

THE TROPHY CASE

PULP FICTION * GAMES * COMIC BOOKS

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Games by Scott Casper - What Have I Got Here?

So I had this big, long editorial pre-written about how H&H had never been professionally reviewed, I was fine with it because it suited my Charlie Brown-like persecution complex, blah, blah, blah - and then James Maliszewski at the Grognardia blog finally came through with a terrific review of H&H. Yeah, go read it --

<http://grognardia.blogspot.com/2011/02/review-hideouts-hoodlums.html> -- love it, come back here.

Reviews are important for many reasons. Just having a review validates the game. Not in the sense anymore than being reviewed in The Dragon magazine would have once accomplished; the authoritative paper sources for reviews are all gone. The reviews that seem to matter these days have migrated to the blogosphere. By whatever magic some people seem to possess more online charisma than others, a rare few bloggers seem to be treated as if their opinions matter more than other bloggers. It is itself its own sort of game. Follow enough blogs, hope that they all follow you back, build readership until the sheer numbers make you seem authoritative and your opinions will have weight. Then you review other people's games in the hopes that they will then review yours. It's a game I have opted out of playing myself, probably to the detriment of H&H.

The most personal reason is that reviews stroke the egos of game designers. No one wants a bad review, but even a bad review would at least say that, "This product is out there and was worth my consideration." But, of course, it's the good review that everyone wants. The one where the reviewer recognizes just what you were trying to do and then tells you that he gets it. When I see things like, "the plot saving throw is so elegantly done," I delight in reading it. Why, thank you; it was meant to be. Said game designer now goes back to work with a big smile on his face, content to crank out another 50 pages of material.

And, of course, the real goal of getting reviewed is the monetary benefit of a good review. When a reviewer says, "I like it, you will too, buy this product," you just know that is going to generate revenue. Again, not the main goal for producing H&H (I talked about this in last issue's editorial), but sure does help.

While Grognardia was the first blog to comprehensively review the core rules of H&H, Steve Lopez has written several glowing blog posts about H&H on his Four Color Glasses blog. Thanks, Steve. Everyone check out the good things he says too at

<http://fourcolorglasses.wordpress.com/2011/01/20/look-what-just-came-out/>. You'll see more of him in this newsletter!

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Editor - Scott Casper

Assistant Editor - TBA?

Change of Address should be sent as soon as possible, and in any event not less than two weeks prior to the first day of April, July, October and January, as applicable.

The H&H FAN CLUB

H&H players online currently have two messageboard-based campaigns to choose from. The original H&H campaign on rpol.net continues now in its sixth scenario, "Reuter Mansion's Hideout," with its Heroes approaching fifth level. The rpol campaign still specializes in hideout crawls.

For gamers with more interest in urban-based roleplaying, there is now "Hideouts & Hoodlums: Kansas Heroes" at rpg.net's forums. It's a first level campaign with few players and off to a slow start, so it's a great jumping on point for new players.

The big announcement last issue was about Ned Martell's retirement from gaming, but now after beating cancer he's ready to come back and beat some more hoodlums! Good luck on getting your post count back up, Ned. Matthew Kay-Conway, who came in "late" to the campaign in its second scenario, has been posting like gangbusters ever since and now leads Jeremy Best, who for a long time was H&H's most prolific player-poster.

I've also been running a live session H&H campaign, also going through "Reuter Mansion's Hideout", for the past few

months at my local public library. Our players skew young, with two ten-year olds among them. One positive thing I can say about kids these days playing video games is that they already “get” a lot of the concepts and game mechanics of RPGs. I hope they’ll think at least as nostalgically about H&H 30 years from now as they probably will about Halo.

The H&H Fan Club on Yahoo!Groups had a great month in February, with membership climbing to 21 and 55 posts for the month. Contributions to Supplement III: Better Quality have fueled a lot of the discussion.

HIDEOUTS & HOODLUMS can now be followed on Facebook too!

MOBSTER SPOTLIGHT

Presenting new Hideouts & Hoodlums mobsters for your enjoyment

ABOMINABLE SNOWMEN

Armor Class: 8 [11]
Hit Dice: 4+1
Attacks: cold or grappling (1d8)
Special: cold aura, hide in snow, immune to cold
Move: 45
HDE/XP: 5/240

Found only in the Far East, the abominable snowmen are a degenerate ape-like species of man, broad, strong, and standing seven feet tall on average. Their skin is pale as snow. They appear to be covered in white hair at a distance, but their bodies are always naked except for layers of snow and ice that hang in icicles off the body.

