



RETRO FAN

Fall 2018
No. 2 \$8.95

Trick or Treat,
kiddies!

Ben
Cooper
Halloween
Costumes



Open the vault of
TV horror-hosts,
with
ELVIRA
& fiendish friends



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Horrible
Hall... The
Groovie
Goolies



Take a
Look at
Superhero
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Boxes

Tune in to the Sixties' most bewitching, munsterific sitcoms!
Featuring Andy Mangels • Scott Saavedra • Mark Voger • and the Oddball World of Scott Shaw!



RETRO FAN

CONTENTS

Issue #2 | Fall 2018

Columns and Special Features

Departments

3

Scott Saavedra's Secret Sanctum

Bewitching, Munsterific Sitcoms of the Sixties

2

Retrotorial

20

Too Much TV Quiz

11

Retro Interview

Ira J. Cooper – Ben Cooper
Halloween Costumes

44

And Now, A Word From Our Sponsor...

23

Retro Television

Haunting the Airwaves –
TV Horror Hosts

51

Retro Toys

Sindy, the British Barbie

27

Retro Interview

Elvira, Mistress of the Dark

56

RetroFad

Mood Rings

31

Andy Mangels' Retro Saturday Mornings

Groovie Goolies

57

Retro Collectibles

Superhero View-Masters®

67

Retro Travel

Geppi's Entertainment
Museum

45

The Oddball World of Scott Shaw!

Dinosaur Land

73

Super Collector

Collecting Lunch Boxes,
by Terry Collins

80

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RetroFan fantasy cover





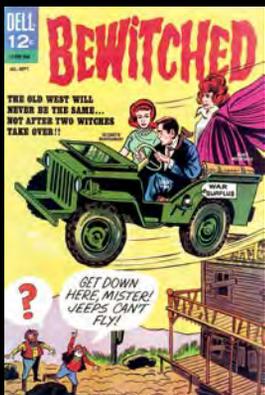
This is how I heard the story.

Early in 1965 my father won \$100 from a betting pool at work. He was then an elevator operator at the stunningly deco Bullocks Wilshire department store in famous Los Angeles, California. My parents had a fifth child on the way. Certainly, \$100 would help pay upcoming hospital bills, right?

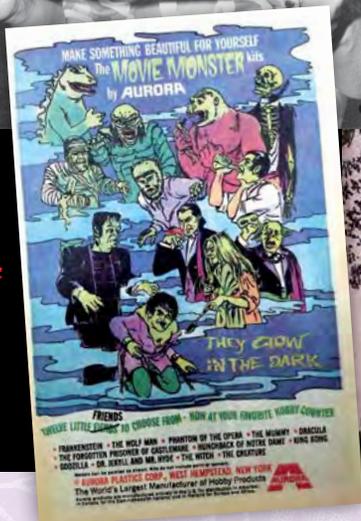
The cash prize made it home in the form of a brand-new color television set—a \$400 color television set that knocked out the back window of my parents' Ford Comet station wagon because it wasn't tied down when it was brought home.

A new color TV set that we didn't need but my father bought—because that's what he told everyone at work he would do in the heat of his winning moment. That was fine by me and the rest of my siblings, current and to come. My mom? She got over it.

It was a big, beautiful, steel box, colored and imprinted to look like wood. It stood on



(ABOVE RIGHT) Elizabeth Montgomery examines the second issue of the *Bewitched* comic book (Dell, 1965), shown above. Art by Henry Scarpelli. Photo courtesy of Ernest Farino. (RIGHT) Monsters were “IN” during the Sixties and ads for Aurora monster model kits appeared in comic books for much of the decade. From the collection of the author, who has never built a single one.



four tapered legs and from the back one could see a village of amber-lit tubes on the inside. That is, if you ever took your eyes off of the screen in front long enough to bother looking.

Of course, it was on that magnificent color-emulating beast that I watched shows in black-and-white.

It was unusual for my family to be on the leading edge of such a technological shift. At that point, the three major television networks—CBS, NBC, and ABC—had yet to broadcast a majority line-up of color programs. And even with an all-color schedule beginning with the Fall 1966 season, it would take years for black-and-white shows to fade from traditional over-air broadcasting. After all, reruns of older shows helped to fill the long hours before the all-important evening primetime schedule. It was in those hours that we kids—first the five of us, then six, then seven—sat there in my parents’ modest post-war rental on a busy street across from the mighty Ventura Freeway in Southern California. And with the noses of those old enough to sit up on their own hovering inches from the convex, glowing screen, we watched that TV to death. I am not kidding.

Don’t get me wrong, we did lots of other stuff too. We played simple make-believe games like “Avoid the Lava!” and “Drive-In Movie Theater!” and “AHHH! Earthquake!” like all the other perfectly normal kids. Once, I tried to launch my then-youngest brother into the lower atmosphere using a simple plastic barrel and fire. To this day, I am truly and deeply sorry that I failed. But watching television? We all really liked that; it was our unifying passion.

And three shows (among many) that we enjoyed watching

over and over again debuted in 1964 before roughly half of us had even been born: *Bewitched*, *The Addams Family*, and *The Munsters*.

The Monsters are Due on Burbank Boulevard

The early hope for television was that it would bring culture and knowledge into the home. The reality, at least as the newly named Federal Communications Commission chairman, Newton Minow, framed it in a 1961 speech to broadcasters, was less impressive. He felt that TV programming was a “vast wasteland” soiled by a procession of “formula comedies about totally unbelievable families,” among other sins. He also complained about cartoons. I think he might have been crazy.

Interest in matters spooky and supernatural had blossomed since the late Fifties with the syndication to television of dozens of old black-and-white horror films, including classics like Universal’s *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*. For me, I’ve loved monsters so long I have no idea when they first captured my attention. I know I wanted the Aurora Frankenstein model kit from a young age. It was first introduced in 1961 and advertised in comic books seemingly as much as those ubiquitous Charles Atlas ads. Sadly, at 98¢ I couldn’t afford it (who had that kind of money?), but it never failed to fire my imagination.

So... the supernatural was in the cultural soil, and plenty of folks wanted relief from the brewing social storm that would define the Sixties. By 1964, I think America was a bit overdue for some spooky television fun. With the arrival of *Bewitched*, *The Addams Family*, and *The Munsters*, ABC and NBC took a welcome detour from the usual assortment of variety, crime, Western, and “rural

BEN
COOPER

Halloween Costumes

AN
INTERVIEW WITH
IRA J. COOPER

Masquerading on Halloween has long been an American tradition and is one of childhood's most beloved rituals. For the kids of yesteryear that scoured store shelves and racks for that perfect trick-or-treating costume, one manufacturer's name stood supreme: Ben Cooper.

From the late Thirties through the late Eighties, New York-based Ben Cooper, Inc. was one of the top producers of inexpensive retail masks and costumes featuring everything from generic goblins, popular licensed characters, and media figures (including U.S. presidents). Ben Cooper and his brother Nat Cooper recognized the commercial value of pop-culture icons and built an empire upon affordable dress-up ensembles, trading on their skills as theatrical costumers. Boys and girls who are now adult RetroFans fondly recall their Halloween candy quests disguised as their favorite characters, decked out in Ben Cooper costumes of everyone from Donald Duck to Cinderella, Fred Flintstone to Princess Leia, Pac-Man to Wonder Woman, Mr. T to Miss Piggy—even offbeat trick-or-treating personalities such as Chuck Norris and Captain Merrill Stubing from *The Love Boat!*

Ben Cooper products are best remembered for their vacuformed plastic masks, with eyeholes and usually with nostril holes and mouth slits, held onto a kid's face with a rubber band; and their vinyl costumes, brightly colored smocks that secured in the back with strings not unlike the ties on the backs of hospital gowns. The masks were sometimes dead-on depictions of their host characters—Ben Cooper's Dick Tracy mask, for example, almost looks as if cartoonist Chester Gould had drawn it; while others were less-accurate representations of their characters—such as Aquaman, whose generic white face with blond hair was covered with an orange domino mask with scales. Ben Cooper costume fronts sometimes recreated the outfit of the characters they represented, but more often than not displayed an illustration of the character (or of a TV show's cast), complete with the character's or show's logo for the benefit of those clueless, candy-shoveling parents who might otherwise ask of the well-costumed trick-or-treater, *Now who do we have here?*

Ben Cooper, Inc.'s costumes were usually marketed in a colorful box with a cellophane "window" which allowed the mask inside to be seen, although costumes could sometimes be found sold on cardboard hangers or in window-less boxes. Many of the company's masks were also sold separately. Ben Cooper masks and costumes not only helped define Halloween as we know it (and perhaps pointed some future cosplayers toward their passion), but the company itself also helped rescue the holiday in the early Eighties in response to parental fears over potential candy-tampering (copycatting the horrific Tylenol®-poisoning murders of 1982) by forming the Halloween Celebration Committee as part of a public-awareness



CONDUCTED BY MICHAEL EURY



Mickey Mouse was long a bestseller for Ben Cooper, Inc.
 © Walt Disney Productions. Courtesy of Heritage Auctions.

campaign to spotlight ways to safely enjoy trick-or-treating.

Ira J. Cooper, son of Ben Cooper, Inc. co-founder Nat Cooper, was long affiliated with the costuming giant and is currently authoring a book, *Seven Decades of Ben Cooper: A Visual History* (publisher and release date to be announced), which will reveal in detail the company's rich legacy. In this exclusive *RetroFan* interview, conducted in late March 2018 by email and telephone, Ira shares some of his recollections of the family enterprise. This is no trick—you're in for a treat!

RetroFan: How did brothers Ben and Nat Cooper segue from being costumers for the New York stage to the Halloween costume business?

