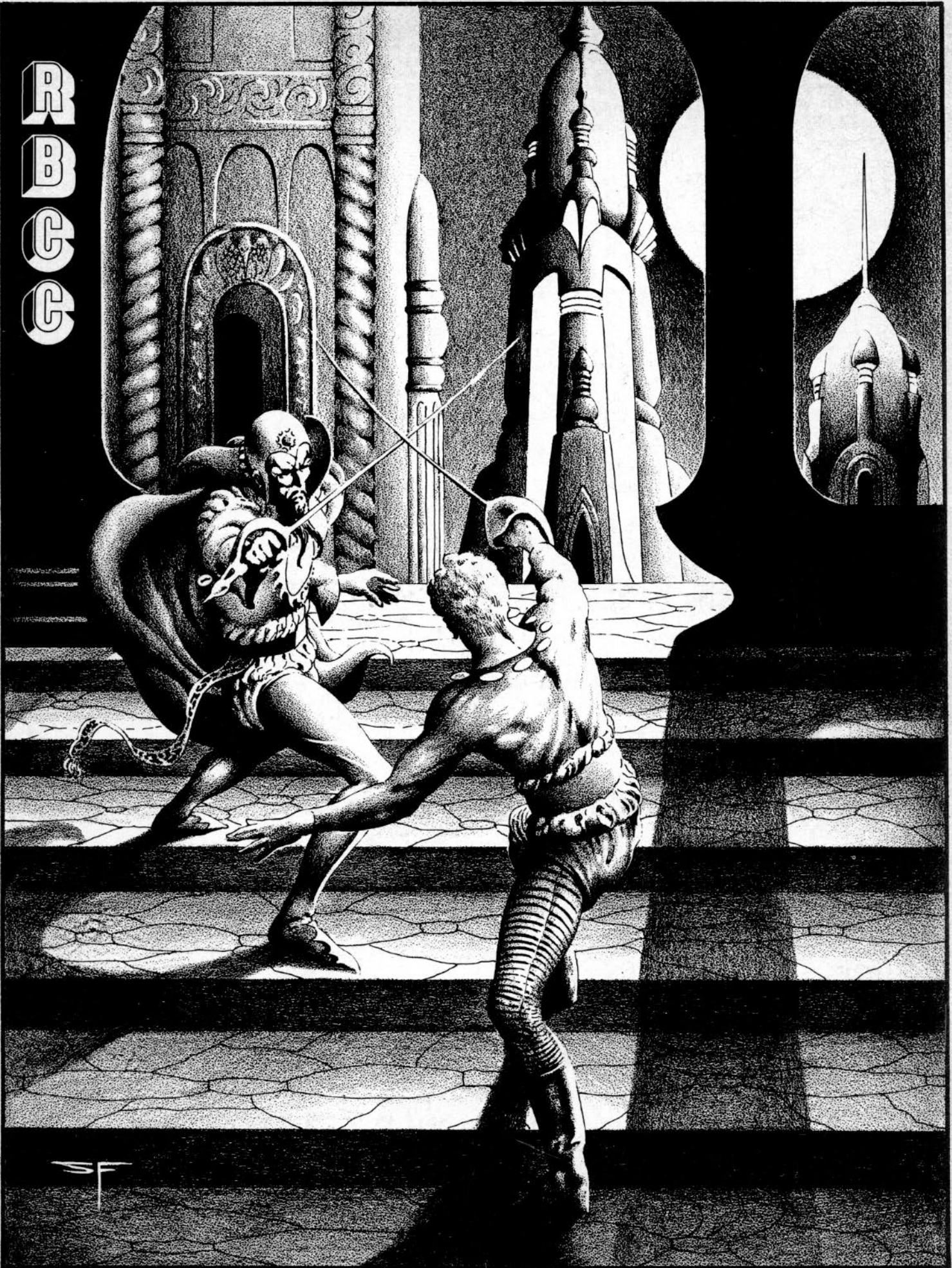


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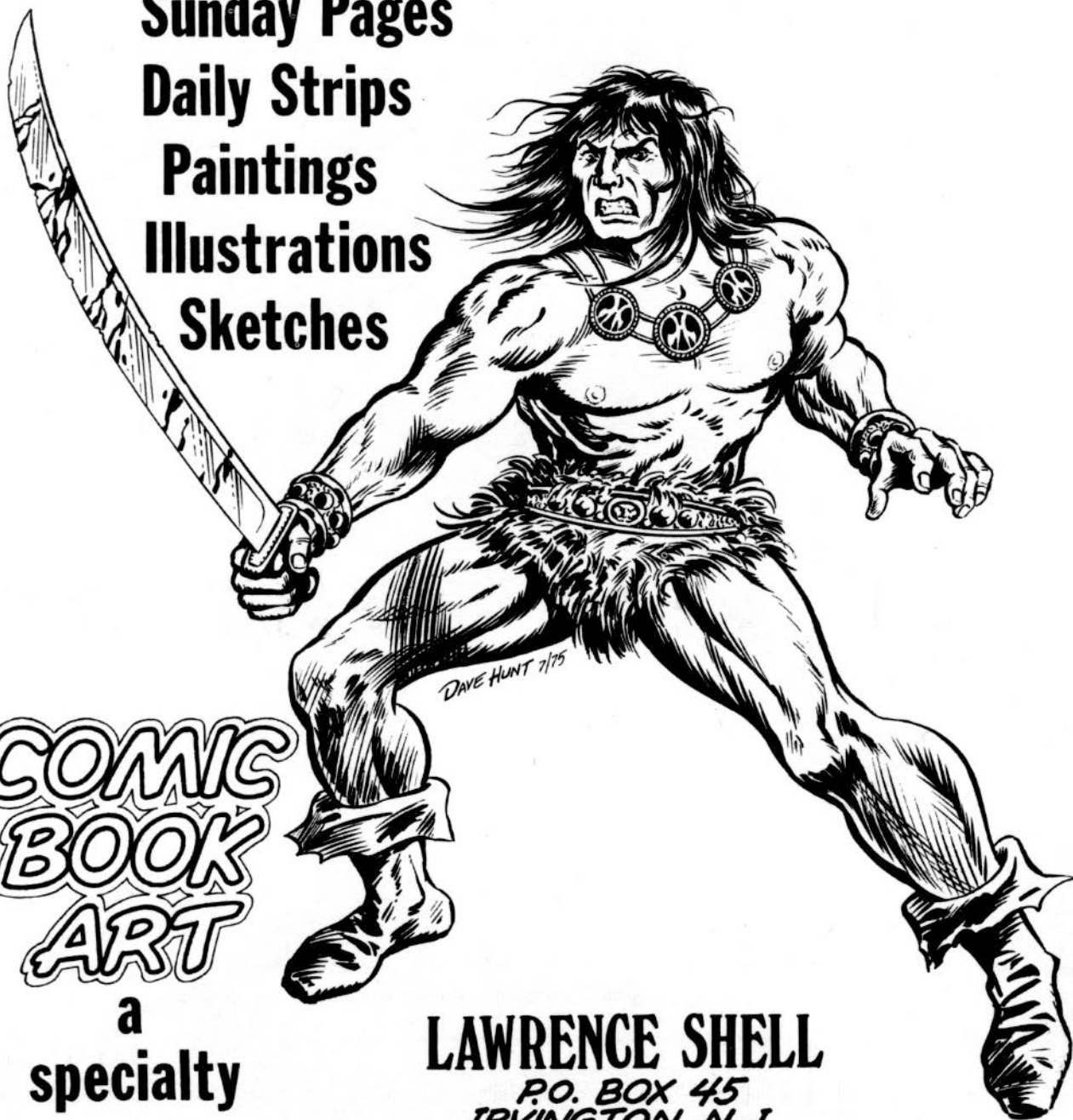


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THE ROCKET'S BLAST COMICCOLLECTOR #134

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FRONT COVER - STEVE FABIAN  
 BACK COVER - MIKE ZECK



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MARCH 1977

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124, 125, 127, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133

THE ROCKET'S BLAST COMICCOLLECTOR is published by THE S.F.C.A., 6351 S.W. 43 STREET, MIAMI, Florida 33155. EDITOR EMERITUS: GORDON B. LOVE, EDITOR & PUBLISHER: JAMES VAN HISE  
STAFF ARTISTS: Steve Fabian, Ralph Fowler, Mike McKenney, Don Rosa, Tom Sutton and Mike Zeck. Contributions are always welcomed, but if you want it returned be sure to include a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

THE ADVERTISING DEADLINES FOR THE NEXT TWO ISSUES OF THE RBCC ARE: APRIL 1  
MAY 13

This special Flash Gordon issue had its beginnings about a year ago when I asked BRUCE PATTERSON to do a drawing for a FLESH GORDON article I was thinking of doing. His first version didn't appeal to me for various reasons and so he agreed to redo it. The months dragged by and I had almost forgotten about it when I received not one, but the several FLESH GORDON drawings by Bruce which appear in this issue. Bruce also wanted to do a logo drawing of me in the gigantic hand of the great God Porno. Bruce is generally quite busy working at Neal Adams Continuity Associates in New York but he took the time and put a lot of work into these drawings. I then got to thinking, "This stuff is too good to run with an article in an issue surrounded by a lot of unrelated material, so I conceived the idea of the Flash Gordon special. I had no idea then that nearly everything I attempted to line up for the issue would succeed, as well as some things I hadn't even asked for. I contacted STEVE FABIAN who agreed to do a drawing of Flash in a sword fight with Ming the Merciless. RON WILBER agreed to do a satire on Flash Gordon as his comic strip satires in the tradition of the old MAD comics and Will Elder are always enjoyable. I contacted MIKE ZECK about doing the drawing which appears on the back cover. While he was working on it he decided that the first version wasn't quite to his liking so he also did a



ZECK



FABIAN



ROSA



VAN HISE

slightly revised second version which also appears in this issue. Then about a month ago he mentioned to me that he was doing a short Flash Gordon strip for his portfolio (which he takes with him when he visits the publishers in New York, such as he will this spring) and offered it to me to use if I was interested. It appears as the lead feature in this issue. I mentioned the possibility to R.C. HARVEY of tying his column into the Flash Gordon special and he agreed to do an article on Alex Raymond. TOM SUTTON enjoys the centerspread format and said he'd be glad to turn one in for this issue (actually he did two Flash Gordon centerspreads and the other will appear next issue). I contacted the publisher of the now defunct THOSE ENDURING MATINEE IDOLS, a high quality zine devoted to movie serials, and he agreed to let me reprint their retrospect on the first Flash Gordon serial. I felt this would be important as it would demonstrate exactly how good a satire FLESH GORDON really was. RALPH FOWLER only had time to complete one drawing for it so I had MIKE ZECK do another of the destruction of the witch queen's swan ship. DON ROSA just made it under the wire with THE PERTWILLABY PAPERS and MIKE KUNTZ, an area fan, wanted to get in his say about the new KING KONG. ANDY WARNER not only did a fine drawing for the Buster Crabbe interview, but also conceived and designed this page, something which I feel the RBCC has needed for a long time to help give it more of a personal touch!

# RBCC CONTRIBUTORS



## EDITORIAL

For reasons usually obscure to me, I am sometimes accused of not being a comics fan because of "all" the movie oriented material I publish in the RBCC (and I suppose too because I publish ENTERPRISE INCIDENTS). These people seem to ignore or overlook the fact that I have been associated with the RBCC since 1970 and have been the sole editor and publisher since August of 1974. Virtually everything which appears in the RBCC I am responsible for in one way or another. Sometimes it is just on as basic a level as accepting a feature which is offered to me, but often the articles which appear here, and with few exceptions the cover artwork and special drawings, are thought up by me and commissioned from the people with the abilities to carry those ideas out. It is only rarely that a drawing submitted to me out of the blue meets my high standards for acceptability. Partly to prove that I really am as interested in comics as films I've started my COMICS COMMENTARY column this issue. The other reason is that I've been wanting to include a column like this in the RBCC since I took over (see the inside front cover of RBCC #112) and finally realized that to get just what I wanted I'd have to do it myself.

Although I mentioned that I rarely find unrequested submissions of art acceptable, there have been times when I've been very excited by unsolicited material. One example is the Spider-Man illustration by Marc Hempel in this issue as it displays both style, ability and originality. One other time this occurred was when Ron Wilber submitted his SPACE: 1999 satire which ran

in RBCC #128. Ron has since become a regular contributing artist, as he presents no less than seven pages of his artistic contributions this issue.

Some people have misunderstood the purpose of the ARTIST PROFILE. It is not meant to be a biography of the artist, but just a profile as the title indicates. It's meant to tell you more than you knew about him before so that he's not just a faceless entity whose drawings magically appear each issue. Still, enough people have requested it have more depth, and so I will try to expand it whenever possible. The profile this issue on Ralph Fowler and by Ralph Fowler is much more like what many of you had requested.

It has been over a year since a Star Trek feature article has graced these pages and I'm making it official now that as long as ENTERPRISE INCIDENTS exists there won't be any more Star Trek articles in the RBCC as there just isn't any need for them here. I can do much more with Star Trek in ENTERPRISE INCIDENTS. For the most part RBCC readers would rather Star Trek be dealt with elsewhere than here. I concede!

There is a lot of artwork for sale this issue. The centerspread by Tom Sutton is for sale from him for \$50.00 and you can write to him at: 40 Marlboro Street, Newburyport, Mass. 01950. There is also Mike Zeck art for sale at \$25.00 per page. This includes the contents page (the original doesn't have the white lettering as that was added photographically when it was printed), the back cover and page 17, all of which are much larger than printed size. Include \$1.00 per page for postage. Also all of the Bruce Patterson FLESH GORDON artwork



Dear Mr. Van Hise,

After reading your review of THE NEAL ADAMS TREASURY, it is obvious that you are not aware of the fact that the information enclosed is directed to the true Neal Adams fan. If it were for the average comix fan it would include such old and used articles as ones on GL&GA.

Your last statement really deals the deadly blow, "The zine as a whole just does not live up to what the title would suggest, that it should be a publication to be treasured." Once again I must stress that this billing is directed to a true Adams fan and not to the person interested in such every day antiques as more "wasted space" on the GL&GA series, which every true Adams fan has been bored to death with recently since most of it is stale information 5 years after the "Award Winning Series."

So next time you want an Adams article done get a real fan to write it.

Oh and yes, if any is interested in joining a Neal Adams fan club send me a S.A.S.E.