In a snowy terrain, snowmen enjoy a 1 in 3 chance of being effectively invisible so long as they remain motionless. As sluggish in movement as they are, they prefer to attack by ambush, for their most fearsome ability is that they continually radiate such deadly cold that anyone within 5 ft. of a snowman takes 1d8 points of damage per turn. Snowmen prefer to grapple and hold their victims to ensure continuing damage, but they only need to miss their attack rolls by five or less to stay close enough to their victims to inflict damage, unless the victim flees at a higher Move rate.

Although culturally primitive, abominable snowmen are intelligent, capable of great coordination among their own kind, and able to use complex weapons including modern firearms.

GHOSTS

Armor Class: 4 [15]
Hit Dice: 5+1
Attacks: frighten (1d10)
Special: fear, invisibility, intangibility, magic weapons needed to hit
Move: 55
HDE/XP: 8/800

The non-corporeal undead are similar to wraiths, but instead of draining life they are interested in causing fear. Any act performed by a ghost intended to frighten not only necessitates a save against magic to avoid fear, as per the Fear spell, but inflicts physical damage as well. Anyone killed by a ghost dies of a heart attack. Unlike some other undead, victims of ghosts do not come back as ghosts.

Ghosts cannot roam freely, but are always bound to a location. It may be a house or graveyard, or as small an area as a single room. The ghost’s fear effect can only affect someone within that area of confinement. Ghosts can move through any objects, walls, or people within their areas of confinement, but cannot use intangibility to escape their confinement.

Ghosts cannot control their invisibility; they are always invisible during the day and always visible at night. They can use frightening sounds during the day, which still cause fear but no damage.

LEPRECHAUNS

Armor Class: 7 [12]
Hit Dice: 1-1
Attacks: small-sized weapon (1d4)
Special: bless, charm, illusions, invisibility, summoning, wish
Move: 85
HDE/XP: 5/240

Uncommon in Ireland and very rare everywhere else, leprechauns are magical little people. They are also rarely violent, motivated only by their love of music, dancing, and wine. They are, of course, highly sought after because of what they can do for others. Leprechauns can impart luck onto others, as per the Bless spell, or curse people with bad luck, reversing the benefits of Bless. Every leprechaun has a hidden pot of gold. A captured leprechaun will give up his gold in exchange for his freedom. If the gold is refused, a leprechaun can grant a wish instead, as per the Limited Wish spell.

Despite their physical weakness, leprechauns have magical defenses. They can become invisible at will, cast Phantasmal Force once per turn, and cast Charm Person once per hour. Anyone charmed by a leprechaun will likely be asked to “dance ‘til you drop” or “come follow me to a fairy place where time stands still.” Ten leprechauns acting in concert can summon a banshee (see Supplement II) to defend them in a real emergency, up to once per week.

NAGAS

Armor Class: 7 [12]
Hit Dice: 7
Attacks: constrict (3d4+1)
Special: hypnotic gaze, wreck things
Move: 50
HDE/XP: 8/800

Uncommon in India and very rare everywhere else, nagas are the spirits of evil people trapped in the body of constrictor snakes up to 15 ft. long. They can make their heads appear to be snake heads or human heads and, when in partial human form they can not only speak, but their gaze forces anyone seeing them to save against magic or be hypnotized and unable to act for 1d6 turns.

The coils of a naga are supernaturally strong; any object small enough to be constricted can be wrecked as if by a 1st level Superhero. Nagas can also slither horizontally up and down walls.

SPECIAL FEATURE: THE REST OF APPENDIX A FROM SUPPLEMENT I

In preparing Appendix A: Index of Golden Age Heroes for Supplement II: All-American, it became clear that I had missed a *lot* of heroes in Supplement I. I had known that there were more comic books published in 1940 than 1939, but was still blindsided by the sheer numbers. This time around, in preparing the list for the second half of 1940, I had taken greater care in systematically checking what titles there were from each publisher during that time. Of course, my research is not from primary sources. I simply do not have the resources to do more than thoroughly check what resources others have developed online and those sources are outlined in each bibliography (which are at least half webliographies, if that is even an accepted term yet) I publish.

