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I have been a soreheaded occupant of a file drawer labeled 'Science Fiction' ...and I would like out, particularly since so many serious critics regularly mistake the drawer for a urinal.

--Kurt Vonnegut, *Wampeters, Foma and Granfalloon*, "Science Fiction"

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**THIS ISSUE OF eI** is for three of my not so secret or faithful fantasy lovers: Wonder Woman, Wonder Woman Lynda Carter, and Wonder Woman Trina Robbins.

Two exceptional websites, devoted to Wonder Woman, were very helpful with the production of this issue of eI. If you have nothing to do for a long while, click into either and be prepared to get lost and spend lots of time looking around.

[www.sufferingsappho.com](http://www.sufferingsappho.com) has a very impressive archive of Wonder Woman cover scans.

[www.wonderwomanmuseum.com](http://www.wonderwomanmuseum.com) has just about everything else you might ever want to know about the Amazonian.

In the world of science fiction, this issue of *eI* is also in memory of dear old friend Bill Bowers, and John Brosnan.

Just as we closed this issue we heard of the death of Noreen Shaw, she of the fabulous Cleveland fan group that was so very active during the 1950s. She was a dynamic force in science fiction fan power politics, a fabulous host, a great fanzine editor, and dearly loved. A huge loss to the entire genre.

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As always, everything in this issue of *eI* beneath my byline is part of my in-progress rough-draft memoirs. As such, I would appreciate any corrections, revisions, extensions, anecdotes, photographs, jpegs, or what have you sent to me at [earlkemp@citlink.net](mailto:earlkemp@citlink.net) and thank you in advance for all your help.

Bill Burns is *jefe* around here. If it wasn't for him, nothing would get done. He inspires activity. He deserves some really great rewards. It is a privilege and a pleasure to have him working with me to make *eI* whatever it is.

Other than Bill Burns, Dave Locke, and Robert Lichtman, these are the people who made this issue of *eI* possible: Daniel Andrews, Chaz Boston Baden, Robert Bonfils, Bruce Brenner, Brittany A. Daley, Bruce Gillespie, Elaine Kemp Harris, Arthur Lortie, Richard Lupoff, Andy Mangels, Robert Speray, Jon Stopa, Ted White, and Peter Weston.

**ARTWORK:** This issue of *eI* features original artwork by Ditmar and recycled artwork by Trina Robbins and William Rotsler.



Trina Robbins did this artwork for the cover of the 1999 San Diego Comic Convention Program Book. Courtesy Andy Mangels Collection.

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The Department of Anthropology rejected my M.A. thesis, which proved that similarities between the Cubist painters in Paris in 1907 and the leaders of Native American, or Injun, uprisings late in the nineteenth century could not be ignored. The Department said it was unprofessional.

-- Kurt Vonnegut intro to the collection *Bagombo Snuff Box*, 1999

Jerome Klinkowitz: "his masters-level coursework completed but his thesis topic rejected (a comparative study of two 'revolutionary groups': the American Plains Indians' Ghost Dance Society and the cubist painters, an approach at the time discouraged because of a presumed disjunction between primitive and civilized models)"

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## ...Return to sender, address unknown.... 12

### The Official *eI* Letters to the Editor Column

Artwork recycled William Rotsler

By Earl Kemp

We get letters. Some parts of some of them are printable. Your letter of comment is most wanted via email to [earlkemp@citlink.net](mailto:earlkemp@citlink.net) or by snail mail to P.O. Box 6642, Kingman, AZ 86402-6642 and thank you.

Also, please note, I observe DNQs and make arbitrary and capricious deletions from these letters in order to remain on topic.

This is the official Letter Column of *eI*, and following are a few quotes from a few of those letters concerning the last issue of *eI*. All this in an effort to get you to write letters of comment to *eI* so you can look for them when they appear here.

#### **Monday April 18, 2005:**

Another fantastic issue, though I've come to expect nothing less than amazing work.

Bill Burns' intro to why he started eFanzines and how he came to lay out *eI* was great, as I'd wondered that myself. I love the concept that eFanzines represents, and I can see that it will only start to become more important as time goes by, paper becomes more expensive and the few remaining forces opposing digital fanzinery slowly turncoat. *eI* as a concept is the best that the Digital age can allow, as the work you've presented is remarkable and the way it comes together is truly the way things should happen. But enough of the grand scheme ass kissing, let's get on to the specifics

I loved *Firefly* from the first. I watched all but two episodes when they first ran. Since it had a terrible Friday Night timeslot and there are opening night movies that need watching ASAP or you lose the magic, I missed the first episode and the last. Nice way to bookend things, though I watched all of them once the DVDs hit the streets. The spirit of *Firefly* is the combination of science fiction and the Western, drawing the best from both and leaving behind many of the ties that often keep each from becoming truly excellent. I can't think of a lot of attempts to do that that aren't SteamPunk. *WestWorld* comes to mind, in a way. The Western played out brilliantly, with my favourite moment being the exchange where Mal went to meet the woman and her gang of toughs while Jayne snipered up on the ridge. I could just imagine that scene with John Wayne running the action. The acting is top-notch, too. Gina Torres as Zoe is one of the few times where I really bought a woman as the enforcer-type in a TV show, though I've known a few in real life. I can say that one thing that always impressed me was the writing. I'm a big fan of Civil War stories and this is essentially one of those Western tales where a group of Confederates go out west and try and restart. The influence of Chinese throughout the Galaxy is perfect and has been done elsewhere, but never to this logical level. And I certainly won't argue with you about *Serenity* being the star of the show. It is far more than just the setting, it's the heartbeat of the show. The only thing I enjoyed looking at more than the sets had to be Kaylee the mechanic. Lovely lass, she is. The movie sounds interesting (Reavers) and I'm excited to see where the whole thing ends up. You've latched on to a fine piece of work.

Charles Nuetzel's article on turning *Planet of Blood* into a novel is one that interested me greatly. Adapting from one medium to another is tough, and it's a process that I understand well and have never managed to master. I have seen *Queen of Blood* a few times, most recently in 1997 or so during a

rare film collective gathering, though I'm sure it's not that rare. Not the best piece of work, but John Saxon and Basil Rathbone can't go wrong. I'm now on the hunt for the book. Forry's thoughts are always fantastic, and he's had a huge influence on me over the years.

The "Curious Couplings" is an interesting concept. I can remember a couple of books from the 1980s that used 1960/70s covers, and in at least one case the exact same content, only with a different name and a different 'author' listed. The one that I'm thinking of was called *Rose Marie's Lust* (or something like it) by someone named Edwards. I can remember it being in my dad's collection back when I would sneak them. The second version was *Her Night* by Anthony Cowen (or it might be Cohen, it's been years). I picked it up recognizing the cover, but knowing that the title had been something else. I wish I still had *Her Night*, but it's been gone for a few years now.

Doug Weaver's art style is exceptional, though I can't remember reading any of the ones listed. I would love to get my hands on a copy of *Silent Siren*.

The look at Tangier is very interesting. William S. Burroughs was living off of his Dad's money, and when I give the tour of the visible storage area of The Computer History Museum, I always point to one of the Burroughs adding machines we have and say, "that machine right there funded a great many benders for the greatest American writer that ever lived." It never fails to get laughs. One of the saddest things in my life is my terror at flying. I can handle it in small doses, but I'll never be able to make the journey to any of the far distant lands where heroes found inspiration. For me, my Tangier would be Berlin. Bowie and Iggy Pop, one of the waves of DaDa, Weil, Kraftwerk, they all went through Berlin and came out much different people while creating much different art. Nowhere near as exotic, but still, a very different world. Your look at Tangier is beautifully crafted and the love you show for the topic is obvious and real. It's a great story, and I am always fascinated by the rest of the world's opinion on Levi's. I don't know what it is, but I've heard similar stories from folks in Moscow and Thailand and Bhutan.

Bruce Gillespie's tales of Norstrilia Press are just the sort of things that keep me reading fanzines. Tales of woe/triumph/hardship/laziness/excitement are always able to get 'em hooked.

And another set from a sleaze cover artist whose covers had been in Dad's collection. It's one of the reasons I read, to relive the moments I'd steal away with those dirty books and their brilliant covers.

--Chris Garcia

#### **Thursday April 21, 2005:**

Golly, oh, gee, oh, wiz!

And low and behold (and wouldn't her green twin peaks be something to be holdin'?) there she is in all her gory glory, fangs a shinin' ... or was that her titties tightenin' up at the thot of another feast after such a long time in the cold storage vaults of our mad minds?

To start over: Looks really quite good. I haven't read the bloody queen, yet, but then, I did put all those words down in order to let others read. Let them feast on her nightmare for a while.

Edgar Rice Burroughs was quoted as saying something to the effect, in his old age, reading some of his literary works: "My, my did I write those lines?"

So. Again, I think you did a great job with the material on the *Queen* and the somewhat rash photos fashioned out of thin air to replace the one and only which never came to be at Tom Lesser's pocketbook show.

--Charles Nuetzel

#

Crikey! Goddammit Earl, I have just been browsing *eI19*. One day, when I figure out how to (or at least have a better printer) I am going to print off all your ezines in colour on good coated paper stock and have them properly bound in hard covers. I rigorously commit each issue to CD storage waiting for the day. To say they are a wonderment would be a hopeless understatement. --Greg Pickersgill

**Friday April 22, 2005:**

**Correction No. 1 to eI19:** Thanks for another great read. One minor correction, that movie still in "Curious Couplings 1" is not from *La Dolce Vita*, it's Brigitte Bardot and Jean Gabin in *En Cas de Malheur* (known in the US as *Love is My Profession*).

--Lynn Munroe

**Correction No. 2 to eI19:** *Ryan Richardson tried his best to be nice as he told me in minute detail how I had screwed up with his article "TWACE'd About...." He was so good at it, embarrassed me so thoroughly, that I had to write this note of apology. What I did wrong was make a big jump in faith and connect a couple of hanging things that weren't really related. Ryan wrote of driving from Portland with the Brandon House paperbacks in his greedy possession. I thought it was an abrupt beginning and needed an explanation. I wrote an introductory paragraph explaining that Lance Casebere's paperbacks had been auctioned after his death and then I inserted the words "from the auction" before Ryan's "Portland." I did it, not Ryan. Ryan did not attend the auction but he did buy the Brandon House paperbacks direct from Lance before his death. I'm really sorry to have embarrassed or defamed Lance.*

--Earl Kemp

**Thursday April 28, 2005:**

Downloaded *eI19* and it sure does look good, full of the usual pictures and scans.



Yes, John-Henri Holmberg is right, *eI* is difficult to comment on. You write about what you know, so a loc from me is tough to write because it's so far outside my own experiences. Yet, it's a challenge, and I must react to this story somehow. I hope it will all find its way into the covers of a book, perhaps as a backlash to the current American Republican/Christian/neo-puritan movement.

Just 20 years ago, any self-respecting fan would never have revealed that he was a big fan of any television series. I had to be careful not to say that I enjoyed *Star Trek*...no matter what my fanac credentials might have been I would be forever labeled a \*ecch!\* mediafan! How things have changed. Earl Kemp is a big *Firefly* fan. I know that Mike Glicksohn and his charming wife Susan Manchester very much enjoyed *Deep Space Nine*. What shows do I enjoy these days? Well, I used to really enjoy *Next Generation* and *Babylon 5*, but today? None, other than some of the shows I might find on Discovery Channel Canada, and maybe Space: The Imagination Station, and the CBC news at 9pm.

Found out recently that Forrest J Ackerman will be a special guest of honour at Astronomicon 2005 in Rochester, NY this coming November. I hope money and time will allow us to go and see him again.

Good article from Bruce Gillespie, freshly taken home after his Bayside adventures. I think many of us wanted to read, but few of us ever had the gumption or just plain the balls to ever think that we could also write or even publish the stuff. The Canada Council, which helps to fund the arts in Canada, may have been able to help back then, if they'd existed. For some time, they refused funding to anything science-fictional, saying that it wasn't a true Canadian literary form.

More and more research is being done into the soft core paperback business, and I can hardly wait for the final product, a book about the industry from close to 50 years back, in hardcover, and waiting for many men with long memories to purchase and reminisce over long-lost memories. Hope it comes along soon.

-- Lloyd Penney

#

I am in the process of looking for a new quote for my signature file. The one I want to use is Ruben Sturman's line about why he avoided paying U.S. Federal income taxes. I *believe* what he uttered was, "I didn't believe in giving any of my money to [an organization | a government] which was using it to try and put me in prison."

I have not yet found the correct wording. But in the process of trying to find this quotation, I was diverted to a site where Erik Schlosser was interviewed on C-Span about *Reefer Madness: Sex, Drugs, and the American Black Market*; and then, to a site which tapped the motherlode.

The link is a gentleman named Earl Kemp <<http://efanzines.com/EK/eI4/>>. That URL is one which mentions R. Sturman. The motherlode is hit when you revert to here <<http://efanzines.com/>>.

There are some \*tremendous\* stories being related here. Along with \*images\* of the science fiction and pulp sex paperback covers which were published in the 1950s & 1960s.

You can go in there now, and not re-emerge until Memorial Day. That is how much stuff it has. So go there. Immerse yourselves. I have the feeling that most of you will enjoy this more than me. But, wow. Even I can amaze at the content therein.

--<http://brainsonfilm.com>

**Sunday May 1, 2005:**

**Correction No. 3 to e119:** I enjoyed all the articles discussing artist Fred Fixler in the last issue. However, I must make one correction to Art Scott's piece on Fixler. In the piece he writes, ""The mystery has been solved, thanks to outstanding detective work by Brittany Daley of *Sin-A-Rama*. The Brandon House artist is Fred Fixler." Although I did make sure that any books with Fixler art were properly credited to him in *Sin-A-Rama*, I was not the person who discovered him, as that was Ryan Richardson of Austin, TX (you can read about how he discovered Fixler in his article in the last issue of *eD*). I did find out about the court case Fixler was involved in, but it was actually Richardson who solved the mystery. I hope the misunderstanding is cleared up now!

-- Brittany A. Daley

**Tuesday May 3, 2005:**

Ya sucked it dry. Or, rather, did a very nice job. Plus, thanks for makin' me look even as bright and intelligent as I am in my best days. Dealing with Hamling and his early adventures down sf land as an editor of *Amazing*, etc. I'd been too lazy, while writing the article, to look up any details, tho I did know about his involvement with those sfs. Also, you mentioned a couple of other items which involved Big Bill H. Some I knew, a couple I wasn't - at least remembering - aware of. And the historical mention of *Amazing*, which is, of course, another long famous story we are all aware of to some degree or another. Works nicely in the piece.

The whole thing came out very nice. I noted a couple of typos which, apparently, even I had missed, but nothing tragic, nor anything any typesetter might have not missed in the rush and hurry flurry of knocking it out on deadline.

--Charles Nuetzel

### Friday May 13, 2005:

My apologies. I was involved in a number of personal projects when I was alerted that the last *eI* had gone up at efanazines and only read a small part of it before forcing myself away. I think I've already observed that I've previously found reading *eI* to be a bit like falling into an avalanche -- somewhat more than just overwhelmingly compelling once you kind of slide into it -- and I just didn't have time to devote to reading and loeing it the way it deserved. But now... *eI* has risen to the top of my Things I Still Want To Do pile. And, yeah, once I started reading in earnest, I went through the same thing all over again in terms of hardly being able to come up for air, particularly your "The Star of the East," about which I can make no comment other than to say "brilliant," and "evocative," and "mesmerizing," and "dreamlike," and "goshwow" -- and I'd go on except they're just descriptive of my reactions without pointing to any whys or wherefores surrounding them.

