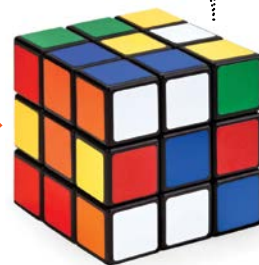




RETRO FAN

Fall 2019
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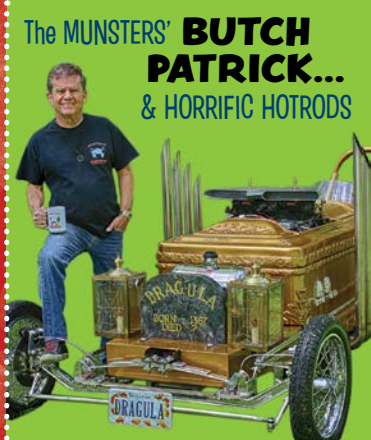
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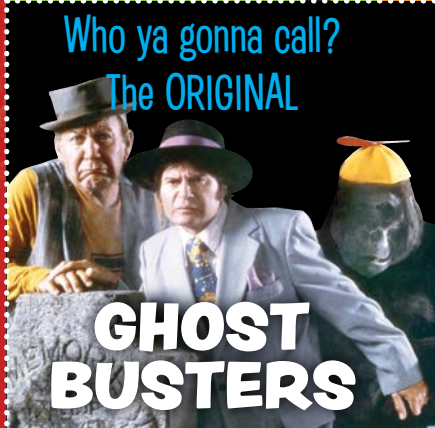
Are you too square to solve me?



Tune in to
SVENGOOLIE
and
the retro
line-up of
MeTV



The MUNSTERS' **BUTCH PATRICK...**
& HORRIFIC HOTRODS



Who ya gonna call?
The ORIGINAL

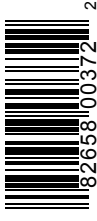
GHOST BUSTERS



*Remember the Naugas?
We've got 'em covered*

"I Was a Teenage James Bond!" • The Dobie Gillis Dilemma • Pinball Wizardry & more!

Featuring **Ernest Farino • Andy Mangels • Will Murray • Scott Saavedra • Scott Shaw!**



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THE CRAZY COOL CULTURE WE GREW UP WITH



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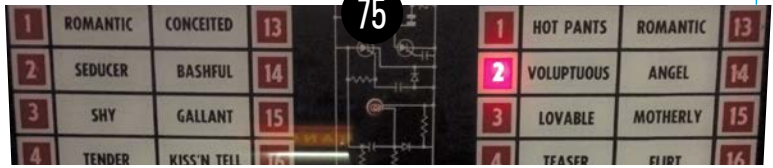
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Saturday Nights with SVENGOOLIE



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by Dan Johnson

In 2010, MeTV launched nationwide. The over-the-air digital channel, billed as “Memorable Entertainment Television,” has become the destination for fans of classic TV shows, offering reruns of such beloved series as *Bonanza*, *The Andy Griffith Show*, *Wonder Woman*, and *The Twilight Zone*, to name just a few. MeTV is the must-see-TV channel for many readers of *RetroFan*.

Shortly after the network launched, MeTV began airing a program that brought back one of the great staples of classic television: the horror host. [Editor’s note: See *RetroFan* #2 for the behind-the-scenes story of TV’s horror hosts.] Every Saturday night, MeTV presents Svengoolie, who under the make-up and costuming is actually Rich Koz, a veteran of Chicago television and a legend in the Windy City. MeTV took him national and has made Svengoolie America’s Horror Host.

Svengoolie screens classic horror movies that many of us grew up with like *Creature From the Black Lagoon* and *The Invisible Man*, with the host introducing these films to a whole new generation of fans. But frightening his viewers is not the primary goal of Svengoolie. Between movie segments, Svengoolie entertains his audience with comedy bits including song parodies that would give Weird Al Yankovic a run for his money. As for the jokes and puns, they fly almost as fast as the set’s rubber chickens do.

Svengoolie is also great about interviewing horror and comedy legends on his show. While most interviews are conducted at horror conventions, a good many take place right in the studio. Indeed, you never know who might pop up on Svengoolie. It could be Gilbert Gottfried, Trace Beaulieu and Frank

Conniff from *Mystery Science Theater 3000*, or even Vicki Lawrence as Thelma Harper from *Mama’s Family*. Recently, *RetroFan* got to sit down with Svengoolie for this exclusive interview.

RetroFan: First of all, thank you for doing this interview with us. I consider it a high honor to have you in *RetroFan*.

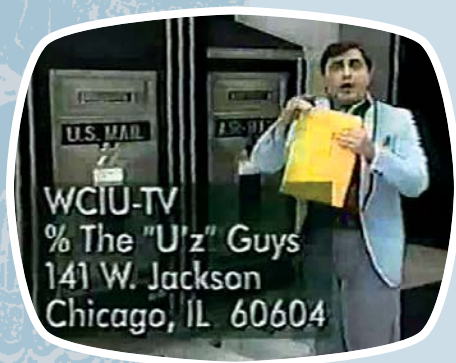
I used to work with *Scary Monsters* magazine, and its Dennis Druktenis introduced me to you back in 1996. He sent me a couple of your shows on video and I was hooked from that moment on. This was when you were starting out on U 26 (WCIU in Chicago), and looking back at the commercials for the classic sitcoms that ran on the channel (*The Munsters* and *Gilligan’s Island*), U 26 appeared to be a prototype for MeTV.

Svengoolie: Yes, actually, it was. That is definitely so. When my boss, Neal Sabin, took over WCIU for the owners, he wanted to make it the kind of retro, independent station that we all grew up with. And that station was the first basis for what MeTV would become.

RF: The channel looked great, and I remember wishing I had a station like this in my viewing area. Even though I couldn’t watch it, I still fell in love with U 26.

Svengoolie: That’s very cool. I think that is exactly why MeTV has been so successful. A lot of people feel that way.

RF: The shows on MeTV are comfort food for your mind. You can have a tough day at work or school, but then this channel just takes you back to a simpler time. If just for a little bit, you get to escape reality.



(TOP) Jerry G. Bishop, the original Svengoolie. (CENTER) Rich Koz as Son of Svengoolie, 1980. (BOTTOM) Koz in a 1995 WCUI-TV promotion.

Svengoolie: Definitely so. Of course, MeTV stands for Memorable Entertainment. One of the things I think about our show is that I think almost everybody grew up some sort of horror host, and it's kind of a kick to see that type of show being done again since most local horror hosts have fallen by the wayside. Today, most local stations devote most of their airtime to news, sports events, and public affairs, and they don't really do my type of entertainment show.

[The horror host show] was one of the things Neal wanted to bring back when he started WCUI. I was his first talent acquisition, I believe. He asked me to do the Svengoolie character again. I told him, very honestly, that in whatever time I had been off the air, a week would not go by that somebody didn't recognize me and tell me, "You know, I really loved that show, are you ever going to do it again?" The show meant so much to people, and I would say, "Sure! I would be happy to do it."

RF: Our local host that I grew up on was Billy Bobb, a redneck who hosted horror films on Saturday afternoons and also did a kids cartoon show on weekday afternoons on WGGT 48 in Greensboro, North Carolina. Besides Billy Bobb's show, WGGT 48 also showed the old Universal Studios horror movies on Saturday mornings, and that was where I discovered the classic films like *Tarantula* and *Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man*.

One of the things I love about your show is that you bring the old Universal horror movies back to the air.