That out of the way, the following is the addenda:

Fighters (with Explorers marked with an E)

Avenger (Shadow Comics #2-4)
Barnes, Bill (Shadow Comics #1-4) - E
Bentley of Scotland Yard (Pep Comics #1-6)
Black Condor (Crack Comics #1-2)
Brady, Buck, of the FBI (Prize Comics #1-4)
Brodie, "Shark" (Fight Comics #1-6)
Bulls-Eye Bill (Target Comics #1-5)
Byrd, "Lucky" (Target Comics #1-5)
Cameron, Ted (Cyclone Comics #1)
Captain Bruce Blackburn, Counterspy (Feature Comics #32-33)
Captain Curry (Amazing Adventure Funnies #1)
Captain Death (Doc Savage Comics #1)
Captain Fearless (Silver Streak Comics #1-2)
Captain Fury (Doc Savage Comics #1, Shadow Comics #2)
Captain K-4 (Daring Mystery Comics #2, 4)
Captain Terry Thunder of the Congo Lancers (Jungle Comics #2-6)
Captain Valor (Zip Comics #1-5)
Carter, Nick (Shadow Comics #1-4)
Champ (Champion Comics #2-8)
Cody, "Scoop" (Blue Ribbon Comics #2-3)
Cole, Dick (Blue Bolt Comics #1)
Collins, Chip, Sky Fighter (Fight Comics #1-6)
Cornwall, Cliff (Flash Comics #1-6)
Corporal Collins (Blue Ribbon Comics #2-4)
Corporal Merrill (Keen Detective Funnies v2 #3, ?)
Crane, Bill, Frontier Marshall (Master Comics #1-3)
Crane, Ted (Exciting Comics #2-3)
Curtis, "Storm" (Prize Comics #1-4)
Dare, Dan (Whiz Comics #2-5)
Dawson, "Stoney" (Amazing Adventure Funnies #1; Keen Detective Funnies v. 2, #2)
Detective Sgt. Burke (Startling Comics #1)
Doc Savage (Doc Savage Comics #1, Shadow Comics #1-3)
Doc Strong (Blue Ribbon Comics #4)
Dr. Gade (Mystic Comics #2-3)
Dolan, Jim (Slam-Bang Comics #1-4)
Eagle (Science Comics #1-5)
Egan, "Shark" (Popular Comics #41?-45, 47-52)
Fantom of the Fair/Fantoman (Amazing Adventure Funnies #1, Amazing Mystery Funnies #1)
G-Man Bob Dalton (Startling Comics #1)
Garrett, Danny (Doc Savage Comics #1)
Golden Arrow (Whiz Comics #2-5)
Granger, Lee, Jungle King (Slam-Bang Comics #1-4)-E