Ira Cooper: Nat said that they figured out that they could not keep making one-

costume at a time and complained, "Taking the train to Chicago every time an actress busted a seam..."

They both saw a potential in the nascent cartoon characters of Disney and others and figured kids would dress up for play. Halloween was still a holiday of homespun costumes, but in the cities like New York and its crowded environs where people worked long hours in tiring jobs, ready-made costumes could be sold at the five-and-dime stores at a reasonable price. More expensive dress-up was sold to the department stores. Ben and Nat were masters at observing the "market."

RF: Why did the family business take Ben's name instead of being, say, Cooper Costumes?

IC: Ben had a son (Bobby Cooper) before the war [WWII] and so he had a deferment.

Nat had been a salesman while they both worked in and around the custom-costume business, but volunteered for OCS [Officer Candidate School] thinking that he would otherwise, as a single man, be drafted into the infantry. He figured his chances were better as an officer—and he had a college degree from St. Johns in New York City. Ben started the official corporation in his absence and Nat joined it shortly after his return from Europe at the end of the war.

RF: What roles did wives Frieda (Mrs. Ben) and Dorothy (Mrs. Nat) Cooper play in the company?

IC: None. I will have anecdotes about family members in my book... but they were never in the business itself.



Haunting the Airwaves

By Dan Johnson

In the days before there were a thousand cable channels and streaming services, you were darn lucky to have three, maybe four, local TV stations you could pick up with your rabbit ears. Even with fewer alternatives, back then there was still a lot of competition on the part of local stations to fill timeslots with shows that would woo viewers to tune into their channel.

The thing is, the programming had to be affordable. “B” horror and science-fiction movies made for cheap TV filler in the late-night hours, especially on the weekends. But getting people to tune in for cinematic clunkers like *The Brain That Wouldn't Die* was not an easy feat. Early on, the stations knew you needed someone to help get you through these stinkers, be it a wacky vampire whose biting wit included corny puns, or a sexy ghoul who specialized in double entendres. These were local horror hosts, the men and women who dressed up as mad scientists, monsters, and femme fatales with names like Dr. Morgus and Crematia Mortem, and on the weekends they welcomed you to sit through *I Married a Monster from Outer Space*... if you dared!

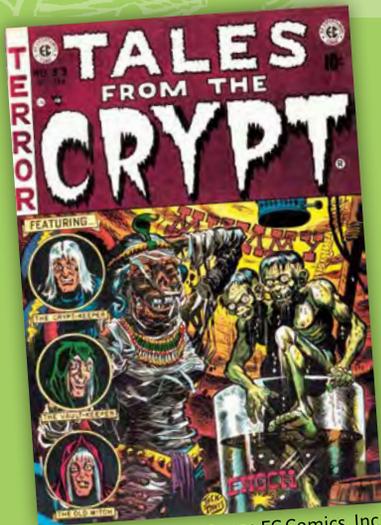
A Long, Sordid Tradition

The best-remembered horror hosts came from the medium of television, but introducing morbid stories of the macabre is a tradition that goes all the way back to the days of radio. Each week, listeners tuned into shows like *The Hermit's Cave* and *Inner Sanctum*, where they were greeted by hosts that would introduce that evening's story. These spooky ladies and gents would keep listeners company in the dark, and then invite them back the next week to have the bejeezus scared out of them again.



(TOP) TV's first horror hostess, Vampira—Maila Nurmi—in a signed publicity still from the Eighties. (INSET) Vampira and the mighty Tor Johnson, in Ed Wood's 1959 classic, *Plan 9 from Outer Space*. Photo courtesy of Heritage Auctions. Plan 9 © 1959 Reynolds Pictures. Courtesy of Mark Voger.

The tradition carried over to comic books in the Fifties, with the most memorable horror hosts being the Crypt Keeper, the Vault Keeper, and the Old Witch, telling terror tales in EC Comics' *Tales from the Crypt*, *The Vault of Horror*, and *The Haunt of Fear*. Throughout the early Fifties, there were dozens upon dozens of knock-offs of the EC trio enticing kiddos to hand over their dime (the cost of a funny-book back then) for an afternoon of thrills, chills, and shocks. As horror comics were beginning to be stamped out of existence due to a real-world witch hunt that led to the creation of the censorship board called the Comics Code Authority—under whose watch stories about vampires, werewolves, and zombies were strictly forbidden—the first of the great television horror hosts was rising to fame out on the West Coast.



© 1952 EC Comics, Inc.

The Ghoul Next Door

One thing you can say about Vampira, she was a real scream. Indeed, that was how she greeted her viewers each week, by slinking down a long hallway, staring into the camera, and then letting out a blood-curling screech. From there, she entertained her audience with dark-gallows humor while wearing a black dress that looked like she had been poured into. She was the perfect combination of sex and horror and from 1954 to 1955, she took Los Angeles, and later the nation, by storm.

Vampira's real name was Maila Nurmi. She was a young actress whose big break came when she attended a masquerade party dressed as cartoonist Charles Addams' character Morticia Addams. A producer for KABC saw her and knew she was perfect to host horror movies on his television station. Refining her look and taking the name Vampira, Nurmi took to the airwaves on May 1, 1954, and quickly became a hit with local viewers as she ridiculed the movies she hosted. Vampira was such a sensation, she was featured in *Newsweek* and *Life* magazines and appeared on *The Red Skelton Show*.

Sadly, her success was what led to her cancellation. The station wanted to own the rights to the Vampira character, but Nurmi refused and was dropped from the air. Thanks to her memorable, yet non-speaking appearance in schlock director Ed Wood's *Plan 9 from Outer Space*, her memory lived on decades after her show was over.

While Vampira was giving up the ghost in the west, Monster Mania was about to hit America, and soon every major city in the United States would lay claim to their own late-night creeper as one of the most successful movie packages ever to hit syndication.

Shock it to Me!

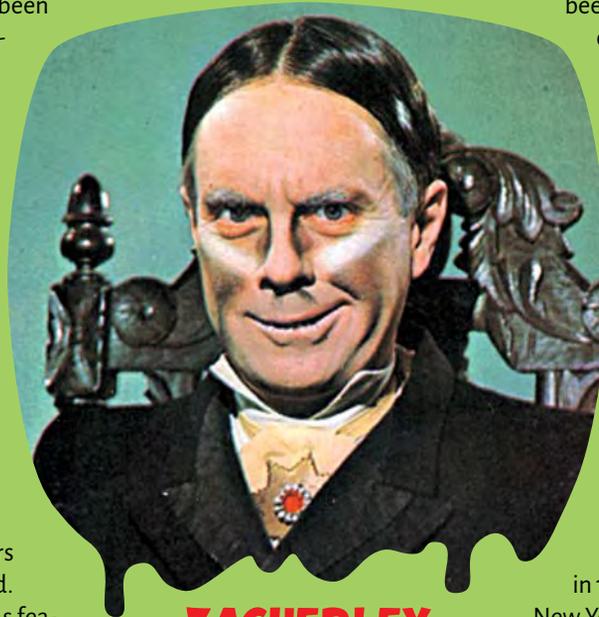
In October of 1957, Columbia Pictures' television division, Screen Gems, packaged 52 Universal horror films for syndication around the country under the name *Shock Theater*. It was—pardon the pun—a monster hit. Kids who had never seen Boris Karloff as the Frankenstein Monster or Lon Chaney, Jr. as the Wolf Man were discovering the old fright films as they aired on the weekends... and they couldn't get enough of them. Fueled by *Shock Theater's* rollout (and a follow-up in 1958 called *Son of Shock*), along with Forest J Ackerman's hit monster mag *Famous Monsters of Filmland*, a whole generation of Monster Kids was spawned. But someone needed to host these movies, and many a local actor or station employee stepped forward to do just that. If they could wear a fright costume and tell a joke, they could be a host.

Many of these *Shock Theater* hosts are lost to time, remembered only by those few who got to see them when they were on television. Some of the ones in the larger cities of America went on to become legendary, though. No horror host had a bigger market than the gentleman who got his start as a simple, unassuming actor who had the good fortune to play an undertaker on a local Western show in the City of Brotherly Love.

Good Night, Whatever You Are

When WCAU-TV in Philadelphia bought *Shock Theater* and was looking for a host, it was suggested that the guy who had been playing the role of the town undertaker on the station's locally produced cowboy show, *Action in the Afternoon*, would be perfect. That was how John Zacherle came to become the horror host known as Roland. With his unseen wife, My Dear, and assistant, Igor, Roland cracked wise at the movies he showed and had much fun with them. Zacherle was close friends with another broadcasting legend from Philadelphia, Dick Clark. It was Clark who gave his friend the nickname of "The Cool Ghoul" and helped him produce a single that became a nationwide hit, the novelty record "Dinner with Drac."

When WCAU changed affiliation in 1958, Zacherle decided to make a move to New York City and WABC. He was signed on to host *Shock Theater* there, but he couldn't use the name Roland. Instead, he simply added a "y" to the end of his name and was forever known from then on as Zacherley. As Zacherley, he hosted horror movies until the early Sixties. Zacherle was unique in that he continued playing Zacherley as he hosted cartoons and even a teen dance show throughout the decade. During the Seventies and beyond, he was just himself playing records on various



ZACHERLEY

ELVIRA

Mistress of the Dark

By Mark Voger



PHOTO: Mark Voger.

Horror movie nerds can be a lonely lot. Well, what do you expect when your best pickup line is: “Wanna come to my place and watch *The Four Skulls of Jonathan Drake*?”

Maybe that’s why Elvira—the horror hostess with, *ahem*, the most-est—has endured and flourished. With her ribald jokes, not to mention her va-va-voom décolletage, Elvira makes us feel a little less alone as we indulge our passion for fright flicks.