David Caffey  
171 Perkins Ext.  
Memphis, Tn. 38117

SINCE I HAD MY SAY ON THIS SUBJECT IN "CRITIQUE" THERE'S NO POINT IN GOING ON ABOUT IT AS I'VE HAD MY SAY AND NOW DAVID HAS HAD HIS. SOME PEOPLE SEEM TO FEEL THAT I OBJECT TO PEOPLE WHO DISAGREE WITH ME AND RESPOND VIOLENTLY TO THEM. NOT SO. I DON'T MIND WHEN SOMEONE

WRITES TO ME TO DISAGREE, RATHER I OBJECT WHEN SOMEONE GOES SO OVERBOARD IN OBJECTING THAT THEY DO SOMETHING INANE OR RESORT TO UNDERHANDED METHODS MERELY BECAUSE I SAID SOMETHING WITH WHICH THEY DISAGREED. THIS PAGE HAS RECENTLY GIVEN A LOT OF SPACE TO THE KIRBY "2001" DEBATE AND ALTHOUGH MOST OF THE LETTERS I'VE PRINTED AGREED WITH MIKE MCKENNEY, NEXT ISSUE I'LL BE PRINTING SOME INTELLIGENTLY WRITTEN LETTERS WHICH DISAGREE WITH MIKE'S OPINIONS OF JACK KIRBY.

Dear Jim,

There really isn't anything that could greatly improve the RBCC because it is the best that is published today! The only thing that I could say that would make me enjoy it more would be more news on comics and such. All though I am not a sci-fi addict, I enjoy the articles presented on it because I am new to that subject. The past articles on Magnus and the Black Condor were very enjoyable and interesting. Also keep the artwork from Mike Zeck coming! I think he is great. I met him at the '75 NY Con and he was very nice to me. We talked about his work and he even drew me a picture of Solomon Kane. Thanx Mike.

Good luck in the future, Jim.

Your loyal subber,  
David Donovan  
17 Fifth Avenue  
E. Rockaway, N.Y. 11518

THANKS DAVE. IT'S LETTERS LIKE YOURS THAT HELP ME GET THROUGH THE EIGHTY HOUR WEEKS I PUT IN. IT'S ALSO GOOD TO KNOW THAT THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO WILL APPRECIATE THE HERCULEAN EFFORTS EXPENDED ON SOMETHING LIKE THIS ISSUE.

which appears in the article itself (but not the drawing here on the editorial page) is for sale. These are larger than printed size, except for the final one I'll list, and are done in brown and gray markers, looking even more stiking than they do in print! The full page of Flesh, Dale and the monster is \$35.00. The rapist robots; the drawing of Flexi & Prince Precious and the drawing of the Amazon Queen & Wang (the last two being each 13" tall) are all \$20.00 each. The Beetle Man-Penisaurus drawing is 11" tall and is \$25.00. You can contact Bruce Patterson at Continuity Assoc., 9 East 48 Street, New York, N.Y. 10017.

I didn't make it clear above but the Mike Zeck art is for sale from me.

I would like to thank Jay Rubin for permission to reprint the Buster Crabbe interview. I also want to thank Robert Malcomson for permission to reprint the 8 FLASH GORDON serial pages from THOSE ENDURING MATINEE IDOLS issues nine and ten, originally published in 1971.

The INFORMATION CENTER is absent this issue both because of space limitations and because Don Rosa just moved and didn't have the time to send in the indexes as well as work on PERTWILLABY PAPERS. POINT / COUNTER POINT ran into some problems the last couple issues but should be back next time.

Next issue will feature a front cover by Mike Zeck of The Blue Beetle, an interview with Tom Sutton, and quite possibly Ron Wilber's second year sequel to his SPACED: 1998 1/4 satire, as well as other surprises.

This RBCC itself is a surprise as it contains more pages of articles and much more brand new artwork than any previous issue of RBCC in its 16 year history!

\* \* \* \* \*

# FLASH GORDON

THE ROCKET BURST OPEN IN A FIERY EXPLOSION HURLING DEBRI HUNDREDS OF YARDS IN EITHER DIRECTION. THE HOLOCAUST SIGNALLED THE DEATH OF A SHIP BUT NOT SO THE CREW.

THERE IT GOES, DOC! DIDN'T HAVE MUCH TIME TO SALVAGE SUPPLIES.

HOW'S DALE?

A MILD SPRAIN. SHE'LL BE ABLE TO WALK.

WE'RE ALL LUCKY TO BE WALKING AWAY FROM THAT CRASH!

2000



I DIDN'T SEE ANY SIGNS OF **LIFE** ON THE WAY DOWN! ... ANY IDEA WHERE WE'RE AT DOC?

**NONE**, FLASH! ... THIS AREA IS FOR THE MOST PART **UNCHARTED**.

I'M PRAYING THIS PLANET ISN'T AS **DEAD** AS IT LOOKS!



WE NEED TO FIND **WATER** SOON! WE WON'T LAST LONG IN THIS **HEAT**!

DALE'S RIGHT, FLASH. HOW DOES IT LOOK?

A LOT OF THE SAME, DOC ....

WE'D BETTER KEEP MOVING. WE'LL HAVE A BETTER CHANCE OF FINDING SOMETHING WHILE IT'S **LIGHT**.

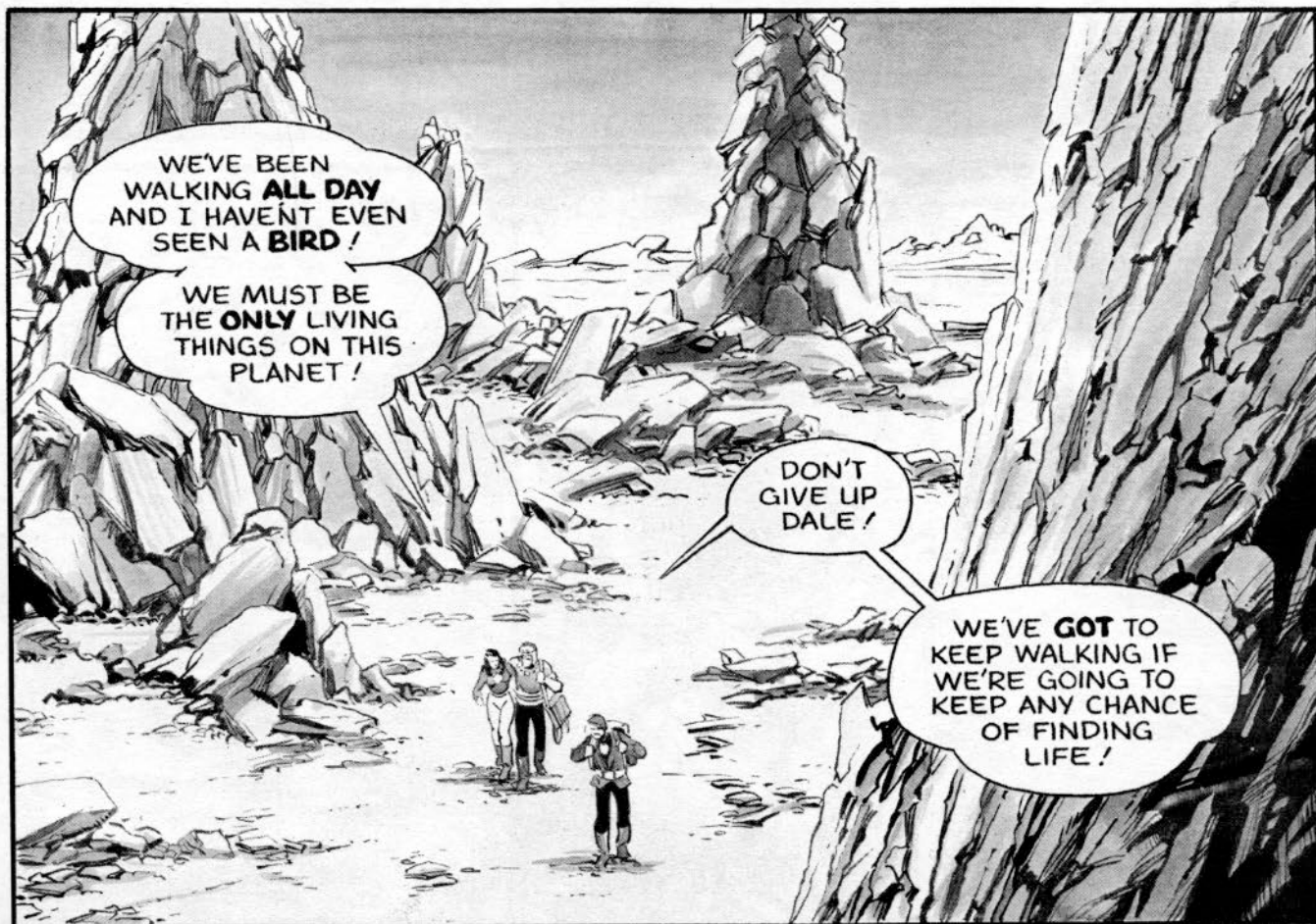


WE'VE BEEN WALKING **ALL DAY** AND I HAVEN'T EVEN SEEN A **BIRD**!

WE MUST BE THE **ONLY** LIVING THINGS ON THIS PLANET!

DON'T GIVE UP DALE!

WE'VE **GOT** TO KEEP WALKING IF WE'RE GOING TO KEEP ANY CHANCE OF FINDING **LIFE**!





FLASH !!

I SEE IT, ZARKOV !

HE COULD LEAD US TO WATER !



WE'VE GOT TO SAVE HIM ...



FIRE !

SKRREEE

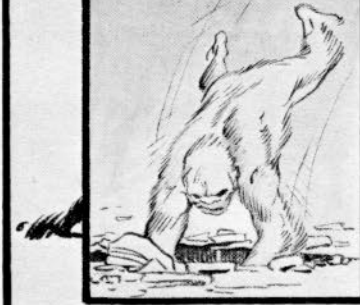
ZAT!

ZZZT!

LOOK!  
HE'S DIVING  
INTO THAT  
HOLE!

HOW'S THAT  
FOR GRATITUDE...  
HE ....

...HE LIVES  
UNDERGROUND...  
AND HARDLY  
HAS THE  
INTELLIGENCE  
TO FEEL  
GRATITUDE...



THE THING IS  
MENTALLY  
COMMUNICATING  
WITH US !!

NOT SO DIFFICULT  
WHEN ONE HAS DONE SO  
SINCE BIRTH...MY RACE  
HAS POPULATED THIS  
PLANET FOR CENTURIES...  
THE THING YOU SAVED  
SERVES NO PURPOSE ON  
THIS PLANET EXCEPT TO  
PROVIDE MY PEOPLE  
WITH FOOD....

...THEY ARE  
OUR SOLE  
SOURCE OF  
NOURISHMENT...

...YOU HAD NO WAY  
OF KNOWING  
THIS... IT IS  
UNFORTUNATE...

...OUR CITY  
LIES JUST  
BEYOND  
THE RANGE  
BEHIND YOU...

...THERE, YOU  
WILL FIND  
WATER AND  
SUFFICIENT  
COMMUNICATION  
MACHINES  
TO REACH  
ASSISTANCE...

...GO NOW...  
... I AM  
BEYOND  
HELP...

...WITH LUCK,  
WE WILL NOT  
BE VISITED BY...  
... EARTHLINGS...  
... AGAH!! ...



# ALEX RAYMOND ILLUSTRATOR

FLASH CRASHES THROUGH  
THE STRUGGLING MEN,  
DASHES UP THE  
STEPS  
AND---



---CROSSES  
SWORDS  
WITH MING,  
THE MERCILESS!

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THE ART OF ALEX RAYMOND

**A**LL THIS HOOPLA is about a comic strip character. That Flash Gordon, Dale Arden, Ming the Merciless and all the rest have become a part of the American cultural heritage is, in itself, a testament to the power of the medium. Like Sherlock Holmes before him and James Bond afterwards, Flash Gordon leapt from the printed page into the hearts and minds of his readers and eventually assumed palpable shape on the screen. But even before his celluloid incarnation, Flash was already as real to his readers as it is possible for a literary creation to be.

The person chiefly responsible for all this was Alex Raymond, whose consummate artistry stamped the strip, the characters, and the stories with an illusion of reality that was more than convincing: it was spectacular.

Before Raymond gave up drawing FLASH, he had established the illustrative manner as one

of the two most acceptable modes of rendering a realistic strip: with Hal Foster, Raymond attracted a following and thereby established a "school" that's only effective rival was in the impressionistic techniques of Milton Caniff and Noel Sickles.

Raymond's influence would doubtless have been considerable through the panels of FLASH alone, but he multiplied its impact in two other strips.

For a while, three of his strips were appearing at the same time: FLASH, SECRET AGENT X-9, and JUNGLE JIM. Eventually, he abandoned all three and created a fourth strip, RIP KIRBY--thereby becoming the first cartoonist to create four immensely successful comic strips. (In this regard, Raymond's only rival is probably Mort Walker.)

Although Raymond is no longer credited with single-handedly creating FLASH, it is nonetheless undeniable that it was Raymond's graphics that clothed Don Moore's stories in their most irresistible raiment. As Stephen Becker observes, "What made FLASH GORDON outstanding was not the story; along the unmarked trails of interstellar space any continuity was original. Nor were Flash and his lady friend radical departures from the traditional hero and heroine. But FLASH GORDON was beautifully drawn."

2701 Maplewood Dr., Champaign, Ill 61820

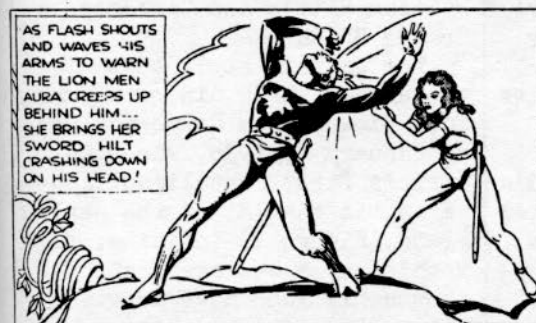


FIGURE 1 (4/15/34)  
--Compared to Raymond's later work, the early FLASH GORDON pages were artistically merely competent. Although superior to much comic strip art (BUCK ROGERS included), the simple outlined forms are not different in kind from those to be found in many strips of the period.

THERE IS NO ANSWER, SO FLASH AND DALE HURRY TOWARD THE SOUND....

THOSE DRUMS CARRY FOR MILES...I HOPE WE FIND THE FOREST MEN...