John-Henri Holmberg, in your letter column, mentions in passing the "reasoning" that I'm sure influences much widespread indifference to proposals that increase police powers at the expense of civil liberties -- *i.e.*, that they're "helpful" to the authorities. As John-Henri observes, no doubt they are. Frankly, I personally don't understand why **\*more\*** people don't find themselves convinced by this unerringly sharp and incisive logic, given that police states -- where the authorities routinely proceed in their investigations with absolutely no regard whatsoever for civil liberties -- are all such extremely admirable models of precisely the kind of justice we'd all like to see put more into practice right here in the good ol' US&A. Of course, many of us are well aware that, to a far greater extent than it really should be, it already has been, but that's another matter.



Ian Covell wonders a bit about the accuracy of my "those fokkers were Messerschmitts" story about the WWI Swedish fighter ace on *This Is Your Life*, given that he saw a Liverpool comedian, Stan Boardman, tell the same "joke" on a tv chat show in the UK. I only share Ian's surprise that a comedian would tell it deliberately in that family hour venue; it **\*doesn't\*** surprise me that it became one. In the instance I cited, it wasn't a delivered as a joke but I grant it's probably the source, and not just a coincidence, that it got used like one when Boardman told it. In the case I was citing, that fighter ace was saying "fuckers" in his broad Swedish accent, no doubt unaware that it wasn't a word one was supposed to use on live television, and Ralph Edwards (the host) just assumed, given the pronunciation, that he was referring to the fokker aircraft. I've never seen the UK show Ian refers to, but I saw the show I cited -- and I believe it was commemorated as well as one of several items on a series of "party" records known as "Bloopers,"

*In the old days of live TV, I remember a drama starring Lloyd Bridges with a scene involving a football game and, Bridges, caught up in the excitement, improvised the dialogue, "Jesus Christ, 40 fucking yards." It was years before he was hired for another acting job.*  
--Earl Kemp

which had on it other similar things that had happened on "live" radio and tv. (A couple of others that I recall from that record include the spoonerism of referring to midnight as "the wee bitching hour" and a football sports announcer becoming over-excited in describing a running TD, "he's down to the 40 -- down to the 30! -- the 20!! -- the 10!!! -- look at that son of a bitch run!!!!")

I'm only mildly disappointed that Lloyd Penney seems to believe my piece in *eI* about Cheryl Morgan and *Emerald City* was based on her decision not to have a letter column in what is, after all, her fanzine. My objection was that she flat out slandered me. Had the slanders appeared anywhere other than in a fanzine, I would have taken my objection to court, but in the microcosm of fanzine fandom which she makes clear she so despises, this simply Is Not Done -- well, those few who've tried have suffered fandom's approbation, mine included, and I will not play the hypocrite. (In fact, when I read in her fanzine about some convention fans who came close to suing her over another matter -- which, according to Cheryl's telling of it, would have

resulted, no matter what the finding, in her having her sorry ass booted out of the country -- I expressed my genuine sympathy to her.) To my mind there was never a need to publish my letter, merely to acknowledge the issues I brought up in dispute of what she'd said about me. That never happened, the slanders are still there to be read and my anger grew. ...but, hey, I'm done with it now, and what people choose to make of it is entirely up to them. Even if they want to think I was just complaining about a lack of a letter column.

Earl, I suspect at least one of those "numerous postings" on internet discussion lists about *Firefly* which you avoided in your effort to be able to watch it without preconceptions may have been several exchanges between Dave Locke and me, with others chiming in from time to time, on I'm-not-sure-now-just-which-list now. Trufen, probably, but it also could've been Timebinders.

I'm a big fan of Joss Whedon's two fantasy series -- *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and its spinoff *Angel* -- neither of which Dave cared for. Well, actually, he admitted to mild amusement at the *BtVS* movie, which ironically struck me as so bad that I didn't start watching the television series until it was in its third season, and then only on my daughter's

recommendation. I can understand that Dave just couldn't get into the "high school" issues that took up much of the story-telling in the first few seasons of *Buffy*. However, at last we both agreed that *Firefly* was delightful, Dave calling it one of his "guilty pleasures."

You say you watched the series in the order they appeared on DVD and you presume they were broadcast that way. Not so. Which I think goes a long way toward explaining why such a fine show didn't catch on and was canceled as early as it was. There are 15 episodes on the four discs, you'll notice, and Whedon started it with the double episode that establishes the background. Now, as in *BtVS* and *Angel*, each episode in a Joss Whedon series is a complete story in itself, but it's also generally part of a larger "story arc" -- unlike, say, *Star Trek*, where you can pretty much have all but the very earliest episodes shown in any sequence, not even with much regard for what season they first appeared in, without engendering any confusion. The primary reason *Firefly* failed, in my estimation



(and I don't think I'm alone in the opinion) was that the morons at the network elected to show it out of sequence. As you can verify by checking the "air dates" on the episode descriptions on the DVD containers, the actual order of the episodes as they were shown on the network was 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 5, 6, 10, 11, 15 and 1/2 (by the double episode intended as the startup). Episodes 12, 13 and 14 were **never** aired in the US. (I gather they were in the UK, but I have no idea the extent to which they may have been shown in the intended order there.) The effect of this on *Firefly* was that frequently the US viewer saw things being explained which had previously been accepted as commonplace, and the set-ups for certain jokes sometimes didn't occur until after the punchlines. We in the US got to know that the Companion was leaving, for example, but didn't get the benefit of the episode that explained why she had reached the decision to do so. While Joss did what he could to tie up at least some of the loose ends when he found the series was being discontinued, the networks even prevented some of that from being shown. Why the network should sabotage the show in such a way, given that they had to approve it as a concept to let it be shown in the first place, is one of those mysteries of the corporate group mind that I fear I'll never be able to understand. Even the reruns of *Buffy* and *Angel* are shown in episode order, so you can't tell me the network executives didn't realize that Whedon was using the same storytelling principles in *Firefly*. Well, not and have me believe it, anyway. The only explanation I can imagine is that the network executives who approved the idea Whedon floated to them were not the same executives who made the decisions on airing the show, and that the latter didn't like the idea at all.

I think it was kind of interesting, though, that when Joss discovered the series was being canceled, he immediately wrote two of his major *Firefly* stars -- Nathan Fillion (the captain) and Gina Torres (the lovely black woman who was his second in command and was married to the pilot) -- into roles on *Buffy* and *Angel*, respectively. Major villains, both, but it kept them working for a while.

I realize some people could speculate that the overt, open and fun-loving sexuality presented on *Firefly* might have led to its quick demise, but I think this would be in error. There's just as much, if not in fact more, of this in *Buffy* and *Angel* -- and both presumably have more appeal to young girls (what with the empowered female in the former and her heart-throb David Boreanaz starring in the latter) than would a space opera like *Firefly*. The only bordello is on *Angel* (in which the prostitutes are female demons) but *Buffy* has sexual liaisons that are extremely tender (with *Angel*), erotic (with Riley Finn, her next regular boyfriend) and with b&d and w/s&m overtones (with Spike), while her two major sidekicks, Xander and Willow have erotic frolics of their own (Xander with Anya, a former demon who's nearly insatiable and willing to try anything sexual he has a mind to suggest, and Willow who, after a heterosexual relationship with a werewolf goes bad, settles into a long-term gay relationship with her lovely fellow wiccan Tara).

Hmm. I wonder, Earl, if you might turn out to like *Buffy* as well? All seven seasons are on disc -- the first only has 14 episodes, the others all have 22 -- and I think cost no more than \$40/season. I think someone should advise you over the first season, as you can get pretty much everything you need to know from just five or maybe six of the episodes, which means you can skip over some (and come back to them later if you like) and go on to some of the more interesting things that occur later. Whether you might want to go on to *Angel* -- whose fantasy themes are darker but overall is less overtly sexual, while having a few "crossover" episodes with *Buffy* -- would then be up to you.

The thing I discovered, in becoming a fan of all three Whedon shows, is that he has such fun with them that I find myself for the first time unbothered by the kind of flaws that would unquestionably upset me if they occurred in more standard other-media sf/fantasy fare. I guess I can finally understand, to an extent, something "sci fi" (or "skiffy" as we pronounce it in the microcosm), i.e. other-media science fiction, fans have been saying to us all along. They love the special effects and feel they are enjoyable enough in their own right to compensate for the silly mistakes and/or inconsistencies in those movies and tv shows. I'm not unmoved by delightful eye-candy, myself, but as a long-term sf and fantasy reader, that alone is not sufficient to compensate me for the annoyance those silly mistakes and

inconsistencies engender in me. But Whedon has found the coin which, if it doesn't buy my total silence regarding those errors, at least purchases a degree of complaisance, an acknowledgment that they "don't matter" all that much. It's not special effects but superb story values and the creation and maintenance of compelling and, for all their outrageousness, believable characters. There are *nine* major characters on *Firefly* -- and by the end of the series you not only know a great deal about them all but, in every single instance, *you want to know more*. So it's space opera and *so-what* if ships traveling at interstellar speeds should pass each other in the blink of an eye; we shrug it off because we want to know What Happens Next.

I'm really looking forward to the movie *Serenity*. And, if "intelligent television network" isn't an oxymoron, it would be nice if Whedon could find one that would let him explore that universe to the same extent he was allowed to explore the demon realms in *Buffy* and *Angel*. Or, failing that, more movies would be nice.

--rich brown (DrGafia)

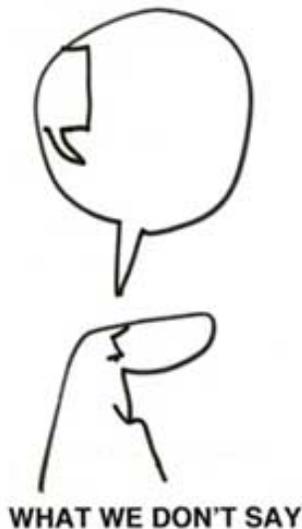
### Friday May 13, 2005:

The March paperback show in Mission Hills, California was a total gas for all concerned. Wheeler dealers from all parts of the globe descended on the burg to load up on some of the tuffest vintage softcovers ever issued, plus we had the opportunity to meet and greet some of the coolest original bigwigs in the biz. Major hurrah was hanging out with Earl Kemp (honcho del rancho for sf sleazemester William Hamling's worship-worthy Nightstand/ Greenleaf Books from the original Evanston, Illinois days throughout the San Diego reign), Robert Bonfils (ultra superb cover artist who picked up William McCauley's torch-y and ran with it, developing an original, heart stopping style for EK's massive pantheon of pulchritude), Arthur Hanno of our dearly beloved Lion Books (super suave mega-fave pub co for Norton's in-house paperback haven), Jim Harmon of *Vixen Hollow* fame who rubbed elbows with KICKS icon Lou Kimzey, and boss cat Don FREAKOUT Glut! Picked up some representative '50S TURKISH dope novels, a lusciously weird oversized BILBREW tome, *Gay But Not Happy* AY by DICK DALE (!) and lots more gunk... so never say never-- they're OUT THERE! ...

--Miriam Linna, *Norton News*, April 2005

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Earl, you prolific stud-muffin, you!



WHAT WE DON'T SAY

Your site's always filled (to the brim, and running over) with such wonderful stuff. I feel like a chocoholic in a chocolate factory every time I check in; all of the goodies leaving me frustrated as to where to begin (and where to end in order to get something else done). Anyway, keep up the good work, my man! I've recently been trying to master all of the html jargon in order to update my William Maltese web-site (until a month or so ago, I was relying upon the kindness of friends - and friends, at least the computer-wiz kind, are becoming farther and farther between). I actually managed to get info and cover graphics of all of my stuff, with the exception of one (presently filed away "somewhere"). The "all" includes the Greenleaf stuff. Check them out, under the "Pulp Collectibles" section at: <http://www.williammaltese.com> As with my dealings with Greenleaf (and you), when you were in charge, most of my interaction was covert: I off in the boonies doing my own thing; you all off somewhere, smoking pot, drinking booze, having hot and heavy sex, and ...the imagination boggles! Ah, the "pioneers" interview, with possibilities for appearance in some gay literary magazine: You were mentioned in that interview a time or two, if my fading memory serves me correctly, yes? Of course,

you were! What would gay porn have been without you? Hell, what would porn, period, have been without you? Speaking of Victor Banis (in the round-about-way the above does), I just happened to get hold of a copy of that first gay book of his (and yours) he did for Greenleaf. I'll add it to the few books I'm collecting, aside from my own. And, it has been reported to me by various people that a Canadian publisher has just released *Song of the Loon*. Anyway, my man, have to run. This web-site shit has monopolized my time for so long, I've oodles of other "stuff" to catch up on. Keep it up!

--William J. Lambert III

### **Saturday May 14, 2005:**

**Correction No. 4 to eI19:** I wish to respond to Ryan Richardson's comments in his letter in the last issue of *eI* regarding the article about Bill Edwards that I had submitted.

I did not properly "credit or document" who "found" Bill Edwards. The intent of that article was to spread information, and I apologize if anyone was offended, because I did not properly credit or give citation sources. It had been a long time search for me and others trying to discover who this great artist was. When I got the name "Bill Edwards" I snooped around the Internet and found out the life details about Edwards through various websites. I took what I found, added other information from other sites like ABE and movie sites, and put that article together. Before this was done, I called and spoke with "Bruce Edwards" who was another artist in California who I was able to cross off as not being "B.E."

As I put together the article, it never occurred to me about writing who discovered Bill Edwards or citing sources for the information in that article. Information was what was being sought to spread to the paperback community and anyone who was interested. In the article, I did not go into who "found" Bill Edwards. If it was implied that it was me who found him, I didn't mean to imply that and wish to correct that here. I have also asked Earl to take my name and picture off that article (though he hasn't done this). For the sake of correction, please let it be known that Eric Deutchman figured out who B.E. was just as Richardson wrote. Richardson also did a lot of research into finding out who B.E. was as well. I do not wish to take any undeserved credit for the article or the B.E. discovery but am glad the information is out there for those who are interested.

I encourage those people who do make discoveries or do research and find something interesting, like Deutchman or Richardson, to take the initiative to get the information out there. I wish to thank any paperback collectors, editors, writers, and anyone involved in this industry who add to this information pool. Personally, I do not care about an article "credit," and I don't think that is the important thing in any of dissemination of paperback related information. This is an interesting subject and a piece of history. The stories of these people are a part of a neglected side of American culture. Earl Kemp went to jail for some of this stuff! Some people are still ashamed of having even been involved in this industry. (If you want proof, check out Ed McBain's recent comments on his official website about the sleaze books he had NOT written but were shown and discussed in *Sin-A-Rama*) This stuff is important, even if it embarrasses some people. The people involved in this industry were and are real people. Their stories should be told and reported on in whatever form we find, not just stories about how somebody found someone or information. If we do tell stories in how we find people who were part of the paperback industry, it shouldn't be the reason for why we write things or share information. Why should it be to our (the article writer's) glory or ego that motivates anyone to write anything? It is Bill Edwards and anyone out there involved in this industry, from the editors to writers to artists, that deserve praise and glory and a stroke to their egos. They deserve the hat's off. They pushed the limits, and we should all be thankful for that.

