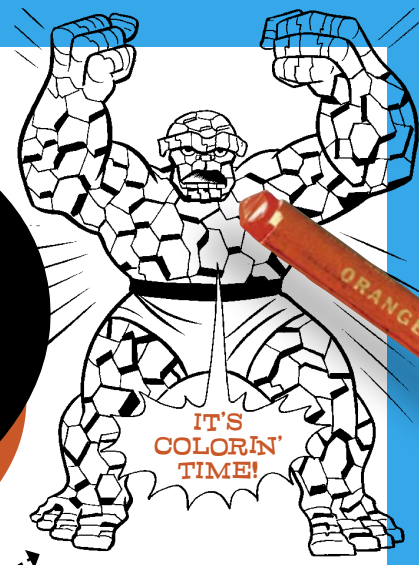




June 2020  
No. 9 \$9.95

# RETRO FAN



THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF  
COLORING BOOKS

## Seventies' Captain America REB BROWN

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

## The An EYEwitness Account CYCLOPS

MEET TV'S  
Captain Nice...  
WILLIAM DANIELS



Whipple! Clara! Madge!  
Behind the  
Commercial  
Characters



Benny Hill Invades America • 8-Track Tapes • Secret ID Quiz & more!

FEATURING ▶ Ernest Farino • Andy Mangels • Scott Saavedra • Scott Shaw! • Michael Eury

# RetroFan: The Pop Culture You Grew Up With!

If you love Pop Culture of the Sixties, Seventies, and Eighties, editor MICHAEL EURY's latest magazine is just for you!



## RETROFAN #10 (NOW BI-MONTHLY!)

RETROFAN #10 celebrates fifty years of SHAFT—can you dig it? Plus: interviews with Family Affair's KATHY GARVER and The Brady Bunch Variety Hour's GERI "FAKE JAN" REISCHL, ED "BIG DADDY" ROTH, rare GODZILLA merchandise, Spaghetti Westerns, Saturday morning cartoon preview specials, fake presidential candidates, Spider-Man/The Spider parables, STUCKEY'S, and more fun, fab features! Featuring columns by ERNEST FARINO, ANDY MANGELS, WILL MURRAY, SCOTT SAAVEDRA, and SCOTT SHAW! Edited by MICHAEL EURY.

(84-page FULL-COLOR magazine) \$9.95  
(Digital Edition) \$4.99 • Ships July 2020!

Please add \$1 per issue for shipping in the US.



## RETROFAN #6

Interviews with MeTV's crazy creepster SVENGOOLIE and Eddie Munster himself, BUTCH PATRICK! Call on the original Saturday Morning GHOST BUSTERS, with BOB BURNS! Uncover the nutty NAUGAS! Plus: "My Life in the Twilight Zone," "I Was a Teenage James Bond," "My Letters to Famous People," the ARCHIE-DOBIE GILLIS connection, Pinball Hall of Fame, Alien action figures, Rubik's Cube & more!

(84-page FULL-COLOR magazine) \$8.95  
(Digital Edition) \$4.99 • Now shipping!



## RETROFAN #7

Featuring a JACLYN SMITH interview, as we reopen the Charlie's Angels Casebook, and visit the Guinness World Records' largest Charlie's Angels collection. Plus: an exclusive interview with funnyman LARRY STORCH, The Lone Ranger in Hollywood, The Dick Van Dyke Show, a vintage interview with Jonny Quest creator DOUG WILDEY, a visit to the Land of Oz, the ultra-rare Marvel World superhero playset, and more!

(84-page FULL-COLOR magazine) \$9.95  
(Digital Edition) \$4.99 • Now shipping!



## RETROFAN #8

NOW BI-MONTHLY! Interviews with the '60s grooviest family band THE COWBILLS, and TV's coolest mom JUNE LOCKHART! Mars Attacks!, MAD Magazine in the '70s, Flintstones turn 60, Electra Woman & Dyna Girl, Honey West, Max Headroom, Popeye Picnic, the Smiley Face fad, & more! With MICHAEL EURY, ERNEST FARINO, ANDY MANGELS, WILL MURRAY, SCOTT SAAVEDRA, and SCOTT SHAW!

(84-page FULL-COLOR magazine) \$9.95  
(Digital Edition) \$4.99 • Now shipping!



## RETROFAN #1

THE CRAZY, COOL CULTURE WE GREW UP WITH! LOU FERRIGNO interview, The Phantom in Hollywood, Filmmaker's Star Trek cartoon, "How I Met Lon Chaney, Jr.," goofy comic Zody the Mod Rob, Mego's rare Elastic Hulk toy, RetroTravel to Mount Airy, NC (the real-life Mayberry), interview with BETTY LYNN ("Thelma Lou" of The Andy Griffith Show), TOM STEWART's eclectic House of Collectibles, and Mr. Microphone!

(84-page FULL-COLOR magazine) \$8.95  
(Digital Edition) \$4.99 • Now shipping!



## RETROFAN #2

HALLOWEEN! Horror-hosts ZACHERLEY, VAMPIRA, SEYMOUR, MARVIN, and an interview with our cover-featured ELVIRA! THE GROOVIE GOOLIES, BEWITCHED, THE ADDAMS FAMILY, and THE MUNSTERS! The long-buried Dinosaur Land amusement park! History of BEN COOPER HALLOWEEN COSTUMES, character lunchboxes, superhero VIEW-MASTERS, SINDY (the British Barbie), and more!

(84-page FULL-COLOR magazine) \$8.95  
(Digital Edition) \$4.99 • Now shipping!



## RETROFAN #3

40th Anniversary interview with SUPERMAN: THE MOVIE director RICHARD DONNER, IRWIN ALLEN's sci-fi universe, Saturday morning's undersea adventures of Aquaman, horror and sci-fi zines of the Sixties and Seventies, Spider-Man and Hulk toilet paper, RetroTravel to METROPOLIS, IL (home of the Superman Celebration), SEA-MONKEYS®, FUNNY FACE beverages, Superman and Batman memorabilia, & more!

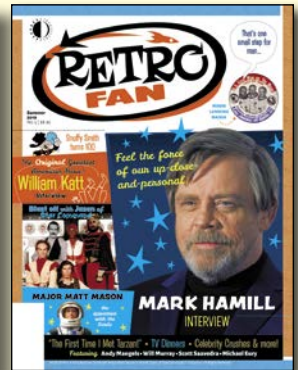
(84-page FULL-COLOR magazine) \$8.95  
(Digital Edition) \$4.99 • Now shipping!



## RETROFAN #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!

(84-page FULL-COLOR magazine) \$8.95  
(Digital Edition) \$4.99 • Now shipping!



## RETROFAN #5

Interviews with MARK HAMILL & Greatest American Hero's WILLIAM KATT! Blast off with JASON OF STAR COMMAND! Stop by the MUSEUM OF POPULAR CULTURE! Plus: "The First Time I Met Tarzan," MAJOR MATT MASON, MOON LANDING MANIA, SNUFFY SMITH AT 100 with cartoonist JOHN ROSE, TV Dinners, Celebrity Crushes, and more fun, fab features!

(84-page FULL-COLOR magazine) \$8.95  
(Digital Edition) \$4.99 • Now shipping!

**SUBSCRIBE NOW!** Six issues: \$67 Economy, \$101 International, \$27 Digital Only



**TwoMorrows.**  
The Future of Pop History.



TwoMorrows Publishing • 10407 Bedfordtown Drive • Raleigh, NC 27614 USA

**DON'T RISK A SOLD OUT ISSUE AT BARNES & NOBLE! SUBSCRIBE TODAY!**

Phone: 919-449-0344  
E-mail: [store@twomorrows.com](mailto:store@twomorrows.com)  
Web: [www.twomorrows.com](http://www.twomorrows.com)

# CONTENTS

Issue #9 June 2020



66

27

43

33

58

3

13

20

## Columns and Special Features

**3**  
**Retro Super-Heroes**  
 TV Captain America Reb Brown interview

**20**  
**Scott Saavedra's Secret Sanctum**  
 Ad Men & Women: Favorite Characters from TV Commercials

**33**  
**Retro Television**  
 Captain Nice

**38**  
**Retro Interview**  
 William Daniels and Bonnie Bartlett

**43**  
**Andy Mangels' Retro Saturday Morning**  
 Cartoon Preview Specials, Part One

**58**  
**Oddball World of Scott Shaw!**  
*America's Best TV Comics* (1968)

**66**  
**Ernest Farino's Retro Fantasmagoria**  
*The Cyclops*

## Departments

**2**  
**Retrotorial**

**10**  
**Too Much TV Quiz**

**13**  
**Retro Toys**  
 The Wonderful World of Coloring Books

**27**  
**Retro Brit**  
 Benny Hill

**30**  
**RetroFad**  
 8-Track Tapes

**64**  
**Celebrity Crushes**

**73**  
**Retro Travel**  
 The Mid-Atlantic Nostalgia Convention – Hunt Valley, Maryland

**78**  
**RetroFanmail**

**80**  
**ReJECTED**  
*RetroFan* fantasy cover by Scott Saavedra

# REB BROWN

## The Motorcycling Captain America of Seventies TV

by Michael Eury

**Muscular, chisel-jawed athlete** Reb Brown started his screen-acting career on the wrong end of a snake attack in the 1973 chiller *Ssssss*. He soon found no end of work making guest appearances in many popular TV series of the Seventies and Eighties including *Kojak*, *Emergency!*, *The Six Million Dollar Man*, *CHiPs*, *Happy Days*, *Three's Company*, *The Rockford Files*, *The Love Boat*, and *Miami Vice*.