I CAN'T HEAR IT ANY MORE..



FIGURES 2 & 3 (Above: Raymond, 1/3/36; below: Briggs, BLUE BOOK, May 1938)--Influenced by pulp illustrators like Briggs (among others), Raymond's style changed dramatically. As the identically posed women here suggest, Raymond imitated the gracefully posturing figures of illustrators for his women and improved his brush technique, now elaborately modeling and shading forms.



This is not to deny Moore's contribution. His stories, built archetypally around Flash as god-like redeemer (the savior from another world, as Maurice Horn puts it), were suspenseful, fast-paced, and (Becker notwithstanding) ingenious. Horn is on sound ground when he notes that all the adventures, linked together thematically by Flash's role as redeemer saving a world from evil, lent to the strip some of the quality of an

epic poem. But it was the visual impact of FLASH that gave the strip its special quality.

"The total effect," Becker says, "--slick, imaginative drawing with literate narrative --was one of melodrama on a high level, which should not obscure the fact that Raymond's villains were thoroughly wicked or that his female characters were generally sexy. FLASH rapidly became the premier space strip. It was wittier and moved

faster than BUCK ROGERS; it was prettier and less boyish than William Ritt's and Clarence Gray's BRICK BRADFORD."

The graphic style that distinguished FLASH did not spring, full-blown, from Raymond's pen on January 7, 1934, when the strip's first installment appeared. As samples of the early FLASH (Figure 1) indicate, Raymond's style was at first thoroughly mundane--competent but undistinguished linework of

the ordinary outline variety. But before long, Raymond began to feel the influence of other styles of illustration, and the artwork in FLASH improved spectacularly.

**I**N USING the work of other artists as models for changing his style, Raymond was scarcely unique. Most artists are influenced by what their fellows do, and they borrow freely this technique and that. When the borrowing is well done, however, it goes beyond mere imitation and gives to the borrower's work a new dimension wholly his own. His work becomes an amalgam of all he has borrowed, unified by a single creative consciousness into something uniquely his--his own style.

It is not clear who influenced Raymond's emerging style the most, although there are several candidates--and Raymond probably borrowed a little from them all (and from some others as yet unknown). In an interview with Shel Dorf in a recent BUYER'S GUIDE, Jack Katz claims that Raymond was influenced by turn-of-the-century artist Franklin Booth.

"If you see Franklin Booth's art," Katz says, "you will just fall over backwards. He's got the city in the air exactly the way Raymond did it. I don't blame Raymond. Booth was fantastic! There's a book on him. In fact, when you see Franklin Booth, you'll say this is Alex Raymond, and I'll say, 'No, this is 1901.'"

In THE ADVENTUROUS DECADE, Ron Goulart picks out the influence of the dry brush technique in Raymond's developing style and concludes that Raymond was imitating the styles favored by pulp illustrators. Certainly that influence was felt.

Also among Raymond's mo-

dels, Goulart says, were Matt Clark and John La-Gatta. "From Clark's slick illustrations, he borrowed a good deal, including the prototype for the new improved version of his other hero, Jungle Jim. La-Gatta he used for pretty girls."

Goulart spends a great deal of time in his book nudging idols off their pedestals--chiefly by disinterring the ghosts who labored in the shadows, creating reputations and fortunes for cartoonists who (Goulart implies) became famous solely by virtue of their assistants' talents. While the credit that consequently accrues to hitherto unsung artists is long overdue, Goulart's discovery of so many unacknowledged ghosts breeds a cynicism that infects the tone of his prose. The effect is that while crediting the obscure, he discredits the famous in scarcely charitable terms. It is in this spirit that Goulart discusses Raymond's relationship with his assistant, Austin Briggs:

"Another reason for the great leap forward in the drawing of FLASH was the hiring of the late Austin Briggs as an assistant. Briggs had been working, in such magazines as BLUE BOOK, with a heroic style similar to the one Raymond adopted in the middle thirties. When I interviewed Briggs /he said he/ thought he'd been associated with the FLASH page as early as late 1934 or early 1935. If this is so, a good many of the advances made from that point on are due as much to him as to Raymond."

**I**T IS GOULART's implication here that most seriously questions what remains of Raymond's reputation now that Moore is credited with writing FLASH. I'm not particularly interested in preserving

① FLASH AND DALE ARE LOST IN THE DISMAL JUNGLES OF BARIN...DURING THEIR SEARCH FOR THE CRAZED DR. ZARKOV, FLASH IS CAUGHT IN A STRANGLER VINE/...



....DALE'S  
TERRIFIED  
SCREAMS MINGLE  
WITH THE THUNDER  
OF AN APPROACHING  
STORM /.....

FIGURE 4 (1/31/37)--The illustrative manner soon pervaded FLASH. The spectacular brush work here is suggestive of the dry brush technique. Although Raymond used that technique occasionally, he normally kept enough ink on his brush to give his lines a liquid sheen. (Note the blending of the modeling on Dale's gown and the grass in which she stands.)



FIGURES 5 (top) & 6 (Briggs, 8/7/38)-- Briggs' style, although more than competent, is sketchier than Raymond's. His outlining lines tend to be less continuous, and his solids and shaded areas are done with a drier brush, leaving more open spots of white. His work consequently has a less polished appearance than Raymond's.

undeserved reputations-- Raymond's or anyone else's. But I am concerned that the kind of circumstantial evidence we see mustered here can be heaped up in this haphazard way ("If this is so...") to suggest that Raymond was little more than a hack with the good luck to have an assistant more talented than he.

The conclusion to be drawn from this is that the graphic style that so illuminated FLASH was not Raymond's but Briggs'. To say that a cartoonist was influenced by numerous other (and often more talented) artists in developing his style is one thing; but to imply that Raymond's reputation as an artist was stolen rather than earned is quite another.

**G** OULART may be culpable here only in the way he makes his assertion rather than in what he says. In any case, in order to establish the extent of Raymond's role as illustrator of FLASH, we should examine some of the evidence.

The Briggs illustration from a May 1938 BLUE BOOK (Figure 3) is clearly superior to the earliest FLASH drawings. Given only this sample (and without even considering what Briggs' worked looked like in 1934), there's little doubt in my mind that Raymond imitated the styles of pulp illustrators when he began to move away from the simple outlines of the early FLASH. His emerging style incorporates the same kinds of gracefully lounging women and heroically posturing men.

And the dry brush technique from which Raymond's style derives much (circa 1936-38; see Figure 4) is an undeniable echo of the sort of thing Briggs' illustration embodies. But newspaper comics pages are a different medium than

pulp magazines, and on those pages of FLASH from the same year as this BLUE BOOK illustration, we have other evidence of Briggs' work.

The unsigned FLASH pages of that year are attributed to Briggs. On the unsigned page for August 7, 1938, we have a lot of pulp-illustration dry brush. But notice the sketchy outlining of Flash's arm and shoulder in one of the panels (Figure 5). Compare this to the firmer lines of Raymond's work. In comparison, Briggs' work is loose --airier, sketchier--more adapted to the pulp pages where the addition of gray fill-in tones flesh out the linework. Raymond's work doesn't need the gray tones.

This doesn't make Briggs the inferior artist. Loose and sketchy styles distinguished the work of Clifford McBride on NAPOLEON and Percy Crosby on SKIPPY. The point here has little to do with the relative merits of Briggs' work and Raymond's. If Raymond borrowed strategies of composition from Briggs and others and if he imitated graphic techniques, he also modified what he borrowed, adapting those methods to the conventions of newspaper comic strip graphics. He used the linear modeling of dry brush techniques but substituted an inkier brush for his rhythmically parallel lines of shading and modeling. And in place of the cross-hatched airy webs of tone, he used solid blacks or bolder lines that ran parallel rather than intersecting. As a result, Raymond's work appears more solid--his shapes more delineated and defined.

Briggs evidently felt less confident of giving his forms such clear definition, and when he tried it, the results were sometimes grotesque, out-of-step with the prevailing



graphic mood of the strip. Notice Flash's uplifted face in another Briggs panel from August 1938 (Figure 6). In modeling the chin with solids, Briggs gives Flash a double-chinned appearance. And the definition of Flash's right eye uses more detail than the strip's usual style. Briggs went too far in delineating clearly that eye: the addition of an eyelid undermines the impact of Flash's stare.

The modeling in another Briggs panel (Figure 7) seems executed with the same lack of confidence--or, rather, with the same diffidence about using solid heavier lines where Briggs' instinct may have been to use gray tones or webby cross-hatch. Compare the shading and highlighting of these two Briggs panels with a Raymond panel from May of the same year (Figure 8).

There are clearly two styles evident here. If you happen to prefer Briggs' style, then you probably would say his work improved FLASH (as Goulart says). If you prefer Raymond's style, you might say Briggs botched the pages he did. To some extent, then, the viewer's preference influences a judgment as to who influenced whom and with what effect. But this much is certain: there is a discernable difference between the work of the two men.

Because of that difference, it is not possible to mistake the work of one man for that of the other--at least, not in 1938, the time of these examples.

**G**IVEN ALL of this, my estimation of FLASH GORDON is that Raymond was the informing genius of the artwork. His style changed dramatically, true; he was obviously imitating the pulp illustration manner (among others) after the first months of

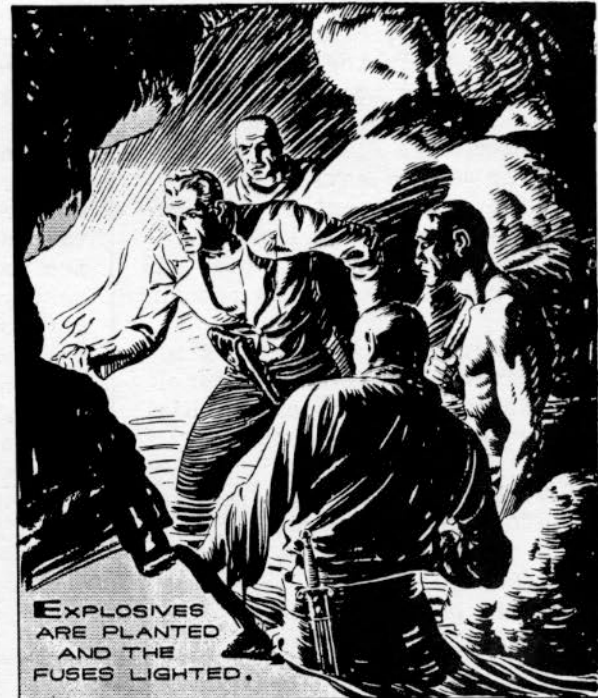
FLASH. If Briggs joined him about this time, Raymond doubtless profitted from the association; he learned from Briggs. One might even go so far as to suppose that Briggs inked some of the earliest pages in the new style after first joining the strip. But given the differences that are apparent by 1938, it is clear to me that Raymond's hand is the one that gave the FLASH artwork its distinctive look. Raymond may have imitated slavishly at first (may have), but he evolved a style discernably different from Briggs'--a style that, in my opinion, is superior to that of Briggs and of the others Raymond may once have imitated.

**R**AYMOND'S STYLE slowly evolved through the FLASH years, and before he gave up his stint on the strip, he had abandoned the heavy lines akin to dry-brush for feathering and shading in favor of an elegant, continuously flowing slender line--starkly simple but luxuriously graceful in all its simplicity (Figure 10). Another influence doubtless at work--but no longer Briggs' if we compare his daily FLASH of the same date (Figure 11).

In all of the styles in which he rendered FLASH, Raymond responded to the influences he felt around him. But in his responses, he shaped a style of his own to fit his own sensibility, and the graphic accomplishment finally represented in FLASH is therefore Raymond's. His was the informing graphic instinct that adapted whatever he saw and liked to the demands of Don Moore's stories and his own sense of the visual--creating thereby a world of graphic illusion and an illustrative manner that have been often imitated

MINGO IS  
NOW A  
FREE  
REPUBLIC--  
MING, TELL  
YOUR ARMY  
TO THROW  
DOWN ITS  
WEAP-  
ONS!

NO! SOLDIERS, FIGHT  
FOR YOUR EMPEROR--  
DESTROY THE REBELS!  
I AM HELD PRISONER  
ON---



FIGURES 7 (top: Briggs, 8/21/38) & 8 (Raymond, 5/15/38)--Briggs' modeling of Flash's face seems more tentative, more searching, than Raymond's, in which the features are clearly delineated with solid black shadows rather than by sketchy lines that distort appearance.

FIGURE 9 (12/6/36)  
 --Raymond's compositions are distinguished by the almost languorous grace of his figures. Although this scene portrays a pitched battle, the figures could be dancers in a ballet as gracefully as they posture. The elegant simplicity of Raymond's later linework underscored the graceful poses in his compositions.



**T**RAPPED  
 IN A HUGE TREE  
 IN THE FORESTS  
 OF BARIN, THE THREE  
 EARTHLINGS FIGHT  
 OFF A FLOOD OF MAD  
 SQUIRLONS... A SINGLE  
 BITE MEANS MADNESS/.....

but seldom equalled since.

Unhappily, Moore's stories, for all their ingenuity of incident, were too fast-paced to allow much time for character development. Flash, the polo player turned savior, is everything we expect in an adventurer--courageous, honest, nobly motivated, and above all resourceful. But he is nothing more.

Apart from possessing the traditional traits of a hero, Flash has no personality. His love for Dale is perfunctory:

he is the hero; she, the heroine --and the customary relationship between such persons is love.

In Dale's pettish flashes of jealousy (which spark with such routine predictability), we see all the individuality that she is allowed. As Coulton Waugh says, "These lithe, sexy young people have an empty look--one feels that a cross-section would show little inside their hearts and heads."

But with Raymond's drawing,

we seldom notice this shortcoming. His graphics give the strip's characters such life-like appearance that we overlook the absence of individual personality in them. The beauty of his visuals seduces us into believing in the characters. It is Raymond's art that brings FLASH GORDON alive; his art that makes the characters live in the minds of their readers. *-HARD*

FIGURES 10 & 11 (left to right: Raymond, 6/9/40 & Briggs, 6/8/40)--By 1940, Raymond had developed a flowing, liquid line with extraordinarily slender grace, and he had simplified his style by abandoning much of the linear shading technique reminiscent of dry brush technique. Briggs, who then began the daily FLASH, also simplified his technique. Although his lines haven't quite the slender grace of Raymond's, this panel is remarkable in evoking the Raymond touch.