--L. Truman Douglas

### **Monday May 16, 2005:**

Check out Art Scott's illustrated article in the latest issue of Earl Kemp's efanzone and discover the identity of a heretofore nameless Brandon House cover artist. You'll have to scroll down, but you'll probably be distracted on the way by any number of other pieces (so to speak) including Charles Nuetzel's comments on Queen of Blood, Kemp's footnote to the article, Forrie Ackerman's remarks (with great photos), and so on. The whole issue is don't-miss reading.

--Bill Crider's Blog

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On his tenure with G.E.: "A broken-down movie actor named Ronald Reagan was working for the company. He was on the road all the time, lecturing to chambers of commerce and power companies and so on about the evils of socialism. We never met, so I remain a socialist."

--Kurt Vonnegut, intro to the collection *Bagombo Snuff Box*, 1999

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## Sheikh Yerbouti

or,

### Recollections of a Nude Male Dancer

Artwork by Ditmar

By Dan Andrews

I grew up always knowing that I would be a star. In the last years that I still ate and slept at my parents home, I was a part-time singer with a couple of rock-and-roll bands like the Anal Sphincters and Big Dick. We could always be heard blasting out black-based rhythms from someone's garage. And I was a part-time actor with local community theatres including The Old Globe, Blackfriars, and The Off Broadway. And it all happened while I was attending San Diego State University and trying to learn a few things beyond party time.

The importance of having a school-based education always took a back seat when getting that "Paying Gig" or landing a role at a "Union House." But education did come. I came to a point where I realized that I should be capable of using my talents to support the increasing demands that tuition and books put on my budget. College did a lot of people in financially.

There weren't many shows around the area consistent enough to fill the coffers when it came to legitimate stage productions. But I'd talked to some gals from ballet class who managed to get their bills paid by working a few nights a week as exotic dancers in some local strip bars.

At the time a male exotic dancer was an unusual animal. And jobs in that field were even more rare. Most men inclined toward the exotic confused the public who mistook them as being homosexual. There were so many misconceptions associated with the exotic male dancer that it would only be considered as a last resort for a guy determined to make a living in show business. Even professional male strippers who had been doing it for ten years were only doing it until they could line up something else. Not so for women. Many women were proud of their long-lasting professional status. The tradition has not accepted men quite as easily.

This was the time when homosexuals were still being called "queers." A person was actually surprised when they could go to the larger cities and find communities where these "fagots" thrived as real people. According to the "religious right," these little infestations suddenly began to receive their just deserts when the "gay plague" broke out. But that didn't really bother anyone until HIV crossed over

into the heterosexual population through intravenous drug use and anal sex. It wasn't as if anyone important had it. Gay bashing escalated to an all-time high.

After some research with friends of girlfriends, who were able to make an above average living practicing the craft of nude dancing, I approached the idea as a challenge. It would be part training and part education during the lean years. A means of expression to serve many ends.

Unfortunately, there were only two clubs in the county that hired men to dance nude.

They drew a small percentage of gays. But mostly curious women. Each place offered nude male entertainers twice a week. Fortunately they were on different nights. Unfortunately I would need a job at both locations if I didn't want to move into a communal situation with the scrounges I called friends.

It was always easy as an artist to stand back with an eye toward the critical and weigh the symmetry of someone else's passion, genuine or not. As long as I felt materially secure I had no problem advancing my theories on another's significance and their ability to contribute to humanity. When I came to the point where a choice between doing commercial art or adhering to my artistic philosophy decided weather or not that emptiness in the pit of my stomach was filled, the struggle revealed what "the nature of sacrifice" could produce. That was the message of all the work I offered from then on. Anyone who truly knew me was able to judge weather or not I had whored myself out by the amount I ate when they invited me over for dinner.

It's remarkable how many of the people I grew up with had hang-ups about nudity. I lived part of my life in northern California where we all swam in the Feather River. And the American and Sacramento Rivers, too. Most of those swims were on the spur of the moment so no one had a bathing suit. We all just made the natural choice. Fry like the rest of the valley or be cool and let the chicks check you out. I was always cool. So when the family moved to San Diego, it worked out that I gravitated toward the nudists. A very small group. Aside from the times when I was with that handful, swim outings were a planned event. The exception was Blacks Beach. That was the last legal nude beach in the United States. One day it went illegal too. That's when the crowds doubled, then tripled. And they weren't all just voyeurs. There was something about it being against the law that brought out all the closet rebel nudists. My handful of friends used to go there and sell homemade sandwiches, pre-rolled joints, and beer to scratch up gas money for the round trip.

Nudity was a good thing. I loved my body. I loved seeing all the naked bodies that I could. The sexuality thing didn't necessarily always accompany what we all shared. The sex thing was chemistry, which was distinguished as an individual element within the mix. That chemistry was controllable. Controlling sexuality was then at the top of the list that I was determined to add to my repertoire

The prospect of being alone on stage is every actor's dream. To be on stage stripping away everything to end up the sole focus of hundreds of intoxicated, howling females is every man's dream. Those intoxicated, howling women have two goals. To drink more. And to slide dollars into a man's clutches, making him her paid accomplice. Maybe of the hundreds of hungry females with their eyes firmly affixed to my genitals, two or three actually see themselves ridding off into the sunrise with the sexual appendages they scream for.

There is no man that, after successfully taking off every stitch of clothing and gyrating around while three songs are played on a juke box in front of a smelly pack of girls, that wasn't offered a job. If a man can do "that," he can do "it," In fact, a successful audition was just getting naked and enduring the feeling of being sucked off by every eye in the house for ten minutes. Don't kid yourself. You'd have to be extremely drunk for it to be as easy as you think it is. No one can stay that drunk at work that long and still keep the money straight.

From my point of view there was nothing very exotic and nothing truly erotic about my dancing for at least a month into my new career. I'd had a little experience with "three ways" and more, but being in front of those crowds was like having sex with a hundred women at the same time. And I couldn't give the impression to any one of them that I was cheating on them with the gal right next to them.

By the time the fifth or sixth week went by, there wasn't any cheating going on anywhere. They were all pandering for each other and guiding one another to the fulfillment they could never meet alone. The sexual intercourse that my dancing had taken relaxed. And it finally felt as though it came with ease. Many of the ladies in the audience were regulars. It had become an ongoing affair to which a couple even brought their boyfriends or husbands. Those guys were the enlightened ones. A few hours of drinks and that hard-driving beat took them all to where waves of pheromones lofted throughout the whole building while the dancer and his cut muscles made dreams of the rhythm. A good dancer could make everyone's sexual tension grow from song to song and the transitions would then all flow from the crowd's movement back to the dancer. And after the doors close, it's just a short ride back home for the boyfriend or husband with a sweaty woman who is definitely in the mood.

Most of this transmitted sexuality wasn't something I added to the scene. The sex and all its expectations was carried in with the party. I did act as a facilitator or medium to exercise those pent-up demons. But I always had more than the necessary prerequisites to work with. Me being there made it all right for this orgasm to begin its wall-to-wall chain reaction. Every night a new life erupted from the depths of each woman as raw passion. If it was in a woman and she was alive, it was coming out that night. That's what they paid me for. Way before sex therapy.



Dancer and Floozies, by Ditmar

Within six months I carried around a canvas sports bag full of costumes and a hundred sample bottles for every scent available. I'd discovered that a few of the dancers offered perfume for sale to their admiring fans and it did bring in a little extra cash, very little. I didn't need to work both clubs any more. I made as much money in tips as most men made five days a week. I would have done well with two nights. I found that I needed the interaction. The psychokinetic symbiosis pulling for my

responses. The rhythms pulse. I needed to feel women's eyes burning all over me. I took soundings as I leaned into them. As I moved along with them. Through them.

My take on this part of the 1970s comes from a slightly twisted point of view. By the time I walked away from high school it was as though the '60s and all they stood for and all they had accomplished never existed. There wasn't any peace or love anywhere. People were beginning to be proud of their involvement in Vietnam. All the long hairs were greased to the skin in drug deals and slick real estate ventures. All my friends began voting Republican because their business sense wouldn't let them go any other way. "Forget those third world beggars," was a buzz line and the overused, "If it helps me make another business connection, I don't mind lying about being a member of the Christian Coalition," was always a party favorite.

Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young were passed over for Bowie and The Sex Pistols. Love-ins gave way to the disco and slam dancing. Cocaine swept the pot heads aside and beached half the yuppies. Gangs and the turf wars that went with them moved back into the ghettos Black power and anything serving to unite a population against their oppressors dissolved. The mainstream raged out of control around the blue collar all consuming couch potato. If control was possible, the middle class whites weren't admitting it. They had just acclimatized to free sex. But this generic androgyny was something unnatural. "It must be indigestion."

The only girls who weren't on the pill were the ones that didn't want to mess up their bodies with them. I either had to use the old pull-it-out method, or risk breaking a rubber. Most of the time I choose not to deal with this cosmically conscious variety. There were so many girls that did use the pill and they made it so easy to have sex with them that it became too much of a bother to even waste my time in a drug store.

During those times a man could set up four or five different dates on the same day. I remember being driven around to these dates by a girl who would have sex with me between dates. While I was with the next girl, she would wait in the car around the corner until I returned.

My sisters adopted the same Open Sex philosophy. The last thing I wanted was to run into a friend who would promptly say, "Man, your sister's nasty. We smacked bellies for six hours. My dick hurt so bad by the time she finished with me that I had to bring in a relief man. I couldn't take care of my girlfriend for a week." But eventually, after every man in the free world had poked them, I got used to my sisters being as sluttish as me. Then they got married.

I developed a type of sonar that soaked into everyone between the gentle moaning and fluctuations of charismatic exchange. There was a special frenzied element that I consciously scanned for. That element could set off a handful of women like a back draft. If a guy finds himself in the middle of that kind of tension, it could be a real risk not to look for a way out. He might really be damaged. Within a few seconds the herd can collectively rave to implosion. The frenzy itself is nearly uncontrollable. An experienced entertainer with a sound survival instinct can learn the techniques needed to back off the sexually stimulated in many different situations. At least enough to save the limb. Turning off the music is a good place to begin.

Sometimes it doesn't matter what a man does. If he's doing his job, dancing the exotic erotically, he's getting women hot. Inevitably that means that he will walk out to his car after a wild night's work and find a woman, sometimes two, draped over the hood waiting for him to come and make good on all the teasing he put those pour things through.

Sometimes it's a blessing. I found myself in more than one incredible situation. Sometimes those freaky little head cases wouldn't go away for months. But restraining orders and harassment arrests

didn't give me any second thoughts or second reasons to change jobs. That's actually what made me realize that I was finally a star. A star of live theatre. Me and DeNero weren't mixing it up with the mob, but when I went out shopping at the mall or when I walked across the San Diego State University campus to classes, I'd get stopped every day with, "Hey, don't you dance at The Grinder?" Or if they already knew me, "I loved the show Thursday night." And no, there weren't a lot of autograph requests. But I went out for a lot of drinks. And I didn't ever make it too hard for them to get me back to their place morning, noon, or night.

Even though I made numerous attempts throughout my career, the reality of it all was that any monogamous relationships were out of the question. No matter how liberated or open minded a woman thinks she is and protests to be, she will never allow herself to remain in a relationship where the man of her dreams is mentally screwing every other woman who has the cover charge to get in the club and a couple of extra bucks to draw him in closer. Sure, the first two weeks are inspiring. Like from a woman's magazine. It's the third week where all her secret plans to have her man abandon the very job that brought her together with him begin to leak out. By the beginning of week four, she always delivers the ultimatum. The next morning she is in her car loaded down with all the stuffed toys she carried from her parents' house, driving away, yelling to anyone within earshot about how big a son of a bitch this weirdo she's leaving is. After five or six attempts at those "open minded" relationships, I learned.

I found myself turning to grass more frequently. Reefer went from the always-popular brown Mexican dirt weed or waterleaf to Humboldt hybridized buds or Hawaiian Cones as big as an arm. Prices matched all the way along the line. Kids were filling half of their pipe bowls with cocaine because it was cheaper. Suddenly 13-year-old kids were experts capable of explaining any subtlety of the genetic breeding process. As well as any relative materials of historical interest. Pot became an art. Its rituals became at least as sophisticated as any Japanese tea ceremony. Hash or any of the byproducts from oils couldn't keep up. A guy could mix in the opiates just as easily with buds. And he could step on it as much or as little as the desire demanded.

Eventually my college career ended. And no matter how much I kicked and screamed, graduate school was history too. My Ph.D. thesis was accepted, leaving me to make some hard choices. These good looks of mine weren't going to last forever. Another seven, eight years were left on the body, tops. I needed to use the remaining years wisely. I needed to squeeze everything I could out of them. So I admitted that there were many more fields that a man like me could Ph.D. in. And a well-earned following wasn't to be tossed away lightly just because there was no more room left on my walls for diplomas.

I still encountered all the confusion due to associations with homosexuals. But when the red neck sons and brothers began getting infected, all the walls turned to dust. The human condition was so close to home that a good 'ol boy finally had to be a man and accept that ten percent of the military population who lived with "don't ask, don't tell" couldn't be all that threatening. The status quo only helped to spread the epidemic. Everyone's heroes and sports stars began falling under the wave. On any day, undistinguished from all the others, a man and a woman began to live outside of the closet. They ambled the walks proudly. And the jocks over at the tit bar didn't need to feel insecure about being seated next to a transsexual. The boys were finally educated. They and their wives knew that their kids were safe in school because sexual orientation doesn't determine a person's predatory predisposition. They were more likely to be molested at church.

All in all, most citizens sought the refuge waiting for them in front of their television sets. The broadcasting companies that owned them were the same ones that established P.A.C.s to elect the politicians who expressed the views, which benefited their ways in the business world. When the cable was finally fitted into the equation, their abilities expanded to a 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week

coverage. No one could escape the airwaves. That was the beginning of all things today. It insured the hold that future marketers would gradually tighten. Mass socialization had entered the age of warp speed. As long as a buck could be made off it, it would be included in the new morality. That's how the global corporate era began.

When the years finally did make the decision for me, I had to start binding my degrees in catalogue form. That's when I decided to put my education to work for me and write a book on the erotics of the exotic dance trade. Stardom is a difficult thing to give up. It drives many to serious drugs and drinking. But traveling the circuit of book signings is an easy way to make the transition. It also paved the way for a series of works based loosely around the subjects of my education.

The hardest part was not having that box of cash on the top shelf of my closet. Studying it, continually filling, continually emptying with the ebb and flow of a tide pool. No more personal contact. Now it is just numbers in logs. It all sleeps without the smell of stale beer, too many cigarettes, and overworked FDS, and without the feel of all those sighing, sex-starved women. The meanings they placed on every dollar bill. Their imprints and values. What it was that they were exchanging in the trade. The look in their eyes that clung for just one more second waiting for something impossible to happen. But I did frame a few.

I also retained many photos and videos for reference. And I guess I finally made it to a place where a woman didn't need to change me. A place where she felt secure enough to throw those stuffed animals on the back of a Salvation Army truck along with that sporting bag of costumes and perfume samples that I hustled around for so many years.