Brown is also no stranger to the big screen, with many of his roles taking advantage of his physicality. His film credits include *Big Wednesday* (1978), *Hardcore* (1979), *Yor, the Hunter from the Future* (1983), *Uncommon Valor* (1983), *The Howling II* (1985), *Death of a Soldier* (1986), *Distant Thunder* (1988), *Space Mutiny* (1988), *Cage* (1989) and *Cage II* (1994), and more recently, *Surge of Power: Revenge of the Sequel* (2016) and *Surge of Dawn* (2019).

Yet to many RetroFans Reb Brown is Captain America, having played Marvel Comics' Sentinel of Liberty in two made-for-TV movies produced by Universal Television that aired on CBS in 1979. Like Christopher Reeve, who at the time had personified DC Comics' Man of Steel in December 1978's big-budget blockbuster *Superman: The Movie*, Brown was the spitting image of the comic-book crusader he portrayed with his broad shoulders, shock of blond hair, and earnest demeanor. Liberties with the subject matter were taken with both *Captain America* movies, sidestepping the traditional World War II setting for a contemporary tale of Steve Rogers, Jr., a drifter/artist given superhuman abilities via the injection of the "FLAG formula."

Pumped up into a super-soldier, Rogers—initially with great reluctance—followed in the footsteps of his father, the original crimefighter dubbed "Captain America," but quickly proved worthy of wearing the legendary patriotic battlesuit.

The airing of Reb Brown's *Captain America* telefilms followed CBS' previous successes with Marvel-inspired live-action series *The Amazing Spider-Man* and *The Incredible Hulk*, plus a 1978 live-action *Doctor Strange* television movie—all of which were riding a wave of TV super-hero popularity that also included *The Six Million Dollar Man*, *The Bionic Woman*, and *Wonder Woman*. Despite revving onto the small screen on a red, white, and blue motorcycle—and often bursting into action careening the bike from the back of a van—Brown's *Captain America* arrived a bit too late to fully enjoy the Seventies' comic-hero trend and his two telefilms unfortunately did not receive the green light for a weekly TV series.



(TOP) Reb Brown revs into action as Captain America. Captain America TM & © Marvel. Photo © Universal Television. Scan courtesy of Andy Mangels. (ABOVE) Reb Brown in 2018 at a store appearance at Krypton Comics in Omaha, Nebraska. Photo by Cornstalker/Wikimedia Commons.

However, impact that Brown's star-spangled performances made upon comic-book fans and children of 1979 has shadowed the actor for decades. Captain America's more recent resurgence in mass-media popularity in the Marvel Studios films of the 2010s has by extension made Reb Brown a familiar face at comic-cons and Hollywood conventions across the country—and as you'll discover while reading this exclusive *RetroFan* interview, the man behind Captain America's cowl (and motorcycle helmet) has the kindness and conviction of a real-life super-hero.

**RetroFan:** You had a lot of guest-starring roles on television before *Captain America*, but how did you get the part of the Star-Spangled Sentinel?

**Reb Brown:** I was under contract at Universal at the time, and Monique James was the head of talent and she set up a meeting with Allan Balter, who was the producer of *Six Million Dollar Man*. We had lunch together and it was like two bears meeting in the woods—we got along. It just seemed to fit. I looked like what they had in mind, and it just seemed to fit.

**RF:** You definitely looked the part. You were very fit then, but did you have to go through more training after you got the role?

**RB:** No. I've been working out since I was 21 years old, my whole life. I was an athlete—I played football, basketball, baseball, I surfed, and was doing heavyweight boxing and martial arts.

**RF:** You were one of the first actors to play a super-hero who had the physical build of a super-hero. Today, Chris Hemsworth as Thor—he bulks up for that, but there was a time a while back, like with Michael Keaton playing Batman, when they built the suit for him. You fit the suit.

**RB:** Yeah. There was no CGI for my Captain America!

**RF:** How familiar with you with Captain America before you got this role?

**RB:** I read the comic book, and there was a cartoon in 1966, where “Captain America throws his mighty shield.”

**RF:** I love it! [sings] “When Captain America throws his mighty shield!” [laughter] The theme is probably better known than the cartoon itself.

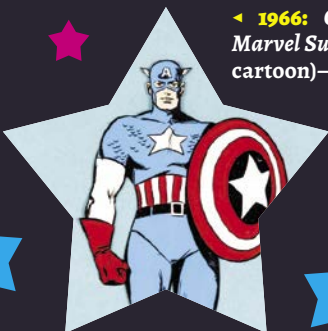


Cap unmasked—and un-helmeted! Reb Brown in costume from 1979's first Captain America telemovie. © Universal Television. Courtesy of Andy Mangels.

## Captain America in the Movies and on Television



◀ **1944:** *Captain America* (15-chapter Republic movie serial)—Played by Dick Purcell



◀ **1966:** *Captain America in The Marvel Super Heroes* (syndicated TV cartoon)—Voiced by Sandy Becker



▶ **1979:** *Captain America and Captain America II: Death Too Soon* (TV movies)—Played by Reb Brown



▲ **1980:** *Captain America Public Service Announcement* (animated commercial)—Produced by the U.S. Department of Energy



◀ **1990:** *Captain America* (theatrical movie instead released direct-to-video)—Played by Matt Sallinger



◀ **2011–2019:** *Captain America: The First Avenger* (and other Marvel Studios films)—Played by Chris Evans

Note:  
Captain America has also made numerous appearances in many Marvel animated TV series from the Eighties to today.

Captain America TM & © Marvel.



**RB:** I really enjoyed watching it and connected with it. It really was important for me.

One question people ask me is, “How do you feel about the character, Captain America?” The one thing I feel is, it is pure. There is nothing going on behind the scenes—no hidden agendas. He just wants to do good for the American people. In essence, he is taking care of business the best way he possibly can.

**RF:** That is a strength, if not *the* strength, of the character. Captain America goes well beyond the red, white, and blue costume. He is unwavering in his convictions.

**RB:** So many other heroes have a hidden agenda—there’s always something going on and there’s something dark there. There’s nothing dark here, with Captain America—it’s just pure. It’s about doing good and being the one who is going to help. That’s the whole goal.

**RF:** We need some Captain Americas in the real world right now, don’t we?

**RB:** Yes, we do.

**RF:** One thing that stands out with your Cap was the motorcycling. But that wasn’t the first time you were on a bike, right? You had some experience with riding...

**RB:** Yes, I did. I had done a Honda commercial early on and was on *CHiPs*, in three episodes. Before you got to ride a motorcycle in *CHiPs*, you had to go with the highway patrol, and they taught you how to ride to look like you knew what

**Don’t let go!** A perilous stunt being filmed for the first *Captain America* TV movie. © Universal Television. Courtesy of Reb Brown/Facebook.

you were doing. I enjoyed it a lot, but don’t ride anymore because of the way people are today. That way they are driving is too dangerous. But I enjoyed it at the time.

**RF:** There were a lot of stunts in your two *Captain America* movies. I’m assuming you had a stunt double, but I know you did some of them yourself. How much of the stunt work did you actually do?

**RB:** I did stuff that wasn’t like riding along a wall! [laughs] Gary Davis was one of the stunt people, and Al Wyatt [Allan Wyatt, Jr.]—he passed away some years ago. He was a wonderful guy, too. And they had Mic Rodgers, who also doubled Mel Gibson. I had some good people doubling.

You talk about something happening when you’re filming... in the first one [*Captain America*], there’s a thing where I come off the motorcycle and jump onto a helicopter. They had the ramp all set up and the airbag and everything and it looked really good. I jumped off the ramp onto the helicopter skid and I looked down. When I looked down, because of the rotors on the helicopter, the airbag deflated!

**RF:** Oh, man!

**RB:** Needless to say, I squeezed the blood out of that thing.

**RF:** What about the iconic Captain America shield? You could see through

it, with its red and clear stripes instead of the traditional red and white stripes. What was it made of, and how much did it weigh?

**RB:** It was a very heavy plastic, and the reason it was see-through was because the highway patrol would not allow something you couldn’t see through [when driving]. You had to have a shield you could see through so you could be able to see everything going on.

**RF:** The shield doubled as a windshield.

**RB:** We had the helmet, too. The cowl is normally what Captain America wears, but we had to have the helmet for that same reason.

**RF:** I understand you carry a replica of your Captain America shield with you to personal appearances. How do you get it onto an airplane?

**RB:** My wife and I pack it up with bubble wrap, and it gets checked onto the plane.

**RF:** I’m glad you don’t try to board with the shield as a carry-on—I could imagine you trying to explain it to a TSA screener! [laughter]

The two movies you did—they both aired in 1979, about ten months apart. Did they film back to back or was there a hiatus between them?