Svengoolie: When we started airing the Universal horror movies again, a lot of the markets that we go into had not had them on broadcast TV for at 15 or 20 years. So in a way, we are re-educating a lot of people about these movies and presenting them for the first time to some other viewers.

RF: I know of parents and grandparents who watch your show with their kids. They know the old Universal horror movies will thrill the kids a bit, and give them a fright, but they won't traumatize them. Plus, having you as the host, you are a nice buffer for the scary stuff. You let them laugh a little before going back to the scary stuff.

Svengoolie: It's kind of like a safety valve, having the comedy relief to offset things that might be a little upsetting. And granted, there are movies, like the Universal horror movies certainly, that are a lot milder than what currently passes for horror movies today. They are a nice introduction for younger viewers who may have never seen a horror movie before.

RF: I think one of the best movies to show younger viewers is *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein*, and I can tell you are always having fun when you show that movie.

Svengoolie: Oh, definitely. Also good are the origin movies, like *Frankenstein*, *The Wolf Man*, and *Dracula*. They are just great movies that I really enjoy, but they offer a lot in the ways that we can have fun with them.

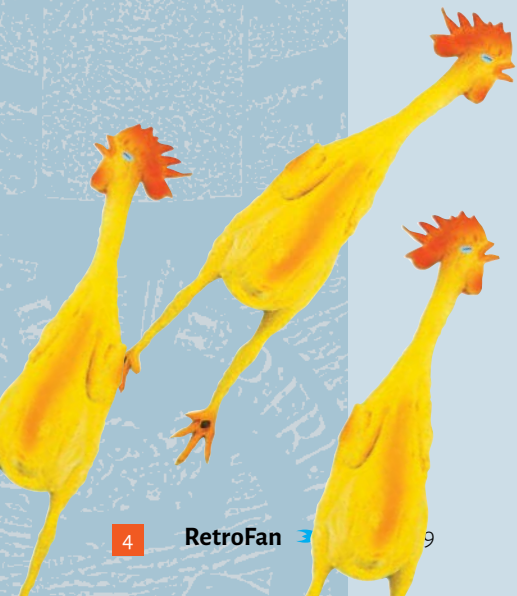
RF: As a horror host, are the Universal horror movies your favorite movies, or are there any other movies you like better?

Svengoolie: With Universal, the great thing about them is that they cover so many different decades. Even into the Fifties they were giving us *Creature From the Black Lagoon*, which I think is one of the classic monsters. In the Forties, there was such a wide variety of monsters. I also love American International's stuff, that's always fun. A lot of the modern stuff I like are the really original films, like *Nightmare on Elm Street* and *Halloween*. Those are really impressive films and I like those as well.

RF: There are some fans out there that may not be aware that your legacy as a horror host extends well before MeTV. You've been at this for four decades now, correct?

Svengoolie: Actually, this year in June marked 40 years since I first put the make-up on and started doing the show on TV. There were years when I was not on TV with a regular show, but I was still doing appearances and people would have me come on TV shows and radio shows as the character.

Originally, Jerry G. Bishop was the original Svengoolie. In 1970, he happened to be the staff announcer who was on duty at the WFLD station on Friday nights when they were running horror movies. He started goofing around during his announcements for them, doing, as he put it, a Transylvanian Yiddish accent,



Ghost Busters stars Forrest Tucker, Larry Storch, and Bob Burns, and the show logo. © Filmation.



THE GHOST BUSTERS

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*... 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*!

It's 1975, and ghosts, werewolves, and mummies are creeping you out at the castle inexplicably placed on the southern California hill. In other words, there's something strange in your neighborhood... Who you gonna call? The Ghost Busters, that's who. But not Venkman, Stantz, Spengler, and Zeddemore, who wouldn't strap on their proton packs for another eight years.

TwoMorrrows book, *Lou Scheimer: Creating the Filmmation Generation*. "I think he said something like, 'Well, what about something like *Gang Busters*, but we call them *Ghost Busters*?' Marc was brilliant and fast. And I said, 'Gee, that sounds fun. What can we do?' 'We'll take all those monsters who've ever been in the movies, stick them in one place.'

Richards began development, and returned to Scheimer with a fuller premise. "He came back to me and said, 'I've got the detective agency, and they're ghost hunters, and we give them some stuff that kills ghosts, but it really doesn't kill them, and we call the characters Spencer, Tracy, and Kong. Spencer [alternately "Spenser," as painted on their office door] is one of the guys in this agency, and Kong is his partner. And they've got a gorilla who works with them.' And I said, 'The gorilla's Kong!' He said, 'No, the gorilla's Tracy.' I said, 'Why is he Tracy?' 'Because it's funnier.' I figured, 'Okay, he's right.' Marc did strange things. So, it was Spencer, Tracy, and Kong."

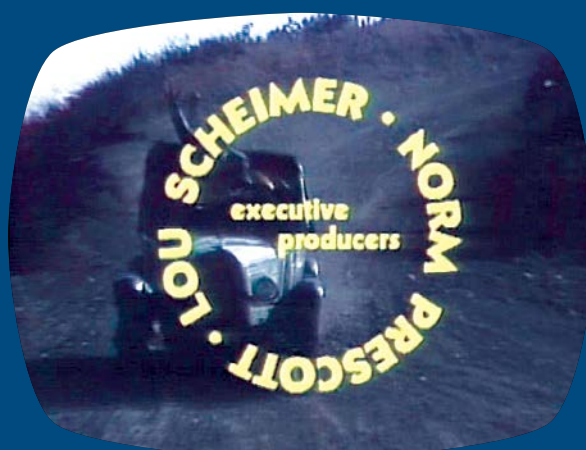
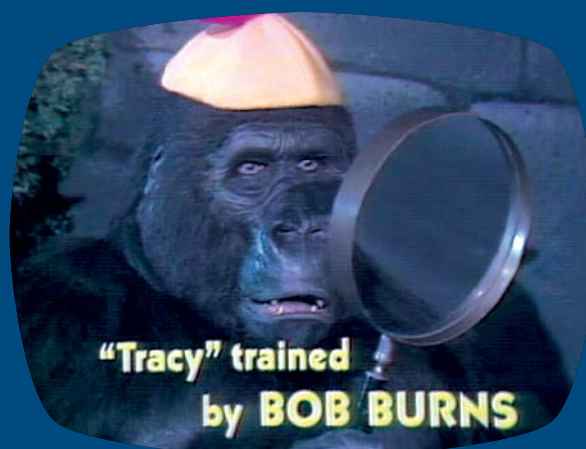
After staff artists did some presentation drawings for the series, Scheimer met with CBS executive Fred Silverman in New York to pitch the show in February 1975. "I told him about this concept we had to do a spooky, laughable show. He liked the idea. He said, 'You've got to get somebody the kids will know to do the lead characters. I mean, you've got two guys who are live, and you've got a gorilla.' I said, 'Well, it probably ought be easier to find the gorilla than the live guys.'"

Filmation had worked with comedian Larry Storch [interviewed in these pages in our next issue!] on the studios' earlier hit, *Groovie Goolies* [see story in *RetroFan* #2], and Storch's agent also represented Forrest Tucker. The two had appeared in the ABC sitcom *F Troop* from 1965–1967, and the series was in constant reruns on syndicated television. *F Troop* also featured the same kind of slapstick and physical comedy, born of vaudevillian and burlesque stage acts, that Filmation intended for *The Ghost Busters*. And Storch and Tucker had camaraderie both off-screen and on-screen, making them perfect to team up again for character-based humor.