MING, PREPARED AGAINST A RESCUE ATTEMPT BY FLASH, BANQUETS WITH THE UNHAPPY DALE--"IF I KNOW FLASH," SAYS MING, "AND I THINK I DO--IF I CAN JUDGE BY PAST PERFORMANCES, HE'LL COME SOON--AND WHEN HE DOES--"



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6-8-40.



FLASH SHELTERS DALE BEHIND THE LOG WALLS----AND THE SIEGE BEGINS!



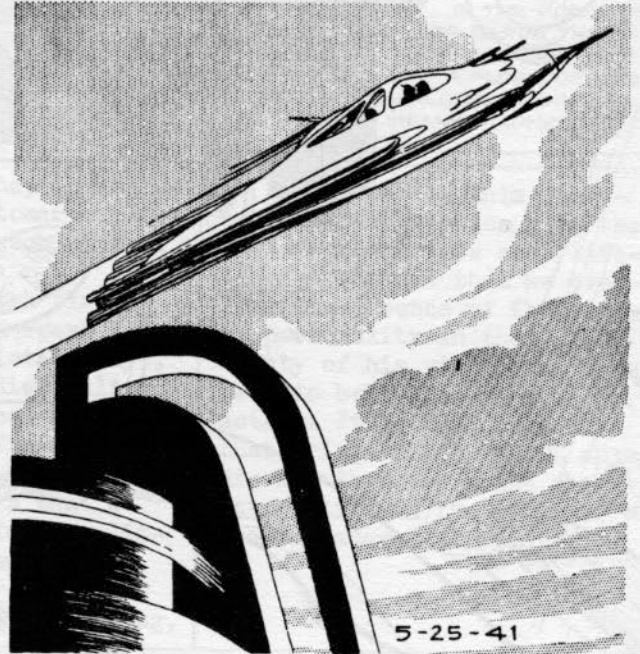


# The ROCKETS Of MONGO

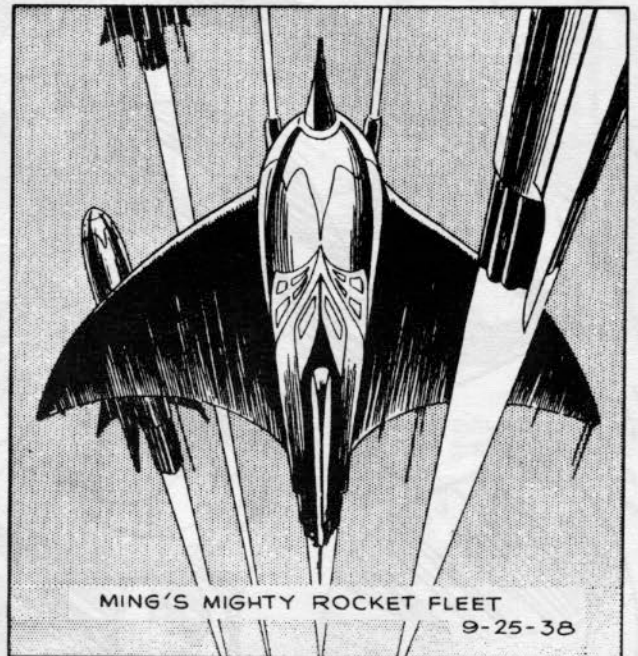


9-8-40

MING'S ROCKET BOMBERS  
POUND FLASH'S FORTRESS-

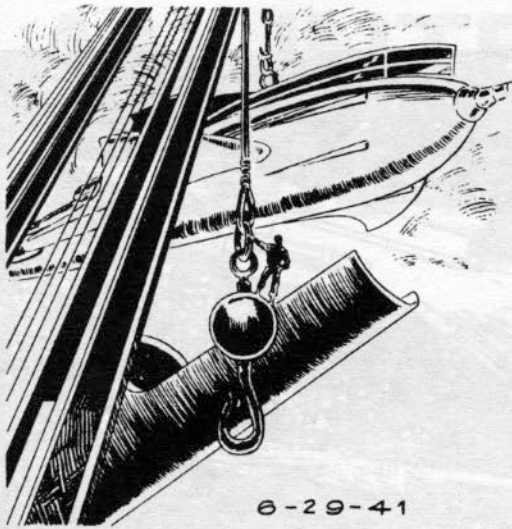


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MING'S MIGHTY ROCKET FLEET

9-25-38

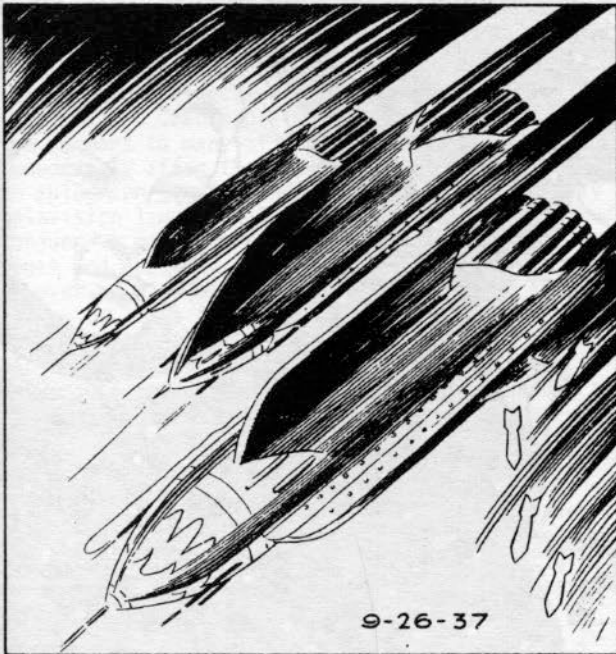


6-29-41

CLENCHED IN A DO OR DIE STRUGGLE, MING THE MERCILESS CRAFTILY USES THE ADVANCED SCIENTIFIC INVENTIONS OF HIS PLANET FOR DESTRUCTION



1-15-39



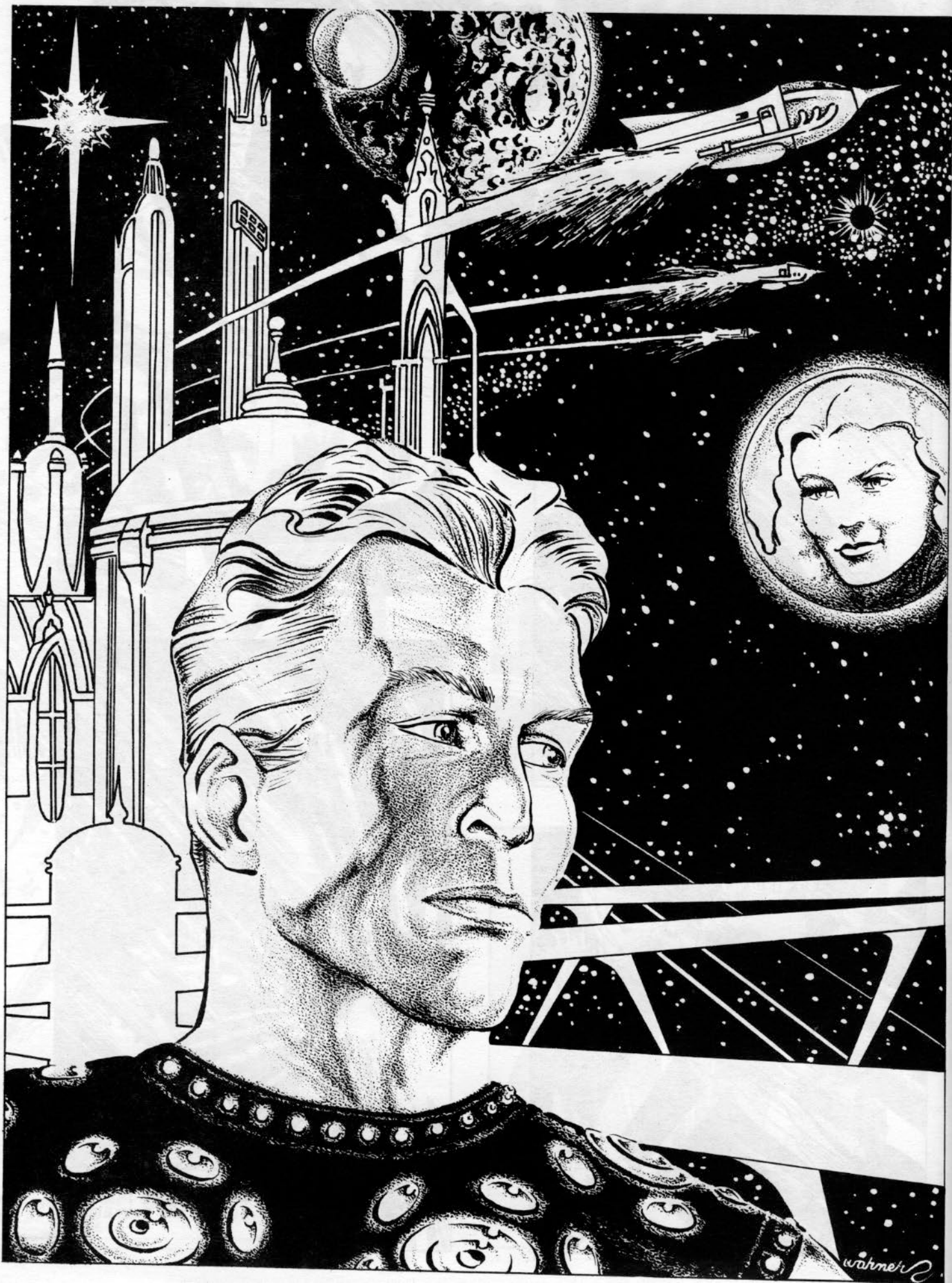
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7-10-38  
MING'S  
ROCKETS  
CHASE A  
BATTERED  
ROCKET  
SUBMARINE



ZARKOV'S RAYS TEAR  
MING'S ONCE PROUD  
FLEET TO SHREDS-  
11-3-35



# AN INTERVIEW WITH: **BUSTER CRABBE**

CONDUCTED BY JAY RUBIN

The following interview appeared the CLASSIC FILM COLLECTOR #43, summer 1974. This interview is reprinted with permission of the publisher, Jay Rubin.  
\* \* \* \* \*

Clarence Linden Crabbe, better known to movie fans as Buster Crabbe, alias Flash Gordon, Tarzan, Billy the Kid, Kasper the Lion Man and Buck Rogers, was the guest of honor at the annual Burroughs Bibliophiles' Dum-Dum held in Toronto, Canada, in 1973. For those readers not in the know, a Dum-Dum is the name given to the gatherings held by the apes in Burroughs' Tarzan books. The luncheon meeting was most enjoyable.

Mr. Crabbe kindly consented to an interview for the CFC following the luncheon. To place this interview into proper perspective, you must picture the following events: Mr. Crabbe delivered a speech which contained the answers to many of this interviewer's questions. Immediately after the luncheon Mr. Crabbe engaged in an autograph signing under the glare of intensely hot television lamps, while this interviewer attempted to conjure up more questions. Finally, the interview began and appeared to be moving along without a hitch. However, approximately one-half of the way through the interview, this interviewer noticed that one of the record buttons on the borrowed recorder he was using had not been pressed. Of course, out of respect for Mr. Crabbe and embarrassment to himself, he did not repeat all of the previously asked questions. Needless to say, Mr. Crabbe was a gentleman and a good sport about the mix-up. Accordingly, for the purpose of constructing an entire interview, Mr. Crabbe's speech and the existing portion of the interview have been combined. In the cases where Mr. Crabbe's words are quotes from his speech, the questions originally intended to be asked and to which the words respond, have been inserted.

IS IT TRUE THAT YOU WERE RAISED IN THE HAWAIIAN ISLANDS?

Yes, I was raised in the Hawaiian Islands. I'm part Hawaiian and very proud of it. Captain John Meek, who brought the first chickens, art, lumber, and everything from the Pacific Coast, was my great-great grandfather. He was born and raised in Marble Head, Massachusetts, (I talk with a long "A" every once in awhile) and went to sea when he was seventeen years old. He had his own sailing ship when he was twenty-one, and he worked for John Jacob Astor, the multimillionaire, as did his brother. They worked up and down the Pacific coast. He settled in the Islands and married an Hawaiian girl, and that's how I came to have Hawaiian blood.

CAN YOU TELL US SOMETHING ABOUT YOUR FORMATIVE YEARS? DID YOU DO ANY ACTING DURING THIS STAGE OF YOUR LIFE?

As I said, I was raised in the Islands. I went to high school there, and spent one year at the University of Hawaii before switching over to the University of Southern California. As a youngster I did just about everything, but I wasn't an outstanding kid. I liked sports, health-exercises have been part of my bit all of my life. I ran around with my younger brother and four or five other guys and, as a kid going to highschool, I never went out for the



CAROL HUGHES AND BUSTER CRABBE IN A PUBLICITY STILL FROM "FLASH GORDON CONQUERS THE UNIVERSE" (1940)

Spring play. Can you believe that? I never went out for the Spring play. I worked as an office boy for a company in the Islands, and it was with that company that I was going to work as a corporation lawyer after I got my law degree, which was my intention. Of course, this never happened. Thinking back on it now, I know that corporation law at that time, not now, but at that time was kind of a research position. This wouldn't have held me. No doubt, had I gotten my law degree, I would have taken up criminal law. Maybe the ham that was latent in me at that time would have come to the fore. But this never happened.

YOU HAVE IGNORED YOUR SWIMMING CAREER.

I learned to swim when I was four years old. In the course of my career I set 16 World and American records and won 35 National Championships. In the 1928 Olympics in Amsterdam, I didn't do too well. I won third and fourth places. However, I won the gold medal in 1932 in Los Angeles. After I won the medal in 1932, Paramount made a series of tests, and I eventually got the part of Kasper in KING OF THE JUNGLE. It was from a story written by the Englishman Stoneham, called The Lion's Way, a definite steal from Edgar Rice Burroughs, no doubt. You see, in 1931, Johnny Weissmuller was chosen to play the part of Tarzan in a very fine TARZAN film. He did 12,

I believe, for MGM over a period of 17 years, and then went over to RKO and did a couple of TARZAN films before doing JUNGLE JIM for Sol Lesser. (Weismuller made 6 for MGM and 6 for RKO). Weismuller, as you know, was raised by the apes and Kaspas was raised by the lions. I was always a helluva lot tougher than Weismuller.

