whaddaya know? He was trying to do something nice for once in his life!"

"Exactly! And what happens? He gets clobbered!"

"Tch! Tch! This is crazy, but I'm beginning to feel sorry for the slob myself!"

Naturally, all this leads Sugar and Spike into another adventure which culminates in a robot fight, with Sugar and Spike inside the robots. This time they manage to rout all the big, mean kids in the neighborhood and get home unscathed before their mothers return from shopping. This is the kind of fantasy that anyone who was ever a little kid in a neighborhood full of bigger, tougher kids can really appreciate.

The stories in the early Sugar and Spike books concern things like conflicts with older kids or parental misunderstandings which might really happen to little kids. Other stories revolve around Spike's first trip to the barber, Sugar and Spike's adventures at the beach, what happens when they get loose in a store, or when their parents install toy steering wheels in the front seat of the car. Sugar and Spike have also had to figure out just what is going on at Halloween, when everybody dresses in funny clothes and gives away candy, or at Christmas when there are funny looking men on all the streetcorners and in stores, and their parents bring trees into the house. But as the books progress, Sheldon Mayer gets away from these commonplace themes and begins including more and more elements of fantasy.

Some of the things which happen to Sugar and Spike in later stories are just a bit unbelievable. Some are just pretty unlikely, like the time Sugar and Spike win an ocean cruise for themselves and their parents. They have figured out how to take the 'yak-yak box' off the hook when it rings, and they shout into it "Dum Dodo! Dum Dodo!" This just happens to be the correct answer to the question the quiz show announcer on the other end of the line is asking, 'Name an ancient bird, now extinct.'

Slightly more unbelievable is the time Sugar and Spike have an 'Adventure with a Flying Saucer.' Not too surprisingly, the aliens decide after their encounter with Sugar and Spike, who aren't the least bit afraid of the funny looking people, that Earth isn't worth conquering. After all, their translating machine can't make head or tail of baby-talk!

The best Sugar and Spike Halloween story is just as fantastic. It's about the time the pair gets to 'Mixdup City' by crawling into the bag an angry witch has thrown in their window. They are able to talk to the creatures who live there after eating a 'language cookie'. Who are these creatures?

"Only witches and goblins!"

"Witches is lady goblins -- only bigger usually!"

"And goblins is little boy witches -- only smaller!"

Spike runs into some trouble when the goblins discover he is not one of them and drag him off to jail. But Spike protests:

"Nothing doing! That's a play-pen with a roof on it -- The only way you can get out of those kind -- is not to go in it inna first place!!"

Spike does escape the angry goblins because Sugar has been mistaken by the inhabitants of Mixdup City for their new Witch-Queen, "Whatever that is!!"

"Well -- it must be some kind of a Mommie -- because everybody does what you tell 'em to do!"

Sugar and Spike eventually do get back home before their parents discover they are missing, but along with Sugar comes the crown of the witch-queen, much to the amazement of the parents:

"For goodness sake! It's solid gold!"

"Must be worth a fortune!"

("Our parents look confused!")

("So?? -- Why should today be different?")

Then there's the time Sugar and Spike acquire a new pet, a flumsh. A flumsh is "a thirty-foot-long animal. . .with wings and polka dots. . .and a necktie," which can build houses and fix leaks with his magic tongue. It's practically invisible, since only the simple-minded can see a flumsh. Sound unbelievable? Well actually, it is; it's really something one salesman thinks up to sell to Mr. Plumm to prove to a friend that he can sell anything.

Even though it's just a made-up animal, Spike actually gets one for a pet. How? Bernie the Brain overhears the conversation between the two salesmen and decides to build a flumsh.

"What's the point of being an infant genius if I can't have a little fun once in a while? Let's see if my "Pocket Invention Producer" can produce a robot flumsh!"

Naturally Bernie can't see the resultant flumsh because he isn't simple-minded, but Spike certainly does see it. As Sugar explains:

"My Daddy tied up Doll-Boy's invisible pet in the garage!"

"He is not invisible! I saw him perfectly!"
 (Sugar's not simple-minded either, it seems.)

Bernie the Brain is the smartest baby in the world. He can speak 32 languages including baby-talk, and he is president of his own company, B.T.B. Inc. Of course, the grown-ups don't know about Bernie's many abilities. Bernie explains to Sugar and Spike how he gets around this difficulty:

"Look -- You know that green paper your mommie carries in her purse?"

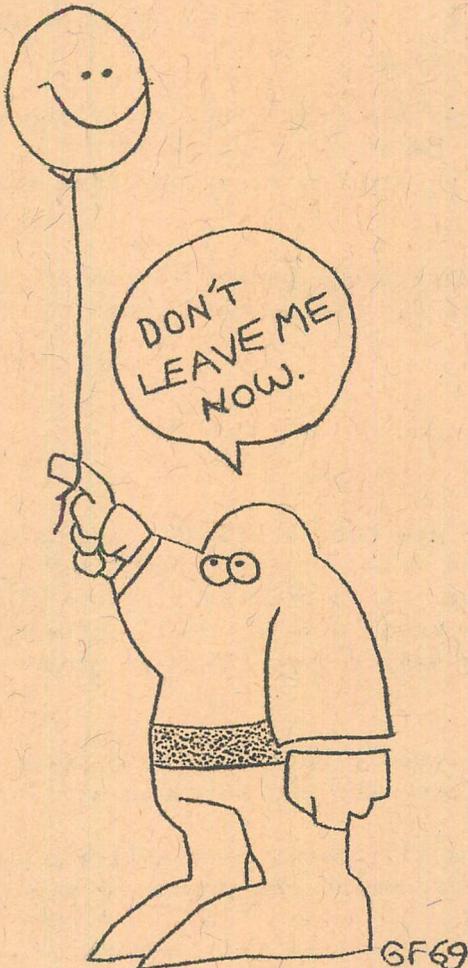
"You mean that stuff she gives to the man inna store before he'll let her walk out with the bundles?"

"Right! They call it money -- I'm only a baby -- nobody would give me any of that green paper -- But I need it to make my inventions--"

"So you trade your inventions for green paper, so you can trade the green paper for more stuff to make more inventions?"

"Exactly! -- And that's called business!"

With the addition of Bernie the Brain Sugar and Spike has become pretty fantastic, although their adventures are really no more amazing than those that many funny animals have every day. And certainly the things that happen to Sugar and Spike are no more unbelievable than the predicaments that youngsters in superhero comics get into.



In the early Sugar and Spike's, Sheldon Mayer created delightful stories while sticking to not-too-unbelievable premises. But since Sugar and Spike look at things pretty straight-forwardly and are not old enough to know there is such a thing as imagination (everything that happens to them is equally real in their minds,) Mayer did not have the added dimension of 'imaginary stories', such as Little Lulu's 'Witch Hazel' stories, to work with. As Sugar and Spike's adventures expand to include witches, goblins, aliens from outer space and Bernie the Brain, Mayer has developed a showcase for his wider flights of fancy. As much fun as these later stories are to read and reread, it is in the earlier stories where he explores things that really do happen to little kids, like conflicts with older kids, and the way babies might think about things, like resisting the temptation to pull down a table cloth, that Mayer is at his best. After all, doesn't it seem that babies really do know what they are saying when they talk baby-talk?