"They were a comedy team like Abbott and Costello," Scheimer said. "They were also crazy, crazy people. We had a meeting, and I told them what we wanted to do. Storch turns around and says, 'What do you think, Sarge?' just like his character from *F Troop*. They wanted to do it, and just like that we had our stars. Except for one... we still had to find a gorilla."

Who's the Guy in the Monkey Suit?

"On our budget we couldn't afford both an actor and a gorilla suit, so we needed to try to find an actor who *owned* a gorilla suit," said Scheimer. "We put a call out to all sorts of agents and the casting people working for us, and set up a time for me to meet the potential gorillas." Enter Bob Burns, a man who worked at CBS, and in his spare time, collected science-fiction and horror movie props, including the armature for the original *King Kong* movie model. Burns had put together his own gorilla costume with his wife, Kathy, for fun, around 1963. The mask, feet, and hands had been made for Burns by Don Post, Sr. of the famous mask company Don Post Studios, and Burns called it Kogar. Burns was soon booked as the gorilla on an episode of *Mickey*, a 1964



Main cast and producer credits. © Filmation.

a copy of *Variety* on the desk, and I picked up and started reading it. And they said, 'that's Tracy the Gorilla.' And a week later, we were shooting."

Scheimer recalled that Burns "had his eyes painted black so his eyes really looked like a monkey. I walked over to him and asked him for his agent. He said, 'Tarzan.' I knew we had our guy. He later chose to have his screen credit read, 'Tracy trained by Bob Burns,' and a lot of people thought Tracy really was a gorilla!"

"Working with Forrest Tucker and Larry Storch was just the greatest thing you could possibly ever do," Burns says enthusiastically. "The first day on the set, I was just in awe of these guys. I knew Tuck from old Westerns, I'm a Western fan, and I knew he and Larry from *F Troop*, which I loved. Well, I was afraid of these guys, and here I'm thinking, 'here I am, a guy in a suit, and animals and kids can upstage anybody,' and I thought, 'Oh, my God, if I upstage these guys, they'll kill me!' Tuck's 6'6"—the guy could kill me! And I didn't know him at all, so in rehearsal, I did this shtick they wanted me to do, I happened to look at Tuck, I didn't know him real well then, and he kind of gave me a glance... I thought, 'Uh-oh, I think I did something wrong.' So, when we actually shot the first scene, I held back and didn't do it.

"Norm Abbott, who was directing, came over and said, 'Bob, something's wrong here. You're not giving me the stuff I want.' And I said, 'Well, Norm, I've got a problem here.' And he said, 'What's your problem? Man, we've got 15 shows in nine weeks, we've got to go!' And I said, 'I've got to talk to these guys.' So I went over, they were both sitting in their chairs, and my heart's pounding, because I thought, 'Oh, I'll be fired right now,' and I said, 'Guys, can I talk to you for a minute? I've got a problem.' And Tuck looks at me—and I didn't know Tuck's sense of humor at that time—and says, 'What could possibly be your problem?' Well, I just want to go climb in a hole, but I look back at Norm, and he's going, 'Fix it, fix it,' and I said, 'Well, I'm trying to do the thing, but I'm holding back, because I'm in such awe of you guys,



and you guys are the last guys in the world I want to upstage. I'm the new kid on the block here, so I'm afraid.' And Tuck says, 'That's what your problem is? Oh, my God, I'm much too old for that! And Larry's just too dumb, he doesn't care anyway.' And Larry goes, 'Yup, yup,' because they were such good buddies anyway. And he says, 'If you can stand behind me and go *bloodoooooop* and get a laugh, we're here to make people laugh. We're going to end up being second bananas to a gorilla anyway. We already know that. And that's fine, we're here to entertain people. Get a laugh.' And boy, from that moment on, it was like the biggest cloud had lifted from me!"

Scheimer noted that the co-stars not only sacrificed laughs to Burns, but protected him as well. "Tucker and Storch fell in love with him. They cuddled him. They nourished him. Because he couldn't stay in the gorilla suit too long. He'd start sweating under the sun or the heavy lights; it was awful! If he stayed in there ten minutes, he'd start to faint! Every time the gorilla would almost faint, Tucker and Storch would catch him. They started making him take more breaks so that he wouldn't faint."

"Tuck became the father figure for me," remembers Burns. "Like one day, I just passed out, because I kept the gorilla head on too long, because I just didn't want to shake up the troops, you know. And he was the first guy over to me, he made up new rules, like, 'Okay, we're going to give him a break whenever he's tired, pop the head off, give him some air, water, whatever he needs, I'm going to go to my trailer have a little drink,' which he did occasionally, 'and I'll come back and shoot...' He took care of me.



(ABOVE) Filmmation head Lou Scheimer (RIGHT) and friends on the *Ghost Busters* set. This photograph was signed to CBS bigwig Fred Silverman. (LEFT) Man-mountain Forrest Tucker as Kong (CENTER) shows he can mug just as well as his co-stars. © Filmmation.

NAUGAS

Adorable Threat or Loveable Menace?

by Scott Shaw!

New plant and animal species are constantly being discovered by scientists, usually in the most distant and desolate places on our planet. However, there is a strain of creature that we have known about for over half a century, one that's both savagely indestructible and yet a selfless boon to mankind.

The name of this monstrous miracle of xenozoology?

I'm writing about the once-elusive Nauga, of course. And here is its story...

Naugahyde®, an artificial leather, was invented in 1936 by Byron A. Hunter, a senior chemist at the United States Rubber Company, now known as Uniroyal® Engineered Products, Inc. The material itself is composed of a knit fabric backing coated by a layer of polyvinyl chloride plastic. Its name was derived from the city of Naugatuck, Connecticut, where it was first produced. Naugahyde, a leather-like material, is extremely durable and easily cleaned, therefore it was well suited to upholster furniture such as sofas and beanbag chairs. The new material became so popular that in its wake, many imitations abounded. Therefore, it became necessary for Uniroyal to “brand” Naugahyde to stand out from the crowd.

In 1966, the advertising agency Papert Koenig Lois, also known as PKL—founded by Fred Papel, Julian Koenig, and George Lois—was hired

to accomplish the branding. Due to such successful accounts as Peugeot automobiles, Maypo cereal, and Xerox, PKL's assignment was to make consumers comfortable with a synthetic material of vaguely mysterious origin.

Working with their designer Kurt Weihs, the PKL team created a non-existent critter to be the source of Naugahyde. But the “Nauga” looked like the opposite of a lovable Dr. Seuss character. Instead, the Nauga, all crazed eyes, fangs, and claws, looked more like, “What if Gonzo illustrator Ralph Steadman re-designed Warner Bros.’ *Tasmanian Devil*?”