The role of the horror host has traditionally been filled by local talent in a given television market. But actress Cassandra Peterson, who co-created and plays Elvira, established herself as the *nation’s* horror host. She did it with savvy branding... and pure hustle.

It all began in the early Eighties, when Peterson, then a member of Los Angeles’ famous Groundlings improv-comedy group, landed a hosting gig on *Movie Macabre* for KHJ-TV in L.A. On the program, she presented films from *The Incredible 2-Headed Transplant* to *The House That Dripped Blood* to *The Torture Chamber of Dr. Sadism*. Not surprisingly, Elvira attracted much attention, and it wasn’t long before her appeal spilled—no pun intended—into the national consciousness.

There was her subsequent syndicated series... her “ThrillerVideo” line on VHS (remember those?) and the “Elvira’s Movie Macabre” line on DVD... TV appearances on *The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson*, *The Arsenio Hall Show*, *Wrestlemania 2*, *Hulkamania 6*, the reality show *The Search for the Next Elvira*, and even a Bob Hope special... her movies *Elvira: Mistress of the Dark* (1988) and *Elvira’s Haunted Hills* (2001)... her comic book *Elvira’s House of Mystery* from DC Comics, home of Superman and Batman... her Coors Light endorsement (which faithfully placed life-sized Elvira cut-outs in taverns at Halloween time)... her countless convention appearances... two Elvira-themed pinball machines... and a return to comic books, first from Claypool Comics in 1993, and recently in a new series that launched in July 2018 from Dynamite Entertainment.

Elvira’s costume is sexy-creepy in the tradition of Morticia Addams and Vampira (who once sued Peterson unsuccessfully), but with a sexy-trashy twist. When in character, Peterson wears Elvira’s trademark gravity-defying, trailer-park-friendly hair-do in jet black; Vegas-showgirl makeup (heavy on the eyeliner and rouge); black nails; a plunging black dress that could double as a shroud; sheer black stockings; and shiny black stilettos. Yep, black is her color.



Poster for Elvira's first movie, *Elvira: Mistress of the Dark* (1988). © New World Pictures. Elvira TM Queen "B" Productions. Courtesy of Heritage.

In fact, the costume has been so closely tied to Peterson's livelihood, it became a matter of professional self-preservation to stay *within* it, the actress told me in 2002.

"A while ago, the dress started getting a little more snug," the native of Kansas, who was born in 1951, then said. "I started complaining to friends about it. They'd say, 'Why don't you just let it out?'"

"But I knew that once I started letting that dress out, the dam would be broken and I'd become Roseanne Barr. So I just started to fit my body to the dress.

"That takes a lot of working out, a lot of exercise, a lot of dieting. And every year, it takes more. It's getting kinda tough to stay in it, you know? But I didn't want to change it, so I decided to form my body to the dress rather than the other way around. I'm afraid if I did it the other way around, I wouldn't have lasted all this time."

As you might guess, Halloween has always been the busy season for Peterson.

"Every year, I start preparing for it earlier and earlier," she said. "People think I work on Halloween and then hang up my dress and sleep for 11 months.

"I do look forward to it, but I look forward with a little bit of trepidation, because I'm always trying to be in ten places at once. My schedule gets really crazy. So it's a mixed blessing. It's great that I work this much, but I wish it were a little more equally spread out over the year.

"But all year 'round, really, I'm working on the character, writing things, promoting things. It's non-stop work."

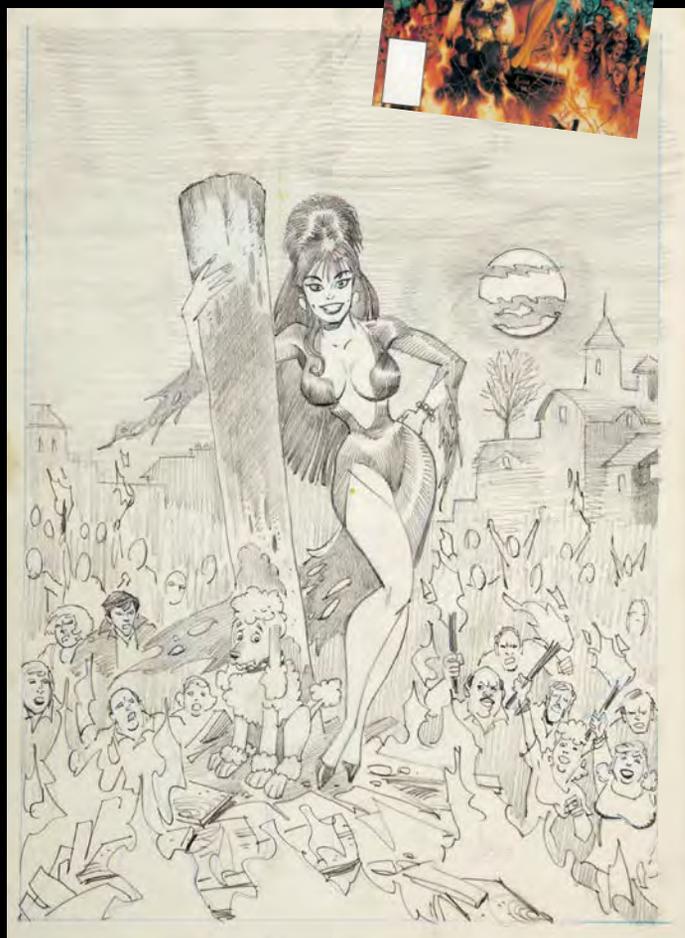
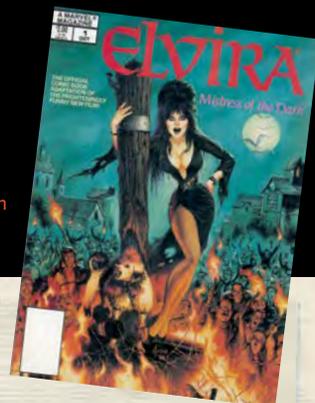
Peterson contrasted her two big-screen forays. James Signorelli's *Elvira: Mistress of the Dark* was a big-studio job, while Sam Irvin's *Elvira's Haunted Hills* was an independently produced project.

Of *Mistress*, she complained of having "a million different executives telling me, 'Change this. Drop this.' Testings with the audience. 'Oh, no, you need to put teenagers in the movie.' Those teenagers in my first movie weren't originally there, until they tested the movie and decided that there needed to be teenagers in the script. So those were an 'add-on' at the last minute.

"And just constantly changing scenes, taking out things—it was very depressing for me, having written the film. It was really difficult."

(BELOW) Artist Ernie Colón's preliminary art for the cover of Marvel Comics' 1988 adaptation of *Mistress of the Dark*. (RIGHT) The published cover, with painted art by Joe Jusko.

© New World Pictures. Elvira TM Queen "B" Productions. Courtesy of Heritage.





The Groovie Goolies all jam in Horrible Hall in this rare piece of 1970 promotional art. (INSET) Filmmation Studios co-founder and producer Lou Scheimer, c. 1970. © the respective copyright holder.



GROOVIE

By Andy Mangels

Welcome back to *Andy Mangels' Retro Saturday Morning*. Since 1989, I have been writing columns for magazines in the U.S. and foreign countries, all examining the intersection of comic books and Hollywood, whether animation or live-action. *Andy Mangels Backstage*, *Andy Mangels' Reel Marvel*, *Andy Mangels' Hollywood Heroes*, *Andy Mangels Behind the Camera*... nearly three decades of reporting on animation and live-action—in addition to writing many books and producing around 40 DVD sets—and I'm still enthusiastic. In this new *RetroFan* column, I will examine shows that thrilled us from yesteryear, exciting our imaginations and capturing our memories. Grab some milk and cereal, sit cross-legged leaning against the couch, and dig in to *Retro Saturday Morning!*

"Everybody shout, come on now, sing out! It's time for the Goolies get-together! We got jokes for everyone, with laughter, songs, and fun, so let's go to the Goolies get-together!"

So began the theme song for *Groovie Goolies* in 1970, and Saturday morning television was never quite the same. An mélange of monster movies, soft rock songs, fourth-wall-breaking

self-awareness, and counterculture humor, nothing quite like the *Groovie Goolies* had ever aired on television before.

But what led to the international hit, and why did it burn so brightly... then disappear like a ghost?

Horrific Inspirations

In the realm of cinema horror, three monsters reigned supreme. Dracula, Frankenstein, and the Wolf Man had been immortalized onscreen by Universal Studios in feature films in 1931—the Tod Browning-directed *Dracula* starring Bela Lugosi and the James Whale-directed *Frankenstein* starring Boris Karloff, and 1941—in *The Wolf Man*, directed by George Waggner and starring Lon Chaney, Jr.—alongside other creatures and spooks such as the Mummy, the Invisible Man, the Phantom of the Opera, the Bride of Frankenstein, and more. Many of the creatures were based on either novels such as Mary Shelley's 1818 *Frankenstein* or Bram Stoker's 1897 *Dracula*, or they were based on European legends of lycanthropy, or whispers of Egyptian curses.



(LEFT) Poster for *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein* (1948), the first film to unite the main Universal monsters. (RIGHT) Late-Sixties development art for “Monster Inn.” Many of the same elements would be used for the later *Horrible Hall* design.
 Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein © 1948 Universal Pictures. Development art © the respective copyright holder.