Handy, Bill (Champion Comics #2-6)-E
Hansen, "Hurricane" (Slam-Bang Comics #1-4)
Hastings, Dan (Blue Ribbon Comics #1-2)
Hatfield, Jim, Texas Ranger (Exciting Comics #1, 3)
Jaxon, Mike, of the Jungle (Prize Comics #1-4)
Johnson, "Gypsy" (Blue Ribbon Comics #4)
Johnson, Ben "Wings" (Top-Notch Comics #1-6)
Jones, "Navy" (Science Comics #1-5)
Jones, "Nevada" (Zip Comics #1-5)
Jones, Robert "Robinhood" (Champion Comics #7-8)
Jungleman (Champion Comics #2-8) - E
Kaanga (Jungle Comics #1-6) - E
Keanne, Rance (Feature Comics #22-30, 32-33)
Kelly, "Duke" (Silver Streak Comics #1-2)
Kerry, Tom, District Attorney (Big Shot Comics #1-2)
Kincaid, "Reef" (Amazing Man Comics #12-13)
Kornell, Keith, the West Pointer (Top-Notch Comics #1-6)
Lance, Ray (Jungle Comics #2-6) - E
Langdon, "Scoop" (Startling Comics #1)
Laughing Mask/Purple Mask (Daring Mystery Comics #2-4)
Lawton, "Lucky" (Slam-Bang Comics #1-4)
Lobo, Flying Sleuth (Champion Comics #6-8)
Logan, "Loop" (Blue Ribbon Comics #4)
Madam Fatale (Crack Comics #1-2)
Mallory, Mark (Doc Savage Comics #1)
Marga the Panther Woman (Science Comics #1-5) - E
Masked Rider (Startling Comics #1)
Masters, Dean, D.A. (Keen Detective Funnies #19-20)
McLane, "Big Red" (Fight Comics #1-6)
Mister Midnite (Silver Streak Comics #1-2)
Mister Q (Cyclone Comics #1)
Mister Satan (Zip Comics #1-5)
Nelson, Nick, of the Navy (Cyclone Comics #1)
O'Brien, Terry, Gang Smasher (Fight Comics #1-2)
O'Casey, Lance (Whiz Comics #2-5)
O'Day, Pat (Keen Detective Funnies v2 #3?)
O'Neil, Ted (Prize Comics #1-4)
O'Shay, Rick (Master Comics #1-3)
Oran of the Jungle (Fight Comics #1-6) - E
Powers, "Ace" (Silver Streak Comics #3-5)
Preston, Lee, of the Red Cross (Crack Comics #1-2)
Red Gaucho (Nickel Comics #4)
Red Panther (Jungle Comics #1-6) - E
Red Torpedo (Crack Comics #1-2)
Regan, Rip, the Power-Man (Fight Comics #3-6)
Reynolds of the Mounted (Feature Comics #21-26, 28-33)
Roberts, "Shipwreck" (Master Comics #1-3)
Ronson, "Runaway" (Blue Bolt Comics #1)
Ryan, "Rocky" (Big Shot Comics #1-2)
Samar (Feature Comics #32-33) - E
Saunders, "Sub" (Fantastic Comics #1-7)
Scott, Perry (Feature Comics #32-33)
Secret Agent M-11 (Prize Comics #1-4)
Sgt. Bill King (Exciting Comics #1-3)
Sgt. "Buzz" Sawyer (Cyclone Comics #1)
Sgt. Spook (Blue Bolt Comics #1)
Sharp, Tom, the War Bird (Slam-Bang Comics #1-4)
Shaw, "Spin" (Feature Comics #29-33)
Sheriff Pete Rice (Doc Savage Comics #1)
Silver Fox (Blue Ribbon Comics #2-3)
Silvers, "Speed" (Amazing Adventure Funnies #1; Star Comics #15, 16, v2 #2)
Sky Wolf (Silver Streak Comics #4-5)
Sloan, "Streak" (Master Comics #2-3)
Smith, "Scoop" (Whiz Comics #2-5)
Spider (Crack Comics #1-2)

Spy-Master (Big Shot Comics #1-2)
 Spy Smasher (Whiz Comics #2-5)
 Stacey, Buck (Blue Ribbon Comics #1-2)
 Storm, Dick (Top-Notch Comics #2-6)
 Strand, Jack (Blue Ribbon Comics #2-3)
 T-Man Turner (Target Comics #1-5)
 Todd, "TNT", Ace G-Man (Keen Detective Funnies v2 #3?)
 Trojak the Tiger-Man (Daring Mystery Comics #2-5) - E
 Ty-Gor (Blue Ribbon Comics #4) - E
 Voice, The (Feature Comics #32-33)
 Wambi the Jungle Boy (Jungle Comics #1-6) - E
 Wayne, Bill (Silver Streak Comics #3-5)
 White Rajah (Master Comics #1-3)
 White Rider (Blue Bolt Comics #1)
 Williams, Dan (Exciting Comics #1-3)
 Wilson, "Yank", Super Spy Q-4 (Fantastic Comics #1-7)
 Wright, Penny (Champion Comics #3-5)
 Zara of the Jungle (Mystic Comics #2-3) - E
 Zero, Ghost Detective (Feature Comics #32-33)