**RB:** Actually, we filmed the first one and they showed it and it did very well in the ratings. Then we did the second one. I was anxious to do that one. I asked

## FAST FACTS

### *Captain America*

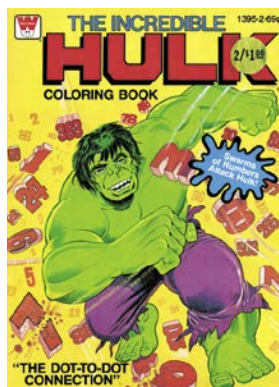
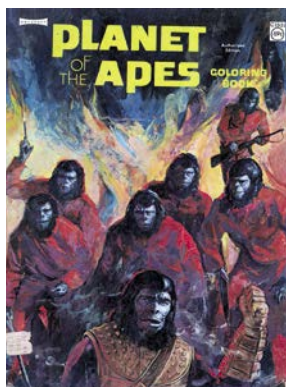
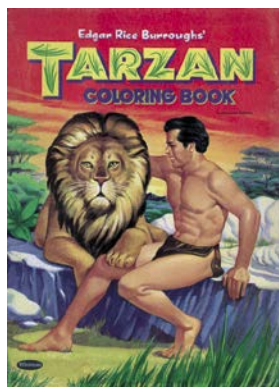
- ▶ **Original airdate:** January 19, 1979
- ▶ **Director:** Rod Holcomb
- ▶ **Cast:** Reb Brown, Len Birman, Heather Menzies, Steve Forrest
- ▶ **Network:** CBS

### *Captain America II: Death Too Soon*

- ▶ **Original airdate:** November 23, 1979
- ▶ **Director:** Ivan Nagy
- ▶ **Cast:** Reb Brown, Len Birman, Connie Sellecca, Christopher Lee, Lana Wood
- ▶ **Network:** CBS

# The Wonderful World of COLORING BOOKS

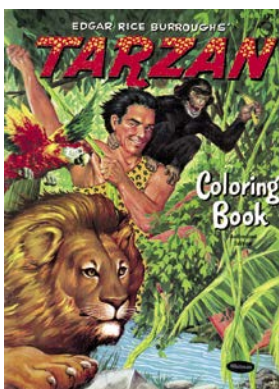
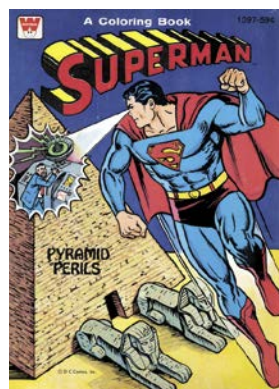
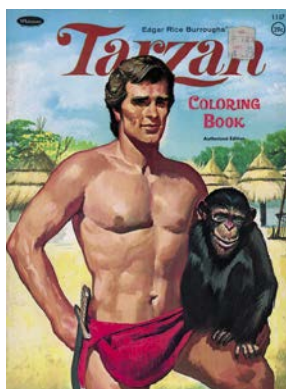
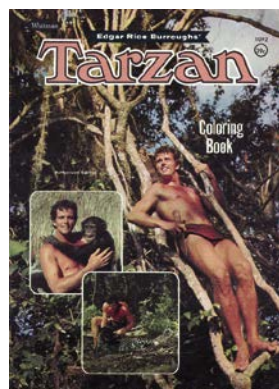
by Joe Pavlansky



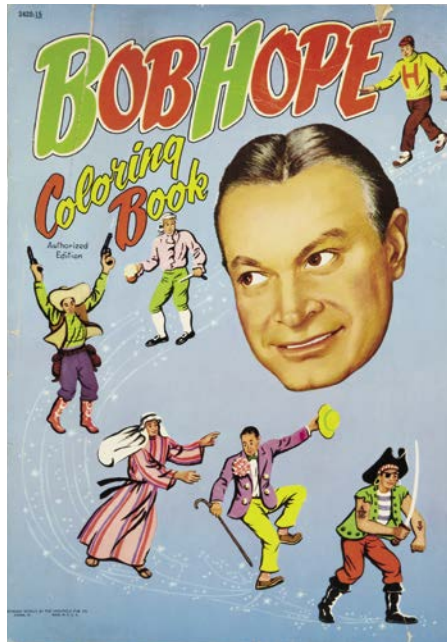
Writing on this subject really took me back some decades, to when life was much simpler, cartoons were aplenty, and every shelf at the department store seemed to have a toy on it. I remember many of the joyful activities of my youth, and still today, I attempt to bring some of that feeling back with my many areas of collecting.

But when I started to think about coloring books, not only did my memories come flooding back but also the smell of the paper and crayons. Everything mixing together was almost too much, and I found myself remembering times of being in my G.I. Joe pajamas, eating a bowl of cereal, watching cartoons, and getting ready to color. Let me try and somewhat set the scene for you as I remember it.

The smell of pulp paper fills your nostrils as you lie belly down on the living room floor or take a comfortable seat at the kitchen table. A quick flip of the pages delights your youthful eyes as you see picture after glorious picture of dynamic black-and-white illustrations. The excitement begins to grow as you set the book down and swiftly grab the cardboard box gently resting next to the book. On the cover of the box gleams a bright rainbow of colors that not only draw a smile to your young face, but also starts to get the wheels turning in your head. With so many shades to choose from, the possibilities could be endless. Superman's cape could be green. The sun could be ablaze with a purple glow. The Hulk could be blue mixed with orange and red. Having so many colors and possibilities to choose from, the outcomes could be as endless as our imagination.



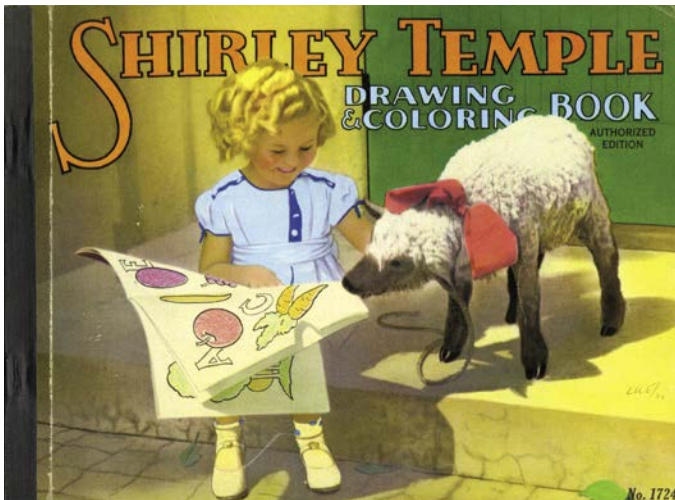
Nine of Joe Pavlansky's favorite character-based coloring books. Tarzan © ERB, Inc. Planet of the Apes © 20th Century Fox. Hulk and Captain America © Marvel. Superman © DC Comics. The Shadow © Condé Nast. Courtesy of the author.



Some of the more common titles of the Forties contained characters and personalities such as Roy Rogers, Bugs Bunny (and other Warner Bros. cartoon characters), Charlie Chaplin, Bette Davis, Dick Tracy, Joan Carroll, Betty Brewer, and Gene Autry (popular through the late Seventies), along with characters from the comic strips *Li'l Abner* and *Terry and the Pirates*.

The Fifties saw books being published in all shapes and sizes, and a huge change to the front cover happening almost overnight. The popularity of wax crayons sent paintbrushes running for cover as crayons dominated the market and caused the near disappearance of the title "paint book." Although the title had come back on certain occasions, paint books were out and coloring books were in!

Kids couldn't get enough of the



Color the stars of yesteryear! Courtesy of Heritage.

books, and teachers had had enough. Many educators spoke out against the books due to the opinion that they didn't provide enough creativity for the students. Everyone knows what happens when teachers don't like something: kids want it even more—and more they got. With many publishers pumping out a wide variety of coloring books, Saafield Publishing and Whitman Publishing were the prominent companies with the most sought-after titles.

Silver screen and radio stars started to become the more sought-after titles as film and television brought imagination to real life... and right in your living room! Store racks could be found flooded with such characters and titles as Eve Arden, Bob Hope, Grace Kelly, Roy Rogers and Dale Evans (a Western coloring-book favorite through the mid-Sixties), Elizabeth Taylor, John Wayne, *Baby Huey*, *Felix the Cat*, *Popeye* (popular through the Eighties), *Prince Valiant*, *Red Ryder* (one of my favorite chapter-play films), *Steve Canyon*, Walt Disney (popular to this day), *Ben-Hur*, Annie Oakley, Andy Griffith, the Hardy Boys, *Cisco Kid*, *Gunsmoke*, and the Lone Ranger and Tonto (my personal favorite cowboy... "Hi-Yo, Silver! Away!").

Television personalities continued to lend their influence to coloring books in the Sixties, even rivaling longtime mainstays such as Disney, Westerns, and cartoon characters. This decade also brought with it adult coloring books in the form of dark satirical illustrations and captions. Two of the most famous adult satire coloring books were *The Executive Coloring Book* (1961) and *The John Birch Coloring Book* (1962). The medium really began to evolve during this period with the coverage of politics, society, human anatomy, television, movies, history, and comic books and strips.

Of course, Westerns, comic strips, and cartoon characters were still popular with boys and girls, but the impact that television had in the Sixties is undeniable. Just about every primetime television show from *The Addams Family* to *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea* had an illustrated book available just waiting to be filled in with all sorts of colors. To say that the little square picture box had an influence would be an understatement. Would *mega-influence* be more suitable?