**DID YOU EVER COMPETE AGAINST JOHNNY WEISMULLER IN A SWIMMING MEET?**

Johnny Weismuller and I competed in 1927 in a 300 meter race, and then in 1928, he quit. He beat me in 1927, but he could never beat me after that. He came along at the right time for the TARZAN films. We never really competed in the role, but he has constantly knocked me verbally in his book. I can honestly say that I am both a better actor and swimmer than he. He was a short distance swimmer, while I am a medium distance swimmer. He isn't even in the Master class today. He knew, after 1928, that he could never beat me in a race again. His career and mine paralleled each other pretty much. It was my victory in the Olympic games and not my acting ability, I assure you, that got me into films.

**WITH YOUR DESIRE TO BECOME A LAWYER, DID YOU HESITATE AT ALL IN ACCEPTING PARAMOUNT'S OFFER?**

I jumped at it, because at that time I was working in a stockroom making \$8 a week. It wasn't the attraction. It wasn't the glamour of the film business that got me in there. It was the money. M-O-N-E-Y!! I was going to make \$100 a week for 52 weeks, and I knew they were taking advantage of me--the publicity that I had locally in the sports page; and then nationally, and

internationally, with my swimming. I knew that they were going to wash me out at the end of the year. But during that year, the first year at Paramount, I saved over \$3,000 of the \$5,200 that I got. I was in as far as college was concerned. I could then go back to put my time where it belonged--on my books. I would get my last three years, go back to the office, settle down, corporation law, nice little Hawaiian wife--IT NEVER HAPPENED! They took up my option at the end of the year! Had I been smart, I would have known that if Paramount had let me go some other studio would have grabbed me, actor unknown, because KING OF THE JUNGLE was very successful at the box office.

**WHAT HAPPENED AFTER PARAMOUNT TOOK UP THE OPTION?**

It was then a whole new ball game. I settled down. I clowned around the first year. I went on the sets and met the actresses and actors. But then I settled down and thought, well, maybe just by some chance, maybe, this might be the work for me. My problem was to stay as long as I could, but eventually to get into the back, the outside of the camera, I was interested then in directing. As a matter of fact, in 1934, I had a talk with Dick Johnson, who was head of the production department at Paramount. I said, "Dick, I'm going to give up my contract. Would you put me on as third assistant here in your outfit so that..."

He said, "Don't be a damn fool. Come into my office." I did, and he talked me out of it.

**DID YOU CONSCIOUSLY PUSH YOUR CAREER IN THE DIRECTION OF SERIALS AND WESTERNS OR DID THE STUDIOS TEND TO STEREOTYPE YOU INTO ROLES LIKE KASPA, TARZAN, FLASH**

**15 SENSATIONAL EPISODES**

# FLASH GORDON'S TRIP TO MARS

From Alex Raymond's Astonishing Newspaper Strip

with **LARRY "BUSTER" CRABBE** as "Flash Gordon"  
**JEAN ROGERS** as "Dale Arden" • **CHARLES MIDDLETON**  
as "Emperor Ming" • **FRANK SHANNON** as "Dr. Zarkov"  
**BEATRICE ROBERTS** as "Queen Azura" • **RICHARD ALEXANDER** as "Prince Barin" • **MONTAGUE SHAW**  
as "Clay King"

Original Story and Screen Play by Wyndham Gittens,  
Norman S. Hall, Roy Trampe, Herbert Dalmas  
Based upon the newspaper feature "Flash Gordon"  
Owned and Copyrighted by King Features, Inc., Jan. 7, 1934  
Directed by FORD BEEBE & ROBERT HILL • Assoc. Producer: BARNEY SARECKY  
A UNIVERSAL PICTURE



GORDON, AND BILLY THE KID?

It's a crazy thing about the picture business. I had a fair education, could talk, but after doing the Tarzan thing--"Me Jane, You Tarzan"--I had to live this down! It never happened! It's a frustrating thing when you would like to get a shot at a good, at a real good script, with a good director and a good producer who could help you--with a good cast; and then to be able to get in. If you fall down, fine but at least you have the chance to fall flat on your face, which never came to me. I was knocked-down, dragged-out, pulled off the horse guy, picking myself up off the ground all the time. This is what I did.

HOW WOULD YOU COMPARE KING OF THE JUNGLE WITH TARZAN?  
My TARZAN?

YES, TARZAN THE FEARLESS.

No comparison. KING OF THE JUNGLE was a much better picture. It took fourteen weeks to make. It was better produced, with a better script, and a better director. We did TARZAN THE FEARLESS for Sol Lesser. Four weeks and that was it.

HOW DID YOU LAND THE ROLE OF FLASH GORDON?

In 1934-35, I read the FLASH GORDON strip every night. Old Flash and Alex Raymond. I met him later in '36--a fantastic guy. I read one day, in the summer of 1935, in the Hollywood bible, the Hollywood Reporter, that they were casting for the part of Flash Gordon. Out of curiosity, I assure, out of curiosity plain and simple, I decided to go out to Universal to find out who was trying out for the part. In those days you knew somebody who could get you on the set. I got out there, got on the set, and stood off to the side. There were 15 or 16 fellows there, and I had definite possibilities.

One would have made an excellent Flash Gordon, I thought. "George Berman! George has got to get the part." He was a nice kid. He was a health faddist.

Incidentally, I didn't know what a vitamin pill was in 1932, believe it or not. I went back, after seeing Jimmy Roberts wrestle, to congratulate him--he had retained the World Championship of Wrestling--and I saw him take some pills, "Jim, what are you doing." I thought it was the Wheaties, you know.

He said, "Vitamins."

"WHAT ARE THEM!!"

"They're good for you," he replied. So now everyday I take vitamins, minerals, wheat germ. Every day.

Anyway, I thought that Bergman would get the part. He didn't get it and I did. It was fortunate that he (the other fellow) didn't get the part, because two months later John Ford picked him to play the lead in an upcoming film, THE HURRICANE and the guy was named Jon Hall. That's the way it was with me all along the line.

HOW WOULD YOU COMPARE FLASH GORDON TO BUCK ROGERS?

I liked FLASH GORDON, because I had done two of them prior to the BUCK ROGERS. The material was fresher. I did FLASH GORDON in 1936 and 1938 and the BUCK ROGERS in 1939. I did the third FLASH GORDON in 1940.

ISN'T IT TRUE THAT THE RELEASE OF FLASH GORDON TO TELEVISION IN THE EARLY '50s SUSTAINED YOU DURING THAT PERIOD?

Well, yes. When television began to become important and started to gobble up a lot of film, they couldn't afford expensive films: the Clark Gables, the Cary Grants, and the Gary Coopers. They could afford a Western picture at \$10 a run, or \$15 a run. They could afford the serials at \$5 to \$10 a run. The first FLASH GORDON Serial was the biggest money making serial that was ever made, so naturally this brought me back. Kids were watching it, thinking it was a new series.

DO YOU THINK THAT THIS NEW POPULARITY HELPED TO LAND

THE PART OF CAPTAIN GALLANT OF THE FOREIGN LEGION?

I think it was a throw over. Yes. But even CAPTAIN GALLANT was made in '54 and '56 and this was 20 years ago. I was younger and firmer, let's put it that way. I think of all the films I did, and I did a lot, about 185 including the serials, the ones that I liked best were from the FOREIGN LEGION series, because the little guy in the series, who is now 29 years old, was my son. Originally they had an English boy designed for the part, but I got my son Cuffy into the part.

WAS IT THE HARRY SALTZMAN OF JAMES BOND WHOM YOU WORKED WITH ON CAPTAIN GALLANT?

Yes, he took the money that he made in the CAPTAIN GALLANT series and bought the JAMES BOND series, a whole new thing.

DURING THIS PERIOD IN THE '50s WERE YOU MAKING FILMS?

I moved to New York in 1951. I had a chance to work on television with the BUSTER CRABBE SHOW. I ran serials and westerns. I thought I would be there for a couple of years. But it turned out that the two or three years I anticipate spending in the East turned out to be 22. We recently moved to Arizona. When I first got to New York, I'd go out two or three times a year to do a film. I did a lot of films for Eddie Small and for Sam Katzman--CITY HOUND and CAPTAIN SILVER, something like that. Then it got further and further away. In 1964 or 1965, I believe, I did two Westerns, one right after the other. One was with Day Duryea called BOUNTY KILLER, I played a sadistic heavy, a knife-thrower. I had more fun doing that picture. Then, God rest his soul, I did a very good color Western with Audie Murphy that same year, a thing called ARIZONA RAIDERS.

HOLLYWOOD AND ITS STRUCTURE HAS COMPLETELY CHANGED.

I am so happy that I was in Hollywood when Hollywood was "Hollywood" in the old days. It's a real sad thing to me (you can get sentimental once in awhile when you're 65) but I worked with a lot of just terrific people. I never went to dramatic school or anything like that, but I used to follow people like Frederic March when he was working on the lot, and be on his set every day. Every day, watching the man work, and trying to steal a little bit of this terrific talent that he had. It helped me in character acting, believe it or not. Actually, I was a heavy. I was always better playing the bastard than I was the hero type like Flash Gordon, Buck Rogers, Tarzan. I was a heavy basically. In the old days when you played the lead you had to look at a girl clean and all--Nothing! The hero couldn't get away with A NAUGHTY LOOK, but a heavy could look at a girl like he'd like to. He could get away with it. Anyway, in the old days there was J. Carrol Nash, Bob Hope and Bing Crosby, Maurice Chevalier, W.C. Fields, Mae West, and best of all for me was a gal, God bless her (everybody love this gal) Carol Lombard. She was a great gal, a beautiful down-to-earth gal.

DO YOU OWN ANY OF YOUR OWN FILMS?

Yes, I have quite a few. I could have had all of them had I been smart enough. When I was a kid I could have gone into production and said, "Could I have a copy of this last thing I worked on?" and they would have given me a copy. Of course, I would have had a garage full of stuff now, but I didn't think about that until 2 or 3 years ago when the nostalgic thing hit.

WHEN YOU WERE MAKING "FLASH GORDON" DID YOU THINK THAT YOU WOULD BE CREATING A SUPER HERO OR CULT HERO?

I didn't think anybody was going to the movies. I thought this stuff was way out. Who's going to believe three people in a rocket ship? All of a sudden you land on Mongo, you run into Ming, you're in trouble...

UNIVERSAL PICTURES  
PRESENTS

# FLASH GORDON

Based On Comic Strip By  
ALEX RAYMOND

Directed by Frederic Stephani  
Produced by Henry MacRae

Flash Gordon	Larry "Buster" Crabbe
Dale Arden	Jean Rogers
Ming	Charles Middleton
Aura	Priscilla Lawson
Vultan	John Lipson
Prince Barin	Richard Alexander
Dr. Zarkov	Frank Shannon
King Kala	Duke York, Jr.
Officer Torch	Earl Askam
High Priest	Theodore Lorch
King Thun	James Pierce
Zona	Muriel Goodspeed
Gordon, Sr.	Richard Tucker

## CHAPTER ONE THE PLANET OF PERIL

TERROR AND PANIC spread across the face of Earth. A wild planet has been hurtled thru space by some unknown force, causing atmospheric disturbances of devastating proportions. Worse yet, it is on a collision course with Earth.

Flash Gordon, on his way home to spend the last few days of Earth's existence with his father (Professor Gordon), meets Dale Arden aboard a small passenger plane.

The plane is caught in the middle of a severe storm. An announcement is made by the pilot that parachutes were provided in the event the plane became endangered. Passengers are given the option of bailing-out, or chance riding-out the storm until the plane is able to land at its destination.



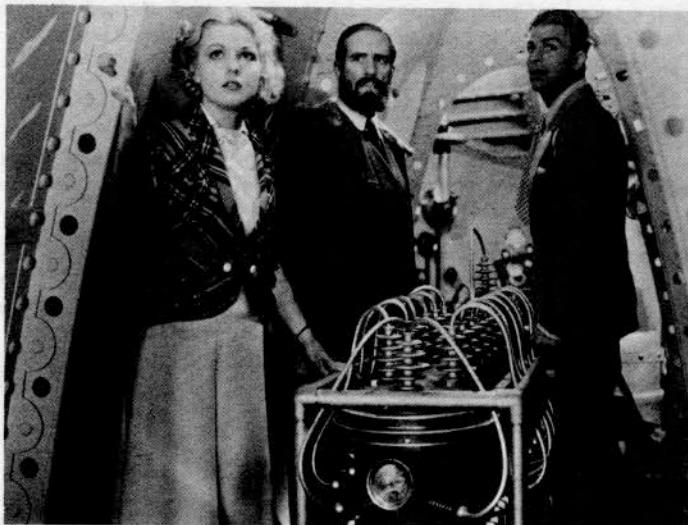
Larry "Buster" Crabbe, Jean Rogers, Lynton Brent

Flash helps Dale don her 'chute. But she is terrified (as are the other passengers, with the exception of Flash) when she approaches the hatch to jump out. Flash grins, seizes her about the waist, and leaps — both using Dale's 'chute for the descent to the ground.

Flash and Dale land safely. (This is observed by a Doctor Zarkov.) After disengaging themselves from the 'chute, they set out to seek shelter. They haven't walked far when they sight an odd shaped rocket. It is then that Zarkov makes himself known. He appears. and holds the two at gunpoint.

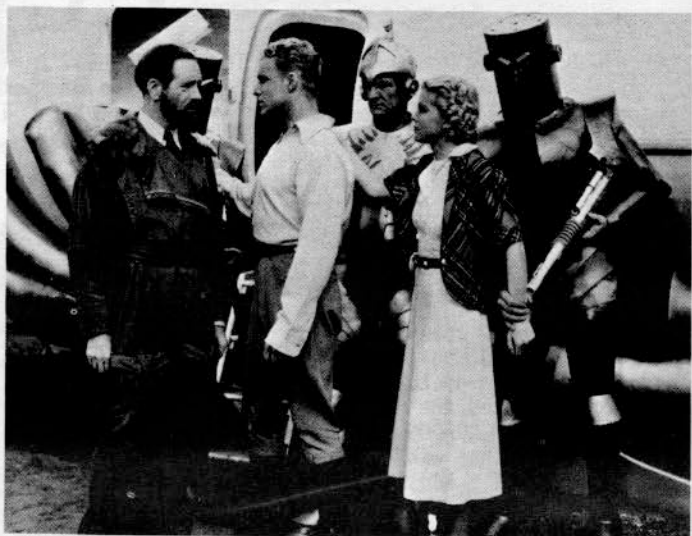
Flash and Dale each introduce themselves; Flash adds he has heard about Zarkov's scientific accomplishments. Zarkov relates his belief that the strange planet bearing down upon Earth is inhabited and radioactive. And he is positive he can fly to the planet in his rocketship (of his own design) and tap its energy, thus diverting it from its collision course with Earth.