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Peculiar travel suggestions are dancing lessons from God.  
-- Kurt Vonnegut

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## Curious Couplings 2

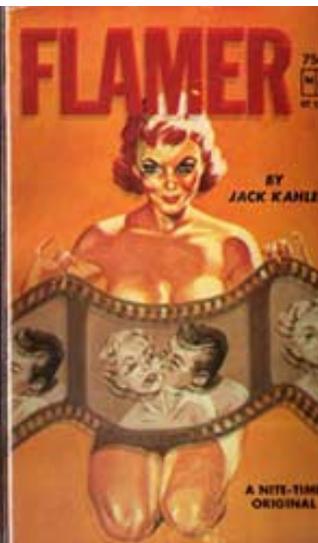
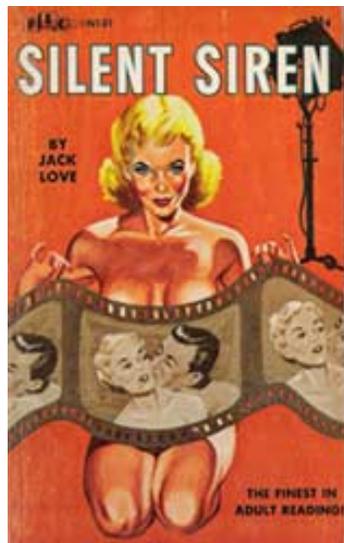
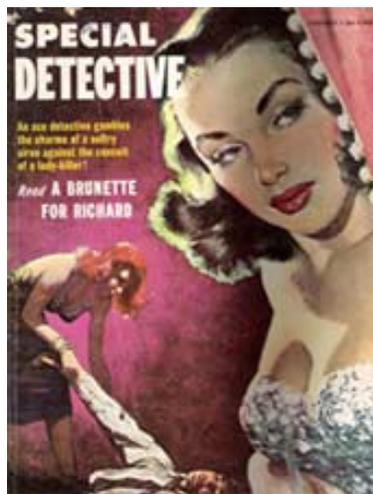
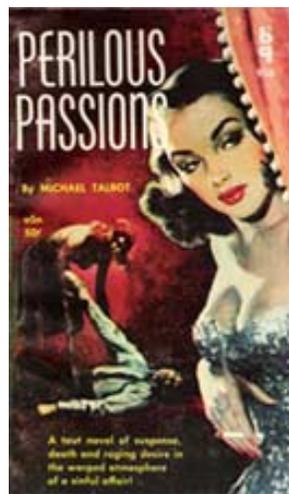
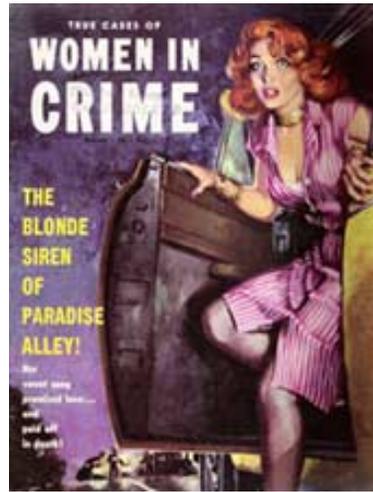
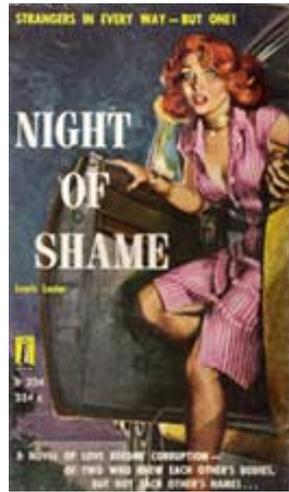
By Earl Kemp

As I wrote in *eI19*, I have noticed a number of odd coincidences regarding sleaze paperback covers and other publications that have intrigued me. Some of them were reasonable and understandable, some of them were outright criminal theft, and some of them were beneath contempt.

What I propose to do is to run a few of them in some issues of *eI* to see if I can create real interest in perusing the venture. It is a participation project. You send me jpegs of your favorite duos to [earlkemp@citlink.net](mailto:earlkemp@citlink.net) and I'll take it from there.

This is the second installment of this projected new reader participation series.

Here then is the second set of examples of Curious Couplings. All of these examples are from the collection of Brittany A. Daley.



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We welcome your contributions to this series. Please email your jpegs to [earlkemp@citlink.net](mailto:earlkemp@citlink.net) and thank you very much for participating in this novel and interesting exercise in futility.

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I think we don't care much anymore. Most of us, as when we were children, have very sound ethical instincts and realize that it's all a lot of baloney. And so we're completely fatalistic about our government's being for sale.

--Kurt Vonnegut 10/99 *Salon* interview

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## Two Thousand Light Years From Home

By Jon Stopa

The Geezer Stones are starting another tour! Why, I'll swan! This reminds me of when I had almost attended a Stones concert back in 1965.

My wife, Joni, and I did our first overseas Worldcon, Loncon II, in a first class hotel. Few US fans could really afford it, but the Brits, noticing how rich were the small number of fans that they knew who had often crossed the Atlantic, felt it was necessary to provide us with the sort of accommodations to which these wealthy fans were accustomed. The Brits, themselves, couldn't afford it, so many stayed at B&Bs and cheaper places, commuting to the con. The hotel had the latest things, like air-conditioning, which boomed on every time the temperature managed to rise to 40 degrees Fahrenheit. Not understanding the British climate, we had left our parkas in check at the airport and so shivered during the whole of the con.



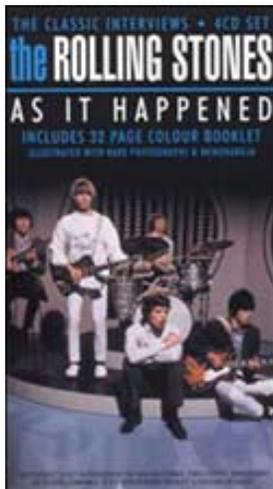
Jon and Joni Stopa at the Worldcon masquerade.  
fanac.org photo by Ben Jason,  
London, 1965

Though our room had heated towel bars in the bath, the maids perversely threw up the windows for ventilation in our room whenever we left it-- unfortunately, the towel bars were a totally inadequate source of heat. On our first day, we met Ella Parker, the con co-chair, for lunch in the hotel coffee shop, an old-fashioned place with rows of built-in booths separated by an aisle. We had met Ella at Seacon, the Worldcon held in a small motel at the Seattle-Tacoma airport, and were pleased to see her again. We had no sooner settled into a booth than a young man urgently waved to Ella.

She excused herself and went to him. She came back, snorting, mumbling, "Rough yans, rough yans!" "What was that all about?" we asked. After a bit of dogging, she explained that the young man was a rock and roller named Mick Jagger. He claimed to be a science fiction fan, and wanted to play for the con with his band. "But I refused them," she said, crossing her arms. Why? we wondered. After all, the Stones had recently released an album that had "Two

Thousand Light Years from Home" on it. Definitely science fiction.

Shaking her head, she explained that they were so sexually charismatic that they would go into a party,



pick out the female they wanted, and draw her instantly away. The poor woman would be so smitten that, against her will, she would follow the fellow right out the door. So Ella had refused Mick to preserve the virtue of American femfandom. When later I told the story at a party, those American femfans, including Joni, allowed that they would rather have made that decision themselves. I was shocked, shocked.

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To me, wanting every habitable planet to be inhabited is like wanting everybody to have athlete's foot.

-- Kurt Vonnegut, *Hocus Pocus*

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[The following article was written in Australian (mostly British) English. Every effort has been made to retain this language intact and to not translate it into US English. -Earl Kemp]

## My favourite Bruce Gillespie article Maniacs with guitars and pianos

By Bruce R. Gillespie

[First published by Leigh Edmonds in *Rataplan 8* in 1972. Irwin Hirsh did not include this in *The Incomplete Bruce Gillespie*, but I think it's my best article. It's certainly the article into which I put the most passion while I was writing it. I was 25 when I wrote it.]

For better and/or worse, this music is also a way of life . . . To a large number of young people it seems passionately to *matter*.

— Wilfred Mellers, *Times Literary Supplement*, 19 November 1971

So all right, the Beatles make good music, they really do, but since when was pop anything to do with good music?

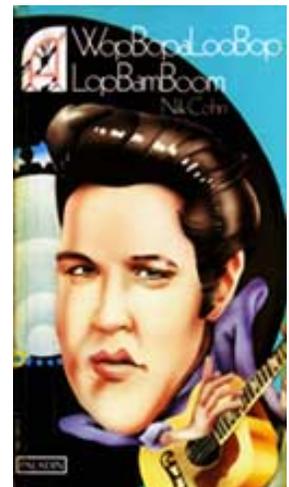
— Nik Cohn, *AWopBopaLooBop ALopBamBoom*

Nik Cohn played pinball and listened to pop music for six hours a day; I studied for exams, listened to pop music during coffee breaks, and collected hit parade charts from local newspapers. Cohn knows his early rock and roll; I'm still in sympathy with 1972's rock and roll.

But we both grew up with rock and roll, and who can shake an upbringing like that? This is the story of an obsession shared by two people, at least.

**I**

I've been a Rolling Stones fan since I heard their first record. Not that I heard their *first* record, of course, since no Melbourne disc jockey played 'Come On' or 'I Wanna Be Your Man', the Stones' first and second singles. When I first heard 'Not Fade Away', I hated it. The lousy voice of that lead singer! Since Melbourne radio stations had never played the records of blues singers such as Muddy Waters, I didn't recognise the origins of Mick Jagger's style. However, the fast, sold beat was so magnificent that I kept listening to the record. Stan Rofe (the only Melbourne disc jockey who knew much about the records he played) said that the Rolling Stones had already become the second most



popular group in Britain. Why were they so popular? Because they caused riots in theatres, fought with club crowds and thumbed their noses at club proprietors. Because the Stones had much longer hair than the Beatles, and they were unbelievably ugly. They were magnificently repellent.



A few weeks after Decca released 'Not Fade Away' in England, London Records released 'Tell Me' in the USA. I still think that it is one of the three or four best pop singles ever made. Its four and a half minutes of running time made it one of the longest pop singles released up to 1964. Why did I like 'Tell Me' so much? *That* lead singer was still there, and he sounded no more tuneful than before, but the drummer had developed an insistent, hypnotic beat that was more compulsively listenable than the best records by any other group. I enjoyed this long single so much that it seemed shorter than the average Beatles record. I still play 'Tell Me' often.

Slowly I became accustomed to Mick Jagger's voice. He sounded mean, angry and sardonic, although he could never express the full urgency of expression of the black blues singers. In late 1964 I managed to borrow a copy of the Rolling Stones' first LP, which includes some of their best performances. On 'Mona', Jagger's voice sinks into a fluid field of intricate drum and guitar syncopation. The more insistent the beat, the more nagging the sound of the guitars and maraccas, the easier it is to listen to the song. The bass guitarist (Bill Wyman) is the star of 'Honest I Do' and 'Route 66'. The entire band works best as an ensemble on 'Little by Little'. There the lead and bass guitars play off each other in an extended blues improvisation, and Jagger sings a short verse at the very beginning of the song and a chorus at the end.

The most intriguing aspect of the LP was the songwriters' names. I had vaguely heard of Bo Diddley and Muddy Waters, but no Melbourne radio station had played their records. A friend of mine began to collect blues records at this time, and soon he bought some Chicago-style rhythm and blues LPs. Now I could hear the original Muddy Waters version of 'I Want to Make Love to You' and 'I Can't Be Satisfied' (recorded by the Stones on their third LP). Melbourne radio stations, especially 3KZ, began to play the records of Solomon Burke, Otis Redding, Marvin Gaye and other rhythm and blues performers. Chuck Berry, to whom the Stones owed much of their style, began to make new records.



Earl Kemp and Bruce Gillespie.  
Photo by Peter Weston, Corflu Titanium,  
San Francisco, March 2005.

Nobody knew how to react to 'The House of the Rising Sun' by the Animals. The record was so long that the radio stations played the abridged American single instead of the record that EMI released in Australia. Alan Price plays an electronic organ at almost cathedral volume. Eric Burdon wails and yells the lyric for almost four minutes. I could not quite bear to listen to his voice, but I couldn't bear not to listen to it. 'The House of the Rising Sun' was a song that had remained in the folk blues repertoire since before 1900, but I had never heard it before (probably because radio stations had previously banned its mildly risqué lyrics). As in many of the best records of 1965 and 1966, the elements of 'The House of the Rising Sun' hang suspended from an audible trapeze wire. Burdon's voice should sound flat, but it doesn't, the beat of the drummer

should clash with the rhythm of the organist, and the dry sound of the guitar should make both the voice and the organ sound out of tune. The performance should have fallen in a heap. But it doesn't.

The barriers were down, and they stayed down in the streets, in the dance halls and in people's homes. For a few years the radio stations assaulted listeners instead of charming them. This listener, at least, remained constantly astonished by the stream of powerful rock music that followed the success of the Rolling Stones.

The Stones did far more for any 'revolution', real or imagined, than the Beatles ever did. I've felt this since late 1964 and early 1965, when the Beatles reached the height of their success, although the Stones had still achieved little success in the USA or Australia. But I've never been able to put that feeling into words, and Nik Cohn can.

## II

In 1970 Nik Cohn published a book called *Pop: From the Beginning*. In 1971, Paladin issued a paperback edition with the far more evocative title of *AWopBopALooBop ALopBamBoom*. It's both the story of rock and roll and a lot of Nik Cohn's autobiography. But that makes the book part of my own autobiography — not only does Cohn agree with me, but he says everything so much better than I can. For instance, here's Nik Cohn on the Rolling Stones:

'In Liverpool one time early in 1965', recalls Nik Cohn, 'I was sitting in some pub, just next to the Odeon Cinema, and I heard a noise like thunder.' Nik went out into the street, but it was empty. The roar grew louder.

'Finally, a car came round the corner, a big flash limousine, and it was followed by police cars, by police on foot and police on motorbikes, and they were followed by several hundred teenage girls.' The entourage came to a stop outside the Odeon Cinema. The squealing girls surrounded the car. The door of the limousine opened. The Rolling Stones and their manager Andrew Loog Oldham climbed out. 'They shone like sun gods', says Cohn, 'impossible to reach or understand but most beautiful in their ugliness. The girls began to surge and scream and clutch. But then they stopped, they just froze. The Stones stared ahead, didn't twitch once, and the girls only gaped. Almost as if the Stones weren't touchable, as if they were protected by some invisible metal ring. So they moved on and disappeared.'



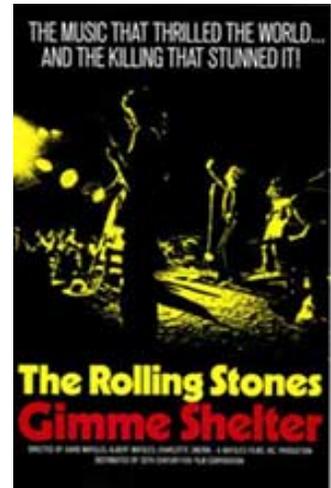
The Rolling Stones posed a threat to everybody. 'On no account must they appeal to parents,' warned Andrew Loog Oldham, even before the establishment had awarded MBEs to the Beatles. Cohn says that the English music business hated the Stones because they 'threatened the structure, because they threatened the way in which pop was controlled by old men, by men over thirty. You didn't need to simper or drool or suck up — the old men might hate you in every way possible, and you could still make yourself a million dollars.' English teenagers of 1965 felt quite strongly that they didn't want to 'simper or drool or suck up' to anybody. Like the Beatles before them, the Stones declared their independence from BBC culture, although the Beatles never quite recovered from BBC acceptance. The Stones unified their personal and musical styles. They looked

ugly, they made ugly music, and for awhile they angered the really ugly people of the world.