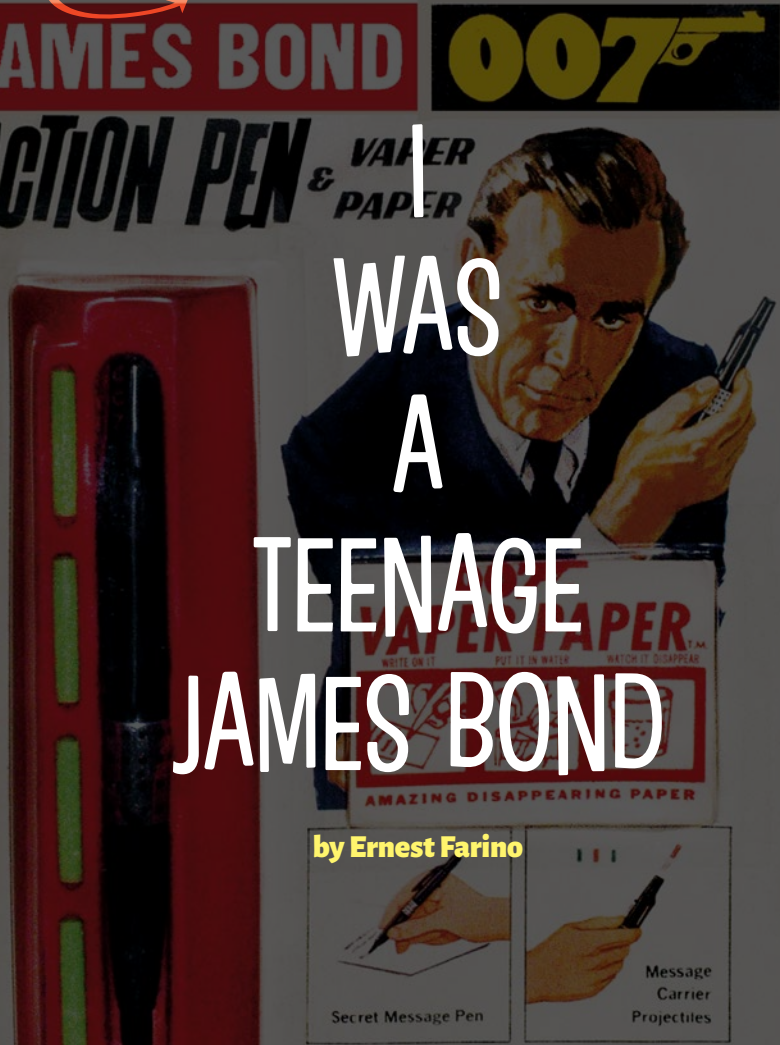
Surprisingly, it worked, possibly because the Nauga looked even more unnatural than the material of which it was both the source and the result. The bizarre-looking creature supposedly hailed from Sumatra and shed its hide once a year for the good of mankind—and Uniroyal.

It sounds to me like the PKL team were fans of Al Capp's *Li'l Abner* syndicated comic strip, which introduced the similarly cooperative Shmoos in August 1948. After all, that lovable creature laid eggs, gave milk, and died of sheer ecstasy when looked at with hunger. The Shmoo loved to be eaten and tasted like any food desired. Anything that delighted people delighted a Shmoo. Fry a Shmoo, and it came out chicken. Broil it, and it came out steak. Shmoo eyes made terrific suspender buttons. If cut thin, the hide of the Shmoo made fine leather, and if cut thick made the best

NAUCA: Jeff Kaplan/Archive.org BACKGROUND: andreas160578/Pixabay



When in Connecticut, be sure to visit Naugatuck. Naugas © Uniroyal Engineered Products, LLC.

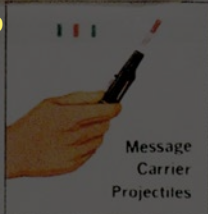


I WAS A TEENAGE JAMES BOND

by Ernest Farino



Secret Message Pen



Message Carrier Projectiles



CAPS NOT INCLUDED



A few years ago the American Cinematheque hosted a retrospective of classic movie main titles with a weeklong screening of films at the Egyptian Theater on Hollywood Boulevard. On the last night, a Sunday: *Goldfinger*. Now, being my favorite James Bond film and easily in my Top 3 favorite films in general, I've seen *Goldfinger* more times than I've had hot meals, and in every format imaginable: indoor theaters and drive-ins, VHS, laserdisc, DVD, Blu-ray, and 16mm. But I hadn't seen a 35mm print in a theater in quite a few years, so I decided to treat myself. First things first—purchasing a large buttered popcorn and an ice-cold Coke. I settled into my seat and soon the lights dimmed and John Barry's electric guitar version of the James Bond theme twanged us right into that famous gun barrel as James Bond walked across and turned and fired.

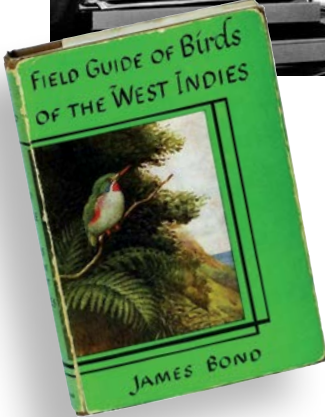
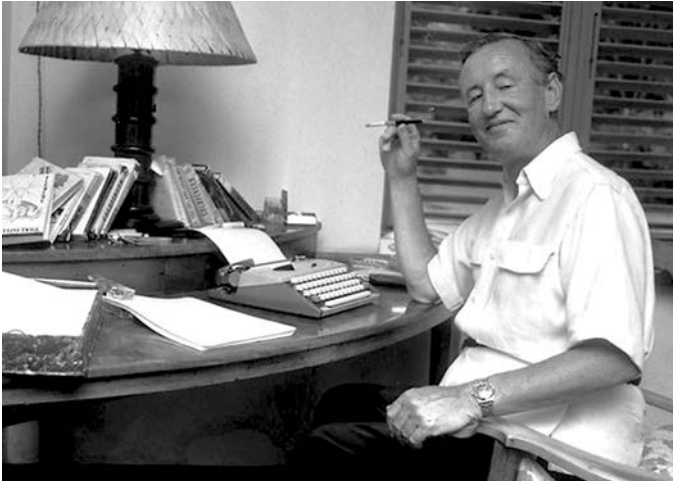
And in an instant I was 12-years-old once again. The music... the imagery... the aroma of buttered popcorn... the tangy taste of Coke... revved up that sensory time machine and whisked me back to a magical Saturday in El Paso, Texas, in 1964.

My father was in the Army and stationed at Fort Bliss in El Paso. They had shown *Goldfinger* on the base for the troops and the next day he had regaled us with an enthusiastic retelling of the film:

A white dot goes across and you're down a gun barrel and James Bond walks across and turns and shoots and blood comes down over the screen and then James Bond comes up out of the water with a duck on his head and knocks out the guard and plants plastic explosives in these big oil tanks and then takes off his wetsuit and he's in a white tuxedo and he goes to a nightclub and the oil tanks explode and Bond goes to see his "girlfriend" and when he's kissing her a bad guy comes up from behind but he sees his reflection in the girl's eye so he spins around and they fight and finally Bond knocks the bad guy into the bathtub and throws in an electric heater and electrocutes him!

Wow! I couldn't wait to see this movie! The next Saturday morning my friend Cordell and I got on a bus to the State Theater in downtown El Paso (yes, by ourselves, with our parents' knowledge and permission—simpler times then). The line of people stretched all the way around behind the theater. Which only added to the anticipation. And as we inched closer once the line starting moving, the marquee gradually came into view with those big, red, plastic chiseled letters—*James Bond Is Back!*—a huge cutout of Sean Connery holding the gun, and eventually posters and lobby cards outside the theater. Once inside, I got my bucket of buttered popcorn and Coke and we settled into our seats.

A white dot goes across and you're down a gun barrel... and finally Bond knocks the bad guy into the bathtub and electrocutes him!



(TOP) Ian Fleming at his desk at his estate, “Goldeneye,” in Jamaica. This is where he wrote all of the Bond novels. Many years later, on this very same desk, singer Sting wrote the song *Every Breath You Take*. (MIDDLE) Albert R. “Cubby” Broccoli, Sean Connery, Ian Fleming, and Harry Saltzman sign the final contracts to commence production on *Dr. No*. Broccoli and Saltzman sunk the entirety of their resources into the enterprise—it was literally Everything Or Nothing, hence the name of their production company, EON Productions. (INSET) *Field Guide on Birds of the West Indies* (first edition) by ornithologist James Bond, the source of the name “James Bond.” (BOTTOM) Newspaper ad for the State Theater in El Paso, Texas, where Ernest Farino first saw *Goldfinger*.