Magic-Users

Boodini the Great (Blue Ribbon Comics #1)
 Dakor the Magician (Mystic Comics #1-3)
 El Carim (Master Comics #1-3)
 Fantomah (Jungle Comics #2-6)
 Kalthar (Zip Comics #1-5)
 Kardak the Mystic (Top-Notch Comics #1, 4-6)
 Marvelo, Monarch of Magicians (Big Shot Comics #1-2)
 Master Mind Excello (Mystic Comics #2-3)
 Monako, Prince of Magic (Daring Mystery Comics #1, 4, 5)
 Mystico (Startling Comics #1)
 Norgil the Magician (Doc Savage Comics #1, Shadow Comics #3)
 Reeves, "Red", Boy Magician (Silver Streak Comics #1-2)
 Sheridan, Jack "Shanghai" (Top-Notch Comics #5-6)
 Tabu, Wizard of the Jungle (Jungle Comics #1-6)
 Warlock the Wizard (Nickel Comics #1-4)
 Wizard Wells (Crack Comics #1-2)
 Zambini the Miracle Man (Zip Comics #1-5)
 Zardi the Eternal Man (Amazing Man Comics #11-12)

Mysterymen

Devil's Dagger (Master Comics #1-3)
 Falcon (Daring Mystery Comics #5)
 Fox (Blue Ribbon Comics #4)
 Fox, Johnny (Champion Comics #6-8)
 King (Flash Comics #1-6)
 Mr. Elixir, the Voice (Feature Comics #32-33)
 Mr. Midnite (Silver Streak Comics #1-2)
 Scarlet Ace (Amazing Man Comics #13)
 Shadow (Shadow Comics #1-4)
 Voice, The, Invisible Detective (Popular Comics #51-52)
 Wasp (Silver Streak Comics #1-2)
 Whisperer (Doc Savage Comics #1)

Superheroes (with Speedsters marked with an S)

Diamond Jack (Slam-Bang Comics #1-4)
 Electro/Dynamo (Science Comics #1-5)
 Hercules (Blue Ribbon Comics #4)
 Iron Munro (Shadow Comics #1-4)
 Kalthar the Giant Man (Zip Comics #1-5)
 Lightning (Jumbo Comics #15-16)
 Marvex the Super Robot (Daring Mystery Comics #3-5)
 Master Man (Master Comics #1-3)
 Silver Streak (Silver Streak Comics #3-5) - S
 Spirit Man (Silver Streak Comics #1)

Thesson, Son of the Gods (Exciting Comics #2-3)
 Thor (Weird Comics #1-3)
 Tornado Tom (Cyclone Comics #1) - S
 Typhon (Weird Comics #1-3)
 Volton, the Human Generator (Cyclone Comics #1)



Q&A WITH THE EDITOR

These are some things that have come up in game play recently.

Q: Can animals be recruited as supporting cast?

A: Yes, if the animal is trainable, it should count. Dogs, birds, and horses would likely qualify, with your Editor's approval, of course.

Q: Should Heroes always have to save vs. plot before they can shoot someone with guns? Wouldn't shooting some people, like Nazis, weigh less on one's conscience?

A: The Editor is always free to assign modifiers to rolls based on the circumstances. In this instance, I told the players that they could have a +1 bonus to their saves if they were shooting Nazis.

Q: Do Android Heroes need to eat? Drink? Breathe?

A: Yes, they do all those things. Your Android may look mechanical on the outside if you choose for him to be, but it is synthetic, human-like organs controlling all of its most important bodily functions on the inside. Really, it's the easiest solution to keep players from stopping the game and asking, "Why doesn't this work differently for my android?"

REVIEWED: SUPERMEN: THE FIRST WAVE OF COMIC BOOK HEROES: 1936-1941

Though this is indeed a handsome repackaging of 20 public domain comic book stories from the Golden Age of Comics, the elephant in the room is online scans. With all these reprints already available online, what is the purpose of the collection? It is hard to argue it is a "best of" collection with the inclusion of Fletcher Hanks' Stardust AND Fantomah. Hanks was the Ed Wood of comic books, his work generously said to be so bad it's good. Still, this could be a "my personal favorites" volume, since the editor, Greg Sadowski's comments in the back are much more favorable

towards Fletcher Hanks than mine. It is also worth pointing out that this is not another collection of an old man's reminiscences of growing up with Golden Age Comics. Sadowski is barely older than I am and, like me, discovered comic books in the '70s.