Other books contained illustrations of Tom Mix and Skeezix, along with characters from *Little Folks*, *Little Annie Rooney*, *Little Orphan Annie*, *Smitty*, *Our Gang*, *Edgar Bergen* and *Charlie McCarthy*, *Pinocchio*, *Snow White*, *Skippy*, and *The Wizard of Oz*. All titles were popular, but not to the extent that Shirley Temple enjoyed.

By the Forties, variety stores throughout the United States and the world began to see an increase in the demand and sales of paint and coloring books. With the market starting to explode, publishing companies quickly began to acquire the rights to television, radio, film personalities, comic-strip characters, and anything else that could turn a quick buck.

Another major factor in the popularity of coloring books occurred on December 7, 1941, with the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the United States' entry into World War II. Up until Japan's surrender on August 19, 1945, U.S. military and patriotic coloring books became a huge part of the market and were geared towards all ages. Some books like *America the Land of the Free Coloring Book* (1942) contained American history; others such as *War Planes Tanks and Jeeps* (1942) contained captioned illustrations to identify equipment.



# AD MEN & WOMEN

Favorite Characters  
From TV Commercials



by Scott Saavedra

When watching television as a kid in the Sixties, if you were too lazy to get up during the commercial breaks (hello) then you were just stuck watching them or doing your best to try and ignore them. This used to be perfectly normal behavior (I guess you had to be there). Channel surfing was only something I did if I couldn't remember what station was broadcasting, say, *Munsters* reruns.

The types of commercials I enjoyed were those for toys and candy, but the memory of them has faded over time. The ones that seemed to really stick featured humorous personalities that described or demonstrated the benefits of the product being sold. The best of these characters were just like you and me but friendlier, and just barely on the sunny side of sanity. Just barely. Remember: repetition is important in commercials. These personas turned out to be well embraced by the consumer. A good thing, because television advertising was pretty lackluster in the previous decade and a half of the medium's short history. Broadcasters treated early efforts as merely radio ads with pictures.

The Bulova Watch Company was the first—in 1941—to broadcast a commercial on television (an image of a clock showing the time). It ran 20 seconds and cost \$9 (a bit less than three pairs of men's socks at Lord & Taylor according to that year's

catalog). Some 4,000 people—exact numbers vary, but about half of all television sets in the U.S.—are said to have seen it. Why, that's fewer people than the 5,360-person population of the fictional small town of Mayberry (watched over by the pair of Fife & Taylor).

Before the use of videotape or film, early commercials were done live. A notorious example of the hazards of that approach was recounted by TV advertising pro Harry Matthei in *American Heritage* (May–June 1977). During a live demonstration of an “easy open” Westinghouse refrigerator, the actress could not cajole the door to open despite her best, most heroic efforts. We late Baby Boomers (and BB-adjacent generations) weren't around to see such sights but we have witnessed (over and over again) Lucille Ball, comically inspired by such incidents, as she tried to sell Vitameatavegamin (a product containing an absurd amount of alcohol) in the “Lucy Does a TV Commercial” episode from the first season of the classic series, *I Love Lucy*. [Editor's note: My wife and I have a “talking” Lucy Vitameatavegamin Christmas ornament!]

Jingles, dancing cigarette boxes, and animated mascots like Alka-Seltzer's Speedy (voiced by Dick Beals) became popular as advertisers worked to compete with each other. Human product trademarks were also featured. In the Fifties, “Betty Crocker” would appear near the end of the television ad to help make the sale. But “Betty,” sadly, was a bit of a stiff.

As I said, that changed by the Sixties. The agreeably odd product salespersons were the stars of the ads and not a tacked-on sales device. And when they became popular (and helped move product), we devoted TV viewers saw their weirdly

(ABOVE) *I Love Lucy* features many beloved episodes out of the 180 produced, but the first season's “Lucy Does a TV Commercial” has got to rate among the best. Here Lucy as played by Lucille Ball is beginning to feel the unsteady effects of the product she's trying to sell, Vitameatavegamin. © CBS.



In this 1966 commercial, Josephine the Plumber, as played by acting veteran Jane Withers, really likes her Comet. © KIK Custom Products, Inc. (BELOW) Before she ever put on plumber's overalls, Jane Withers was a successful child star of the Thirties. Withers and an unsettling ventriloquist's dummy (is there any other kind?) share this half-sheet for *45 Fathers* (1937). © 20th Century Fox.



specific, repetitive adventures play out in 30-second increments over months and even years. Let's meet some of them, okay? Okay.

### Josephine the Plumber and the Swamp Wizard

I always accepted the notion of Comet cleanser's Josephine the Plumber as a plumber. She wore appropriate work clothes and was often seen around sinks, which was, I assumed, a popular focus of plumber attention. She even fixed a sink or two. Of course, no plumber anyone has ever hired concerned themselves so much with getting out stains "that other leading cleansers can't" as did Josephine. Josephine's single-minded pursuit of excellence in sink cleaning lasted over a decade, from 1963 to 1974, making her a hugely successful creation with as many as 20 different (I use that word loosely) installments of her story told each year.

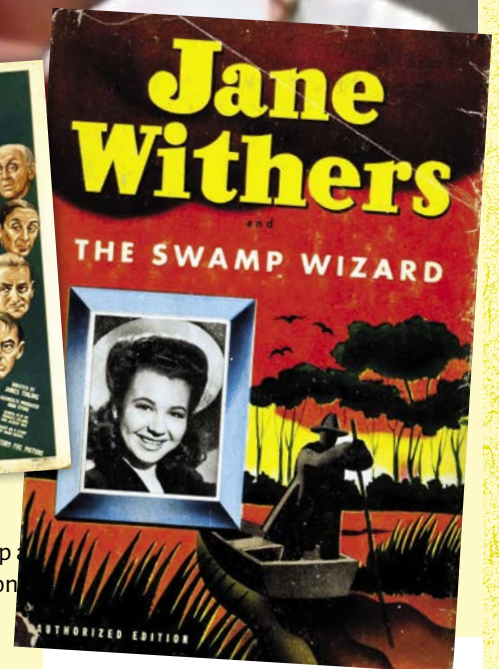
One of the more shocking Josephine commercials featured a very young Robby Benson as a lad preparing to put on a sandwich board. The front of the board read, "Josephine says DON'T USE COMET." Robby, clearly upset, thinks that such a sign was, and I'm quoting here, "naughty." Josephine comforts young Robby by showing him the other side of the sign, "USE NEW SUPER STAIN-REMOVING COMET." Robby was eye-poppingly relieved as

Josephine then held up a sign that she had the craziest look on her face.

Josephine was played with a certain amped-up flare by actress Jane Withers. Withers' acting career began, well, before she was even alive. Her mother wanted a girl so the child could have the show business career she herself missed. Withers frequently told the story of how her mother (pre-child birth) would look at movie theater marquee

and try to come up with a name that would look good up in lights and go with the family name. Say what you will about Mother Withers' plan (and I'm trying hard not to say anything), she was right and Jane Withers was born—in 1926—a natural.

Withers' big break came when she was cast as a mean kid opposite sweet little Shirley Temple in the 1934 film, *Bright Eyes*.



*Jane Withers and the Swamp Wizard* (1944), by Kathryn Heisenfelt. The fascinating [www.series-books.com](http://www.series-books.com) calls the ending "bizarre and unsettling" and leaves the reader feeling "creepy and repulsed."

# Benny Hill

by Ian Millsted

In December 2018, the church that my wife, daughter, and I attend had an evening of comedians doing a Christmas-themed show. Of tangential interest to *RetroFan* readers, one of the comedians, Dominic Holland, is the father of current Spider-Man actor Tom Holland. Hosting the evening was Paul Kerensa, best known in the U.K. as a writer of sitcoms. As part of his act Kerensa put up two lists on the screen. One was a list of well-known tunes and the other of Christmas carols, the idea being that any of the carols could be sung along to any of the tunes. The overwhelmingly popular choice was the tune simply identified as “The Benny Hill Theme.” How interesting that, 30 years after his show was cancelled largely due to being seen as not acceptable for modern audiences, the name elicited such a warm response from, of all things, a church audience. The church we go to may be a little unconventional, but—even so!

Benny Hill was both a traditionalist and a pioneer at the same time. He had been a star of British television for 20 years before the first signs of success in America emerged, and he should be given all due credit for making that success happen. He was steeped in the vaudeville tradition, while also understanding the need of modern television for programs of a certain length that could also accommodate commercials. The risqué nature of much of his comedy meant that it was cutting edge in the Sixties and out of fashion by the Nineties. The tone and style of the programs changed little over time.

**Benny Hill's character Fred Scuttle, as immortalized in wax at Madame Tussauds in London.** Photo by Ricardo Liberato/Wikimedia Commons.