The “creature features” were a huge hit for World War II-era and post-war audiences, who could experience fright and villains without the confrontation of real-life horrors. Sequels and spin-offs were created by Universal, and a “shared universe” was soon created. The first team-up out of the gate was *Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man* (1942), followed by *House of Frankenstein* (1944) and *House of Dracula* (1945), which brought together into the same film Frankenstein, Dracula, Wolf Man, and the Hunchback (though most of the creatures barely crossed paths while active in their own separate plotlines)! The first proper gang film for the group was *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein* (1948), which left out the Hunchback in exchange for a comedic monster romp played against two of film’s most popular screen comedians.

Although Universal moved away from the monster films, in England, Hammer Films upped the stakes with its own series of films utilizing the same characters, often starring Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee, among others. Hammer’s horror films were far more graphic and sexualized than their American predecessors, a sign of both less-restrained European markets and changing morals in society and filmmaking. But while monsters overseas became more adult, in the U.S., they became relegated to the realm of youth.

Due to a 1957 syndication package from Screen Gems of the old Universal features, many of the horror films were now airing on television, chopped up and edited, and often packaged and presented by local TV stations’ “horror hosts” such as Vampira and Zacherley, who would crack wise or add spooky intros for the films, as chronicled elsewhere in this issue. No longer relegated to theaters, the monsters were now enjoyed by kids, safe in their homes. In August 1962, Bobby “Boris” Pickett released a novelty song called “Monster Mash,” in which he mimicked the voices of Boris Karloff and Bela Lugosi. The song quickly shot up to #1 on the Billboard music charts. Monsters were now verging on being both kid-friendly *and* funny, instead of nightmare-inducing.

From September 1964 to May 1966, CBS aired the sitcom *The Munsters*, which featured a family with a Frankenstein-like father, a vampire wife and father-in-law, and a werewolf son. Concurrently with *The Munsters*, ABC aired a similar macabre sitcom called *The Addams Family* (1964–1966), though its characters were based on the morbidly funny humor of cartoonist Charles Addams rather than horror monster tropes. In March 1967, Embassy Pictures released *Mad Monster Party*, a stop-motion animated musical feature film from Rankin-Bass which featured its own version of almost every major movie creature as part of a “Worldwide Organization of Monsters.” With Aurora monster model kits being advertised to kids in comics and in the pages of the pun-filled newsstand magazine *Famous Monsters of Filmland* (1958–2017), horror was now *friendly*.

Growing up in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, future animator Lou Scheimer had always liked the Universal movie monsters, even though some of the movies came out after he was serving in the Army overseas. In the early Sixties, having worked for animation houses including Kling Studios, Walter Lantz, Ray Patton Productions, Warner Bros., and others, Scheimer founded Filmation Studios with fellow animator Hal Sutherland and disc-jockey-turned-producer Norm Prescott. Filmation was a scrappy young company that was changing the face of the nascent Saturday morning culture with popular animated superheroic television exploits for *Superman*, *Aquaman*, and *Batman*, as well as the musical adventures of *The Archies*, and film spin-offs *Journey To the Center of the Earth* and *Fantastic Voyage*. Scheimer recognized there was a built-in audience if he worked with licensed characters and shows and preexisting concepts... and he remembered his love for the movie monsters.

Monster Inn... is In

"I always wanted to do a show with the monsters Dracula, Frankenstein, and a werewolf as comedy characters," said Scheimer in my interviews with him for the 2012 TwoMorrows book, *Lou Scheimer: Creating the Filmation Generation*. "Every once in a while, they'd make fun of these guys in the live-action theatricals, but they were perfect comedy characters. And there was certainly no way we could do horror characters any other way for animation." In 1968, Scheimer hired writers Jack Mendelsohn and Jim Mulligan to develop a comedy concept with the monsters.

Mendelsohn had been a writer for EC Comics' *MAD* and *Panic*, as well as a comic strip artist doing *Jacky's Diary* (1959–1961) and ghosting art for other comic series, before moving on to write and direct animation for *Krazy Kat*, *Beetle Bailey*, *George of the Jungle*, ABC's *The Beatles* cartoon, and the *Yellow Submarine* film (1968). Shortly after, he switched to the new live-action TV comedy sketch show, *Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In*. On that latter show, he met Jim Mulligan, who had co-written its pilot episode. At Filmation, Mendelsohn quickly began writing for *Archie*, while the pair began work developing a monstrous concept called *Monster Inn*, a name that sounded suspiciously similar to *Laugh-In*. "We thought we might introduce it in a future season of *Archie*," said Scheimer.

By the fall of 1968, Mendelsohn and Mulligan had turned in preliminary work on *Monster Inn*, which included a monstrously familiar cast: Dracula was a fun-loving, stay-out-late playboy; Wolfman was a surfing and cycling flower child/hippie; and Frankenstein was the harassed one of the group who was always

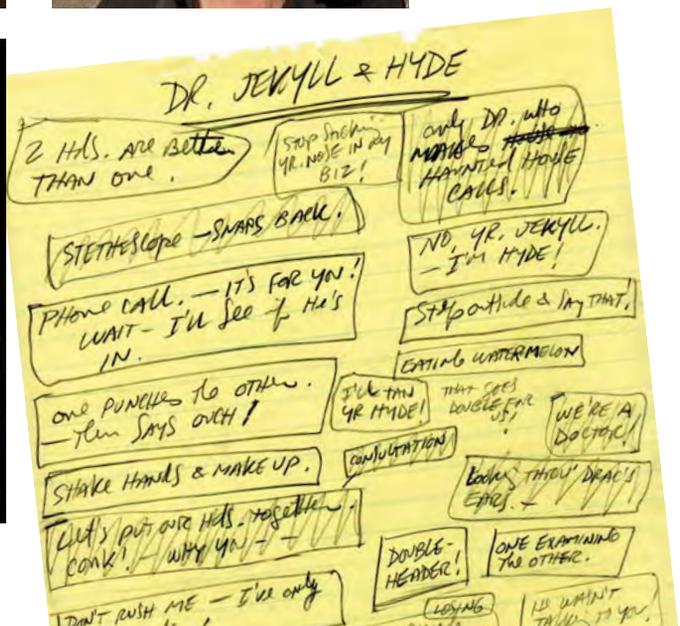
worrying. There was also Bella La Ghostly, a Vampira-like switchboard operator; Hagatha the hotel cook and witch; and Icky and Goo, a pair of mischievous baby gargoyles. "The villain of the story would have been Sir Sydney Sneaking-Slyly, who knew of a treasure hidden somewhere in the Monster Inn and was determined to find it," said Scheimer. "The Inn would be constantly visited by other ghosts and monsters and would have doors that would open up to strange settings, including live footage of things like cannons firing and such. Even at that point we'd planned to have monster-themed musical segments with Wolfman on guitar, Frankenstein on drums, and Dracula at an organ. The first script also featured a quick Archie and Jughead cameo, as well as another by Batman and Robin!"

In a 2015 interview for *HorrorHound*, Mendelsohn said of his co-writer that, "The truth is, I did most of the work. Jim Mulligan kind of took the money and ran. He was a nice guy, a creative guy, but he didn't contribute much." Mendelsohn's claims are pretty easy to substantiate; when he provided me with a folder of development materials to use on the 2006 *Groovie Goolies* DVD set, the dozens of pages were packed with jokes, plots, premises, potential names, and puns that overflowed the margins, all written by Mendelsohn's hand.

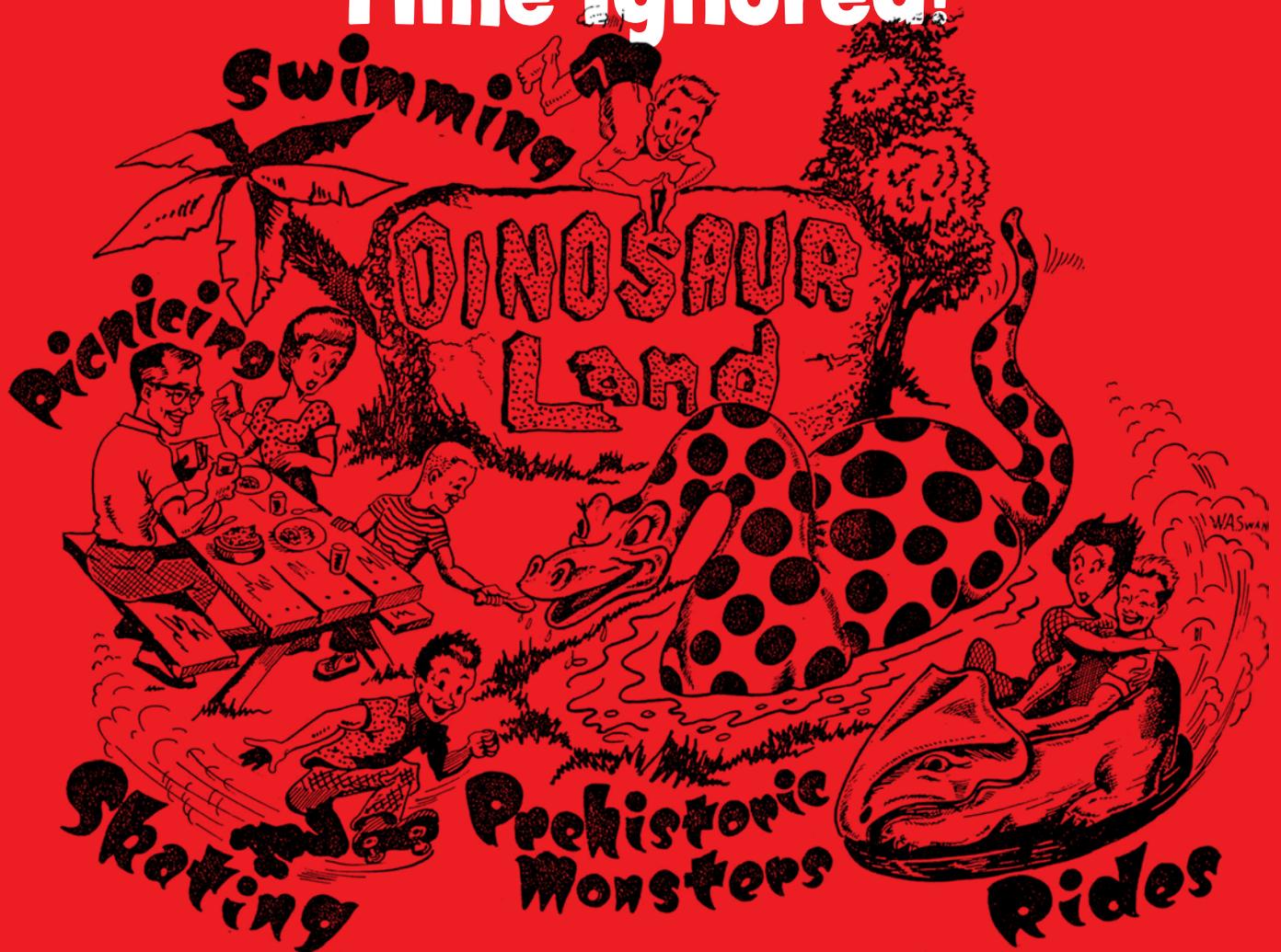
In 1969, Fred Silverman, the head of Children's Programming at CBS, wanted a Fall companion show for *The Archie Show*, and the decision was made to add another half-hour of *Archie* to the schedule, debuting it with *Sabrina*, *the Teenage Witch*, another Archie character with supernatural powers. The show, titled *The Archie*