What this book is, is a cross section of the early Golden Age, showcasing a little of every genre and showing them in their formative years. The selections seem to be about showing as much variety as possible and even, within each genre, the range each covered. The magic-user genre is shown to range from the raw crudeness of Joe Shuster's Dr. Mystic to the slick, polished work of Will Eisner. The science fiction genre ranges from the sketchy, early work of Bill Everett to the beautiful grotesqueries of Basil Wolverton to Jack Kirby's swarthy figures in front of gorgeous vistas. The purpose of such a volume is not so much for the benefit of those already looking for Golden Age stories - who are for the most part better served online - but for those new to comic books and browsing the shelves at some book store or library. This book is an option, if not a remedy, for those who might otherwise be sucked into more modern interpretations of the comic book genres without ever knowing their roots.

First up is the first two-page installment of Dr. Mystic who, in DC Comics' hands, would soon become Dr. Occult. I love it for the same reason I love the early Superman comics - for their rawness and vitality. Perhaps under-confident in his backgrounds, Shuster's cityscapes are full of line work representing a fog-shrouded night that, panels later, swirl and become a different type of fog in the supernatural otherworld. This otherworld is a scary place where ethereal monsters always lurk just a panel away. And though Shuster's Dr. Mystic may appear at times interchangeable with Superman, Siegel's Dr. Mystic is clearly a different character from Superman, showing his is the greater range and versatility.

George Brenner's The Clock has already had plenty of exposure in the pages of H&H. It can certainly be difficult to take seriously a mysteryman in a tuxedo, disguised only by a blank hanky over his face, who can so easily be framed for murder by crooks who had a local printer duplicate The Clock's calling cards. Yet this installment of The Clock gives us bold, stark images of the criminal underworld, with its drug addicts and bordellos, that are lost in more "cleaned up for kids" versions we will soon see from other publishers.

Fred Guardineer did many gorgeous covers for DC Comics, but this bland, blocky, Buck Rogers pastiche, Dan Hastings, shows why Guardineer seldom did strip work that earned cover spots.

Slightly more interesting, though still slight, is Dirk the Demon. The character of Princess Nemo is a dead giveaway as to what this strip is supposed to be - a sci fi version of Little Nemo in Slumberland. Aiming too high, Bill Everett (a year before his success with Sub-Mariner) falls flat, though the framing device wherein Dirk's adventures are related through Bill Everett's future diary, is an interesting twist.

Lou Fine was an early master of superhero art and some of his Flame stories were gems. The one in this volume isn't one of them. Yes, there are some flashes of brilliance in the layouts and the faces in close-ups, but Lou Fine racing a deadline was as mundane as any other artist in the field. The concept of pseudo-undead "living spectres" is interesting and the earliest instance I've seen of the concept, (and perhaps will turn up in Supplement III?). I do have trouble, though, buying that their skin is so dried out as to make them

bulletproof (could The Flame have beaten them with skin lotion?).

This is the second of Will Eisner's Yarko the Great story I've ever read and I've really liked them both. I love that Death is a recurring character, that he's a creepy-looking guy in a top hat and dark glasses, and that Yarko and Death are always at odds with each other, but it's a game of wits because Yarko is never so powerful that he can fight Death. This particular story is like a lite version of the Cliff Notes of Dante's Inferno, with some interesting cosmological twists (like going *up* a staircase to reach the Land of the Dead, inverting our classically-oriented expectations). For the first time in this volume, this eight-page story left me wishing it was longer. Indeed, it could have used at least another page to explain the tenuous connection between the Scottish diplomat and the Indian witch that set up the plot.

Dick Briefer's Rex Dexter of Mars is another early piece by an artist in his formative years; at times bland and stiff, but with flashes of real talent. It is perhaps not surprising that the villain is the most interestingly drawn character, considering this artist went on to do Frankenstein for almost ten years. The science is as goofy as comic book science gets, with Rex able to override control of a Martian robot by virtue of being able to speak to it in Martian.

Just over 21 years before revolutionizing comic books with the Silver Age of Marvel Comics, it's amazing how much of Jack Kirby's artistic strengths are already here, and what is missing. Both Kirby's objects and figures have always had a lustrous sheen to them, as if he was not drawing the thing itself, but an idealized version of it. This look is used here somewhat less effectively for the sci fi serial of Cosmic Carson, but is perfect for the superhero genre. Kirby would later say that he drew fight scenes as if he were choreographing a dance. There is little of that skill at depicting combat on display here, but there is an inkling of it, with the grand vistas and big panels (three per page, well shy of Kirby's penchant for splash pages or his invention of two-page splashes, but still amazingly open page layout compared to other artists in this volume) found here.