'To begin with', writes Cohn, 'they used to play the Crawdaddy Club in Richmond and they laid down something very violent in the line of rhythm and blues. They were enthusiasts then. They cared a lot about their music.' Their care about music and attention to innovation remained for some time. At first Charlie Watts played in the background, Keith Richards and Brian Jones played like a cross between Chuck Berry and Muddy Waters, and sometimes Mick Jagger managed to sound like Mick Jagger. When the Stones wrote their own songs, they gradually simplified their style, threw out the frills and, as Cohn so brilliantly describes them, their records became 'nothing but beat, smashed and crunched and hammered home like some amazing stampede. The words were lost and the song was lost. You were only left with chaos, beautiful anarchy. You drowned in noise.' 'The Last Time' (the Stones' first Top Ten record in America) and 'Satisfaction' (their first Number 1 record in America) sum up the power of the Stones' best records. 'You drowned in noise.'

The Rolling Stones gain most of their musical power from Charlie Watts' drumming, rather than anything that Jagger has ever done. In 'The Last Time', Charlie develops an onrushing beat that hypnotises me every time I hear it, even after seven years. He has recreated this beat in even more exhausting feats of distilled violence, on tracks like 'Salt of the Earth', 'Let It Bleed' and 'Sister Morphine'.

'They remain the best rock band in the world', says Cohn, although he thinks that the Stones have wasted most of their energy since 1967. For me, the film *Gimme Shelter* shows clearly that Jagger in particular has never really understood the influence that the Stones have over their audience. Asked why the Stones stayed together, Bill Wyman said, 'I guess we're too lazy to do anything else.' Most of *Sticky Fingers* (1971) is a musical disaster. On nearly every track Charlie Watts sounds as if he has forgotten everything he ever knew about rock and roll. 'If they have any sense of neatness', concludes Cohn, 'they'll get themselves killed in an air crash, three days before their thirtieth birthdays.'

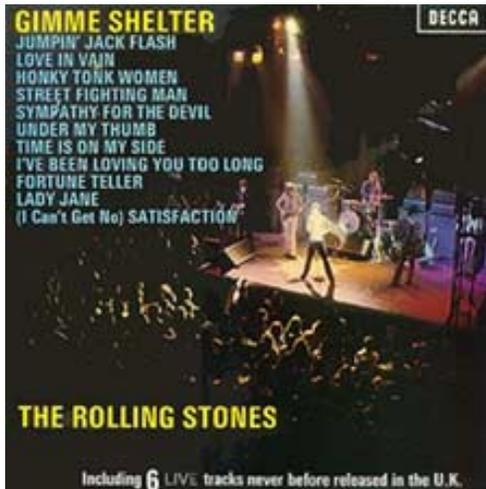


### III

In late 1965, we moved to a marvellous old house in Bacchus Marsh. The stairs were steep, my room was on the mezzanine floor, and I could ignore everybody and everybody could ignore me. In spare moments I could turn up the radio loudly and try to find some good music. (1965 might have been the best year for pop music since 1956, but that doesn't mean that Melbourne radio stations played good records very often.) Occasionally I could pick up 2UW, a Sydney radio station. At that time, and for several years afterward, it was the best commercial radio station in Australia. The deejays played few advertisements after 8 p.m., and they did not talk about the weather or read the news. They played no record that was more than a few weeks old. Constantly the station replenished its 'playlist' with new records that Melbourne radio stations would begin to play months later, or never played at all.

One night, when I was huddled in my eyrie, supposedly struggling with Hofstadter or George Eliot, I heard the most extraordinary noise hurl itself from Sydney. A vast orchestra pounded out a strange, syncopated throb while an inspired female blues singer wailed a song that became louder and louder until she ended with a perfectly controlled blues shriek. 'A new Phil Spector record!' I shouted, throwing something into the air with delight — probably the radio. I wanted to buy the record the next day and play it over and over again, but I had to wait for months before I could even *hear* it again.

Four months later, London Records finally released 'River Deep Mountain High' by Ike and Tina Turner (for that was the record) in Australia, and two months later Melbourne radio stations began to play it. Eventually the record sold very well in Australia, but it did not enter Melbourne hit parades



until nearly a year after I had heard it blare out from Sydney like some distant apocalyptic celebration.

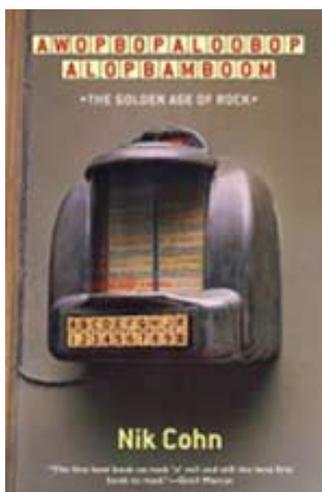
That's my story. Here's Nik Cohn's:

'Phil Spector [who produced 'River Deep Mountain High'] was demonic. He'd take one good song and add one good performer and then he'd blow it all sky high into a huge mock symphony, bloated and bombasted into Wagnerian proportions. He'd import maybe three pianos, five percussion, entire battalions of strings. Drums and bass underneath like volcanoes exploding. Tambourines by the hundredweight. And he looked down from his box and hurled thunderbolts. Added noises, Spector sound, and the impetus.'

Spector's records sounded as if they had been made in a mile-high cave. Nobody has ever been able to copy Spector's sound. He would hire Gold Star Studio in California for three months at a time, which is the period Spector took to make 'River Deep Mountain High'. The legend goes that Tina Turner recorded the vocal tape in one night, after Spector had manufactured the entire backing. Tina Turner was 'a big earth woman, one scream of infinite force,' says Cohn, as he describes the ending of the song. 'At one time there's an instrumental chorus and everything thunders, crashes, gets ready for final dissolution. Tina snarls and wails in the background. Then she screams once, short and half-strangled, and everything goes bang. That's the way the world ends.'

'River Deep Mountain High' failed in the USA, which is perhaps why it took six months to be released in Australia. Spector, already a millionaire, foreswore America after this failure, and later made pleasantly ingenious records for George Harrison and John Lennon. Like Nik Cohn, I think that the 'daemon' had left him, although Harrison's single 'Bangla Desh' recaptures much of the excitement that is called Spector sound.

#### IV



Nik Cohn hits the nail on the head so many times in *AWopBopaLooBop AlopBamBoom* that I didn't like to disagree with the last chapters of the book. The first two-thirds of the book contain passages such as these:

On *classic rock*: 'Rock and roll was very simple music. All that mattered was the noise that it made, its drive, its aggression, its newness. Rock turned up a sudden flock of maniacs, wild men with pianos and guitars who would have been laughing-stocks in any earlier generation, but who were just right for the fifties. They were energetic, basic, outrageous. Above all, they were loud.'

On *rock and roll lyrics*: 'The lyrics were mostly non-existent simple slogans, one step away from gibberish. This wasn't just stupidity, simply inability to write anything better. It was a kind of teen code, almost a sign language, that would make rock entirely incomprehensible to adults. The

first record I ever bought was by Little Richard. The message went: "Tutti frutti all rootie, tutti frutti all rootie, tutti frutti all rootie, awopbopalooobop alopbamboom!" As a summing up of what rock and roll was really all about, this was nothing but masterly.'

On *Roy Orbison* (my favourite pop singer since 1960; who sang the best pop songs in the best way possible): ‘The last time I saw Roy Orbison was at the 1966 *NME* poll winners concert. Everyone else was frantic, ran themselves crazy trying to whip up a reaction. Orbison just commanded: the big O. He banged it out so solid, so impossibly confident that he made everything else that had gone before seem panicky. He’d been around, had twenty years behind him. Almost on his own, he knew what it was all about.’

On the *best lyric writer*: ‘Chuck Berry’s most perfect song was “You Never Can Tell”.’ (Cohn quotes the complete lyric, but you’ll have to buy the book to read it.) ‘Chuck himself more intoned than sang, sly and smooth as always, the eternal sixteen-year-old hustler. What the song boils down to is detail. Most pop writers would have written “You Never Can Tell” as a series of generalities. But Chuck was obsessive. He was hooked on cars, rock, ginger ale, and he had to drag them all in. That’s what makes it — the little touches like a cherry-red Jidney ’53 or the coolerator.’

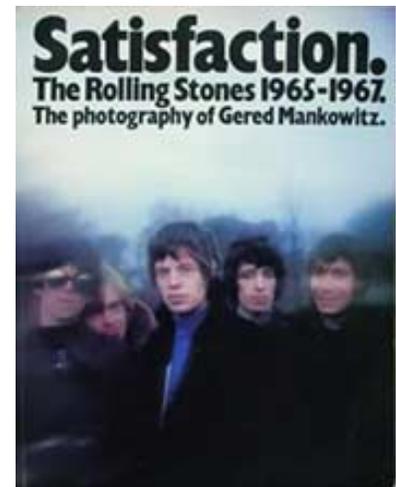
That last passage contains Nik Cohn’s key word: obsessive. Cohn is obsessive: he worries about an idea or impression until he finds a word or phrase that exactly gives his impression of a performer or group, or a music fashion. The Platters ‘were all coloured but the lead singer sang exactly like an Irish tenor. That’s how confused they were.’ The Who ‘didn’t have number ones but they kept hitting the top ten and, in due course, they became safe. They even stopped punching each other’. The Beatles ‘were perfectly self-contained, as if the world was split cleanly into two races, the Beatles and everyone else.’

Cohn talks a lot about maniacal environments and ‘maniacs . . . with pianos and guitars’. Nik Cohn makes America’s southern states sound like a musical version of Faulkner-land. The South bred people like Little Richard, one of thirteen children, who sang in church choirs, and who ended his rock and roll career in 1957 when he became a Seventh Day Adventist minister. The southern states bred Elvis Presley, who made sex the main selling point of his music and inspired the hatred of Baptist preachers everywhere, but who said often that he loved his mother and sang hymns during the intervals of his concerts. Elvis was unfailingly polite to everyone, but his ‘voice sounded edgy, nervous, and it cut like a scythe. It exploded all over the place. It was anguished, immature, raw’. According to Cohn, pop music was driven for ten years by the impetus of southern blues and country and western music (plus black rhythm and blues from the northern cities). The next wave of madness came from Liverpool.

‘Liverpool is a strange town. It gets obsessed by everything it does. It is a seaport, and it is made up of different races. It is a city full of gangs, and outside of Glasgow, it is the rawest, most passionate place in Britain.’ According to Cohn, as soon as the music hits the big cities and the promoters, it loses its intensity.

Nik Cohn writes like a genuine *naïf*. He’s a person who sees an almost visionary role for pop. ‘The fifties were the time when pop was just pop, when it was really something to switch on the radio and hear what was new right this minute. Things could never be so good and simple again.’ Beware of people who think that wide and powerful social movements are good and simple. For Cohn and me, rock and roll was a relief from boredom, a tingle in the veins, and endless source of conversation, a touchstone of style (although I don’t think pop *style* ever touched my relentlessly puritanical background). Rock and roll was right because it annihilated the parental world of right and wrong that they had deposited into teenagers’ lives like silt into clockwork. It was a secret world, with public idols, incomprehensible to adults, but something that they had to take notice of.

I part company with Nik Cohn during the last third of the book. According to Cohn, the Beatles



abandoned the faith when they began to improve the quality of their music. 'Musically, *Rubber Soul* was the subtlest and most complex thing they'd done and lots of it was excellent' but 'The Beatles were softening up. *Revolver* was a big step forward in ingenuity and again, there was a big step backwards in guts.' Cohn admires the idea and musical quality of *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* but 'it wasn't much like pop. It wasn't fast, flash, sexual, loud, vulgar, monstrous or violent. It made no myths. The Beatles make good music, they really do, but since when was pop anything to do with good music?'



Now, we all know that that's rubbish, don't we? Or do we? Cohn's last statement sums up the whole book, and is basically correct: if pop *had* been good music, I would not have discovered it until the age of twenty-one, when I actually began to enjoy *good* music — Beethoven, Bach and the rest. Cohn shows that he believed the publicity about *Sergeant Pepper's* broke barriers, leapt forward, had intelligent lyrics and brilliant music, and was littered with references to LSD. Even in 1963, such a publicity campaign would have ensured the failure of the record. In 1963, no Melbourne disc jockey played Bob Dylan's records ('the kids wouldn't understand him'). In 1962, a rumour spread that the Everly Brothers had failed to arrive at a concert appearance because of a 'drug problem'. If the Everly Brothers had confirmed that rumour, they would have instantly ruined their careers, which they did eventually anyway. Who wanted good music in pop songs before 1965? No one, except the people who recalled early Sinatra and Nat King Cole, and

welcomed the chart successes of 'Telstar' and the 'Theme from *Exodus*'. The publicity for *Sergeant Pepper's* was a fraud because songs like 'Lovely Rita', 'Fixing a Hole', 'Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds' and 'With a Little Help from My Friends' beat out the same relentless rock rhythm as the Beatles had played three years before. George Martin disguised the rock with some elaborate orchestration, but he couldn't hide the banality of most of the songs. At the same time, not even Nik Cohn could deny the terrifying power of 'A Day in the Life', which, by itself, lit pop's future path. But we are not talking about music, as Cohn says. We are both talking about what rock and roll meant to its audience.

Lee Harding says that 'Nik Cohn just grew up, that's all'. So did I (in a way), but not before I saw why rock and roll changed from one kind of religion to another. It changed because the audience changed; or rather, a whole audience grew up. Millions of rock and roll addicts reached their twenties at about the same time. The twenty year olds learned to think, love and perform music, and some of them even read books. They didn't have to fight their parents anymore, because many of them had already become parents. They did have to fight (for their lives, this time) against the people who built the bomb and staged the Vietnam War. Rock and roll supplied the battle magic against the War, and the *raison d'être* for the fight: 'Make the world safe for rock and roll.' The rock and roll fans did not become teddy boys or truck drivers. They became editors of university student magazines and broadcasters for the BBC. Perhaps this explains why articles about 'rock' appeared in *The Times Literary Supplement* and *The Listener* within a week of each other in December 1971, why *The Times Educational Supplement* featured a very learned article about The Who, and why *Rolling Stone* published one of the best recent analyses of the American presidential elections. Why did people get serious about rock and roll? Not because campus intellectuals suddenly discovered rock, but because today's thirty-year-old professors and steely minded revolutionaries always knew rock and roll. Now they rock with their heads as well as their nerves and blood.

What can you say to Nik Cohn? He shows what rock and roll meant to him, but he fails to see why rock means so much in 1972. He underestimates the influence of acid, he calls Dylan 'boring' and he sees nothing in Paul Simon's lyrics (which I like better than Dylan's) but 'softness and tenderness, wistful

ironies'. He dismisses Cream (the second-best rock band ever) in half a page, and thinks that Procol Harum 'only inept reviving "Whiter Shade of Pale" in different names and disguises'. In the last few pages of *AWopBopaLooBop ALopBamBoom*, Cohn implies over and over again that he doesn't want to listen to the new stuff. He hopes that it will go away, and that his style of rock will reappear. He still thinks pop singles hit parades show an accurate picture of the pop music industry, although nobody over sixteen buys pop singles these days.

Will the maniacs with pianos and guitars ever return? They didn't go away. They have longer hair and they read books and they sell far more records than Little Richard ever did. But they remain just as mad, just as obsessive. On the last page of the last chapter of *AWopBopaLooBop ALopBamBoom*, Nik Cohn says that rock and roll 'has to be intelligent and simple both, it has to carry its implications lightly and it has to be fast, funny, sexy, obsessive, a bit epic'. It still is.