(LEFT TOP & BOTTOM) Filmation provided color presentation art for CBS to promote *Groovie Goolies* to television stations; some of the art was later used on licensed products. (RIGHT TOP) *Groovie Goolies* co-creator Jack Mendelsohn in 2006. (RIGHT BOTTOM) Some of Mendelsohn's hand-written joke notes for *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. © the respective copyright holder.



The Dinosaur Land That Time Ignored!



FUN FOR THE ENTIRE FAMILY

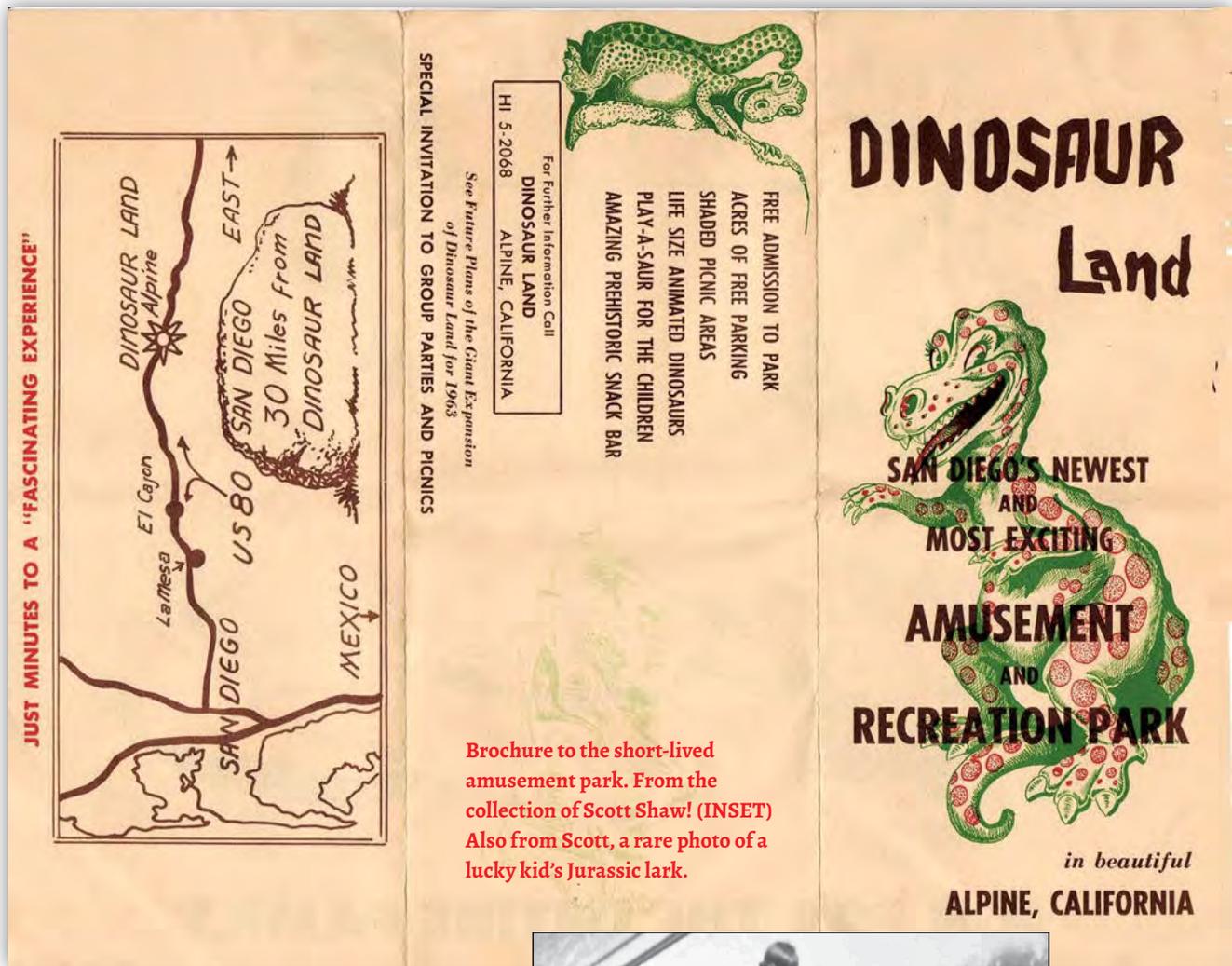
Prehistoric monsters add the perfect touch to that family getaway... we wonder if young Michael Crichton or Steven Spielberg visited here. Dinosaur Land ad courtesy of Scott Shaw!

By Scott Shaw!

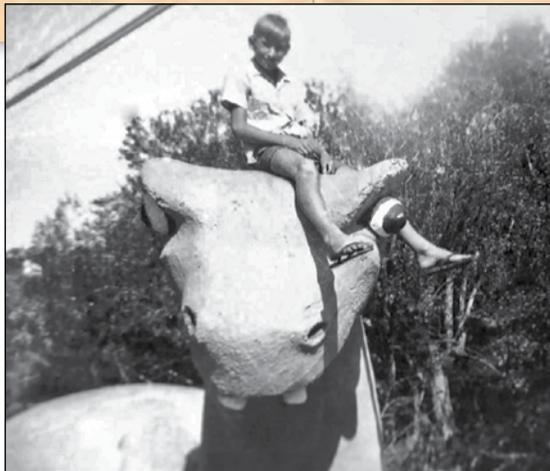
San Diego, California, was an enjoyable place for a young Oddball (like me) to grow up in the late Fifties and early Sixties. It was a U.S. Navy town and I was a Navy brat obsessed with cartoons, dinosaurs, comic books, monsters, and the weird side of natural history. Fortunately for kids like me, we had Balboa Park, with its world-famous San Diego Zoo, the San Diego Museum of Man, and dozens of art museums, arboretums, and other cool hideaways, mostly with free admission. But as much as I loved them all, there

was no local landmark I'd rather visit than the San Diego Museum of Natural History.

Why? Dinosaurs, of course. Actually, half a dinosaur, and not even a real fossil, either; it was only a plaster casting of the skeleton of a duck-billed *Corythosaurus* embedded in a very big wall at the end of one of the museum's halls, but that was good enough for me. There wasn't much else in the way of paleontology: a few beautiful—small, but beautiful—bronze dinosaur statues based



Brochure to the short-lived amusement park. From the collection of Scott Shaw! (INSET) Also from Scott, a rare photo of a lucky kid's Jurassic lark.



on artwork by Charles R. Knight; a taxidermy-style replica of a Smilodon (that's a "saber-toothed tiger" to you); and a few fossil fragments of Smilodon and dire wolf skulls from the La Brea Tar Pits, the legendary "Death Trap of the Ages" in downtown Los Angeles. Since then, the San Diego Museum of Natural History has grown in size and sophistication, even boasting a spectacular timeline mural by noted paleo-wildlife artist William Stout.

I should point out that, in those days, dinosaurs weren't generally considered to be cool and popular with kids like they are these days. Sure, back then, every boy loved mega-monster movie matinees, but it was due more to hurling Good-and-Plentys at each other than genuine scientific interest. And I think that all of those colorful plastic dinosaurs dangling in toy displays in the supermarkets of America were bought by the same little weirdos (like me) who bought every single issue of Dell's *Kona*, *Monarch of Monster Isle*, DC's *Star Spangled War Stories* featuring "The War That Time Forgot," and Charlton's *Gorgo*, not to mention the Pyramid paperback reissue of *The Lost World*—tying in with the Irwin Allen movie—and copies of Oliver Butterworth's *The Enormous Egg* and Roy Chapman Andrews' *All About Dinosaurs*. But a lot of us were amateur paleontologists, memorizing the names, sizes, and geologic era of every dinosaur we could remember.

got beaten up for naming our four-square team "The Triceratops." When my teachers screened "A World is Born"—the "educational" edit of the "Rite of Spring" sequence of Disney's *Fantasia* (1940)—I'd have to hide my face from my classmates so they wouldn't see that the sight of dying cartoon dinosaurs always made me cry. I was even called "Dinosaur Boy," which was intended as an insult but was what I considered a compliment. At least dinosaurs became a bit more acceptable in September 1960, when ABC premiered a very popular new "adult" cartoon show about cavemen and dinosaurs called *The Flintstones*. (But believe me, that's *another* story.)