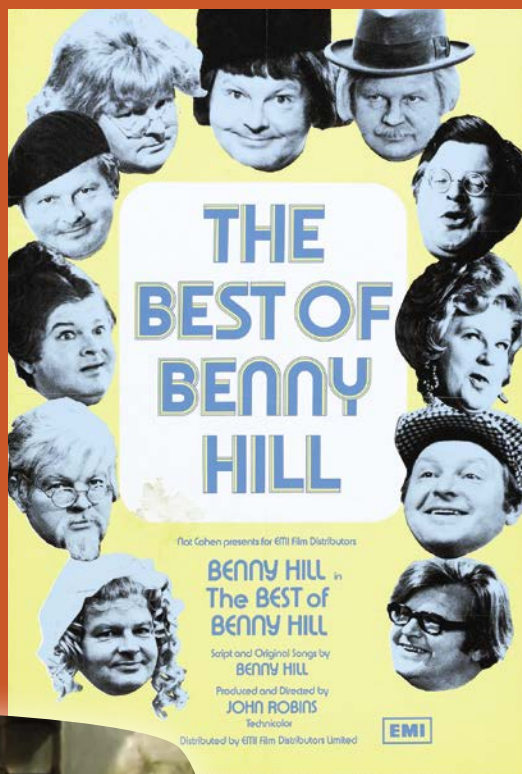
Having been named Alfred Hawthorne Hill by his parents, Hill took the stage name Benny Hill in tribute to Jack Benny, of whom he was a fan and on whom he modelled his direct to audience style. After serving in the British army in Normandy in 1944, Hill sought a career in show business. He worked as a stagehand at the Windmill Theatre, which had a curious mix of comedians and stationary nude models (the censors only allowed nudes on stage if they didn't move!), which may have influenced the shows he later made. Hill gradually made something of a name for himself on radio, some of which recordings still exist in the BBC archives, but found true success when his pitch for a television sketch show was commissioned by the BBC. From 1955 to 1967, Hill made *The Benny Hill Show* for the BBC to great success. He also starred in a couple of films, *Who Done It?* (1960) and *Light Up the Sky* (1960). The former was the last comedy to be made by the legendary Ealing Studios and the latter is a World War II-set piece that allows Hill to show off some of his vaudeville-style act.

It was the move from the BBC to ITV in 1968 that really gave Hill the opportunity to make it to the very top. ITV was the only rival to the BBC from the Fifties to 1982. It was therefore the only commercial television network in the U.K. and had an effective monopoly on TV advertising revenues. The network was divided into about a dozen different companies for different regions with each contributing a certain proportion of the primetime

degree of creative control; he wrote the scripts and supervised the choice of music, some of which he wrote himself. The theme tune was actually a pre-existing piece called "Yakety Sax" by saxophonist Boots Randolph, but which almost everyone now knows as "The Benny Hill Theme."

*The Benny Hill Show* as made by Thames Television was never a regular weekly show. Hill was given enough time to make hour-long specials that would be scheduled when ready. There were typically three or four of these a year, with one usually shown somewhere over the Christmas holiday season. Thames Television was also more entrepreneurial than the BBC and actively sought ways to sell their shows overseas. The first sales to syndication in America were made by re-packaging the shows down to 24-minute episodes suitable to fit into a half-hour slot with commercials. By the mid-Seventies there was enough color material to package whole series, which is what local American stations were looking for. It also helped that Hill worked with a regular group of support actors (Henry McGee, Jackie Wright, Nicholas Parsons, and Bob Todd), so arranging new contracts was relatively easy. It didn't hurt that they were paid quite well either.

Many other British comedians envied Hill's American success, but none of them were willing to do the logistical part of the process that Hill did. Possibly they didn't understand what he had been doing. Only *Monty Python's Flying Circus* achieved anything like the same number of syndication sales, even though Python and Hill represented opposite ends of the comedy spectrum.



**(LEFT)** Poster for a 1974 theatrical release of sketches from *The Benny Hill Show*, from programs produced in 1969–1972. © EMI. Poster courtesy of Heritage. **(BELOW)** Lovely, leggy ladies—Hill's Angels—were a popular attraction on *The Benny Hill Show*. © AH Hill Residuals Trust.



programming. Greater London had such a large share of the population that it was split into two separate companies—one for weekdays and one for weekends. It was for Thames Television, which had the weekday franchise, with whom Hill signed. The advertising money was plentiful enough that they could offer Hill big money for making the shows. They also made the series in color, where the BBC had still been in black and white. Hill also had a high





# Captain Nice

*The Short and Happy Flight  
of America's Insecure Superman*

by Dan Hagen

"Watch out for the fallout!" Carter called. "I'm going to take the potion!"  
"Do it, boy!"

There was a blinding explosion! A cloud of smoke billowed up from behind the couch! A sulphurous odor filled the air! Then a figure, choking, eyes tearing, stepped from the smoke. It was:

Captain Nice!

He spread his arms, lifting his cape, revealing the lettering on the chest of his red, white and blue uniform. His muscles bulged, his jaw jutted, his steely eyes glinted.

"And to think!" Mrs. Nash murmured. "A moment ago, that was my finky son, Carter!"

"It's still me, Mother," Captain Nice said. "No matter what I become, I'll always be your son."

— William Johnston, *Captain Nice* paperback novel (1967)



On the evening of January 9, 1967, NBC viewers were treated for the first time to these sprightly, though not deathless, lyrics:

Look! It's the man who flies around like an eagle.

Look! It's the enemy of all that's illegal.

Look! At the muscles on those arms, they're like hammers.

Look! It's the nut who walks around in pajamas.

That's no nut, boy, that's Captain Nice.

Nice! Nice! Nice! Nice! Nice!

The theme song was written by Brooklyn-born composer Vic Mizzy, who'd also penned the catchy themes to *Green Acres* and *The Addams Family*. Mizzy didn't find *Captain Nice* funny, and the show's creator Buck Henry, in turn, didn't care for Mizzy's theme song. He'd have preferred to punctuate his comedy with an instrumental theme, like the one Irving Szathmary had written for Henry's other parody sitcom, *Get Smart*.

ABC's *Batman* had become TV's surprise hit the year before, a fact not lost on the other two networks. Debuting the same night

(TOP) Able to bend steel in his bare hands! William Daniels in a publicity photo for *Captain Nice*. © NBC. (ABOVE) Jack "King" Kirby's promotional poster for NBC's *Captain Nice*. Courtesy of The Jack Kirby Collector. © NBC.

as *Captain Nice*, actor Stephen Strimpell gained the strength of a thousand men and the ability to fly in another Superman spoof, the CBS sitcom *Mr. Terrific*. Pretty much a yawn.

*Captain Nice* ran opposite CBS's sitcom *The Lucy Show* and ABC's World War II adventure *Rat Patrol*. The critics ran from cold to lukewarm to warm, at least preferring the show to *Mr. Terrific*.

In the *Los Angeles Herald-Examiner*, Bob Hull said *Captain Nice* and *Mr. Terrific* were "embarrassing likenesses in theme,

costume and gag." But both the *Boston Globe* and the *Detroit Free Press* used the phrase "Nice is nicer."

In the *New York Times*, George Gent said *Captain Nice* "...at least gave some evidence of a sense of style." In the *Washington Evening Star*, Bernie Harrison called the show smartly written, brisk, and ingenious.

In retrospect, it's clear that NBC had the fresher approach. "The show was just irreverent enough to make it work both as spoof and super-hero," recalls fan Chuck Rothman. "Carter was never as dumb as Maxwell Smart, but often had problems trying to live up to the super-hero lifestyle."

Buck Henry, in creating his clever but largely unappreciated show, anticipated with comic effect something that might happen in real life if some masked, super-strong fellow were to fly around doing good deeds.

We imagine helpless, grateful citizens being overawed, and look-up-in-the-sky-ing, but very, very quickly we'd get used to him, just as we get used to every impossible thing that happens—men landing on the Moon, Japanese nuclear reactors poisoning the Pacific, walking around with *Star Trek* communicators in our hands, and so forth.

Henry's satire was deft. I remember laughing at an episode in which a highway bridge, ruined by corrupt contractors, collapses during its dedication ceremony. When police chemist Carter Nash (William Daniels) appears as Captain Nice to catch the bridge and save the day, the mayor wonders if he wouldn't mind just standing there to support the bridge permanently.

Cheryl Spoehr, a fan of *Captain Nice*, recalls, "I loved the way he defended the whole concept of comic-book heroes, as well as showing how a real person might be if they got powers. He never liked the taste of his super-serum, often getting a stomach ache from it... and he was the only sane and moral man in his hometown."

A couple of decades after the show's early demise, Daniels put it down to the audience's inability to cheer for an "insecure Superman." But after all, Henry's *Get Smart* featured an inept super-spy and ran five seasons. Later, Daniels said CBS's decision to air *Mr. Terrific* a half-hour before NBC's *Captain Nice* really hurt both shows.

*Mr. Terrific* starred Strimpell as Stanley Beamish, a filling-station operator whose unique biochemistry permitted him

## FAST FACTS

### Captain Nice

- ▶ **No. of seasons:** One
- ▶ **No. of episodes:** 15
- ▶ **Original run:** January 9, 1967–August 28, 1967
- ▶ **Primary Cast:** William Daniels, Alice Ghostley, Ann Prentiss
- ▶ **Created by:** Buck Henry
- ▶ **Network:** NBC

to pop a government-developed power pill and become a flying, super-strong secret agent for a maximum of 100 minutes.

To the general audience, both *Mr. Terrific* and *Captain Nice* were obviously Superman parodies. But the two protagonists also resembled a largely forgotten DC Comics superhero, Hourman. He, too, had gotten his time-limited powers of strength and speed from a wonder drug. In fact, both sitcoms were sometimes criticized because of America's growing uneasiness about drugs.