Zarkov's intended assistant for the journey has fled. So he asks Flash to help him. Flash agrees with one stipulation — that Dale be taken along. At first reluctant, Zarkov finally acquiesces. The rocketship departs.



After a swift journey thru space, they land on the unknown planet (later identified as Mongo). The first form of life they encounter is a giant, carnivorous lizard. However, before they are devoured another lizard appears and attacks the one imperiling the earthlings.

Next, a rocketship comes on the scene and emits a strange ray that kills the battling lizards. When the ship lands, Officer Torch and two ray-gun carrying robots emerge. Torch announces they are captives of Ming — the self-proclaimed emperor of the Universe.





In the emperor's throne room, Ming questions his captives. He tells Zarkov that the collision course his planet is taking toward Earth is *planned*. Zarkov (seemingly turning against his friends) suggests Ming should conquer Earth, not destroy it. Ming likes the idea and sends Zarkov to his laboratory, promising him everything he needs (to accomplish the feat) *except his freedom*.

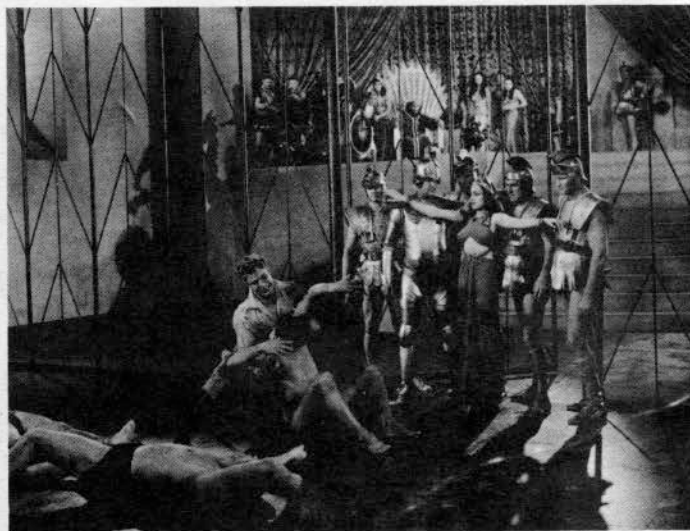
Then the plot takes on new dimensions as Ming gets his first real look at Dale. He is awed by her blond beauty. When he commences feeling her hair, Flash

becomes infuriated and makes a grab for Ming's throat.

This incenses the emperor. He orders: "Throw him into the arena!"

Enter Aura, daughter of Ming. She strikes a bargain with her satanic father: "If he survives, he's mine."

Three animal-like men set upon Flash. After a ferocious fight, Flash bests his opponents. However, Ming reneges on his promise and now orders Flash to be hurled into the "pit" (of lizards). Aura protests and rushes into the arena. Guards are sent after Flash and another battle ensues.





Aura seizes the ray gun of a fallen guard and dashes to Flash's side. She fires. The ray hits a guard standing by a panel of levers (one of which controls the trap door to the pit). He pushes down a lever, sending Flash and Aura plummeting into a seemingly bottomless pit.

## CHAPTER TWO / THE TUNNEL OF TERROR

Ming sees to it another lever is quickly activated when he frantically shouts: "*The net!*" (Editor's Note: A huge circular frame with a net appears and covers the pit *below* the falling Flash and Aura and *above* a bevy of giant lizards, of the variety seen in chapter one.)

Thru a viewer, Ming witnesses the fact Flash and Aura have escaped certain death. He orders guards to seize them both.

Aura leads Flash out of the pit area thru a maze of tunnels. When guards approach, they hide in a side tunnel. There, Aura feels Flash's muscles, then inquires if he loves Dale. Before he can respond, the guards have passed and they continue on until they come upon a rocketship. Aura persuades Flash to wait in the ship while she goes to her father to plead for Dale's safety. However, once Flash is inside she kicks away the boarding ladder and whispers that Flash will never see Dale again!

Inside the rocket, Flash finds a locker containing a much needed garment to replace his torn and tattered clothing.

Meanwhile, Ming goes to his laboratory. Zarkov informs him there is enough power in his machines to produce sufficient radioactive energy to conquer the Universe. Ming chortles and announces that is exactly what he intends to do, and to do it with Zarkov's aid.



In another room in the palace, Dale tells the High Priest of Tao she refuses to put on the ceremonial robes he has ordered her to wear — much less marry Ming.

The Priest departs angrily and reports to Ming, who tells him to use a device called the "Dehumanizer" to cease Dale's opposition.

Back to Flash. An alarm sounds and he looks out to see an approaching armada of spiral-top "gyro-ships." Realizing his friends in the palace are in peril, Flash takes off in the rocketship to do battle.

His attack on the intruders is devastating. But, a collision with one of the foreign aircraft sends both spinning to the planet's surface, locked together. After the crash, a huge, bearded man (Thun, Prince of the Lion Men) emerges and attacks Flash. Flash is the victor, but when both realize they are enemies of Ming, they decide to become allies. Thun knows of a secret entrance into the castle and enters with Flash.

The two reach Ming's lab where Zarkov happily informs Flash that the planet has been diverted and Earth saved!

At this moment, a large idol is manipulated by the High Priest. It is the oracle which will decide whether or not the god Taco looks favorably on Ming's marriage to Dale. When Flash sees this on the tele-screen, he is determined to stop the ceremony.

An exotically gowned Dale, under the influence of the "Dehumanizer", is led into the ceremonial chamber. Ming is present as well as Zarkov, ostensibly to congratulate Ming. A gong is struck. When it is struck for the 13th time, the marriage ceremony will be completed!

As the gong rings, Flash and Thun make their way toward the chamber. However, they encounter a group of guards. A battle follows. Thun holds the guards in combat while ordering Flash to continue on and stop the ceremony.

Flash comes upon a huge set of doors. He finds a lever to open them — and enters a mammoth, mist-filled cave. In it, he sees a dragon-like monster with giant talons similar to a lobster.

The beast seizes Flash and in moments he hangs limp, a victim of "Ming's guardian of the caves"!



UNIVERSAL PICTURES  
PRESENTS  
**FLASH GORDON**

Based On Comic Strip By  
ALEX RAYMOND

Directed by Frederic Stephani  
Produced by Henry MacRae

Flash Gordon..... Larry "Buster" Crabbe  
Dale Arden..... Jean Rogers  
Ming..... Charles Middleton  
Aura..... Priscilla Lawson  
Vultan..... John Lipson  
Prince Barin..... Richard Alexander  
Dr. Zarkov..... Frank Shannon  
King Kala..... Duke York, Jr.  
Officer Torch..... Earl Askam  
High Priest..... Theodore Lorch  
King Thun..... James Pierce  
Zona..... Muriel Goodspeed  
Gordon, Sr..... Richard Tucker

Written for TEMI by  
Robert M. Malcomson  
From Adaptation of Serial  
Authored by  
ERIC HOFFMAN



(Above: Dale, King Thun, Aura and King Kala.)

### CHAPTER 3 / CAPTURED BY SHARK MEN

While the dragon-like monster has Flash in his clutches, Thun manages to best his opponent. He grabs a ray gun and rushes to the cave. Seeing Flash's peril, he fires the gun, hitting the dragon. The beast falls to the ground, releasing Flash.

Thun and Flash race to the ceremonial chamber to prevent the hypnotized Dale from marrying Ming. This they are successful in doing . . . however, moments later, Flash and Dale plunge thru a trap door into a huge tank-like room filled with water. "Shark-Men" attack the two earthlings and drag them into a submarine-type craft.

Flash and Dale are taken to the palace of Kala, king of the "Shark-Men". There they are put in separate quarters: Dale in a beautiful apartment; and Flash is thrust into another tank-like chamber. Kala starts water rushing into the room. Dale, suspicious, sneaks into the throne room and hears Kala

inform Ming (via tele-screen) he will return Dale to him, and eliminate Flash. When she demands to know what has become of Flash, Kala takes her to a view-port where she sees Flash treading water. Then, to her horror, Kala pulls a lever and a panel near the floor opens, revealing a huge octopus-like creature (called an Octosac). It swims into the room and pulls Flash underwater!

### CHAPTER 4/ BATTLING THE SEA BEAST

Enter Thun in the company of Aura, now allies and out to save Flash. (Editor's Note: How they manage to get to Kala's palace is never explained.) Armed with a ray gun, they force the Shark King to drain the chamber. During all of this time, Flash frantically battles the huge Octosac.

After the water drains off, Flash crawls away from the dying beast. Aura opens the door and convinces Flash that she drained the water and Thun and Dale have escaped via a Hydro-sub to the surface. (Actually, Thun and Dale are holding Kala at bay in another part of the castle.)

As Flash and Aura make their way thru the corridors of the sea palace, they come across a master power control board. Aura blasts the controls with a ray gun. The act is disastrous: power and air are cut off, and the seams in the palace walls commence to break, letting in the sea.

Flash learns Dale and Thun are in the throne room. He rushes in. As Kala informs the group there is no escape, the main seam in the wall bursts. Flash, Dale, Aura, Kala and the "Shark-Men" are engulfed in a gigantic wave of water!

## CHAPTER 5 / THE DESTROYING RAY

Ming in his laboratory sees via his tele-screen the peril his daughter is in. He tells Zarkov there is a chance to save them all — a device that will nullify the magnetic force that holds the palace under the sea and cause it to rise to the surface. He activates it . . . and within moments the palace is above the sea.

Aura wants them to go to her father's kingdom, but Thun, not trusting Ming, offers the protection of the land of the "Lion-Men". Flash agrees and the group, despite Aura's protests, leave via a tunnel on shore.

Back at the lab in Ming's palace, Zarkov has been watching the situation on his tele-screen. Enter Prince Barin, a heroic figure dressed in armor, helmet and cape. He reveals himself to Zarkov as the rightful ruler of Mongo, whose right was usurped by Ming. He allies himself with the earthlings . . . and he and Zarkov take off to find Flash.

A new menace perils Flash, Aura, Dale and Thun when they enter a strange valley: the "Hawk-Men", who fly like birds and dwell in a palace that is suspended in the sky of Mongo.



Flash takes off to scout the valley, with Aura close behind. Moments after she departs, Thun and Dale are captured by "Hawk-Men" and carried off into the air. At the same moment, Barin's rocket arrives and he and Zarkov rush to Flash's aid. Flash and Zarkov are reunited, and Barin is accepted as an ally by Flash. Aura demands she be taken to her father but Flash overrules the idea, stating he is tired of her treachery. The four get into Barin's rocket and head for the sky palace.

King Vultan, ruler of the "Hawk-Men", orders the castle defense, the "melting ray," to be turned on the approaching rocketship.

The ray strikes — and the rocket containing Flash, Zarkov, Barin and Aura plunges downward toward certain destruction!

## CHAPTER 6 / FLAMING TORTURE

Barin's rocketship is saved when it gets "caught" in the anti-gravity rays holding Vultan's city in the sky.

Inside the throne room, Vultan pursues Dale and has her in his grasp when he is interrupted by the entrance of guards flanking Flash, Aura, Barin and Zarkov.



Dale with Vultan, King of the Hawk Men.

Flash, Barin and Thun are sentenced to the atomic furnace room below, shoveling raw radium. (The furnaces power the machines supporting the city in the sky.) Zarkov is spared because Vultan wants him to find a substitute for the dwindling supply of radium.

A full scale riot breaks out when Flash attacks one of the furnace room guards. Only the appearance of Vultan's minions with ray rifles halts it.

Flash is taken to the "Static Room" where (in view of Dale, Aura and Vultan) he is chained to a trapeze-like arrangement of electrode-bars and tortured by electrical shocks. As the current is escalated, Dale screams while watching his suffering. Flash suddenly goes limp, apparently killed by Vultan's executioners.



## CHAPTER 7 / SHATTERING DOOM

When Dale faints, Vultan orders Aura to take her back to the women's quarters. But Aura quickly returns with a ray gun. She orders Vultan to free Flash. The unconscious earthman is taken to Zarkov's laboratory . . . and placed in a "reviver."

Once revived, Flash is returned to the furnace room. Zarkov is ordered to connect a wire to a metal band on Flash's wrist, the plan of the "Hawk-Men" being to electrocute Flash if he starts another revolt. While Zarkov is doing this, all are behind a huge lead wall — the only protection from the radio activity of the radium.

Ming flies to the sky city (with his full entourage, including the high priest of Tao) and demands the return of his "affianced" bride, Dale, and his daughter, Aura. Vultan defies Ming and cynically suggests that they talk things over.

Back to the furnace room. Zarkov sneaks in and connects the high voltage wire Flash wears to a shovel. Later, Flash is to throw the shovel into the radium-atom furnace. Then when the electrical charge is set off by the "Hawk-Men", the furnaces will be wrecked. But, Zarkov warns Flash and his friends that all must be behind the lead wall before the furnaces blow.

The plan goes as suggested . . . except that the gigantic explosion of the atom furnaces comes just as Flash is starting to leap over the wall. Seemingly he is caught up in the blast!

## CHAPTER 8 / TOURNAMENT OF DEATH

When the smoke from the blast clears, it is evident Flash hurtled the wall in time. He, Thun and Barin take off for the throne room . . . only to be condemned to a firing squad of "Hawk-men" for blowing up the atom furnaces. As the guards take aim, the sky palace starts to tip. Zarkov rushes in, states he has a device to substitute for the wrecked anti-gravity force. He exchanges with Vultan his salvation for a sacred promise that all the prisoners will go free. (Ming is not considered a captive.) Zarkov's machine works!

However, Ming squelches Vultan's promise by demanding a "tournament of death," which, he states, he has a right to do as "Emperor of the Universe". And Flash must enter the contest!

Flash bests one opponent, only to have to take on another. He is given a small, razor-sharp dagger . . . and battles an ape-like beast with a unicorn horn in the middle of his forehead. Bleeding, cut and hurt, Flash is easy prey as the monster (an Orangopoid) closes in for the kill!

## CHAPTER 9 / FIGHTING THE FIRE DRAGON

Aura learns (from the high priest of Tao) the only vulnerable spot on the beast is a white spot at his throat. She grabs a

spear, gives it to Flash and tells him the target. His thrust hits the target!