The teasing and bullying never deterred my fascination with all things extinct. (Hanna-Barbera Productions' *The Flintstones*,

But as all geeks eventually learn, the Real World rarely shares our passion for such ephemera. Girls giggled derisively when I corrected "Parasaurolophus" and other mispronunciations of creature names. I

Sindy

Barbie's British Rival

The Rise and Fall of
a Supertoy

by Elizabeth & Ian Millsted

The Rise

Fashion dolls were popular in the Sixties and Seventies, but while pre-teen girls in the U.S.A. were likely to be playing with, and collecting, Barbie dolls, the same age group in Britain at that time were more likely to be spending their time and money on Sindy. In 1968 and 1970, Sindy was the bestselling toy in the United Kingdom. The authors of this article were both children living and growing up in England through the Seventies, and to both of them the name and brand of Sindy was the one that came instantly to mind when thinking of the types of dolls that girls would buy or have bought for them.

In September 1963, Sindy was launched into the British toys market by Pedigree Toys Ltd. with the advertising slogan, "the doll you love to dress." It was an opportune time, and the manufacturers did a lot of the right things to establish a successful product. This was the time when British fashion designers were becoming household names to all social classes, not just the privileged few. Pedigree Toys made the astute move of having the initial line of clothes for the doll designed by Marion Foale and Sally Tuffin. Foale

Sindy © Pedigree
Dolls and Toys Ltd.

*Sindy the
Doll you love
to Dress*



Super-Duper View-Master®

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by Robert V. Conte

When inventor William B. Gruber created the first View-Master in 1938, it is likely he did not foresee that his patented, stereoscopic viewer paired with round, interchangeable reels would become an 80-year-old iconic brand. In fact, the standard View-Master viewer (although ever evolving) and its compatible reels (each containing seven, three-dimensional pictures) remain among the most consistently manufac-

tured products since their debut at the 1939 World's Fair in Flushing, New York City!

The United States had been in the midst of its worst economic depression in history. Gruber (with partner Harry J. Graves—president of Sawyers Photographic Services) originally intended View-Master to be the scenic gateway to the world—permitting the average person to

“visit” far-off, exotic places and see numerous delights Earth had to offer. The Grand Canyon, Colorado; Las Vegas, Nevada; and Honolulu, Hawaii, were among hundreds of reels to choose from. Families could share these incredible, full-color Kodachrome images with each other, their friends, classmates, and co-workers. For decades, travel agencies used View-Master viewers and reels to promote tourism—and it worked!

Another icon first appeared in 1938—Superman! The Man of Steel debuted in *Action Comics* #1 and took the world by storm. Created by writer Jerry Siegel and artist Joe Shuster, Superman was the first “superhero” and quickly grew to become a multi-million-dollar enterprise including comic books, Krypto Ray Guns, radio programs, and cartoons. Within a few short years, hundreds of other costume-wearing crimefighters graced the four-color pages of comic books published by a plethora of companies.

Sawyer's, Inc. was first responsible for bringing View-Master inside American homes nationwide. After producing hundreds of different scenic titles, the company realized that alternate subjects could also be marketed and profitable—especially to children. By the Fifties, Sawyer's had expanded into new territories such as Cartoons, Religion, Sports, and Special Subjects. In addition to its successful single-reel program, the company experimented with selling three, specific-themed View-Master reels inside paper envelopes. This product repackaging, some titles including an illustrated booklet, proved to be incredibly successful. The format remained this way for decades!

In the mid-Fifties, television shows like *Lassie and Timmy* and *The Mickey Mouse Club* were successfully adapted for View-Master. For the first time, images from these programs were depicted



Scarce print ad announcing the then-forthcoming *Batman* (1966) View-Master packet in Montgomery Ward's mail-order catalog. From the collection of Robert V. Conte. Batman TM & © DC Comics.

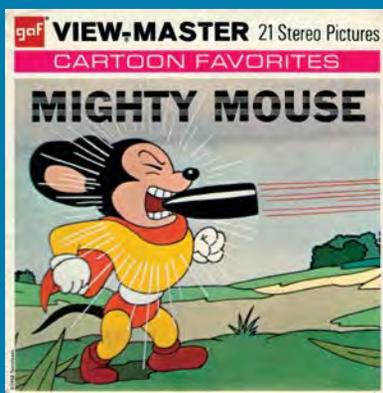
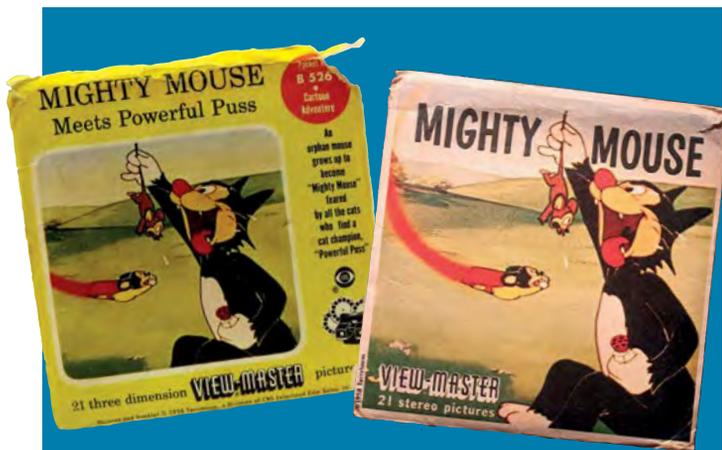
in full-color—whether or not shows were seen this way; most Americans owned black-and-white television sets. Other programs like *Tom Corbett: Space Cadet* were freely adapted by hired sculpture artists, who created unique interpretations of the characters, spaceships, and sets. This technique was sometimes preferred to having a cameraman on set during production of a television show. This allowed View-Master to take advantage of the full effect of its vibrant, three-dimensional imagery.

Another growing View-Master category proved to be its Stories and Adventures Series (later branded Showtime) including *The Lone Ranger* in “Mystery Rustler” (962-A/B/C) and Walt Disney's *Zorro* (B469), both preceding the Superhero genre. Kids seeing their favorite action heroes in “eye-popping, three dimensional color” was an incredible option too powerful to pass on during that time. It was not uncommon for children to trade their bubble-gum cards, comic books, and toys in exchange for View-Master reels!

Another popular live-action program from that decade, *The Adventures of Superman*, starring George Reeves as Clark Kent/Superman, would have been a natural fit for the growing line of View-Master packets. Fans often wondered why reels featuring this incarnation of the Son of Krypton were never released?

Reportedly, it almost happened...

According to the late Noel Neill (with whom I spoke at the 2010 San Diego Comic-Con)—the first actress ever to play *Daily Planet* reporter Lois Lane on film (and later on television after Phyllis Coates portrayed the character during the first season and for the feature film, *Superman and the Mole Men*)—a View-Master cameraman had been on set during an episode from one of the last two seasons. However, Reeves' tragic suicide (later theorized to be a homicide or an accident) forced the show's cancellation. His untimely death was considered taboo in the merchandising world of the day, and new products based on the program were deemed inappropriate and abandoned. (Rumor has it these images were archived at the View-Master factory in Portland, Oregon, until it closed in 2001. If true, where are they now?)



Here he comes to save the day—*Mighty Mouse* (B526), the first View-Master superhero packet, seen in its original 1958 incarnation (TOP LEFT) and later versions. Mighty Mouse TM & © CBS Consumer Products.

With exception of a few titles including *Buck Rogers* in “Battle on the Moon (J1), its television counterpart *Buck Rogers in the 25th Century* (L15), and the “Superheroes of Rock ‘n’ Roll,” KISS (K-71), GAF only produced superhero reels based on DC and Marvel properties. Its next three-reel packet, *Super Heroes* (K53), featured Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, Aquaman, and the Wonder Twins—Zan and Jayna! There is some confusion with this particular title: the same reels were renamed *Super Friends* (per the ABC Saturday morning cartoon of the same name) inside a Talking View-Master Gift Pak and then *Super Powers* (the brand name used to promote Kenner’s action figures and other DC Comics merchandise throughout the Eighties) in another Gift Pak packaged with a two-dimensional View-Master projector. Of the three, the *Super Friends*-marked reels appear to be the scarcest.

Some View-Master enthusiasts, and certainly many comic-book fans, claim the best superhero packet ever produced by GAF was *Batman* in “The Joker’s Wild” (L31). Unlike its 1966 predecessor, this new 1981 packet adapted an actual comic book: *Batman #251* (Sept. 1973), written by Denny O’Neil and drawn by Neal Adams. The Clown Prince of Crime escapes from an insane asylum and challenges the Darknight Detective to numerous tricks before he is returned to prison. The artwork shown in this title is superb; GAF artists were respectful in keeping Adams’ style while using a color palette that enhanced his work as not seen before due to limitations of four-color newsprint.

The last superhero packet produced by GAF was *Superman II* (L46), also in 1981. Featuring virtually the same cast as its predecessor, Superman fights General Zod who, with his two accomplices Ursa and Non, escape the Phantom Zone and travel to Earth seeking revenge for being banished from Krypton. The enclosed booklet was a “Fun and Games” package with crosswords and other brain-teasers relating to the Last Son of Krypton.

A Blistering Change for View-Master Packets

Although GAF had taken View-Master into a new direction with myriad product offerings and experiments with new methods of advertising, design, and manufacturing, the company realized pictorial products were not as profitable as hoped. The Talking View-Master line, its Double-Vue Movie Viewer, and new Show Beam investments were becoming money pits. It was time to sell View-Master once again.