With the *It's a Bird... It's a Plane... It's Superman!* musical having just closed on Broadway and four live-action superheroes (*Batman*, *The Green Hornet*, *Captain Nice*, and *Mr. Terrific*) on TV's three networks, maybe it was just a case of "capelash," as one wit suggested.

But in fact, Daniels' "insecure Superman," played for laughs, anticipated the evolution of less campy super-hero stories in later decades.

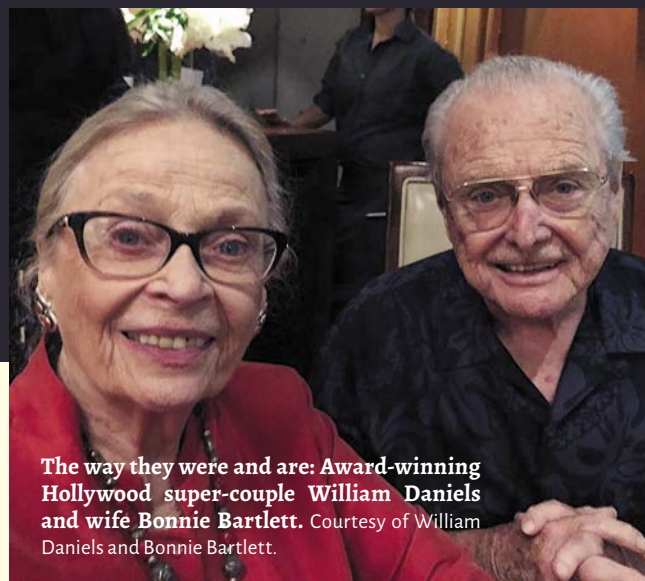
Publicity photo of *Captain Nice* stars William Daniels and Ann Prentiss. © NBC.



# William Daniels and Bonnie Bartlett

by Dan Hagen

RETRO  
INTERVIEW



The way they were and are: Award-winning Hollywood super-couple William Daniels and wife Bonnie Bartlett. Courtesy of William Daniels and Bonnie Bartlett.

He's been, among other things, John Adams, the Graduate's dad, a super-hero, a surgeon, and the voice of a car.

Born in Brooklyn in 1927, William Daniels was a child performer from the age of three who, in 1960, earned critical acclaim and an Obie Award in Edward Albee's play *Zoo Story*.

He's had notable roles in numerous memorable movies, including *A Thousand Clowns* (1965), *The Graduate* (1967), *The President's Analyst* (1967), *Two for the Road* (1967), *Marlowe* (1969), and *The Parallax View* (1974).

Daniels originated the role of John Adams in the 1969 Broadway musical *1776*, and played the part again in the 1972 film version.

His starring TV roles included *Captain Nice* (1967), Mr. Feeny in the ABC sitcom *Boy Meets World* (1993–2000), and two TV series at once during the Eighties. Daniels was Dr. Mark Craig in the critically

acclaimed *St. Elsewhere* (1982–1988) and the distinctive voice of KITT the supercar in the popular *Knight Rider*

(1982–1986). Daniels won two Emmys for *St. Elsewhere*, and Bonnie Bartlett—who has been Daniels' wife since 1951—also won one. He was president of the Screen Actors Guild from 1999 to 2001.

"When strangers recognized me in public they still didn't know my name, but they remembered the uptight doctor in that hospital show," Daniels recalled in his memoir *I'd Rather Be Elsewhere*. "It's an odd way to live, but there are many actors and actresses who have had the same experience. ... We don't end up on the cover of *People* magazine. But many of us without name recognition make a fine living, put our kids through college, and, if we're lucky, enjoy long careers precisely

because we can play many different kinds of roles. We're not typecast. That's the reason I am still working in my late 80s.

"As a character actor I became a star, but a very small one, and I saw time and again how the big stars—the leading men—surrounded by sycophants, lost their sense of reality and then lost everything: their families, their marriages, and, in some cases, their lives."

**RetroFan:** Are your grandchildren aware that you were once a comic-book super-hero?

**William Daniels:** I don't...

**Bonnie Bartlett:** Yeah, Liam.

**WD:** Does Liam know that?



# Saturday Morning Preview Specials

Jack Burns and Avery Schreiber are surrounded by ABC's stars in this promo for the 1973 *Saturday Morning Sneak Peek* program.

## Part One: 1968–1977

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 my *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!*

**Normally in this** column, I have spotlighted one series or set of series, giving you behind-the-scenes stories, cool factoids, and interviews. In this column and the next, I'll instead be giving you the *Retro Saturday Morning* treatment of one of the most anticipated shows every fall from 1968 forward... the *Saturday Morning Preview Special*.

In the September 26, 2008 issue of *TIME* magazine, *Family Guy*'s Seth MacFarlane gave his own thoughts on the

phenomenon: “I was obsessed. Every year, the Friday before the new Saturday-morning shows would premiere, the networks would do this big preview special, and I was always glued to the TV. As horrible as they were, they were entertaining at the time. There was a lot of showmanship from the networks based around the new lineup.”

The problem with nostalgia for the *Preview Specials* is that they were never ever aired *once*. They were never rerun, never offered in syndication, and never released on home video, DVD, or streaming. Because of the cross-platform licensing rights for clips and music, they never *can* be legally released. Some of them exist in parts and pieces on YouTube—a few of them exist completely there—but by and large, this set of shows is a missing part of television history. Very little has been written about them, and even Wikipedia has many of its crowd-sourced facts wrong.

Until now.

Now there's *RetroFan* to the rescue. Utilizing this author's amazing resources, here is as much information and material that could be dug up on the astonishing phenomenon of *Saturday Morning Preview Specials!* Beware, though... proceeding without caution can bring untold emotions, unfettered joy, and quite possibly, madness!



### 1968 NBC - Meet the Banana Splits

**Airdate:** Friday, September 6, 1968, 9pm, 30 minutes

**Song:** "You're The Lovin' End" (Banana Splits)

Produced by Hanna-Barbera Productions

This is the first Saturday Morning Preview Special ever aired, and the formula for such shows was not yet in place. As NBC had only one new series debuting in the fall on 1969, this special mostly previewed that series only. The half-hour show was hosted by the Banana Splits, and contained segments of early episodes of the series that would debut the following morning: *Kellogg Presents The Banana Splits Adventure Hour*.

The Banana Splits were four large, furry creatures who lived in their dream house Banana Pad, and played in a rock band. They were FleeGLE the dog guitar player (suit actor: Jeff Winkless a.k.a. Jeffrey Brock; voice actor: Paul Winchell), Drooper the lion guitarist (suit actor: Dan Winkless a.k.a. Daniel Owen; voice actor: Daws Butler), Bingo the gorilla drummer (suit actor: Terence H. Winkless a.k.a. Terence Henry; voice actor: Daws Butler), and Snorky the semi-mute elephant keyboard player (suit actor: Robert Towers). Other elements from their show, introduced on this special were the live-action serial *Danger Island*, and two animated segments, *The Arabian Knights* and *The Three Musketeers*.

It is unclear whether or not other returning Saturday morning NBC shows were mentioned in the special, though it is likely they were. The season also included *Super Six*, *The Flintstones*, *Top Cat*, *Underdog*, *Birdman and the Galaxy Trio*, and *Super President*.



Press photo for the 1969 ABC Special, showing Edward Mulhare's sea captain ghost on the television, and Hope Lange's Mrs. Muir looking on. © 20th Century Fox Television (INSET) An ABC Super Saturday Club sticker.

### 1969 ABC - The Ghost and Mrs. Muir Present the ABC Super Saturday Club Special

**Airdate:** Thursday, September 4, 1969, 7:30pm, 60 minutes

Produced and directed by Bob Henry

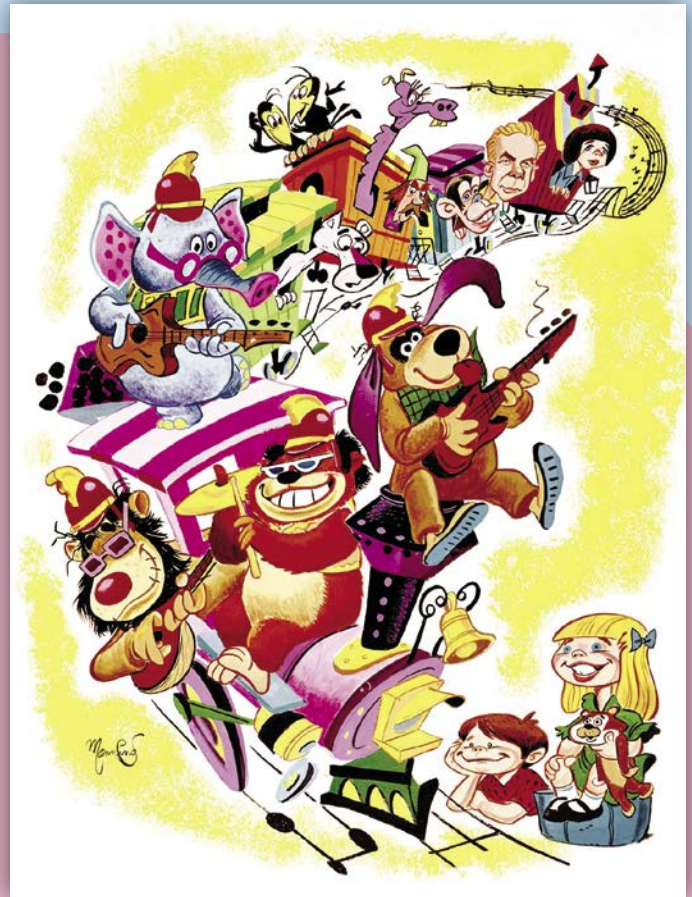
This awkwardly named special crystallized the form almost every successive special would take, combining live-action stars, music, clips from a variety of series, and non-canonical appearances by television characters not in their natural habitat. In this case, the stars were from an ABC series titled *The Ghost and Mrs. Muir*, in which Hope Lange played widowed writer Carolyn Muir, and Edward Mulhare haunted her as the ghostly sea captain Daniel Gregg. Also appearing were fellow cast members Reta Shaw, Charles Nelson Reilly, Kellie Flanagan, Harlan Carraher, and dog Scruffy. Making a guest appearance in the episode was Jonathan Frid, in character as his 175-year-old vampiric Barnabas Collins from the ultra-successful gothic soap opera *Dark Shadows*.