Ming unhappily must make good his earlier promise: choice of bride for Flash and a kingdom of his own on Mongo. It is obvious to Aura that Flash will choose Dale, but the decision is to be postponed until a feast day.

The high priest knows Aura wants Flash and conspires to have him taken to the Sacred Palace of Tao where both will be safe from Ming's hatred. However, the journey lies thru "the tunnel of terror," home of the "Fire Dragon." The plan . . .

Flash is conversing with Dale when a guard brings in a goblet of wine, supposedly from King Vultan. Flash drinks. The wine has its effect, and he goes into a deep sleep.

Dale (with Barin) rush off to get Zarkov. Aura enters the chamber with some guards and the high priest. They spirit Flash away on a stretcher to the "tunnel of terror."

In the tunnel, they stop before a huge door and the priest opens it to check his calculations (at a certain hour the dragon sleeps). However, a guard rushes up informing the group they are being followed. Fearful for his own life, the priest turns traitor to Aura and rings the gong that awakens the dragon.

As Dale, Zarkov, Vultan and Barin enter, the huge monster appears, bathed in flames, and advances on the helpless party!

## CHAPTER 10 / THE UNSEEN PERIL

As the dragon advances on the horrified group, Zarkov suddenly whips out a grenade and hurls it at the beast. The monster is killed!

Aura returns to Ming. He is elated to hear that the wine Flash drank contained "drops of forgetfulness." The way is clear for him to get Dale!

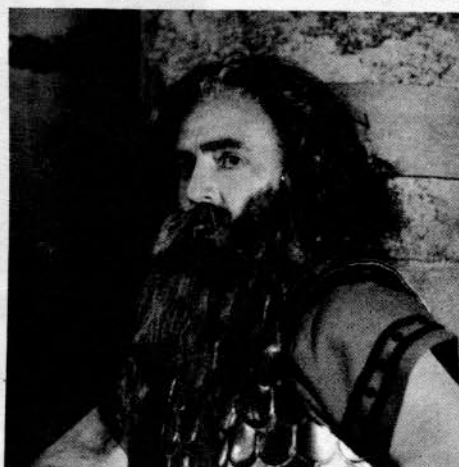
On the feast day, Flash is brought before Ming and asked to choose the bride of his choice. But he can't — he doesn't remember anyone there.

Later, a battle of wills goes on for possession of Flash's affections between Aura and Dale. Eventually Aura is successful in convincing him Dale is one of Ming's wives! But, Barin (after a struggle) manages to get Flash to Zarkov's lab where his memory is restored by the rays of the Electro-reviver. The joy of Dale, Barin and Zarkov is short lived when guards, led by Officer Torch, appear armed with ray guns. They have orders from Ming to kill Flash.

Zarkov tells Flash to stand against the wall, and is surrounded by strange gadgets. As the guards take aim, Flash suddenly fades from sight!



Doctor Zarkov



Thun, the Lion Man



High Priest of Tao





Ming and his ray-gun-equipped soldiers.



Dale, Barin, Vultan and Flash (invisible).

## CHAPTER 11 / IN THE CLAWS OF THE TIGRON

When Flash vanishes, the soldiers react in terror. Zarkov explains to the bewildered Dale and Barin that Flash is invisible.

While invisible, Flash seizes Ming around the throat and demands the release of his friends, or what he is experiencing now will be mild to what will happen! Then Flash, still unseen, rescues the Hawk King (now his trusted ally) from Ming's dungeon.

Later, in the catacombs under Ming's palace, Aura and the keeper of the sacred Tigron (an animal resembling Earth's tiger) are with the beast when it suddenly breaks away from its leash and goes bounding into a tunnel. At the other end is Dale. She reacts in horror as the monster springs at her!

## CHAPTER 12 / TRAPPED IN THE TURRET

Flash and Barin arrive on the scene . . . and Flash attacks the Tigron and kills it with his bare hands!

Dale is embraced by Flash. And Barin tells Aura that her efforts at treachery will not win Flash — but helping him will gain his respect and friendship. Aura agrees to do so, and intercede with her father.

Thru his spy network, Ming later learns of a plan by the earthlings (plus Aura and Vultan) to flee to the sky city. Before the flight they intend to rendezvous with Barin and his rocketship "at the old turret."

While the group is waiting for Barin's rocket to land, the ship suddenly fires upon them. They rush inside the turret house as the rocketship launches another bombardment, this time bringing the structure down upon them!

## CHAPTER 13 / ROCKETING TO EARTH

As the rocketship continues its bombardment, Aura spots a trap door in the floor and all escape death when they flee into a cave below the turret house.

Meanwhile Ming had made a captive of Barin and used his ship as a decoy.

Flash and his friends return to Zarkov's laboratory, only to be made prisoners and taken to Ming's throne room. However, the "Lion-Men" in their "gyro-ships" victoriously attack Ming's stronghold. When Thun, Prince of the Lion Men, enters the room,

Ming flees and heads for the Sacred Palace of Tao (abode of the "Fire Dragon"). In a dramatic moment of courage, he walks thru the entrance . . . and is consumed by the deadly flames and smoke. This is witnessed by the high priest.

Time passes and Flash, Dale and Zarkov prepare to leave Mongo. Aura has become ruler of Mongo with Prince Barin at her side.

After saying goodbye, the earthlings take off in their rocketship. The high priest appears and informs Aura, Barin, Vultan and Thun that he has planted a time bomb on the ship!

In a tense few minutes, Barin manages to radio Flash about the bomb. It's found and hurled out of the spacecraft just moments before it explodes.

The fade-out comes with Flash and Dale embracing . . . and with a smiling Doctor Zarkov at the controls of the ship.

### EDITOR'S NOTE

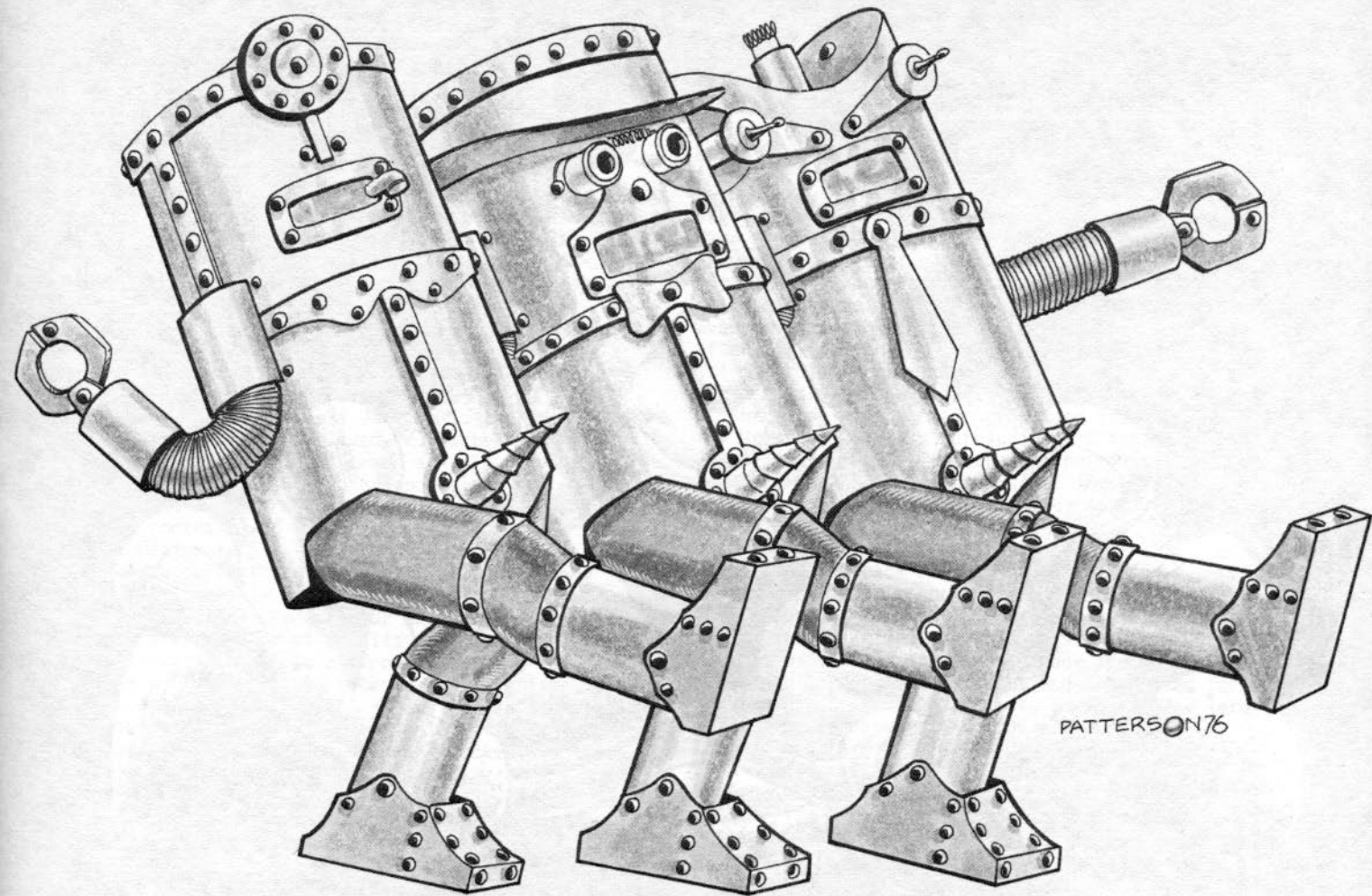
Priscilla Lawson (Aura) was 21 at the time FLASH GORDON was released (4/6/36). TEMI reader Val Warren (former associate editor of "K'Scope") relates that Priscilla was involved in an automobile accident, probably in 1937, that resulted in the amputation of her right leg. Today she is happily married and manages a stationery shop in Los Angeles.

Warren learned personally from Larry Crabbe that Universal had originally cast Jon Hall (then called Charles Locher—see pg. 99) in the role of Flash. However, producer Henry MacRae finally acquiesced to the insistent pleas of Crabbe and his agent for an audition. The rest is serial history.

This was writer Frederic Stephani's first (and last) direction chore. Tho unbilled, Ray Taylor had to step in to help complete the serial.

In chapter nine, the sacred god is referred to as Taelo and Taco. Both are incorrect. It should be Tao.





# FILMS FANTASTIQUE

PRESENTS

# “FLESH GORDON”

BY JAMES VAN HISE

"FROM 1929 TO 1933, AMERICA HAD BEEN RAVAGED BY A MERCILESS DEPRESSION. THE PUBLIC NEEDED SOMETHING TO HELP LIFT MORALE AND GIVE COURAGE. ONE OF THE GREATEST MORALE BUILDERS WAS THE CREATION OF THE SUPER HERO. FLASH GORDON, CAPTAIN MARVEL, BUCK ROGERS, SUPERMAN AND MANY OTHERS. THEY POSSESSED THE GOODNESS AND MORAL FORTITUDE WHICH THE COUNTRY COULD ADMIRE IN ITS TIME OF NEED.

"IN TODAY'S TROUBLED TIMES, WE THE PRODUCERS FELT THERE EXISTED A NEED FOR MORE ENTERTAINING HUMOR. REALIZING AMERICA'S RESPECT FOR THINGS OF THE PAST, WE, IN THE SPIRIT OF BURLESQUE AND SATIRE, HAVE CREATED A NEW FOLK HERO WITH THE SPIRIT OF THE OLD BUT THE OUTRAGEOUSNESS OF THE NEW.

"THE ORIGINATORS OF THE HEROES OF YESTERYEAR, AND THOSE WHO IMMORTALIZED THEM ON THE SILVER SCREEN AND IN COMIC STRIPS, PLAYED NO PART IN THE PRODUCTION OF THIS MOTION PICTURE, BUT IT COULD NOT HAVE BEEN MADE WITHOUT THEM, FOR THEIR IDEAS AND VISIONS OF OTHER WORLDS HAVE BEEN OUR INSPIRATION. TO THOSE INNOVATORS,

AND THEIR FANS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD, WE DEDICATE FLESH GORDON."

The above words are spoken and appear on the screen at the opening of FLESH GORDON, a satire on the old Universal Flash Gordon serials which was released in 1975. Since the original serials were set in the 30s (which was the present, and not a period setting then) so too does FLESH GORDON take place in the thirties. It never comes right out and gives the date any more than the old serials did, but rather makes it obvious as to the time period at the beginning of the film when it shows Flesh flying back from Tibet in a "new Ford Tri-motor" along with some other passengers. This scene itself is a take off on the first serial done by Universal featuring Flash (FLASH GORDON, 1936). But the film as a whole satirizes both the first and the second serials (FLASH GORDON'S TRIP TO MARS) as the scene with the scientists debating the source of the "sex madness" as well as the introduction of Amora, Queen of Darkness



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(a take off on Azura, the Witch Queen) are both inspired by the second serial.

But this film is no simple satire which swipes the old serials scene for scene with exaggerations. Rather it is merely influenced by these serials, paying homage to them while at the same time presenting an entirely original story peopled with some characters who are recognizable and some who are outrageously new.

Jason Williams as Flesh Gordon is more of a likeness to the comic strip Flash Gordon than the celluloid version. He is convincing in the part and plays it straight throughout, which makes it that much more enjoyable.

Suzanne Fields as Dale Ardor is patterned after the film version of Dale as in the first serial Dale was very blond and played by Jean Rogers, whom fields actually looks much better than.

Joseph Hudgins as Dr. Flexi Jerkoff is the spitting image of Frank Shannon who played Dr. Zarkov in all three of the Universal Flash Gordon serials. Even his voice is remarkably similar to Shannon's!

William Hunt as Emperor Wang is patterned after the exaggerated portrayal of the evil Ming as embodied by Charles Middleton in all three of the serials. His over acting is perfect and he is an excellent parody of the villain in early comics and serials.

John Hoyt, a little known actor who nonetheless has an almost endless number of credits in films and TV, appears briefly in the role of Prof. Gordon, a role for which he is perfectly suited because he looks like he could have appeared in a serial in any number of roles. Some of you may recall Hoyt in his role as the merciless crippled millionaire who bankrolls the rocketship built to escape our doomed planet in George Pal's WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE (1951).

There are also various other actors who are effective in their roles including the one who plays Prince Precious, the rightful heir to the throne of the planet

Porno. I've been unable to correctly separate his name from that of the other supporting players but he is very good and amusingly enough bears a striking resemblance to Rob Reiner of ALL IN THE FAMILY.