The comic book equivalent of Plan 9 from Outer Space, Fletcher Hanks' Stardust starts with the startling revelation that Stardust's machines can not only observe events on other planets, they can read people's thoughts on other planets. A mad scientist named Kaos wants to conquer Earth by feeding vitamins to space vultures that look oddly like giant pigeons. Stardust saves the day, saves the girl, and kills the mad scientist. Said girl is such a hussy that she can't even grieve over her dead parents because she really, really wants Stardust to take her home with him. Yeah, we know what you're hinting at, Hanks. There actually are some decent Stardust stories in Hanks' brief oeuvre - this story isn't one of them.



Jack Cole's Plastic Man was eventually a masterpiece, but it did not start off that good and Cole's earlier work was pretty spotty too, such as this goofy-looking installment of

The Comet. In it, we learn why superheroes should never let villains follow them home - because villains will capture them, brainwash them, and make them commit crimes to ruin their reputations. Although I don't see the "sophistication" here that Sadowski talks about in his end notes, I do agree that the sub-plot about the two villains betraying each other is an interesting bit of cosmic justice worthy of Arthur Conan Doyle.

I fully understand why Fero, Planet Detective is included here. It's not for the poor art, crammed into ten-panel pages so no panel has to show too much and it's not because detectives-investigating-the-supernatural was ever an important genre in comics, but because the concept of a lone detective knowing that all of the werewolves and vampires in the world are actually aliens from outer space pretending to be supernatural is too good an idea to let be lost.

But then there's things that probably deserve to be forgotten, or at least only kept around to snicker at - which brings us back to Fletcher Hanks and one of his other creations, Fantomah. Fantomah is like Sheena, Queen of the Jungle...in a skirt...with weird supernatural powers...and sometimes her face is only a skull. There's gorillas and a serum that makes the gorillas both hyper-intelligent and hyper-savage and Fantomah makes sure the super-gorillas turn on their maker and dismember him. Yeah.

Fred Guardineer returns with Zatarra - oops, no, this is Marvelo. We know he's not Zatarra (or Mandrake or, etc.) because he's wearing a white suit instead of black and a red turban instead of top hat. Marvelo, Monarch of Magicians, does have one other gimmick that is interesting - being new to America, Marvelo has to overcome culture shock just as often as he has to overcome bad guys, like when he learns about hoodlums in this story (because, naturally, whatever country he's from must not have organized crime). There's also some really fun moments, like when Marvelo makes a statue of George Washington not only come to life and subdue the hoodlums, but the Washington statue starts scolding and lecturing the hoodlums too.

Michael Blake's The Face pushed no envelopes in the mysteryman genre and Blake himself was no visionary artist, but he does a solid job of telling the story he sets up. If the idea of a man sneaking up on you in a Halloween fright mask doesn't sound too frightening, try imagining walking into your bedroom at night and seeing a stranger wearing such a mask peeking out from behind your window curtains - and it's not Halloween.

Before Airboy and Blackhawk, Skyman was probably the most important aviator hero and remained a significant one for years. This initial outing is more of an experiment for the genre. Skyman starts with an investigation that builds into stopping an entire enemy air force and then saving an entire air force. Each page ratchets up the demands, both on Skyman, and on our suspension of disbelief. How much can we seriously believe one lone guy with a plane capable of? This genre-defining question would continue to be explored for the rest of Skyman's run.

On paper, Silver Streak is a character who should have a lot going for him -- the distinctive arrow motif on his shirt, the fact that he's fighting giant bugs in this early story instead of ordinary hoodlums, the fun supporting cast character (a fat lady who talks faster than Silver Streak can and can't get his name right), and the early attempt to explain the science supporting his powers (suction shoes for climbing walls at

super speed?), this last bit long before Gardner Fox was treating The Flash as anything more than fantasy. But this is still 1940 and Jack Cole just isn't ready for drawing superheroes yet.

There's something else wrong here, but it's a mistake a lot of comic book creators made when they jumped on the superhero bandwagon without really understanding the look Joe Shuster had created with Superman. Superman is not wearing, as so many artists drew it post-Shuster, tights. Superman is not a ballerina. His costume is a circus strong man's costume. It's a 1930s-era symbol of masculinity, not femininity. Yet here, Cole doesn't get it either. Silver Streak is wearing green tights and brown ballet shoes. The misinterpretation replaces the real meaning and soon many heroes would just look gay for generations to come.