— **Bruce Gillespie, March 1972**

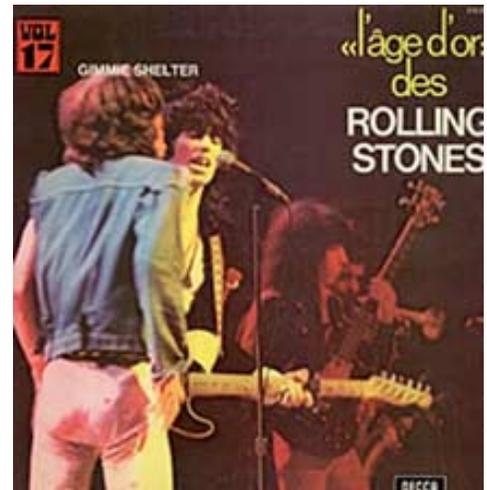
Leigh Edmonds' editorial reply, 1972

Yesterday I went out to visit Bruce and he gave me this article. At the same time we listened to a few records, the Faces' *A Nod's as Good as a Wink to a Blind Horse* and Rod Stewart's *Every Picture Tells a Story* and a couple of others, what you might call new rock. Also, recently I've been leaving the radio on a bit and listening to whatever it is playing. I haven't been listening to much rock and roll recently — that means for the last two years — and when I consider why I find that it is because, for me, the guts went out of rock sometime in 1970.

Well, I suppose that the guts did not really go out of rock and roll. All that happened was that the music changed and took a new form. Some people can relate themselves to this form and still call it good rock and roll but to me it's gone soft and useless; and, like Nik Cohn, I end up complaining that it's no good any more.

Cohn had his golden age a long time ago and it seemed to come to an end in the middle of the sixties. My golden age dates from then on until the beginning of this decade. Cream, Jimi Hendrix and Big Brother and the Holding Company were my idols. The Cream laid down such music that even now I can't fully believe that it exists; Jimi Hendrix was the greatest of all 'maniacs with guitars' and he was everything that either Nik Cohn or I could hope for: 'fast, funny, sexy, obsessive, a bit (more than just a bit) epic' . . . the whole bit. Hearing Big Brother for the first time was something like how Bruce tells of hearing 'River Deep Mountain High', only much, much more so. And while all this was going on, there were the Beatles, Stones, Who and a couple of other groups releasing records enough to make each visit to the record shop a delightful nightmare of decision making.

As Bruce pointed out, rock and roll is obsessive. If it isn't, it isn't rock. Rock is a whole culture, a way of thinking and living. The music is the obsession that occupies your mind; it's like driving down the road at seventy with Jerry Lee Lewis or the Stones or the Cream or the Faces (it all depends which year) pounding something into your head and making everything seem magical. Modern rock seems far more introspective than the rock of earlier years. It seems more the music to sit and listen quietly to and if you are sitting and listening quietly and thinking about what you are listening to you are always making judgments on the music and you are not obsessed. You are not involved in the music; you are a listener and a bystander.



As I remember, in the early pages of the book Cohn says that in periods of social stress the music is soft and luxuriant because people want to have something gently wash away fears and frustrations. Only in the times when things are going (or seem to be going) right with the world do people feel able to get involved in music that carries and is concerned with fears and frustrations. The fifties were years when people could indulge themselves in various flights of fancy and rock and roll was what happened. As the years passed things got tougher and the world is not in a very good way these days. The music is going soft because the people listening to it want to hear something more pleasant.

And, well, things change, and if rock and roll is no longer something which I enjoy being current with, I am not going to complain. I grew up with it and it is still with me, but only when I pull records out of my collection and play them again — and only records I seem to buy are the ones that I didn't buy earlier and the further releases by groups I still dig.

Apart from all this there are an awful lot of things I don't see eye to eye with Bruce or Nik on. Phil Spector is one of them, for I can hardly stand to listen to anything that he has messed around with. The lauded Spector sound is musical forgery. I don't know how many times I've listened to George Harrison's 'Wah Wah' and been frustrated to find that all that fine musical backing is nothing at all . . . nothing at all that you can actually listen to. But this is the end of the page and I stop.

— Leigh Edmonds, 1972

Bruce Gillespie in 2005 tries to remember what it was like listening to music in 1972

I can remember 1972 pretty clearly — better than I remember most years since. Years had shapes in those days. 1972 was the year when Chris Winter announced in his sepuchral voice on 3LO's night program when he was actually allowed to play LP tracks instead of singles: 'Here is the best rock and roll band in the world.' It was one of the tracks from the Faces' *A Nod's As Good as a Wink to a Blind Horse*, their third LP, which had just come out. Until then, all I had heard from the Faces on regular pop radio was one of the tracks from that album: Rod Stewart and the Faces' version of Chuck Berry's 'Memphis, Tennessee'. It was okay, but nothing to justify Chris Winter's judgment.

I bought the album, and found several tracks that proved to me that rock and roll was back! 'Stay with Me', 'Too Bad' and 'That's All You Need' had that ferocious energy of the early rock and roll singles and the best Stones albums. They were all a lot better than Rod Stewart's 'Maggie Mae', the rather plodding track that was a hit at the same time. That track came from *Every Picture Tells a Story*. I looked at the liner notes. They were the same band members as on the Faces albums. Rod Stewart sang on the Faces albums. It was all one act, so I bought the first three Rod Stewart albums as well. And most of the tracks on *Every Picture Tells a Story* were as good as those on *A Nod's as Good as a Wink*. The combination didn't last long: four Stewart albums and four Faces albums and a concert LP. Stewart got a big head, toned down his sound, and hired a new band. Ronnie Lane left the Faces. Ronnie Wood joined the Rolling Stones. By 1975, it seemed, rock and roll really was dead.



Rereading my own article, I cannot believe that I ever disliked the Rolling Stones' *Sticky Fingers*. I still play it constantly. A few years ago, it was finally remastered for CD, and I could enjoy it doubly. But it



was very different from the previous two Stones albums, *Beggars Banquet* and *Let It Bleed*. Like any fan, I wanted the Stones to stay the same, and not progress. In 1975, they got the message, and they haven't changed a thing ever since. The first rock group to discover it could make a half a billion dollars a year by becoming a museum to its own past.

My article reminds me of the 1972 I didn't know existed; you can see all my references to the policies of our AM radio stations. Until FM radio came along in 1975, what in America was called 'underground music' was *really* underground in Australia — just names mentioned in *Rolling Stone* magazine. Except for odd late-night programs such as Chris Winter's and Graeme Berry's, no radio station in Australia played the LPs that actually provided the

soundtrack for the seventies. I discovered them much later, through friends. In 1972, Leigh Edmonds had his ear to that indefinable ground by which people communicate news about music that isn't played publicly. He already had LPs by Janis Joplin/Big Brother and the Holding Company. That's the only way I heard them. Leigh had heard Jefferson Airplane. I had heard *about* them, but heard almost none of their music until the late seventies. In the last twenty years I've kept buying groundbreaking albums, released in 1972, of which I knew nothing in that year. Two great albums were played on radio here in 1972: Neil Young's *Harvest*, whose wispy hippy ditties put me off his music for four years until Roger Weddall played for me the LPs that show Young as the greatest rock and roll performer since the Stones and the Faces; and the Stones' *Exile on Main Street*. The rock critics hated it, then decided it was the definitive Stones album. And the Stones have been trying to make another *Exile* ever since, and that's how the story of rock and roll ended.

Except, of course, it upped its tent, left pop radio, and set up camp in something called 'alt.country'. But that's for an article I haven't written yet.

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I think that one of the things parents have to do is to teach children hypocrisy, because that's how you survive--by being nice to people who are contemptible. So the kid coming into the world sees hypocrisy and wants to point it out. You're nice to this awful person? What you're doing is a crime, isn't it, Dad?

--Kurt Vonnegut, 10/99 *Salon* interview

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# The Age of Ignorance

By Richard Lupoff

Due to a most unfortunate series of incidents that I will not go into today, I found myself enrolled as a cadet at an institution that I will call the Boulderwall Military Academy. I was eight years of age. Life there was as nasty and tyrannical as any “military school” horror movie you have ever seen.

The BMA philosophy seemed to include the notion that the devil finds work for idle hands, so a schedule was in effect that kept the students on the run from reveille to taps. If you weren't in class you were in study hall, or practicing close order drill, or on the athletic field (if you weren't on the team you were in the stands, cheering on command), or attending compulsory chapel services, or in the dining room -- to and from which you marched in military formation.



Richard and Pat Lupoff.  
Photo by Chaz Boston Baden,  
Corflu, San Francisco, February 2005.

It was terrible.

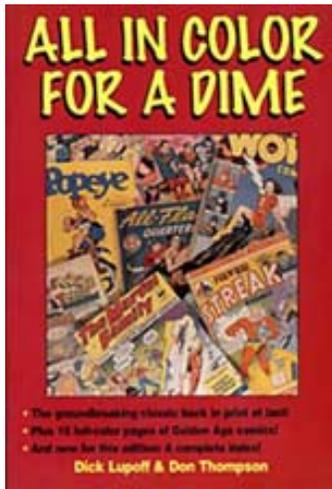
Privileges were few and stingily awarded. The right to leave the campus was limited to a couple of hours on one midweek afternoon and again on Saturday. Providing, of course, you hadn't racked up any demerits for such felonies as forgetting to empty your wastebasket before inspection or showing up for formation with a speck of tarnish on your brass belt buckle or marching out of step. If that happened, you spent your precious “off” afternoons trudging up and down on the drill field with a rifle on your shoulder.

Everybody spent every evening in study hall. Well, not quite everybody. Grades were assigned every two weeks, and if yours were good enough you were allowed to study in your room. With the door open, of course, and with faculty monitors and student proctors pacing the hallways peering over your shoulder to make sure you were actually working algebra problems or conjugating Latin verbs, and not -- horrors! -- reading something for pleasure.

This hellish existence, not surprisingly, led to the creation of a rich fantasy life. In many cases, fuelled by comic books. I used to spend most of my allowance on comic books, purchased in the town of Boulderwall on my precious trips off campus. I loved comic books. I loved all kinds of comic books, but my favorites were superheroes, and my favorite superheroes were Captain Marvel and the other members of the Marvel Family.

But I would read any comic book I could lay my hands on. Anything to escape the wretched life of that wretched school and plunge instead into the colorful square panels of flying men, spaceships, magicians, beautiful women, lurching monsters, happy-go-lucky teenagers, even funny animals.

One evening I was sitting at my desk with my back to the door, a geography book open before me and a copy of *Sensation Comics* nestled inside the textbook. Wonder Woman was the lead feature in *Sensation Comics*, and I didn't like this feature very much. In fact, I don't know why I had a copy of *Sensation Comics*. My favorites were the Fawcett group – *Whiz, Master, Captain Marvel Adventures*.



And I was a fan, to a lesser extent, of Green Lantern, Captain America, Human Torch, Sub-Mariner. The shadowy scenes of Batman, I found disquieting. And I never did care much for Superman.

But -- Wonder Woman?

Nonetheless, there I was reading *Sensation Comics*, happily oblivious to my real world surroundings, when I sensed another presence behind me. I turned and looked into the face of a person I will call Dr. McGill. I recognized him from encounters in the hallway but had never been in his class. I knew, though, that he taught chemistry.

Did I mention that Boulderwall Military Academy ran from fourth grade through high school? Dr. McGill taught at the

high school level. I was in fourth grade.

I folded up my geography book desperately hoping that Dr. McGill hadn't seen the comic hidden within but knowing, of course, that he had. I expected all hell to break loose. Boulderwall Military Academy was a serious institution and defiance of the rules was not to be countenanced.

To my astonishment, Dr. McGill asked me gently if he might see what I had been reading. I handed him the geography book, *Sensation Comics* enfolded, and he removed the comic book and returned the textbook to me. Hope blossomed in my chest. Maybe he was merely going to confiscate the contraband comic and not report my felonious conduct to the military authorities.



As I sat there trembling he studied the cover drawing, then opened to the lead Wonder Woman story. He turned the pages slowly, carefully perusing the drawings. After a while he said to me, "Do you have any others like this?"

What? A teacher asking about comic books? Recognizing them as anything other than vile trash?

"Oh, yes. Lots." I uncovered my stash of *America's Greatest Comics*, *All-Winners Squad*, *Spy-Smasher*, *All-American Comics*. I offered them eagerly to Dr. McGill.

He gave each comic book a cursory examination. He shook his head sadly, returning the pile of comics to me. "I mean," he said, "like this," holding *Sensation Comics* between us.

"Uh, no, that's the only one of those I have."

"Oh." There was a pause. "Well, may I borrow this one?"

I was flabbergasted. "Sure. Any of them. Here's one of my favorites." I offered him a copy of *Ibis the Invincible*.

For boys, Wonder Woman is a frightening image. For girls she is a morbid ideal. Where Batman is antifeminine, the attractive Wonder Woman and her counterparts are definitely antimasculine.

--Fredric Wertham, *Seduction of the Innocent*

Well I can't comment on the image girls had of Wonder Woman. I never knew they read her—or any comic book. That girls had a preference for my brand of literature would have been more of a frightening image to me than any number of men being

beaten up by Wonder Woman. Whether Wonder Woman was a lesbian's dream I do not know, but I know for a fact she was every Jewish boy's unfantasied picture of the world as it really was. You mean men weren't wicked and weak? You mean women weren't taken badly advantage of? You mean women didn't have to be stronger than men to survive in this world? Not in my house!

My problem with Wonder Woman was that I could never get myself to believe that she was that good. For if she was as strong as they said, why wasn't she tougher looking? Why wasn't she bigger? Why was she so flat-chested? And why did I always feel that, whatever her vaunted Amazon power, she wouldn't have lasted a round with Sheena, Queen of the Jungle?...I see now that my objection is just the opposite of Wertham's: Wonder Woman wasn't dykey enough. Her violence was too immaculate, never once boiling over into a little fantasmal sadism. Had they given us a Wonder Woman with balls—that would have been something for Dr. Wertham and the rest of us to wrestle with!

--Jules Feiffer, *The Great Comic Book Heroes*

"No, just this one. I'll bring it back next week. If you get any more of these, I'd like to borrow them, too."

And he left, taking my copy of *Sensation Comics* with him.

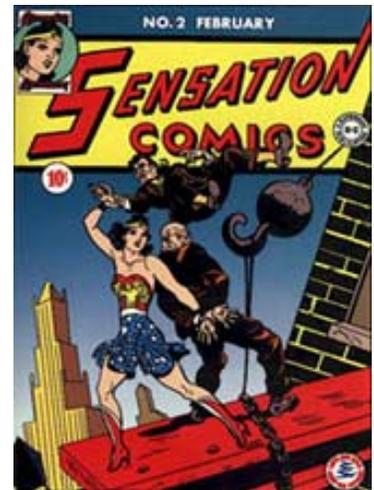
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Actually, I didn't like Wonder Woman very much. I was just a little kid, and at that age remarkably naive when it came to the ways of the world. I had no conscious inkling that the grotesque drawings and the weird imagery and story lines in the Wonder Woman strip were rife with lesbianism, sadomasochism, bestiality, bondage-and-domination, and just about any kind of sexual oddity you can name. I just knew that they made me feel queasy.