Fortunately, in 1981, View-Master was purchased from GAF by an investment group that believed the brand, its licenses, and its products could reach new financial prosperity if retooled to accommodate the ever-changing retail market. The company was renamed View-Master International Group (VMI) and it quickly initiated several changes:

First, VMI introduced a packaging technology in the United States that GAF implemented for View-Master in Europe just a few years before. The new format, dubbed the “blister-pack,” eliminated the booklets, direct-mail order forms, and paper envelopes that had been available for generations. Now each three-reel title would be contained in a plastic tray sealed on printed cardboard and a more detailed description of the story would appear on the back. The cards had a die-cut hole on the top so they could be racked on peg-board shelves inside store aisles as opposed to retailers being obligated to use valuable floor space on View-Master displays in years past.

Next, VMI discontinued all “non-essential” backlog and deep discounted remaining GAF inventory by stapling packets to printed cards similar to the new blister-packs, so both styles could be racked together.

Lastly, VMI cancelled the entire Talking View-Master product line and replaced all canister gift paks with a rectangular-boxed, three-reel gift set containing a Model L viewer and one three-reel title.

GEE . . . IT MUST BE GAF! IT'S THREE-DIMENSIONAL FUN!

5 TALKING SPIDERMAN VIEWER GIFT PAK. Kids favorite crime fighters come alive with this GAF gift pak. Special reels have sound and brilliant 3-D pictures of Spider-Man, Iron Man, Captain America and Thor. Kids advance reel at the speed they desire; and they can hear the story as often as they like. Deluxe illuminated talking viewer comes with 6 reels and permanent storage canister. Operates on 2 "C" batteries (not incl.—see page 62). Other 5-reel paks for use with talking View-Master are sold below. See 'em all!

83 Y 4244—Ship. wt. 2 lb. 10 oz. 18.99

TALKING 5-REEL PAKS. Reels only.

83 Y 4242—DISNEY FAVORITES, 6 oz. 4.44

83 Y 4243—CARTOONS, Wt. 6 oz. 4.44

83 Y 4246—CHILDREN'S STORIES, 6 oz. 4.44

6 VIEW-MASTER GIFT PAK. The ticket to hours of quiet fun for your child. Consists of a View-Master 3-D viewer and 7 full-color picture-reels in permanent storage can.

DISNEY GIFT PAK.

83 Y 4219—Ship. wt. 1 lb. 4 oz. 5.99

GOODY GUY'S GIFT PAK.

83 Y 4222—Ship. wt. 1 lb. 6 oz. 5.99

MONSTERS GIFT PAK.

83 Y 4220—Ship. wt. 1 lb. 4 oz. 5.99

7-REEL PAKS. Reels only; for use with above View-Masters and Theaters in the Round at right.

83 Y 4264—DISNEY CARTOONS, 6 oz. 2.99

83 Y 4272—FLINTSTONES, 6 oz. 2.99

83 Y 4270—GHOSTS AND MONSTERS, 6 oz. 2.99

7 THEATER IN THE ROUND gives you optional fun when you're alone. View the colorful 3-D slides through the View-Master stereo viewer. When a crowd of kids gets together, use the View-Master projector which projects pictures on any flat, light-colored surface. Theaters in the Round consist of: View-Master stereo viewer, View-Master projector and a collection of 10 full-color picture-reels in a permanent storage canister.

SPACEMEN THEATER IN THE ROUND.

83 Y 4274—Ship. wt. 1 lb. 4 oz. 18.77

DISNEY THEATER IN THE ROUND.

83 Y 4273—Ship. wt. 1 lb. 4 oz. 18.77

7-REEL PAKS. Reels only; for use with Theaters in the Round and View-Masters. See listings under View-Master Gift Pak, at left.

Talking Spiderman Viewer Gift Pak 18.99

View-Master Gift Pak 5.99

Theater in the Round 18.77

Fisher-Price 2-Way Theater 24.77

Show movies on a private screen or on the wall for bigger audiences! Simply turn the crank to operate. Interchangeable cartridges . . . no threading or rewinding. Use AC house current. With 1 Mickey Mouse film cartridge.

83 Y 4263—Shipping weight 4 lb. 5 oz. 24.77

MOVIE CARTRIDGES FOR 2-WAY THEATER.

83 Y 4241—SNOW WHITE. Shipping weight 7 oz. 2.99

83 Y 4292—DONALD DUCK. Shipping weight 7 oz. 2.99

83 Y 4293—SYLVESTER AND TWEEETY. Shipping weight 7 oz. 2.99

83 Y 4294—PINK PANTHER. Shipping weight 7 oz. 2.99

Super 4 Sound Projector 59.90

Ideal's sound-synchronized, motion picture projector uses super 8mm sound film cartridges for easy loading and unloading. Projects pictures from 4 to 8 ft. Solid state amplifier. Uses AC current; U.L. listed. Polystyrene construction. Complete with Bad News files sound movie cartridge.

83 Y 4296E—Shipping weight 8 lb. 59.90

3-TITLE PAKS. For use with Super 4 Sound Projector.

83 Y 4298—FLINTSTONES; LAFF OLYMPICS; STYL IN TWEEETY, 1 lb. 19.77

83 Y 4297—SPIDERMAN, BATMAN, SUPERMAN 1 lb. 19.77

83 Y 4296—KINGKONG, GODZILLA, BIRDS, 1 lb. 19.77 [ALDENS • 63]

Late-Seventies catalog ad for various View-Master Gift Paks, including *Spider-Man* (misspelled “Spiderman” on canister). From the Robert V. Conte collection.

Geppi's Entertainment Museum

The Final Tour

By Michael Solof

My name is Michael Solof, and for the past five years I've been the Collections and Exhibits Manager at Geppi's Entertainment Museum (GEM) in Baltimore, Maryland. Geppi's Museum is a place where you can experience pop culture as never before. Located in the historic Camden Station, GEM houses a collection of over 6,000 artifacts and is a tribute to the characters, toys, and collectibles of our past and present. It's a place where guests can rub elbows with the characters that have shaped pop culture and our lives. But how did such a deep and varied collection come to be?

From a Collection to a Museum

Back in the Seventies, Steve Geppi—the owner of just about everything on display at the museum—was working as a postal worker. On weekends, he liked to spend his time at comic-book conventions, and eventually began buying and selling books himself. Like so many of us, his mom had thrown out his comic collection when he was younger, so he had a lot of lost time to catch up on! Soon, he was making more money selling comics than he was working for the post office, so he quit his job and opened up the first of many comic-book shops. His next big step was to get out of selling comics and instead get into dis-

[Editor's note: Perhaps this department header should be retitled "The Best Laid Plans..." this issue.

On Wednesday, May 30, 2018—the very day I was finalizing this article for the designer to begin layouts—I received a Scoop e-newsletter from Diamond Comic Distributors with the unexpected announcement that its president and CEO, Stephen A. Geppi, had made a multimillion-dollar donation of over 3,000 items from his collection of comic books, original comic art, movie posters, photographs, and other pop-culture collectibles to the Library of Congress. Since 2006, Geppi's phenomenal collection has been housed in Geppi's Entertainment Museum in Baltimore, Maryland—the subject of this very article, guest-written by the museum's Collections and Exhibits Manager Michael Solof—but surprisingly with this bombshell, the museum's doors have closed as of Sunday, June 3, 2018.

This startling twist of events occurred too close to press time to cancel or dramatically alter this article. As a result, what was intended to be a tourism feature enticing reader attendance to Geppi's Entertainment Museum is now a warm-hearted time-traveling trip in the Wayback Machine. But that's what the museum was always about—preserving memories and history through the lens of pop culture (not unlike the mission statement of *RetroFan* magazine). While Mr. Geppi's collection can no longer be seen in the manner described and depicted here, consider yourself fortunate to take this final, intimate tour of Baltimore's beloved showplace of Americana—and plan to follow select items from this celebrated collection to their new home in the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.]



(FAR LEFT) Geppi's Entertainment Museum, April 30, 2013. Photo by "Jim, the Photographer," via Flickr. **(LEFT)** Beam aboard this tour of Geppi's Entertainment Museum with its Collections and Exhibits Manager, Michael Solof (seated). Steve Geppi, owner of most of the museum's collection, is on screen in the background.



(TOP) GEM's comic-book library. All images in this article are courtesy of Geppi's Entertainment Museum. (LEFT) From the Fabulous Fifties, the Bob-A-Loop toy, as seen in its GEM display.

tribution. This led to the founding of Diamond Comic Distributors, now the largest comic distributor in the world.

But like so many of us collectors know, all of this buying led to a new problem: storage. Geppi needed a place to both preserve the wonderful artifacts he was amassing, but he also wanted to share his love of comics and pop culture with the world. Plus, it just made sense to base his collection in the city that he was born and raised in and continued to love throughout his life. That's how Geppi's Entertainment Museum, the world's best showcase for comics and pop culture, came to open on September 6, 2006.

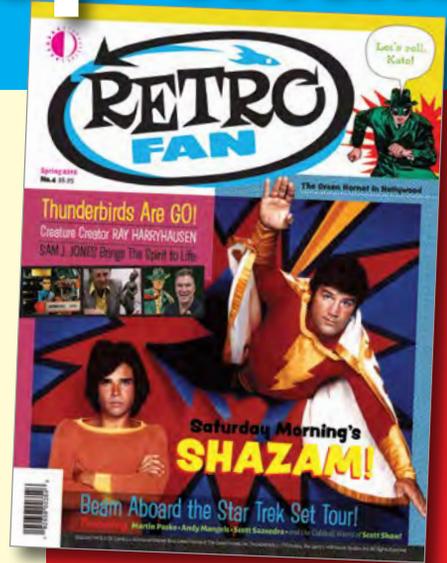
I love my job and I'm always thrilled to give tours of the Museum to show it off. There's a lot to be amazed by here at GEM! We always suggest visitors start off in our Comic Library. As you can see... it's stunning!