During the special, the live-action band the Hardy Boys (Deven English, Nibs Solpysiak, Bob Crowder, Reid Kailing, and Jeff Taylor) materialized in one scene, to perform a song and to promote their new Filmation series, *The Hardy Boys*. Other shows promoted on the special were new entries debuting that weekend: *Smokey the Bear*, *The Cattanooga Cats* (including segments of *Motormouse and Autocat* and *It's The Wolf*), *Hot Wheels*, and *Sky Hawks*.

In addition to this special, ABC advertised and promoted a Super Saturday Club for kids to join. Members received a pinback badge, membership card, pennant, montage poster of cartoon characters, stamp album, sticker decals, a club membership book, and premium coupons. Promised for the future were newsletters.



Promo image for the *Meet the Banana Splits* special. In the back (LEFT TO RIGHT) are FleeGLE, Snorky, and Bingo, while Drooper sits in front. © Hanna-Barbera Prod.



(TOP LEFT) Wild examines the usually hidden operating parts of Freddy the Flute. (LEFT) Jack Wild, star of Sid and Marty Krofft's *H. R. Pufnstuf*, joins the Banana Splits. (ABOVE) Gorgeous color art promoting the special by Hanna-Barbera and comic-book artist Jack Manning. © Hanna-Barbera Productions and Sid and Marty Krofft Productions. B&W photo courtesy of Mark Yurkiw, color Wild photo courtesy of Scott Awley.

## 1969 NBC - The Banana Splits and Friends

**Airdate:** Saturday, August 30, 1969, 9:30am, 60 minutes  
Produced by Don Sandburg and Hanna-Barbera Productions

NBC's second preview special was again hosted by the Banana Splits, but was the first preview to be aired on a Saturday morning. It was broadcast in the regular timeslot of *The Banana Splits Adventure Hour*, the week prior to the new fall schedule's debut.

The show featured the Banana Splits having a club meeting, with Coach Bingo telling the others that they would be initiating new members. First up were the animated Terry Dexter, his pet Bipup, the gnome-like Grump, and his pet dragon, stars of the new series *Here Comes the Grump*. Next were the stars of *The Pink Panther Show*, including a live-action costumed version of Pink Panther. Third were Marshall Thompson and Judy the Chimp from the live-action animal series *Jambo* (a spin-off from Thompson's *Daktari*), followed by another Krofft creation (Sid and Marty Krofft had built the Banana Splits for Hanna-Barbera). Representing *H. R. Pufnstuf* was Jack Wild, who played Jimmy on that series.

Terence H. Winkless, who was inside the suit for Bingo, the drummer, informs *RetroFan*, "I will never forget working with Judy the Chimp while I was Bingo the Gorilla; she wanted to take me apart piece by piece. The terror has always stayed with me, even now 50 years later." Winkless would later go on to write 1981's *The Howling* and direct many episodes of *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* and its spin-off series.

The producer for the special was Don Sandburg, who had kids' show experience as "Sandy the Tramp" on Chicago-based WGN-TV's *Bozo's Circus*. Jack Manning, a Hanna-Barbera artist, created a piece of color preview art for promotional purposes, utilizing many of the characters aboard a train. It included characters from returning show *The Heckle and Jeckle Show*.

Filming for the second season of *The Banana Splits* had been completed by the time work began on this preview special, so ironically, the footage shot for this special was filmed *after* the second season. Because the show never got a third season, it is thus the final *Banana Splits* footage to be filmed. A later syndicated version of the series was packaged as the similarly named *The Banana Splits and Friends Show*, but it did not include footage from either of the preview specials.

# “You Won’t Believe Your Eye!”

## THE CYCLOPS AND FILMMAKER BERT I. GORDON

by Ernest Farino

As part of the 64th Academy Awards, on March 7, 1992, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences presented stop-motion artist Ray Harryhausen with the ninth Gordon E. Sawyer Award, honoring “an individual in the motion picture industry whose technological contributions have brought credit to the industry.” Two-time Academy Award®-winning superstar Tom Hanks stepped onto the stage as Master of Ceremonies to introduce Harryhausen's body of work and proclaimed, “Some people say *Casablanca* or *Citizen Kane*, but I say [Harryhausen's] *Jason and the Argonauts* was the greatest film ever made!”

As Visual Effects Supervisor I had the pleasure of working with Tom for a year-and-a-half on the HBO miniseries *From the Earth to the Moon* and found him to be as smart and as personable as his public image conveys. But here I have to take exception. In what can only be a momentary lapse of memory, Tom appears to have overlooked the one film that stomps on all of those with a giant Godzilla foot.

*The Cyclops*.

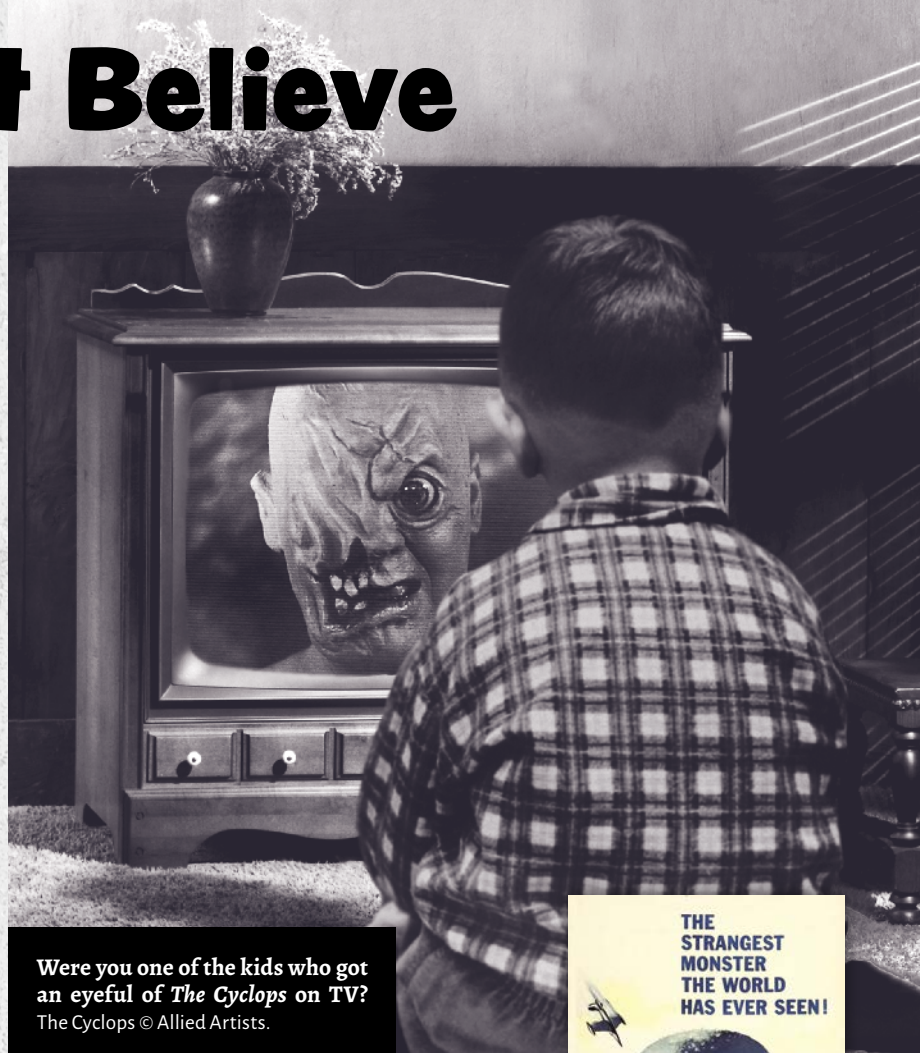
Made in 1957 by Bert I. Gordon, whom wordsmith and punster Forry Ackerman nicknamed “Mr. B.I.G.” in the pages of *Famous Monsters of Filmland*, *The Cyclops* starred Clark Gable lookalike James Craig, the lovely Gloria Talbott, the heavy-drinking Lon Chaney, Jr., and Duncan Parkin as the one-eyed-wonder. Filmed in the picturesque, cave-strewn, “I’ve-seen-it-in-a-hundred-other-movies” valley called Bronson Canyon in the Hollywood Hills in less time than it will take you to read this magazine, *The Cyclops* has emerged as a bonafide cult classic among those in the know.