God knows they didn't give me any little eight-year-old erections. On the contrary, they gave me an uncomfortable sensation in my belly.

What kind of kicks was Dr. McGill getting out of Wonder Woman? Probably he was engaging in a rich fantasy life of his own. Maybe he wanted a voluptuous Amazon in a set of patriotic tights to tie him up with a golden lasso and make him kneel and grovel at her feet. But I'm only guessing this, more than half a century after the fact.

Certainly Dr. McGill never molested me, never touched me. Which is a good thing, because I wouldn't have had any idea what the hell was going on until it was too late to do anything to stop him. No, he was a totally innocent man. I was grateful to him all those years ago and I'm grateful to him to this day. He provided a moment of validation and a sense of human communion in the cold, horrid walls of the Boulderwall Military Academy.



That school has long since vanished from the face of the earth, and good riddance to it. Enough childhoods were ruined there,

including mine.

But Dr. McGill? Is he still alive? He would be 85 or 90 years old. If he is, which I doubt, and if he should happen to read this little memoir, which I doubt even more, I want to tell him, "Thanks."

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"And what is literature, Rabo," he said, "but an insider's newsletters about affairs relating to molecules, of no importance to anything in the universe but a few molecules who have the disease called 'thought.'"

-- Kurt Vonnegut, "Bluebeard," 1987

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## Three Days In Cellblock B With Lynda Carter\*

By Earl Kemp

When I was an invited guest of the Feds in their Terminal Island Federal Correction and Entertainment Center in the 1970s, I met many important people. A lot of them were criminals. Some were convicted and some were not. Some were inside and some were outside. Small world....



Earl Kemp. Photo by  
Chaz Boston Baden,  
Corflu, San Francisco,  
February 2005.

Initially it looked and felt as if I was destined to spend my entire criminal career as the centerpiece of the biggest sex and drugs and rock and roll party ever imagined. Fortunately for all concerned, I was wrong. Those were just the dominating activities of every routine day inside the Federal "country club" I occupied.

Everything started to change when I finally managed to work myself into the position of editor of the *Terminal Island News*. That was mostly because none of the facility administrators, staff, or guards could read, much less write. They didn't know or care what I did in my official position. The only thing that concerned them, or that they made clear to me, was that I couldn't incite anyone to anything, preach my own gospel whatever that was, or use any dirty words.

I can't resist a couple of my most often repeated sidebars:

I was not allowed to use any profanity in a publication allegedly directed to a readership (ha!) that used "motherfucker" as every other word.

I wanted to change the name of the *Terminal Island News* to *Terminal Island Times*, so I could be known as the "tit man" rather than the "tin man."

What it meant, being editor of the prison newspaper, was that I somehow had moved into an invisible, unchallenged position, one I felt I wore rather well, before and after my incarceration. For the first time since I had arrived there, I found myself with a semi-private office that I shared with Rodni Hardison, the graphics guy who designed and put the whole fanzine together physically. I liked him a lot and felt that he did good work for a coke dealer to his own probation officer.

And, best of all, I had my very own typewriter. Admittedly a very old, much used and in need of repair desktop manual, but nevertheless my very own typewriter. I could use it for all my personal stuff, like letter writing, like working on time-killing assignments from my Creative Writing class, and just in

general enjoying myself.

Also, I was, finally, on the *real* grapevine. Ever since I had first entered the slammer, I had been a recipient, as was every other convict, of the most amazing amount of information coming to me about me from the administration and staff without their knowledge. Now, I was actually on their grapevine as well, and receiving all the “official but somewhat tardy” information, especially about upcoming visitors of significance, celebrities, convicted judges or governors or cabinet members, all the usual stuff. This was to somehow help me schedule material for the prison newspaper.

What it really did was allow me to schedule my time the way I most wanted to spend it with the people I most wanted to be with.

People like Flora Purim and the incredible Aierto who brought their entire Brazilian ensemble and put on a two-hour show for Flora’s old criminal buddies, me included.

People like every group that ever did a Motown job out of Detroit, bringing the whole gang including backup singers and musicians and putting on stage shows...at least one a week as I recall.

Lots of movie people. Terminal Island, in Long Beach, was so readily accessible to Hollywood, and the feds so agreeable to working with them in leasing the facility for filming, that I began to recognize portions of it in many films I saw almost nightly in the prison theater.

James Franciscus (*The Incredible Shrinking Man*) was one such celebrity. He was there as part of a big film crew working on interior shots for some long forgotten movie. I spent a lot of time with him, interviewing him, questioning him on motivations he had never even thought of before.

And then she came along. Wonder Woman. The one and only erotic and exotic Lynda Carter in the flesh I so already coveted and lusted after because of her hit television series. A large gaggle of crew and hangeron arrived with her. They were quite protective of her, I thought, and seemed to keep all eyes on her at all times just in case one of those crazed, drug-saturated, sex-addicted criminals should somehow want her. There must have been more than just me who was so inclined.

The cast and crew, in the same manner as the prison administration, didn’t know what to make of me, or do with me, as I moved freely among all of them, occasionally appearing to make notes or Take Names. They just stepped back and made room for me to keep on moving.

Because I was already familiar with much of the activities going on around and in front of the camera while making movies, I found I could concentrate on just lovely Lynda. And I did. We spent as much time together as we could, between repeated takes and alternate camera angles. It was exciting and rewarding to be so close to her, and to ask her what could sound like idiot questions to casual listeners.



Our conversations rapidly turned into less interview and more personal reminiscences being exchanged by old friends (*If she only knew...*) who had much in common. That was the problem. Our conversation moved directly into superheroes and old comic book favorites. We had very much to share because we had done the very same things at the very same points in our lives, almost two decades apart.

Lynda told me of how, as a small girl, she adored Wonder Woman and would play being her whenever she could. She told me of her comic book collection and how she felt about it and treated it as a youngster herself. And most of all she told me about how, inside her wildest obsessions about Wonder Woman, she had never really dared to think that she would someday grow up to be her. If not her at least the physical persona of Wonder Woman recognized universally as being one and the same.

I wrote a small piece for the *Terminal Island News* about Lynda and her comic book lifetime. I wish I had a copy of it to reprint here, but I do not.

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Terminal Island was a perfect location for making prison movies because there were so many different types of cells within it from single, open-barred cages to multiple and quadruple rooms, to huge dormitories, all filled with fun-loving boys and girls who somehow got caught in the wrong place at the right time with the smoking gun.

Because they were doing mostly location shots, to be filled in with action sequences filmed inside a studio in Hollywood, there were almost incomprehensible when taken alone at face value. Many shots of Lynda running up and down stairs, along cellblock corridors, rattling barred doors and trying to break free from her fictional confinement.

Her makeup was always flawless and appeared to be natural, not camera makeup at all. They fussed over her endlessly trying to make her look even more perfect. They seemed to be catering to her every whim yet I saw nothing of the prima donna evident coming from her. Perhaps it was just protecting their investment and keeping the product desirable.

And Lynda Carter was certainly that. The three days I spent with her in Cellblock B were some of the better days I spent in that slammer. Because I also had two nights of Lynda thrown into the mix. Smelling her didn't help any either.

During those fantastic fantasy nights, I would dream of my Wonder Woman, the one who had been mine since my teen years when just the thought of that gorgeous Amazon could send me into spasms of freeze-frame joy. How many wonderful times we had spent together, just doing the things we most wanted to do and felt we did the best each for the other. *Ride, Lynda, ride...* I more or less created her in her own image, the one just for me, who really, really liked me and just couldn't get enough. *Can I lick it or something...?* She would tie me up with her magic lasso so I would be completely within her control. *Yeah, right there, do that...* She would go at me relentlessly trying to force me to do it again and again, hoping to finally get it right once and for all.

Of course I didn't, because then the exercise would be finished and neither of us wanted that to happen because it was so good just wallowing around inside that incredibly impossible fantasy of unendurable ecstasy.

After me, there was no way she could ever go back to Major Steve Trevor again (or Lyle Waggoner for that matter). Once you've gone con, you can never go back again.

After that, I followed Lynda's career just a bit, out of curiosity, and was happy for her when she finally married well and moved on out of the television acting business altogether.

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As an afterthought for Wonder Woman, I understand that Joel Silver has hired Joss Whedon, of *Buffy* and *Firefly (Serenity)* fame, to write and direct an entirely new concept of Wonder Woman as a feature-length film in the immediate future. Silver said, among other things, at the formal announcement of the new venture, "It's just a great, legendary comic-book hero, and it's one that has never been kind of brought back to life after Lynda Carter. I mean, it's a reinvention. Tim Burton reinvented Batman after Adam West, and Richard Donner reinvented Superman after George Reeves. It's time to do that to Wonder Woman. It's a thing that could be great if it's done great. The idea is to try to find a way to make it, and I thought Joss has a great idea, because he understands a kind of female superhero character, and also he's great at what he does. So I'm trying to find the best way to do it."

We'll wait and watch.

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\*For William Moulton Marston, Lynda Carter, and especially for Wonder Woman; you were the best, babe...!

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The big difference between conservatives and liberals is that killing doesn't seem to bother the conservatives at all. The liberals are chickenhearted about people dying. Conservatives thought that the massacre, the killing, of so many people in Panama was okay. I think they're really Darwinians. It's all right that people are starving to death on the streets because that's the nature of work.

--Kurt Vonnegut, *Playboy* 39:5, May 1992

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## Wonder Woman

By Ted White

### Introduction

In January 1999 I was the third "content writer" hired by The Collecting Channel for its new website. My editor was Arnie Katz, and I was initially responsible for writing *all* the content of the comics "microchannel" on that site. This meant writing, every day, a 1,000-word "feature article," a 300-word shorter article, and three to five one-paragraph "Newsclicks" – or about 2,000 words a day. Doesn't sound like a lot, does it? I didn't think so either – until I started doing it. The actual writing turned out to be only half the job. There was also the job of coming up with ideas or topics to write about, and – much more importantly – doing the necessary research. It was a full-time job, and it only got to be more so as I tried to get ahead of my deadlines and was hit with the usual managerial reports and bullshit. And, I was supposed to do a music "microchannel" as well, a few months down the line.

As we hired more writers and Arnie himself began writing yet another "microchannel," it quickly

became obvious that this was in fact a heavy workload. I was putting in 12- to 14-hour days, just doing the comics material. I was allowed to hire Steve Stiles as my assistant on comics – and just in time because in June, two weeks after I'd hired him, I broke my hip and suddenly Steve was forced to take over the comics “microchannel.” (His load was lightened; he didn't have to write the lesser pieces.)

Compounding my workload was the fact that I found it hard to keep my feature articles *short* enough. They typically ran 1,200 to 1,500 words and sometimes even longer. I began dividing them up – into Part 1 and Part 2 and sometimes Part 3 – but even so divided each part wanted to sprawl over 1,000 words. At first no one minded, but as we entered our second year I was told to keep them to 700 words. That might seem like a blessing, but it's hard to cram a lot of information into only 700 words and maintain readability – and by then two-parters were also frowned upon.

It all ended in the beginning of March 2000. The company had no viable business plan – only a glib lip-service to “partnering” and “synchronicity” – and no cash flow. The dot.com bust occurred just as the company was about to launch its IPO. Instead, 30 of us were laid off that March, and by summer the company was dead. Ultimately, the website was sold and although there is still a Collecting Channel out there on the Internet, it has gradually dismantled all vestiges of our era. Now all the comics articles I wrote for it appear to be gone.

It's a sign of the management's gormlessness that I was never at any time asked to sign *anything* concerning my rights to what I wrote. No “work for hire” contract. Nothing specifying who owned what, or for how long. I never mentioned it; I knew where my advantage was.

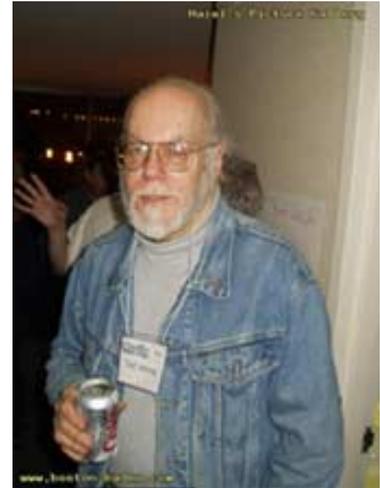
It's now five years since I left The Collecting Channel and all rights have reverted to me. I have reposted many of my music pieces to my own website; they can be found at <http://www.holeintheweb.com/drp/bhd/Biosecintro.htm>. But the comics pieces exist only on a set of floppies on my desk. Until now, that is. When Earl Kemp heard about them he expressed his usual avid interest of running at least some of them in *eI*. So we start with this one, on Wonder Woman.

I wrote it in the late spring of 1999. It was originally a two-parter, and there are a few redundancies because of that, some of which I have edited out when it didn't interrupt the flow of the narrative. I have also done some minor rewriting to reflect the differences in putative audiences, so this is not the exact republication of the original two pieces. But the latter parts, which offer a more or less value-free resume of Wonder Woman's more recent history, are a bit comics-fanboyish, and I apologize for that.

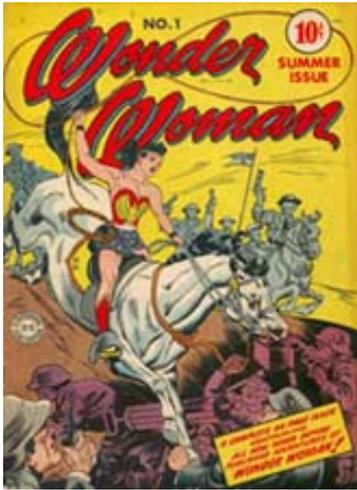
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I can still remember that day. It was in the middle of the summer in 1946. I was eight years old. Coming back (on foot) a mile or so from an errand, I ran into a friend who had several new comic books. I talked him into giving them to me – whether as a loan or with the promise of others in trade, I no longer remember.

One of them was an issue of *Wonder Woman*. I'd never seen that one before – my exposure then to comics was spotty and pretty hit-or-miss, depending more on what my friends happened to have – and the comic fascinated me. I started reading it as I continued walking home. Soon I was lost in its strange



Ted White. Photo by Chaz Boston Baden, Corflu, San Francisco, February 2005.



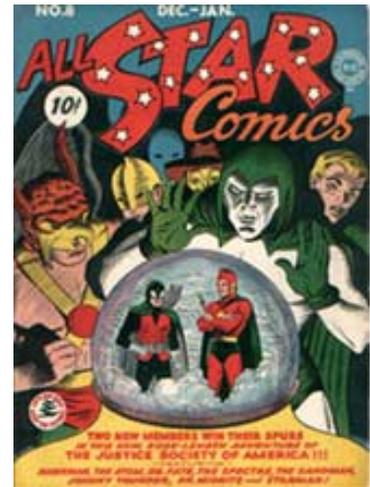
stories of dominant women in chains, gods moving among humans (one of them was Mars, the god of war), and a college sorority group known as the Holliday Girls. I dawdled. I stopped. I sat down under a tree and gave my full attention to this unsettlingly strange comic book.

I was still sitting there when my mother, a teacher, appeared. She was also on foot, backtracking me. She looked very angry and demanded to know what I was doing and where I'd gotten those comic books. She marched me home and, to teach me a lesson for being so late, burned up my entire "collection" – less than two dozen, many coverless – of comic books, including those I'd just acquired. I never even got to look at the other two.