Then the main titles: images projected on the “golden girl” accompanied by Shirley Bassey belting out one of the most famous movie theme songs in history.

And then it dawned on me: Everything my father had described in such loving, enthusiastic detail was the *pre-title sequence*. I thought that was the *whole movie*! I sat there thinking, “There’s *more...!*”

And boy, was there. I was mesmerized. At one point my friend Cordell leaned over and said, “I’m gonna get a hot dog—you want anything?” I said, “You’ve *leaving*? Are you *crazy*?!”

Worth every penny of the 35¢ admission...

I talked about the movie so much that my entire family went to see it the very next day, Sunday evening. (They were highly amused at my pronunciation of “Seen” Connery and “Eye-an” Fleming.)

Okay, so I am firmly entrenched in the thick of the spy craze. At the time I didn’t even know there was one—for whatever reason, I had missed *Dr. No* and *From Russia With Love*—probably just too young to be aware, combined with my then overriding preoccupation with monsters, hot rods, and other interests. But I sure made up for lost time, including building the Aston Martin model kits (both of them), the trick attaché case, the bubble gum cards, the vinyl soundtrack LP album (which I thoroughly wore out), and whatever else I could get my hands on.

Yes, this was the height of the “spy craze” of the Sixties. It seemed like everything at one time or another had some connection with spies—TV shows, comics, movies, commercials, clothing—you name it.

Of course, it was also the world’s heaviest involvement in the Cold War between the U.S. and Russia, providing a real-world context that made even the most outrageous plots and unbelievable spy gadgets... well, believable. I don’t think the CIA ever built a sports car with an ejector seat, but in *Thunderball* the next year gadget-master Q gives Bond a small breathing apparatus with dual mini-oxygen tubes that allows him to survive underwater for several minutes. Sure enough, someone from Britain’s Royal Engineers called chief draftsman Peter Lamont and asked him how long the apparatus actually lasted. Lamont replied, “As long as you can hold your breath.” The engineer hung up.

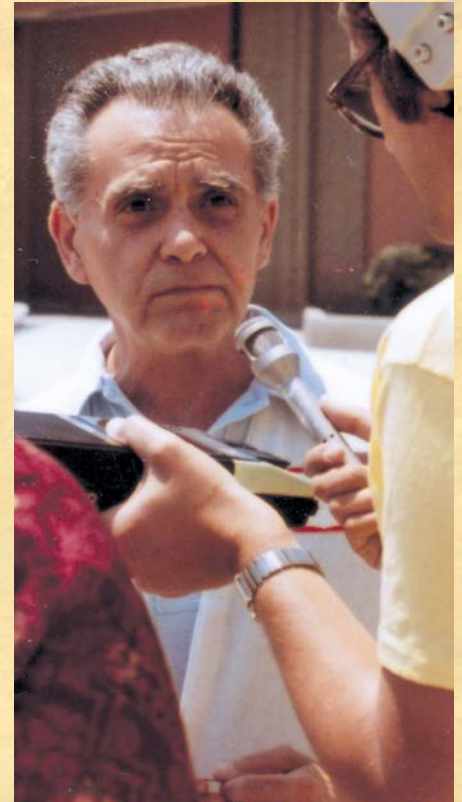
Nevertheless, the CIA found inspiration for its gadgets such as the poison-tipped dagger shoe in *From Russia With Love* and the tracking device featured in *Goldfinger* (a precursor of today’s GPS technology). According to a study entitled *Ian Fleming and the Public Profile of the CIA* published in the *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Allen Dulles, director of the CIA between 1953 and 1961, had met Fleming at a dinner party at the London offices of MI6, London’s international intelligence service, and soon instructed his technicians to try and replicate the gadgets.

The Man with the Golden Pen

Ian Fleming was a formerly an officer in British Naval Intelligence during World War II and later a writer for the Reuters newspaper syndicate. In 1953 Fleming said he “was just on the edge of getting married, and I was frenzied at the prospect of this great step in my life after having been a bachelor for so long. And I really wanted to take my mind off of the agony, and so I decided to sit down and write a book.” He retreated to his resort house in Jamaica, named “Goldeneye,” and set to work. Up first: a suitable

Dad Made Me Do It

Three Letters to Three Famous People



by Scott Saavedra

Astronaut Neil Armstrong. Illustrator Norman Rockwell. Comic-book creator Jack Kirby. Three individuals generally regarded to be near or at the pinnacle of their professions. When I was a kid, I wrote to all of them. I asked one for comic books. I asked one for a job. And I asked one for government property. My requests were all made under duress.

This is my story.

The Man from the Moon

Thinking back through the haze of my childhood memories, I don't recall much about America's Space Program during the Sixties. Certainly, I was aware of it and interested in it. I know that I wanted to be an astronaut but I had awful motion sickness (plus

I was bad at math and, much later, hated flying). Even playing too long on a swing set was problematic. To this day, my mom will—for no discernible reason—remind me about the time I got “car sick” on a drive one Easter Sunday and threw up in her brand-new purse. There was no malice intended. I just don't travel well. Also, I was an infant (besides, I was sitting on my mother's lap in a moving car that was not equipped with seatbelts, therefore a baby blithely barfing was really the least bad thing that could've happened).

So... space. By the middle of 1969, NASA was on the cusp of realizing President John F. Kennedy's famous 1961 call to put men on the Moon and return them safely home before the decade's end. President Kennedy, cruelly assassinated in 1963, would not

(LEFT TO RIGHT) Neil A. Armstrong in a lunar module simulator where he practiced in the weeks leading up to the historic *Apollo 11* mission. NASA. Illustrator Norman Rockwell in a portrait by Underwood and Underwood, 1921. Library of Congress. Jack Kirby in thought during a media interview at a fund-raising event in Westlake, California, c.1977. Photo courtesy of the author.

Growing Up

MUNSTER



by Dan Johnson

In 1964, CBS introduced America to one of the most memorable television sitcom families of all time. In many ways, they were very typical. There was a father, a mother, a grandfather, a poor distant cousin that seemed destined to be an old maid because of her looks, and a young son. They had the usual wacky misadventures that a lot of television families experienced, and, at the end of the day, it was certain that there was much love in this family.

What set this clan apart from everyone else on the air was that they were based on the classic Universal Monsters (Herman Munster, the father, was, more or less, the Frankenstein Monster, and Grandpa was Count Dracula). They were the Munsters, and for two years (1964–1966) they rode the wave of monster mania that was sweeping the U.S.A. in the early Sixties. Even

Butch Patrick, TV pop culture icon, indeed!

Courtesy of Leila Murray/
Munsters.com.

though the show ended over 50 years ago, *The Munsters* remains a fan-favorite thanks to reruns, and it is a show that has never left the airwaves.

At the Fayetteville Comic Con in October 2018, this writer got to sit down with the youngest member of this frightening family unit, Butch Patrick, who played Eddie Munster, for a panel Q&A. Butch was nice enough to share his memories of working on the iconic sitcom and also discussed his career after *The Munsters*. The following is an edited transcription of that interview.

RetroFan: Tell our readers how you got the part of Eddie Munster.