*Casablanca*? *Citizen Kane*?

Pffft! Neither of those movies has a 25-foot one-eyed giant. So there.

So let’s join business magnate, inventor, scientist, Nobel laureate, gourmand, and two-time Olympic medalist Mr. Hector Peabody and his adopted son Sherman in the WABAC machine for an all-new episode of “Peabody’s Improbable History.”

All the way back to 1964.



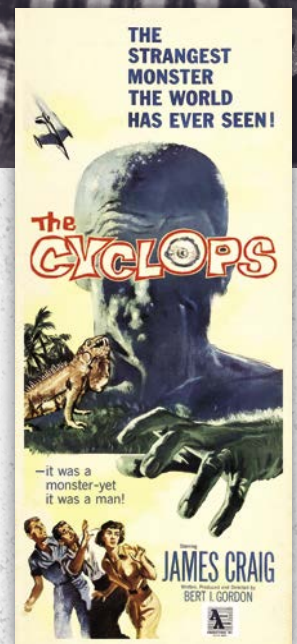
Were you one of the kids who got an eyeful of *The Cyclops* on TV? The Cyclops © Allied Artists.

(I almost said, “Well, not that far back,” but golly—do the math: that’s 56 years ago—more than half a century. So I guess that is way back...)

As I’ve mentioned before in these pages, that was a magical time for me. I was 12 years old, immersed in everything from monsters to Ed “Big Daddy” Roth hot rods, to monsters, to James Bond, to monsters, to—well, you get the idea. So one day I’m studying the local El Paso, Texas, *TV Guide* to plan out my week of *The Munsters*, *The Outer Limits*, *The Twilight Zone*, *Bewitched*, and more, and lo and behold, the Saturday midnight horror movie is *The Cyclops*. The logline in the listing was probably something like, “An expedition to Mexico does battle with a mutated 25-foot man with one big eye.”

All riiiiight! That Is For Me!

Now, this was the “Silver Age” of monsters, and a whole crop of TV horror hosts had sprung up following the success of Maila Nurmi as Vampira: there was Zacherley, Ghoulardi, M. T. Graves, Seymour, the original Svengoolie, and no doubt many other local yokels who slathered on some greasepaint and chomped down





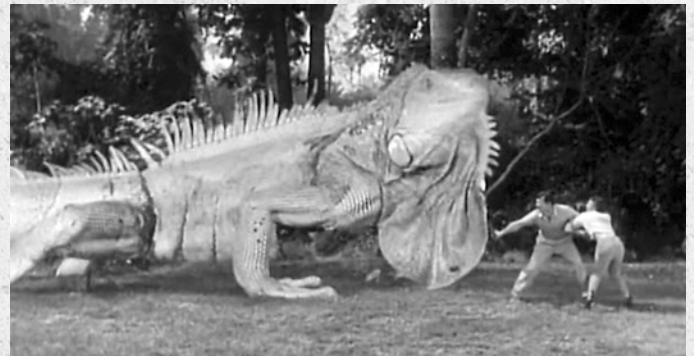
Be on the lookout for this guy! (INSET) Ai-yi-yi! Cyclops gets a spear you-know-where. © Allied Artists.



and me to wade in. And I thought to myself, 'This is glamour? This is fame and fortune?' I just wanted to go home."

getting absolutely stoned, and by the time we got out of there I was weaving!"

The plane lands, of course, in the valley of Bronson Canyon. Not far from Griffith Observatory, Bronson Canyon and the caves still exist (and are still used for films). You can visit by heading north on Canyon Road from Franklin Ave.



What a crappy job! James Craig and Gloria Talbott flee a giant iguana lizard into a swamp covered with hardened duck poop. © Allied Artists.

## THEN CAME BRONSON

*Did You Know?*



A young actor named Charles Buchinski had already appeared in small parts in films such as *Pat and Mike* (1952), *Vera Cruz* (1954), and *House of Wax* (1953). Seeking to revitalize his career, he thought a more marquee-worthy last name might be the answer. While driving along

Franklin Avenue one day in 1955, he stopped at the intersection of Bronson Avenue. *Eureka!* So Charles Buchinski became Charles Bronson and went on to be one of the industry's major stars, appearing in numerous TV episodes, including the third season premiere episode of *The Twilight Zone* on September 15, 1961, opposite future nose-twitcher Elizabeth Montgomery, and major feature films such as *The Great Escape* (1963), *The Dirty Dozen* (1967), and Sergio Leone's epic Western masterpiece, *Once Upon a Time in the West* (1969). So the switch must have worked (a Buchinski by any other name...!)

Before finding the Cyclops, our intrepid explorers encounter giant reptiles and insects, and one chases Gloria into a lake. The filming location was the Arboretum in Arcadia, California, also seen in *The Zombies of Mora Tau* (1957), *Teenage Caveman* (1958), and *Attack of the Giant Leeches* (1959). "We tried it once," said Gloria,



As Mark Thomas McGee wrote in his book *You Won't Believe Your Eyes! A Front Row Look at the Science Fiction and Horror Films of the 1950s* (BearManor, 2018), "The film's best line comes from Gloria after she's been kidnapped by her 30-foot tall lover. 'There's something about his face,' she tells James Craig. 'That left side that's not completely mutilated, makes me feel sorry for him.' At the sneak preview the audience laughed so hard Gloria's agent hustled her out of the theater before anyone recognized her."

### Of Cyclops and Doughboys

Prolific actor and voice artist Paul Frees provided the growling "voice" of the Cyclops, and appeared (or provided voice) in several other Bert Gordon films. On screen he can be seen as one of Frank Sinatra's assassination team in *Suddenly* (1954), as scientist Dr. Vorhees in Howard Hawks' *The Thing from Another World* (1951), and as a radio announcer in George Pal's *The War of the Worlds* (1953).

Frees' voice can be heard in *When Worlds Collide* (1951), *Gigantis the Fire Monster* (1955), *Francis in the Haunted House* (1956), *Rodan* (1956), *The Deadly Mantis* (1957), *Beginning of the End* (1957), *The 27th Day* (1957), *The Monolith Monsters* (1957), *The H-Man* (1958), *Space Master X-7* (1958), *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* (1956–1958), and *The Shaggy Dog* (1959). Remarkably, of his work in this field, Frees' greatest achievement was probably as the voice of Josephine, the



# The Mid-Atlantic Nostalgia Convention

by Michael Eury

Imagine a minefield of movie posters, celebrity autographs, DVDs of rare films and TV shows, trading cards, comic books, Baby Boomer-era toys, cartoon collectibles, LPs and 45s, and cinema-related books (of all vintages), loaded to explode with warm memories at every step. Whether you're looking for an original *Pee-wee's Big Adventure* one-sheet or an autograph of Lash LaRue or a *Captain Kangaroo* comic book or a *Frankenstein* T-shirt, this is your destination. Now picture a 24-7 movie room with classic and cult film showings, plus late-night horror screenings. And a full slate of scintillating seminars exploring everything from the long-uncredited *Batman* co-creator Bill Finger to old-time radio reenactments. And an assemblage of familiar faces from the small and big screens, like Loretta Swit, *M\*A\*S\*H*'s own "Hot Lips" Houlihan, live and in person, waiting to meet you. No, this isn't an impossible dream—this extraordinary three-day event exists, once a year. It's the Mid-Atlantic Nostalgia Convention (MANC), held each September in Hunt Valley, Maryland, just outside of Baltimore.

I attended MANC for the first time last year, on September 12–14, 2019, to promote *RetroFan* and other TwoMorrows

publications. When I'm a guest, whose audiences skew to this magazine, I often cast a wide net through the convention aisles, hoping for my way to discover my warehouse of vintage comics-history magazine *Batman* (and other comics-history books). But a man out—I was among my first to discover my warehouse of vintage *West* T-shirt. And the Yul Brynner *Reischl*, the convivial actress of TV's most offbeat spin-off of *Brady* interview with "F... And the friendly fan that interviewed portrayed random Mayberry episodes of *The Andy Griffith Show*.

## Convention History

From programming to guest appearances, the Mid-Atlantic Nostalgia Convention is a blast of throwback to what convention organizer Martin Grams, Jr., the author of books and articles about some of the same topics you find in our very pages

IF YOU ENJOYED THIS PREVIEW, CLICK THE LINK TO ORDER THIS ISSUE IN PRINT OR DIGITAL FORMAT!



### RETROFAN #9

NOW BI-MONTHLY! Interviews with '70s' Captain America **REB BROWN**, and Captain Nice (and Knight Rider's KITT) **WILLIAM DANIELS** with wife **BONNIE BARTLETT!** Plus: Coloring Books, Fall Previews for Saturday morning cartoons, *The Cyclops* movie, actors behind your favorite TV commercial characters, **BENNY HILL**, the Mid-Atlantic Nostalgia Convention, 8-track tapes, and more!

(84-page FULL-COLOR magazine) \$9.95  
(Digital Edition) \$4.99

[http://twomorrows.com/index.php?main\\_page=product\\_info&Path=133&products\\_id=1531](http://twomorrows.com/index.php?main_page=product_info&Path=133&products_id=1531)