Stung and furious at this destruction of my personal possessions, I resolved to save every comic book I got thereafter – which I did. That was the start of my comic book collecting, in the summer of 1946. By the time I was a senior in high school, I'd been written up in the *Washington Daily News* as "The Boy With 10,000 Comic Books."

Wonder Woman had her start earlier, in the December 1941-January 1942 issue of *All Star Comics* – issue #8. The nine-page story which introduced her was visually unique, and not only due to artist H.G. Peter's individual style of art, but because the balloons and captions were lettered mechanically, using a pantagraphic system known as Leroy Lettering. (In addition to that, the third and fourth pages, which consist of blocks of text alternating with panel-like illustrations, used set type.)

In that story we are introduced to the original Wonder Woman mythos – her "origin story" – in which Princess Diana rescues the crash-landed Steve Trevor on Paradise Island and competes for the right to don the costume and identity of Wonder Woman. (That costume was originally less revealing; she wore floppy star-spangled blue pantaloons.) In the story's finale we are told, "And so Diana, the Wonder Woman, giving up her heritage, and her right to eternal life, leaves Paradise Island to take the man she loves back to America – the land she learns to love and protect, and adopts as her own!" She would not adopt the secret identity of Diana Prince until she began her regular series as the cover-featured lead story in the monthly *Sensation Comics* #1, cover-dated January 1942.



At that time National (now DC) Comics published two general types of comics (with a few exceptions like *All Star* thrown in). The first type was the monthly titles which had lead stories featuring a major superhero (Superman, in *Action Comics*; Batman in *Detective Comics*) and five or six backup stories featuring other, lesser, continuing characters – some of them humorous rather than serious. The second type was the usually less-frequent (bimonthly or quarterly) titles which featured only stories (three or four) about the title character. In addition to *Batman* and *Superman*, DC had *All-Flash* (*Flash Comics* was a monthly title which co-featured The Flash and Hawkman) and *Green Lantern*.

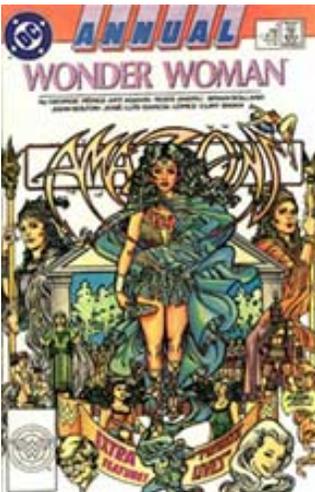
*Sensation Comics* was a bold addition to the monthly titles. And within a few months, Wonder Woman also had her own quarterly title with *Wonder Woman* #1, Summer 1942.

Wonder Woman was the brainchild of William Moulton Marston, who signed the stories as "Charles Moulton." Marston was a psychologist and an educational consultant for Detective Comics Inc.

(National/DC) in 1940, who wondered why DC had no female heroines to go with all their male superheroes.

M.C. “Max” Gaines, who headed up the All-American half of the company (and was responsible for *Flash Comics*, *All-American Comics*, *All Star Comics* – then DC’s second-best-selling title after *Superman – Comics Cavalcade*, *All-Flash*, and *Green Lantern*) suggested to Marston that he create a female comic book hero – a “wonder woman” – and Marston took him up on it.

Marston had invented the systolic blood-pressure test, which led in turn to the polygraph, or lie detector. Because of this he was convinced that women were better than men: he believed they were more honest, more reliable, and could work faster and more accurately. Marston was, by his own lights, an early male feminist and throughout his life he championed the causes of women.



In 1943 Marston said, in *The American Scholar*, “Not even girls want to be girls so long as our feminine archetype lacks force, strength, and power. Not wanting to be girls, they don’t want to be tender, submissive, and peace-loving as good women are. Women’s strong qualities have become despised because of their weakness. The obvious remedy is to create a feminine character with all the strength of Superman plus all the allure of a good and beautiful woman.”

Unfortunately, that quote demonstrates not only Marston’s goal in creating Wonder Woman, but his confusion over what qualities in fact define the female half of our species. This confusion manifested itself in stories which even an eight year old found curiously quirky, if not outright kinky.

Here’s how one critic – and comic book fan – summed it up in 1960. In Jim Harmon’s article about The Justice Society of America in the fanzine *Xero* #3, he wrote, “*Superficially* Wonder Woman is an Amazon who fell in love with a felled aviator, Steve Trevor. But *underneath*, I am seriously convinced that the strip was bondage fetishism, and perhaps lesbian pornography.” After citing chapter and verse examples from the comic books, Harmon stated that, “I strongly suspect [creator William Moulton Marston] and his artist, H.G. Peter, of unusual sexual tastes.” In that opinion Harmon was joined by that selfless crusader against comic books, Dr. Frederic Wertham.

In any event, Marston died in 1947, and the writing duties passed on to Robert Kanigher. H.G. Peter (and, from the looks of it, at least some assistants) continued drawing *Wonder Woman* through issue #97. He died immediately after completing it.

While *Wonder Woman* as a title survived the general purge of superheroes from comics (including DC’s comics) in the early fifties, *Sensation Comics* did not. It became a romance comic. About the same time *All Star Comics* became *All Star Western*. It was the end of an era. The “Golden Age” had ended.

The original Wonder Woman was and remains unique among comic book characters and superheroes. She was an “Amazon,” a member of a race of immortal women who lived on Paradise Island, apparently without the need for or presence of men. Although immortal and thus not needing to propagate themselves to maintain their race, they *did* have children occasionally – although *how* they did it without men is never mentioned – which is how Princess Diana, who wins the right in competition to become Wonder Woman, happens to be the daughter of Queen Hippolyte.

When Steve Trevor, an American aviator, crashes on the island, he is the first man Diana has ever seen – no father in her life! – and she is instantly smitten with him, her infatuation lasting for most of her run in comics, with occasional interruptions dictated by the stories' authors.

Wonder Woman, like most of the “Amazons,” wore heavy metal “bracelets” which look as if they had been permanently welded in place and were heavy enough to deflect bullets. If she is shackled – her bracelets joined with a welded chain – she loses all her powers and must “submit” to the will of her captor. Conversely, she has a “magic lasso” which, when it ensnares someone, controls that captive, forcing the captive to submit to her will and to tell the truth when commanded to.

Then there were the “Holliday Girls,” a sorority of college girls, all but one of whom were pretty young women, and none of whom had her own identity, except for their leader, Etta Candy. Etta was, at best, “plump,” given to gorging herself on candy, and chortling, “Woo-woo!” Sometimes she was hopelessly and helplessly out of shape and sometimes she appeared to possess some muscles. But her favorite method of disabling an opponent was to sit herself down on the hapless victim. Not the sort of woman mothers might wish their daughters to use as a role model, but she was probably intended as a form of comic relief. The girls acted as Wonder Woman's girls' auxiliary but seemed to just get into trouble – often involving being tied up.

These are unusual elements for comic book stories aimed at children, and the more so because Marston was a child psychologist. The implicit kinkiness of the situations and story lines in the early '40s *Wonder Woman* comics, involving as they did bondage with sado-masochistic overtones, was a strange thing to foist upon children and especially so with such high-toned rhetoric. Marston not only believed in what he was doing with *Wonder Woman*, he was proud of it – but not so proud that he used his own name on the strip. (He used the middle names of his publisher, M.C. Gaines, and himself to create the pseudonym of “Charles Moulton.”) Nonetheless his authorship of the strip was no secret.

Marston cut a unique deal with DC: If the company stopped publishing *Wonder Woman* the character would revert to Marston – or his estate and heirs, in the event of his death. DC has kept her in print steadily for 57 years.

Harry G. Peter was equally out of the ordinary as a comic book artist. Although he did a few covers for *Famous Funnies* in the '40s and his “studio” had a hand in one or two other strips (for other publishers), Peter remains to this day primarily associated with *Wonder Woman* and her look in the '40s. His style was unique and instantly recognizable with its rococo ornamentation and flourishes. He stayed with the strip until his death. Marston had died earlier, in 1947.

Although *Wonder Woman* survived her original creators, subsequent writers, editors, and artists watered down the quirkiness of the early years, turning her into a more conventional comic book superheroine. But the problem remained: reconciling different goals for her character. Just how *should* a super woman behave? Should she be dainty and feminine, or tough and hard-nosed? Exactly what was “a woman's place” in the comic books? If she could take on villains as formidable as Mars, the god of war, why did she still get weak in the knees over Steve Trevor? And as “Diana Prince,” she assumed a very Clark-Kentish pose with glasses and her hair in a bun, a very business-like secretary – only to “take down her hair,” throw off her business suit, and become *Wonder Woman* when needed.

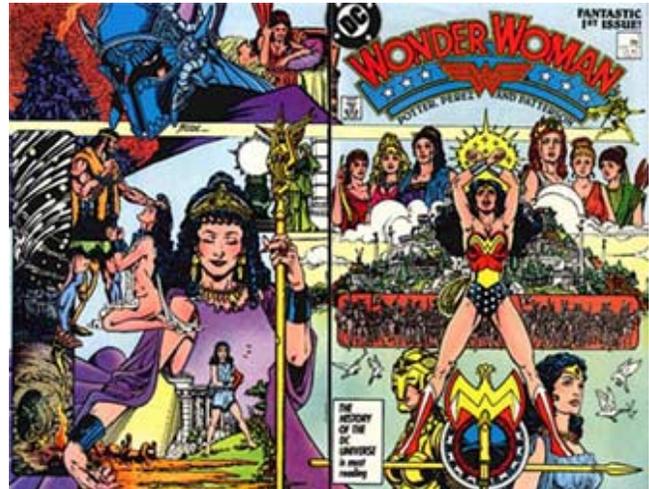
*Wonder Woman* was one of the few DC superheroes to survive the “Golden Age” of comic books and make it into the post-Comic Code Authority “Silver Age.” The Code Authority did not like superheroes, which, it felt, sent the wrong message to kids. There were stories of boys pinning bath towels around their necks like capes and jumping off roofs to see if they could fly. That was, the Code Authority felt, a bad thing.

So Wonder Woman underwent a number of changes. Her origin was revamped, with her powers now ascribed to a combination of Greek and Roman deities. Her earrings provided air for her when she was in outer space. Her Invisible Plane – which came to her telepathic summons – became an Invisible Jet. And her bracelets could now send and receive messages from Paradise Island. Additionally, she was given a youthful protégé, Wonder Girl.

She survived the resurgence of superheroes in the Sixties, but at the end of that decade she was forced to surrender her powers in order to remain in our “Man’s World” while her fellow “Amazons” fled to another dimension where they could keep their magic. Looking more like the TV *Avengers’* Diana Rigg, and no longer wearing her traditional costume, Diana Prince studied the *I Ching* (popularized by Philip K. Dick in his *The Man in the High Castle* in the early ’60s) and ran a boutique.

This attempt to make Wonder Woman “mod” lasted for two years, and she got her powers and costume back in the early ’70s. Then it was a roller-coaster of ups and downs for the character. Steve Trevor was killed by villain Dr. Cyber, resurrected (Wonder Woman long had a healing “Purple Ray”), killed again, and again resurrected as “Steve Howard.”

At one point former fan and feminist underground cartoonist Trina Robbins was brought in to draw the strip. Her art was evocative of H.G. Peter’s but too far outside what was then the mainstream of comic book art to be successful with the audience. In 1986 Wonder Woman was “killed” during DC’s “Crisis On Infinite Earths” in which all DC’s superheroes were revamped.



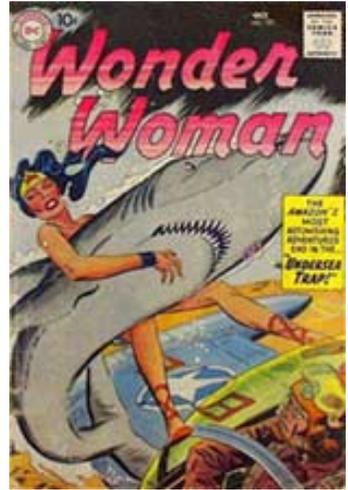
In 1987 Wonder Woman was revived with a new look, a new writer/artist, and a fresh start with *Wonder Woman* #1. George Perez is generally given good marks for his handling of the character, who returned to the basics. Wonder Woman was not a superheroine, but an emissary of peace from a mythological land. She was a babe in the woods, completely without guile. Diana had to learn English when she came to America for the first time. In her previous incarnations, Wonder Woman knew English when she came to America, even though they only spoke classical Greek (!) on Paradise Island.

Through Perez's tenure, Wonder Woman became a rich character with a fully fleshed out internal existence. Princess Diana dealt with war, injustice, inequality, death, and of course the Olympian Gods.

Perez's run stopped with #62, leaving Wonder Woman in a bit of a limbo. She was a pirate for a bit during an outer space jaunt, worked at a fast food restaurant, and was a bounty hunter for a brief period of time. This all changed with *Wonder Woman* #0.

During the *Zero Hour* sequence Diana was forced to be a participant again in the tournament to decide who would be Wonder Woman. This time the winner was a formerly renegade “Amazon” named Artemis.

After losing her title as Wonder Woman, Diana worked as a full time bounty hunter and still fought crime. Diana and Wonder Woman (Artemis) fought Diana's nemesis, The White Magician, a corrupt former superhero, at the climax of the 100th issue. In this battle Artemis was killed, leaving Diana to become again the Wonder Woman.



With issue #101, John Byrne took over the writing and illustrating chores. John redesigned her look and, according to his critics, returned Diana to a cardboard cutout of what she had been. He introduced a new Wonder Girl, and took poor Diana through a number of changes which ended up with her mother, the Queen – now referred to as “Polly” – as Wonder Woman. Byrne departed with #136.



No doubt one reason for Wonder Woman's longevity is that she has moved into other media. There was a brief-lived daily newspaper strip by Marston & Peter in the '40s, now largely forgotten, but a whole generation remembers the television show of the '70s. Actress Lynda Carter is still referred to as “Wonder Woman” as a consequence of that program.

Less well remembered is the fact that Wonder Woman originally was broadcast as a made-for-TV movie starring Cathy Lee Crosby as a bizarre blonde version of the raven-haired “Amazon.”

The series with Carter debuted on ABC on December 18, 1976 as *The New Original Wonder Woman* to distance itself from the Cathy Lee Crosby version. This version was set in the '40s during World War II, and the look of the show was copied directly from comic books of that era. It was excellent for its detail, and was faithful to the characters of that time.

This version ran on ABC for only one season. Then it was retooled, set in modern times, and brought to CBS where it lasted for two more seasons. Like *The Bionic Woman*, it was a favorite with girls of the time who were looking for role models who were not insipid. My young daughter loved it.

Before either of these two versions were made, there was a pilot shot in the '60s which was created by the makers of the TV *Batman*. Campy, and an insult to the character, this show fortunately never made it to the television screen. If it had, we might never have seen the Lynda Carter version which is still warmly remembered today.

In only a couple of years Wonder Woman will celebrate her sixtieth birthday. Considering her age she still looks pretty good.



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Wonder Woman cover scans courtesy [www.sufferingsappho.com](http://www.sufferingsappho.com) .

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This is a huge country. There are primitive tribes here and there who have customs and moral standards of their own. It's the way I feel about religious fundamentalists. They really ought to have a reservation. They have a right to their culture and I can see where the First Amendment would be very painful for them. The First Amendment is a tragic amendment because everyone is going to have his or her feelings hurt and your government is not here to protect you from having your feelings hurt.

--Kurt Vonnegut, *Playboy* 39:5, May 1992

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