Some of the special effects technicians (who Lord knows have legitimate gripes against the producers of the film) have criticized the live action shooting as being below par. Yet the film's live action sequences are just as closely patterned after the old serials as some of FLESH GORDON's characters are. The scene of the Earthship sitting on the ground on Porno while Flesh and the others disembark is set up exactly as that same scene in the first FLASH GORDON serial is. Even the scene where Flesh and Dale meet Dr. Jerkoff after they parachute to safety from the stricken Ford Tri-motor is the same as that similar scene in the first Flash Gordon serial.

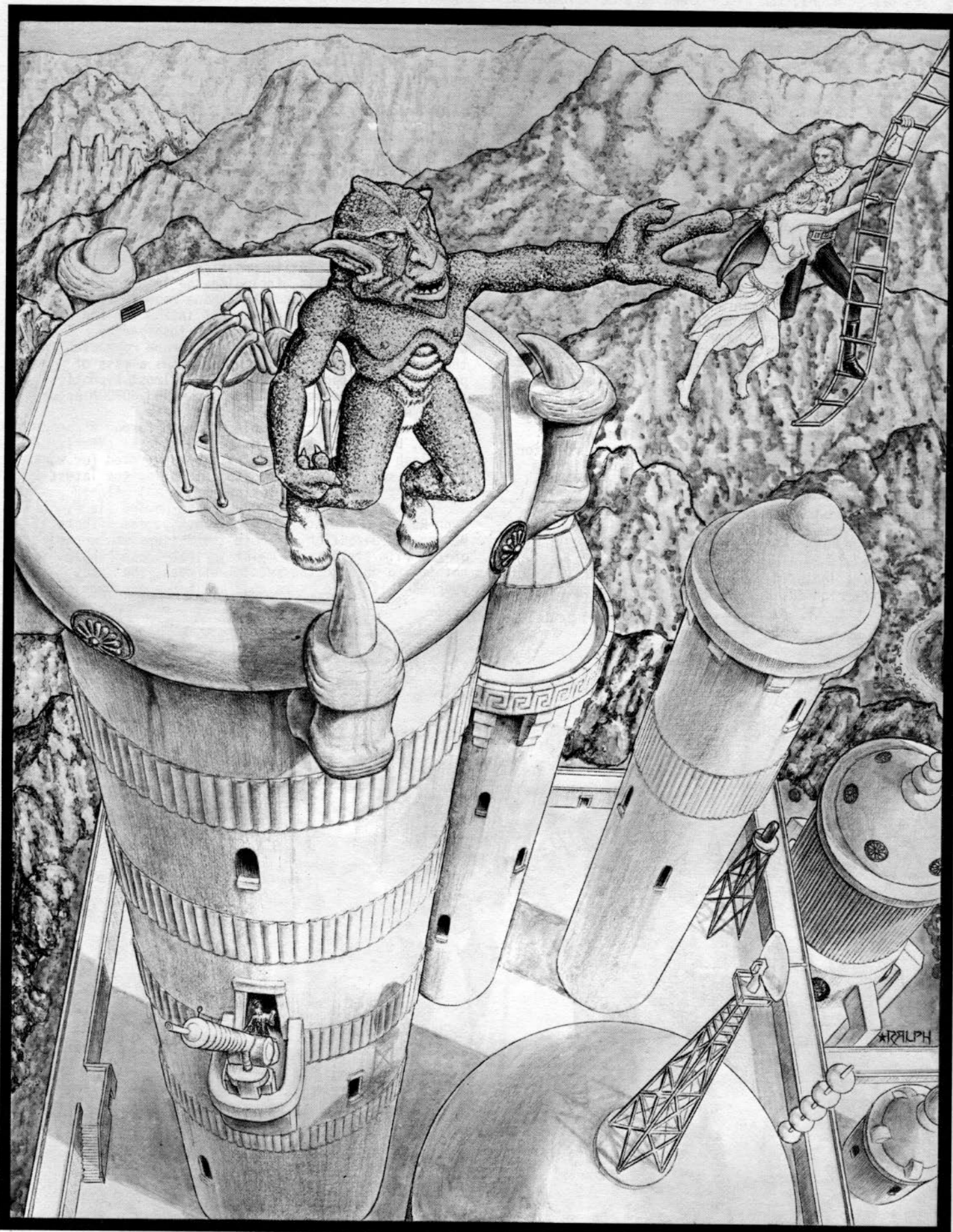
There are also certain props and sets patterned after the Universal serials, including the interior of Dr. Jerkoff's rocketship and the throne room of Wang's palace. The scene of the mass of interwoven bodies in the midst of constant orgy is also inspired by FLASH GORDON as there is a scene in the throne room used in the credits of each chapter which shows a mass of people swaying back and forth in an almost hypnotic dance. This same scene appears in FLASH GORDON as part of the wedding ceremony of Ming and Dale.

The special effects people chose to forego a parody of the, by today's standards, crude special effects of the Flash Gordon serials. Instead they opted for work that was smooth and up to date, employing the latest methods of miniatures and stop-motion animation.

The credits for FLESH GORDON list Howard Ziehm, Lynn Rogers and Walter R. Cichy as "Special Effects Design and Direction." Those technicians who worked on the film steadfastly maintain that these people had nothing to do with the special effects, that they usurped this title as revenge against those people who

BELOW: PRINCE PRECIOUS, DALE ARDOR, FLESH GORDON AND DR. JERKOFF





gave them trouble during production, trouble such as wanting to get paid and refusing to work unless they were! Although some of the technicians are credited on screen, such as David Allen and Mij Htrofnad (Jim Danforth spelled backwards), many others were not. David Allen worked so long as he was paid at the end of each day and Jim Danforth, who animated the Beetleman, also painted many of the matte paintings for the background of several scenes. Danforth was unhappy with the professional relationship he'd had with the producers and requested his name not be listed in the credits. Instead of removing it completely the producers included it spelled backward so that he could still point to the film as his work if he so desired. The producers did this for someone who didn't want to be credited, and yet struck the names of some who deserved credit.

Mike Minor, who previously did work for STAR TREK, such as masks and things, was with the film at its earliest stages but was uncredited on screen. Many of the effects technicians were having great difficulty getting paid and so in 1972 they got together and as a team, consisting of Mike Minor, Joe Musso, Joe Clark, Tom Scherman, Dennis Muren, Jim Danforth, Robert Maine, Bob Costa, Greg Jein and Bill Hedge, agreed to finish their work but to withhold 8,000 feet of effects negative until they were paid. In December, 1972, Graffiti productions paid up and the technicians left.

Some of Minor's work on the film included the models of the castle as well as Jerkoff's shack on the hill.

Why did these people have so much trouble with the producers of a film company? Because until FLESH GORDON all Howard Ziehm and associates had produced were pornographic films. They had been a small operation which turned out cheaply made films for a large return of profits. When they embarked on FLESH GORDON it was originally intended to be on a much smaller scale of production but as more and more people joined in the work the plans for the film grew as well. The producers knew nothing about special effects or the costs involved and this too caused delays. At one point they were raided and all the completed negatives from the film were confiscated along with their regular porno stock. It took months of litigation to get the negative back.

George Barr, the renowned fantasy artist, drew the fine one sheet poster for the film. He was also slated to design the opening credits but the producers reneged on the previously agreed upon price and Barr withdrew. George Barr was also uncredited on screen even though he designed the Penisaurus as well as other props in the film. At the 1976 Worldcon in Kansas City he had a drawing he had done of Jerkoff's rocketship on display.

Of the film's three major special effects sequences, far and away the most popular is the final one of the



Great God Porno (also referred to by the film's technician as the Great God Nesuahyrrah. Spell it backward). No less than four different people actually worked on the final animating of this model. They are Rob Maine, Jim Aupperle, Dennis Muren and Jim Danforth who worked on most of the rear projection set-ups. Most of the actual animating was done by Rob Maine.

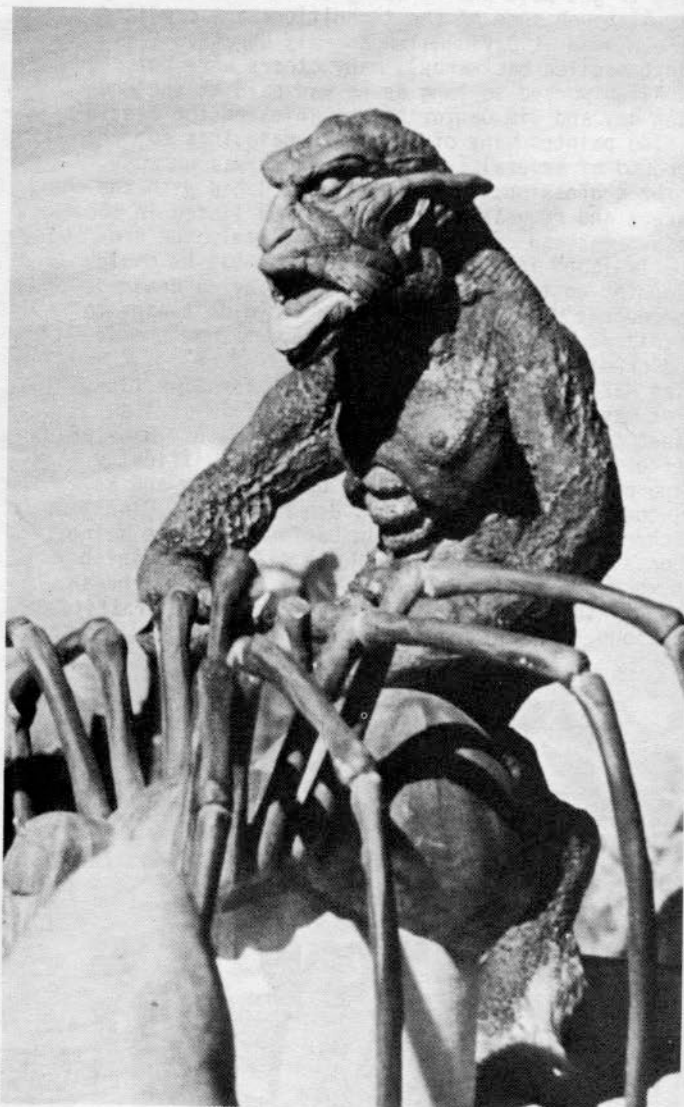
This sequence (photo at right) is so popular because for the first time in the history of stop motion animation the monster model was given a complete personality. Not only did it register facial expressions but it also talked! What an incredible idea! The voice used for it was perfect.

Those who did the final animating on the model in that special effects sequences are not the same ones who started out working with that model. The model was originally built by Mike Hyatt but after months of work Hyatt had not turned in any usable effects footage so the producer, Howard Ziehm, lured Hyatt away from his home to avoid trouble and had all of the special effects equipment as well as the model removed from Hyatt's residence. Hyatt claims there was no reason for this action, that he was ready to animate but was fired without good reason before he even had a chance. Hyatt also claims that Ziehm used him as a scapegoat because of how far over budget the film was running. Interestingly, Mike Minor, who has no reason to back up any false claims made by Ziehm and who himself had a bad business relationship with him, agrees that Hyatt was fired due to inability (see CINEFANTASTIQUE Volume 5 Number 2). After the model was removed from Hyatt, it was altered slightly before final animation. This model, on film, displays characteristic reminiscent of two of Ray Harryhausen's creations: the cyclops from THE SEVENTH VOYAGE OF SINBAD and the Ymir from TWENTY MILLION MILES TO EARTH. And yet it cannot be called an imitation of these as the model is very unique unto itself, employing a lot of imaginative detail in its construction. This model with its glowing eyes, curious gait, and outrageous dialogue forms the fitting climax to an outrageous film.

Another favorite sequence is Flesh's combat with the Beetleman. Although this armor plated creature is never referred to by this name in the film, this is what it has come to be known as by the fans. This sequence was very imaginatively animated by Jim Danforth who has the creature assume a karate stance just before it attacks. The matching up of live action with the animated footage is perfect and the entire scene displays some of the smoothest animation footage in the history of the cinema. There is a humorous gag played with this copper colored creature when it's killed by an arrow fired by Prince Precious. Just as the arrow hits and the creature dies it turns green! This happens very quickly and is often not noticed until subsequent viewings.

The delays in the making of this film were so massive that it was announced as being released on a future date, only to have that release date cancelled. In the February 1973 issue of PENTHOUSE, the men's magazine, there was a twelve page spread on "the new sci-fi spoof FLESH GORDON" which featured thirty-eight full color stills. Much of the information in the copy portion of the article was erroneous as it discussed a non-existent mask made for Chief Nellie and referred to the Great God of Porno as the Penisaurus. It wasn't until two years later that the film was finally released.

Originally, FLESH GORDON was released as an "X" rated film although it was a very soft "X" to say the least. The film THE GROOVE TUBE, released about the same time, was only rated an "R" but it was much more explicit and more deserving of an "X" than was FLESH GORDON. To try and reach a larger audience, FLESH GORDON was later released as an "R" and it was so chopped up and poorly edited that those who had viewed the original version found this edited rerelease unwatchable. Both versions are currently in release although like many recent films which go into rerelease no new prints seem to have been



made and thus is often in very poor condition from wear caused by hundreds of screenings.

When I originally saw FLESH GORDON I found it to be disappointing in some way and rather silly. But when I went back to see it a second time to once more enjoy the fine special effects, I found that I enjoyed the film more as a whole. When I first saw it I thought it would be something clever and subtle when actually the humor is rather obvious and sophomoric. After finally accepting the film as the light, escapist satire it was intended to be I found I enjoyed it much more and was able to appreciate elements I had ignored the first time through. I had this same reaction to MONTY PYTHON AND THE HOLY GRAIL (which was recently shown on television in a hopelessly edited version that was totally unenjoyable) which I have seen three times and which I get something more out of upon each new viewing.

Although at the end of FLESH GORDON a sequel is announced, this was probably done to once more imitate the serial format as it took so long just to organize and release this film that it is highly unlikely that a sequel will be filmed. Producer Howard Ziehm has said as much himself.

Like THE EXORCIST before it, the Academy Awards also ignored the fine special effects of FLESH GORDON as they only honor films which are popular among its member ship.

Special information for this article was obtained from CINEFANTASTIQUE Vol. 3 #4, Vol. 4 #2 and Vol. 5 #2 as well as from PENTHOUSE for February 1973. Many thanks to them for doing the real research for us all.





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