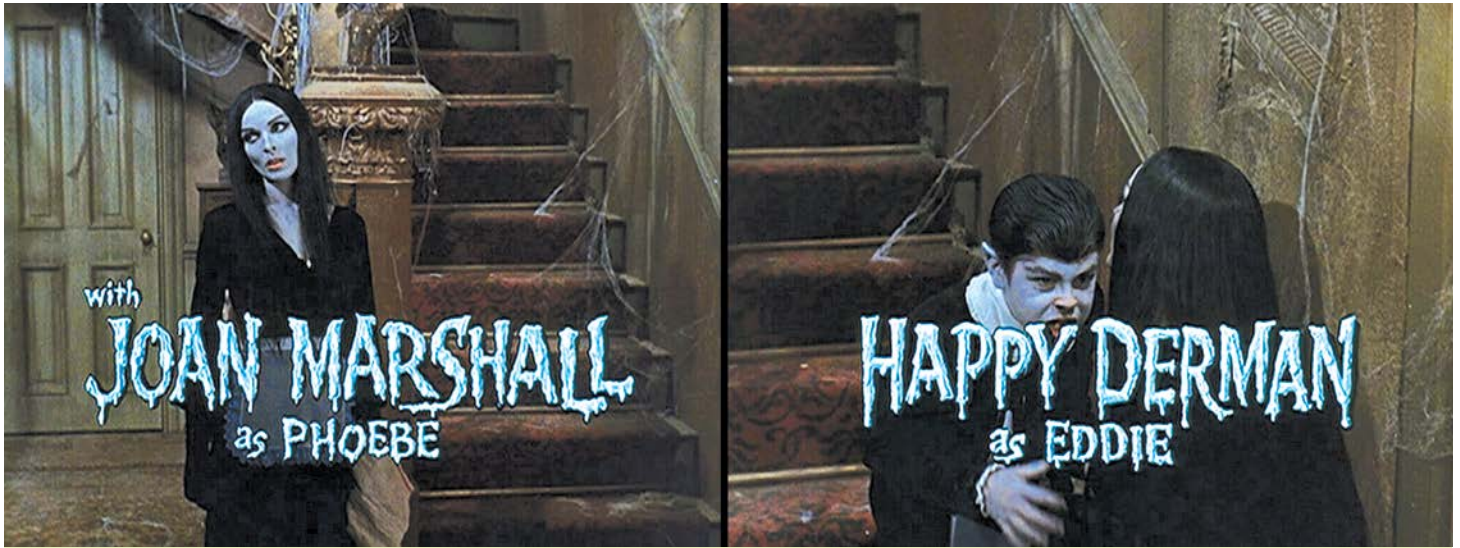
Butch Patrick: *The Munsters* came along in 1964. I had started acting in 1961, and I was actually living in Illinois with my

grandparents. They had cast the show with a kid named Happy Derman and a woman named Joan Marshall played the mom, whose name was Phoebe. [They were in the original pilot, and this] has since become the lost pilot for *The Munsters*, which was shot in color. At the last minute, the producers decided to do screen tests for other kids, and my agent convinced them to fly me out from Illinois and do the screen test, which I did. Before *The Munsters*, I had appeared on *General Hospital* and done a year on *The Real McCoys*, so I had several credits before this series.

RF: 1964 was a big year for horror fans. *Shock Theater* was on the air with the Universal Horror films, *Famous Monsters of Filmland* was out on the newsstand, and the Aurora monster model kits were huge hits. Were you a horror fan before *The Munsters*?

BP: Yeah, I really enjoyed the classic Universal Monster movies, like *Dracula* (1931), *Frankenstein* (1931), *The Wolf Man* (1941), *The Mummy* (1932), and especially





(ABOVE) Phoebe, not Lily? And who's that as Eddie?? Title cards from the original *Munsters* pilot showing the two key roles that would be recast. (BELOW) Just an average American kid: Butch Patrick as Eddie Munster, with Al Lewis as Grandpa, in an autographed publicity still. Photo courtesy of Heritage. *Munsters* © Universal Pictures.

Creature From the Black Lagoon (1954). I was definitely a Universal Monsters junkie.

RF: The age you were, working on the sets of *The Munsters* and working in the monster make-up, and being a fan, you must have been in seventh heaven.

BP: It's funny. *The Munsters* for me was a job. My favorite thing to do was explore the Universal lot when I had some free time. My favorite destination was the make-up department where Mike Westmore worked. Mike was an apprentice on *The Munsters* and [doing my make-up] was his first work in television. My favorite thing to do was check out the special effects and make-up and all the things behind the scenes.

RF: Tell us about Fred Gwynne. Herman Munster was, in my opinion, one of the most iconic television dads of all-time.

BP: Fred was a great guy and a really fine actor. He and Al Lewis, from [the 1961–1963 sitcom] *Car 54, Where Are You?*, were a very funny comedy team. On *The Munsters*, Fred was able to capture this Frankenstein character, and once you saw him, he wasn't Frankenstein, he immediately became loveable Herman Munster.



The thing I learned the most from Fred was acting techniques. Fred was such a good teacher and such a talent. You'll notice, as we became closer and closer, the writers started writing more father-and-son moments, so I have to thank Fred for broadening my techniques.

RF: For a show about a family of monsters, *The Munsters* presented a great family dynamic.

BP: Well, the people who produced *The Munsters* worked on *Leave It to Beaver* for six years, so they were very committed that the scripts be poignant. Hugh Beaumont [*Leave It to Beaver's* Ward Cleaver] was a great TV dad. Fred Gwynne was a great TV dad. The interesting thing they were able to do was take the family dynamic of *Leave It to Beaver* and apply it to *The Munsters* while utilizing Universal's classic monsters. So they really knew how to use set dressing and lighting to make them scary while being friendly and a family.

RF: Tell us about Al Lewis, Grandpa Munster.

BP: Well, Al and Fred were so opposite. Fred was very much reserved and Al was over the top with crazy energy levels. Together, they made up a Yin and Yang. Al

loved sports and was well known for being a scout for basketball, and he taught me a lot about not taking things too seriously. He would toss a Frisbee and play baseball with me when we had the time, and he became my mentor. Until the day he died, Al and I were very close.

My favorite thing to do when we were on set was check out Grandpa's dungeon. The laboratory/dungeon set

Evil Brains and Gruesome Teeth

The 40th Anniversary of the World's Most Terrifying Toy, *Alien*



by Rob Smentek

In today's collector-driven toy market, it's hard to imagine a pop-culture property that doesn't have a line of toys. Apart from the kid-driven marketplace that offers playthings based on popular TV shows or movies, grown-up RetroFans now have the opportunity to go to any toy retailer or comic store and find figures for adult-themed properties as diverse as *Cheech & Chong*, *Reservoir Dogs*, and *The Big Lebowski*.

While these days, it's clear that the licensors are gearing these toys to the adult market—seriously, what kid is going to be remotely interested in a *Breaking Bad* or even a *Bride of Chucky* figure? Once upon a time, though, the very idea of a toy line based on an R-rated film was considered inexplicable and even offensive.

(ABOVE) Screen capture from an *Alien* action figure commercial. Image manipulation by SMS. (RIGHT) Larry Strothe's very own original 1979 Kenner *Alien* with box. Courtesy of Larry Strothe. Alien TM & © 20th Century Fox.