And yes, that is an *Action Comics* #1 as well as a *Detective Comics* #27 on display in our Prestige Case, front and center, as

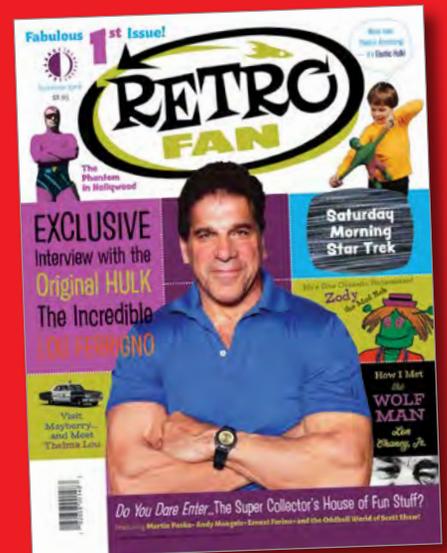
you walk into the room. The Library traces the history of comic books from the late 1800s all the way through today, and it showcases about 1,000 comics. Hidden gems throughout the room include *Pep Comics* #22 (the first appearance of Archie), *MAD*'s first magazine-sized issue, plus the first appearances of Spider-Man, Iron Man, the Fantastic Four, the Hulk, and many more. We also have more modern classics for viewing, such as the first issues of *Watchmen*, *Ultimate Spider-Man*, *Sandman*, and *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. Plaques on the walls tell the story of the entire history of comics through all of its ages, with stops along the way including pulp magazines, Big Little Books, plus highlights of EC and Atlas Comics' expansive collections.

We're very proud to be able to have a constantly rotating Artist Spotlight section within the Library, where guests can view original comic art up close. Here, you can study in detail the amazing pencils, inks, colors, and watercolors of both classic and

NEXT ISSUE: The SUPER COOL Culture We Grew Up With!



#4: Interviews with the Shazam! TV show's JOHN (Captain Marvel) DAVEY and MICHAEL (Billy Batson) GRAY, the Green Hornet in Hollywood, remembering monster maker RAY HARRYHAUSEN, the way-out Santa Monica Pacific Ocean Amusement Park, a Star Trek Set Tour, SAM J. JONES on the Spirit movie pilot, British sci-fi TV classic Thunderbirds, Casper & Richie Rich museum, the King Tut fad, and more! **SHIPS MARCH 2019!**



#1 STILL AVAILABLE! Interview with TV's Incredible Hulk LOU FERRIGNO; The Phantom in Hollywood; Filmation's Star Trek cartoon; "How I Met the Wolf Man—Lon Chaney, Jr."; goofy comic book Zody the Mod Rob; Mego's Elastic Hulk toy; RetroTravel to the real-life Mayberry; interview with BETTY LYNN, "Thelma Lou" of The Andy Griffith Show; and Mr. Microphone!

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NEW!

RETROFAN #3 celebrates the 40th ANNIVERSARY of SUPERMAN: THE MOVIE with an exclusive interview with Superman director RICHARD DONNER! Editor MICHAEL EURY voyages to the bottom of IRWIN ALLEN's sci-fi universe and Retro Travels to Metropolis, IL, home of the Superman Celebration! ANDY MANGELS dives in to Saturday morning's undersea adventures of AQUAMAN! ERNEST FARINO flips through monster fanzines of the Sixties and Seventies! The Oddball World of SCOTT SHAW! unravels Marvel's wackiest product ever: Spider-Man and Hulk toilet paper! SCOTT SAAVEDRA adopts a family of SEA-MONKEYS®! Plus FUNNY FACE beverages and collectibles, a fortress of SUPERMAN AND BATMAN MEMORABILIA, and more fun, fab features!

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A Hunger for Yesterday

Collecting Metal Lunch Boxes

By Terry Collins

Of Pop Bottles and Sears and Roebuck

I didn't have much money as a kid.

Scratch that: I didn't have *any* money as a kid. While my family wasn't destitute, the budget was lean and most of the time limited to the necessities. I'm sure that if my father hadn't kept up the monthly payments on our Sears credit card, my yearly visits from Santa would've consisted of a single "cool" gift from the local Eckerd's Drug Store and clothing galore instead of the invitation to choose up to \$50 worth of *Sears Wish Book for the Christmas Holiday Season* awesomeness.

No *Sears Wish Book for the Christmas Holiday Season*? No *Batman*, *Lone Ranger*, *Six Million Dollar Man*, *Star Trek*, *Dallas Cowboys*, or *Atari 2600 Home Entertainment System*.

So, for me, the concept of a weekly allowance was a fiction. Other than parental purchases and the generosity of relatives on holidays, most of my spending cash came via the gathering and selling of the now-extinct method of currency known as "pop bottles." For younger readers not Southern born, a "pop bottle" is a glass soda bottle returned to the grocery store for a nickel, or later, a dime deposit. When one purchased a soft drink, an extra

premium was added to the cost for the container. Return the glass container and the premium was refunded.

Yes, back in my day in the Seventies, Pepsi and Coke bottles were sterilized and reused again and again and again. Think of it as primitive recycling, which I'm still of the opinion was better for the environment.

I was always on the lookout for stray bottles. Finding one was discovering discarded money. One summer, after participating in a walkathon for charity, those who reached the end of the 15-mile route were given a pack of Lance ToastChee crackers and a soda. Most people left the glass bottles abandoned along the hillside. I was instantly transported into the form of a present-day California Gold Miner of 1849. With a hearty mental cry of "Thar's gold in them thar hills," I went bottle gathering, filling the trunk of the family Bonneville when they picked me up after the walk.

As this story, and the others that support my opening sentence, relate... I didn't have much in the way of currency as a kid. The reason for this explanation is the root of why I am a collector. Instead of having the luxury of breaking a toy, ruining a comic book, or bashing a lunch box over Ivan Edward's bowl-cut-adorned noggin, I was forced by circumstance to take care of my possessions. So, I hung

Editor's note: Are you a Super Collector? Want to share your collection with RetroFan readers? If so, contact the editor at euryma@gmail.com—and include a few photos from your collection with your query.

(TOP) You're never too old to enjoy having lunch out of your Flintstones lunch box. Super Collector Terry Collins, in the East Surry High School (NC) cafeteria, and a 1962 Flintstones lunch box, the first lunch-box release for *The Flintstones*.

daily brown bag containing a sandwich, chips, a cookie, or a banana, with chocolate milk to drink courtesy of the steel industrial cooler in the lunch line of the cafeteria. However, a sack was so... lame. No, I lusted after what I'd seen in the aisles of my local stores.

So, thus began an annual ritual I would follow for six years. Preparations for each grade would launch in late summer, two weeks or so before the first day of classes, with the accompanying of my maternal grandfather to Roses Department Store. Each new year, Pa treated me to that most valuable of all the back-to-school supplies available, allowing me to choose a new lunchbox from the cornucopia spilling out at a kid's eye-level.

There were so many possibilities. Miniature metal television sets of vibrantly painted scenes from the finest Saturday morning offerings, or primetime shows with children's appeal. Cartoon and comic strips. Celebrities and sports. Music and more. Sometimes, these metal treasures were placed on seasonal shelves, while other times were housed in tall, narrow bins. The array was undeniable, and

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it, yet simply drawn and colored in the style of Charlie Brown on the front, or the iconic endary Charles M. Schulz, but by the artist Tom LoBianco, who not only designed the iconic Pezley Thermos lunch boxes in the 1960s, it was also master of the style of the 1970s *Peanuts* merchandising of the time, from the z empire to the current day.

The market dictated the purchase of a lunch box that would not be out of style in the country today. *Scooby-Doo*. In the 1970s, lunch containers today, even with markers and stickers. Back to the 1960s, erasers... and yes, a shiny

and 1974...?

Third grade? I picked up *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids*, a personal choice due to it being one of my favorite Saturday morning cartoon shows. The front panel alone was a masterpiece of composition, fitting the entire Junkyard Band of Mushmouth, Dumb Donald, Rudy, Weird Harold, Bucky, Russell, Bill, and Fat Albert himself into a fun musical tableau.

Choice number four? *Emergency!* In hindsight, an odd choice from my usual tastes of cartoon boxes, but a logical one. The paramedics and firemen of Squad 51 were enormously popular with kids in the late Seventies, and the box itself was dynamic and beautifully painted in tones of yellow and red befitting a series set in a firehouse. The show was so popular, Aladdin also designed another version as a dome-shaped lunch box with all-new artwork to return to the well of the young fans for the show.

Fifth grade and 1976 brought us the *Marvel Comics Super Heroes*, which embraced the entire Marvel line-up... giving a kid a shiny back-to-school special featuring Spider-Man, the Hulk, the main members of the Avengers with Captain America, Iron Man, Thor, the Vision, Scarlet Witch, and Hawkeye, and the Fantastic Four on a single lunch box. As a lifelong comics fan, I loved this lunch box, and wore it out to the degree there was nothing left to save. I was happy decades later to replace it with a mint-condition



(TOP) One half of Collins' lunch box "wall," a true mix of genres and characters from over the decades, with other collectibles dropped in. This was a remodeled tool shed that was refurbished to serve as Terry's office and a place for his ever-growing collection. (BOTTOM) The other side of the "wall." Query from our Super Collector: "Who carried a *Hee Haw* (1970) lunch box to school?"