A long time ago, in a toy aisle far, far away

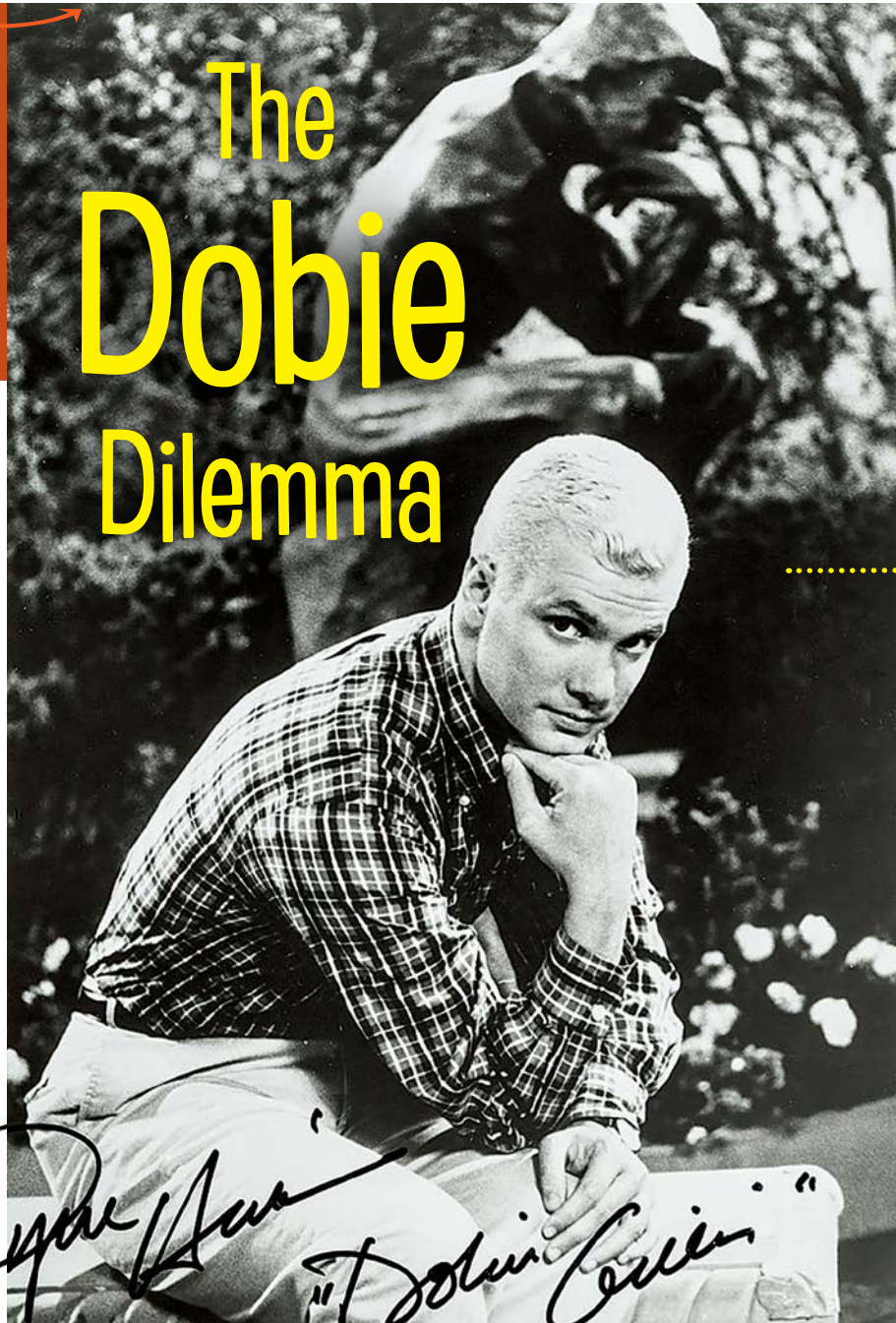
In the late Seventies, Kenner had taken the toy world... by force. The intergalactic success of their *Star Wars* toy line, in particular the 3¾-inch action figures, had created a fervor for science-fiction playthings unseen since the heyday of *Buck Rogers* and *Flash Gordon*, and, perhaps more important to their bottom line, positioned the company as tops among licensors.

As such, in late 1978, 20th Century Fox invited Kenner Product Manager Jim Black and Senior Product Designer Jim Swearingen to England so they could scope out the sets of to tour the sets of *Alien*, a sci-fi picture that had just concluded filming at the legendary Shepperton Studios. As the pair had forged a solid relationship with the studio thanks to their stellar work on the initial *Star Wars* toy line-up—Swearingen designed the 12 original figures that essentially started the 3¾-inch action figure trend—the studio was hoping to find repeat success by having Kenner merchandise this new film on toy shelves to cross-promote their tent-pole release for summer 1979.

According to Swearingen, "Jim and I saw the sets, and I think we met Giger [Swiss surrealist painter H. R. Giger, who designed elements of the film, including the titular creature]. We got to tour



The Dobie Dilemma



Platinum-coiffed Dwayne Hickman as Dobie Gillis and the series' signature Thinker statue. © 20th Century Fox Television. Signed publicity still courtesy of Heritage.

by Will Murray

Let me tell you a secret about the classic TV show, *The Many Loves of Dobie Gillis*.

It's not what you think it was.

No, really. But before I let you in on the secret, allow me to wallow in this classic show's *je ne sais quoi*, *joie de vivre*, *savoir faire*, and other classy French expressions hinting at my half-century-plus love affair with this, one of the greatest sitcoms of the Golden Age of Television.

If you ever watched more than one episode, you'll recognize that I'm talking just like 17-year-old Dobie, who often waxed poetic—not to mention sappy and philosophical—about Thalia Menninger, Aphrodite Millican, Elspeth Hummaker—among many of the innumerable girls this love-struck lad romanced

Affairs of Dobie Gillis, starring Bobby Van as the Grainbelt University freshman and Debbie Reynolds as his love interest, Pansy Hammer. Other than Hans Conried as Professor Pomfritt, none of the familiar future TV characters appeared in this rather forgettable 1953 musical film.

One film critic derided the title character as “One-third Casanova, one-third Henry Aldrich and one-third one of Mr. Wodehouse's poodles.”

Remember the Henry Aldrich reference. I'll explain later.

during the CBS show's four-season run back in 1959–1963.

As Dobie once quipped, “I'm not oversexed, mind you. But I'm not undersexed either. Let's just say I'm sexed.”

He couldn't say that on TV back in the late Fifties, of course. But he did in Max Shulman's original stories, where it all began.

I suppose I must recap the checkered history of Dobie Gillis before we proceed to the secret.

“He looked like a Dobie Gillis.”

Dobie emerged out of satirist Max Shulman's experiences at the University of Minnesota, which led to his bestselling sendup of campus life, *Barefoot Boy with Cheek*. The first Dobie Gillis short stories popped up in *Cosmopolitan* and *The Saturday Evening Post* in 1945, later collected in a 1951 book, *The Many Loves of Dobie Gillis*.

Shulman turned the book into a screenplay, which was filmed as *The*



© Max Shulman estate.

It's difficult to tell which supporting character raised more eyebrows: Dobie's amiable buddy, Maynard G. Krebs, or his father, lowly grocer Herbert T. Gillis.

"I don't want the series to be entirely a teenage one," recalled Shulman. "It needed some leavening, so the grown-ups were added."

Florida Friebus played the mother, Winifred. She was too sweet to be real, and handled all the exposition. Frank Faylen's Herbert T. Gillis (INSET ABOVE) was like no dad ever seen on TV. Grumpy, stingy, short-tempered. In other words, realistic. His trademark line was, "I gotta kill that boy, I just gotta."

Faylen confided, "You will notice that I never say that in front of the boy. That would be bad, I suppose. So it's always a sort of Shakespearean aside. When he has driven me beyond endurance, I express my feelings aloud, but not to myself."

"It's this way in the show," Shulman explained. "The papa loves the boy, loves him fine, but at 15-minute intervals he says to himself: 'I gotta kill this kid.' Let's just say he's undecieved about his teenage son, as when he remarks: 'He's a bum, but he's my bum.'"

Nevertheless, complaints caused Faylen to drop his trademark line and stare angrily at the camera instead. Audiences had no trouble reading his mind.

Maynard was Dobie's best friend and comedic foil. He was also a jazz-loving protest cat afraid of girls, and a rarity for TV—a bearded beatnik. In real life, the actor was anything but hip.

"Call me king of the beatniks and I hit you over the head—but I guess I am," Denver allowed. "From the first days of the show, when I started saying, 'like,' 'dig' and 'the most,' it all came to me easy. However, I've never done any outside research."

Dobie introduced himself to viewers seated before a copy of Rodin's Thinker statue at Central City Park, pining over his love life, or lack thereof. Remember that statue, too. It will be significant later.

Every episode opened with a soliloquy in which Dwayne Hickman broke the fourth wall in emulation of TV pioneer Jack Benny. These morose monologues introduced that episode's main problem



and set the tone for the comic-romantic hijinks to come.

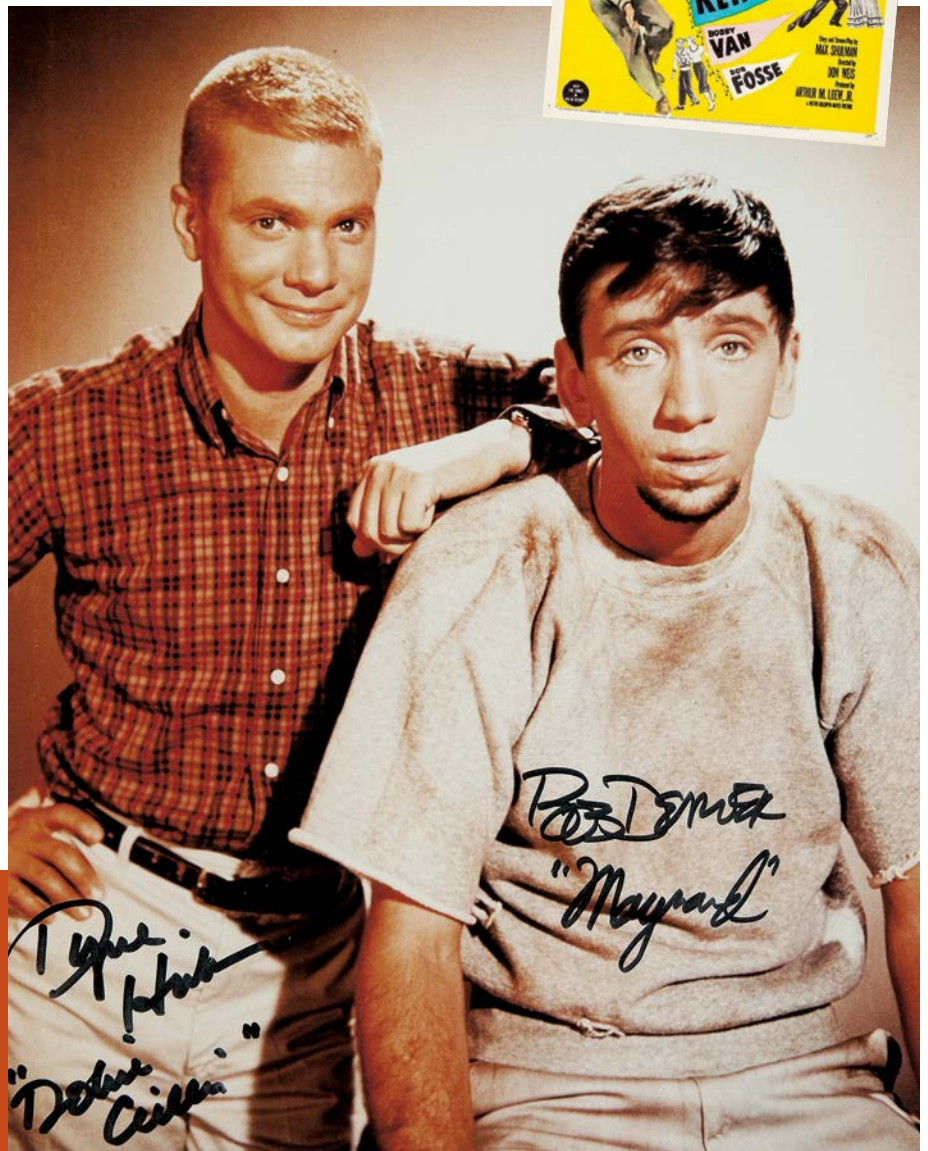
As Shulman saw him, "Dobie is a high school kid who will do anything to get a girl. He's not a wolf. He just has to have a girl. That's his main mission in life."

The series' premise called for Dobie to blunder from girlfriend to girlfriend, never finding or keeping one. But when the producers cast sex-kitten

Tuesday Weld as the first girlfriend of the week, grasping and greedy Thalia Menninger, the show runners knew immediately she was special.

Shulman explained, "After seeing her in the pilot film we knew she was too good to let go."

So Thalia became a semi-regular. Dobie



(INSET) The singing, swinging pre-TV series *The Affairs of Dobie Gillis*. © MGM. Movie poster courtesy of Heritage. (RIGHT) Move over, Archie and Jughead—here come Dobie and Maynard! © 20th Century Fox Television. Signed publicity still courtesy of Heritage.



Pinball wizards, your mecca awaits: the Pinball Hall of Fame in Las Vegas, Nevada. Driph/Wikimedia Commons. (INSET) The Las Vegas Pinball Hall of Fame's Tim Arnold. Photo courtesy of Jim Schelberg.

Autosave Triggered

The Las Vegas Pinball Hall of Fame

by Richard J. Fowlks

A chorus of high-pitched bleeps and metal pings fill the air. Excited jackpot chirps compete with the din of mechanical triggers. All the while, coins rattle persistently through hungry slots. These are not the sounds of slot machines, but rather the soundtrack of a place founded to be the antithesis to the gambling thrall of Las Vegas, the Pinball Hall of Fame.

The Las Vegas Pinball Hall of Fame (LVPHoF) was opened in 2006 to be a nostalgic record of the pinball games of yesteryear. Machines from across the history of pinball were gathered and painstakingly restored to share the joy and tradition of the beloved pastime. Row after row of pinball and arcade games stand shoulder-to-shoulder, open to public play: most for a quarter or some two quarters. Grouped by era stand classic favorites from companies Williams, Gottlieb, Stern, Midway, Bally, Data East, and Atari, among others.

This author was immediately taken back to his youth on the Spider-Man and Superman tables (at the local Round Table Pizza after basketball practice). The recently released Batman '66 game featured a video screen playing clips from classic television show that react to the game play! The Black Lagoon pinball game is a perennial favorite of mine, with an LCD screen that simulates scenes from the black-and-white movie and a lower "swamp" area stalked by a small creature. The Haunted House has a lower level "basement" and upper level "attic" of game play for triple the pinball action. Hours of games from the peak of the pinball era can be played on the

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ines "Pin-Bot," "Fireball," "Black
"Black Hole," "Challenger," and

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stantly wanted to play it.

At the age of 20, in 1976, Arnold opened and operated Pinball Pete's with his brother, and the arcade hit it big as the oncoming Pac-Man era landed in the Eighties. Tim states, "Pinball Pete's was the perfect place for me. I always had a problem with authority, didn't play well with others, and had no patience with education. [The arcade] allowed me