Now it's 1941 and Jack Cole is in possession of some of the mastery he would possess on Plastic Man by 1943. Daredevil vs. Claw is still cartoony, but this is cartoony in a good way now, plenty fun, and with some inspired layout work.

This is my second Basil Wolverton's Spacehawk story I've ever read and I hope to someday get a hold of the reprint books Dark Horse put out years ago because these stories - really cowboy stories, but with a thick veneer of science fiction over them - are a pure joy. Wolverton's unique style is a ravishing mix of realism and abstract weirdness. No matter how crazy his aliens look, they never break your suspension of disbelief if you can already buy into the underlying weirdness everywhere else, like in the giant fungal forests of Saturn.

Bill Everett was already Timely Comics' best writer/artist in 1940, but he did some moonlighting for Novelty and one feature he did an issue on was Sub-Zero. It's an interesting - and dark - story wherein Sub-Zero nearly gets fried in the electric chair by a masked villain whose face we never see. Sub-Zero's ice powers were novel in the Golden Age, long before Ice Man of the X-Men. Still, my 10-year old son could tell at a glance that Sub-Zero was being drawn to look like Superman. This is not where Everett was putting all his creativity into - that was his one true love, the Sub-Mariner.

Speaking of creativity, though, the last sample is Blue Bolt by the undefeatable team of Simon and Kirby. Blue Bolt is an excellent place to leave off because it's an example of both the best and the worst of comics. The worst is its obviousness -- the scantily clad Green Sorceress in chains isn't there for character development. The best is the Green Sorceress' underground city -- the perfect locale for an urban-fantasy-superhero campaign. Also going for it is Kirby's inventiveness, particularly in terms of believable-looking futuristic technology, like the rocket-cycles. If only Blue Bolt himself wasn't so boring!

THE VINDICATORS: CHAPTER ONE

Fiction by Steve Lopez

Doug Davis stubbed out his cigarette and took another sip of his drink. He'd been cooped up in his office for three days waiting for the phone to ring and he was starting to get a little stir crazy -- that's no April Fool's -- so he decided to close up his detective agency for the afternoon and knock a couple back down here at Clancy's. This morning's early edition carried a banner headline about another tenement building

catching fire under mysterious circumstances, and from the sound of the sirens this afternoon it's likely that the evening edition will have a similar headline. Other than the string of possible arsons over the last week, things had been really quiet in town. Davis hadn't seen hide nor hair of a paying client in nearly three weeks. Hell, even Clancy's was crazy quiet for a Wednesday afternoon – it was just Davis, the bartender, and that drunk guy who was practically falling off his barstool.

"Whaddyou lookin' at??" the drunk sneered.

"Who, me?" Davis replied.

"You see any g--damn else in here?"

"Look, friend, I don't--"

"I ain'tcher damn friend!" the drunk yelled as he lunged at Davis. The private investigator sidestepped the rummy and gave him a punch in the breadbasket as he went by. The drunk turned and landed a lucky hard right on Davis jaw. Even as his head snapped back, Davis could notice the strong odor of gasoline coming from his assailant. Davis popped the guy with a quick left and the drunk hit the floor. A roll of quarters fell from the drunk's hand; no wonder he punched so hard, Davis thought. He'd been fighting with a loaded fist.

The bartender was at the far end of the bar and couldn't see what was going on. Davis quickly searched the drunk's pockets and found another \$110 in addition to the roll of quarters. Business had been slow lately and, after all, the drunk had jumped him, so Davis didn't feel badly about pocketing a cool hundred; he left a \$10 bill and the quarter roll for the police to find. Davis also found a matchbook in the drunk's pocket; it had an address scrawled inside the flap. Davis recognized the street name as part of a warehouse district on the outskirts of town. He pocketed the matchbook alongside the cash he'd lifted. He returned to his barstool (and his drink), patiently awaiting the arrival of John Law.

Davis recognized the cop as soon as he walked through the door, a young kid named Callahan; he'd been acquainted with the patrolman for some time, but they weren't what you'd call close.

"Hoo-weeee!" Callahan said when he bent over the drunk's inert form. "You'd think he'd been drinking some hi-test!"

"Yeah, about that..." Davis said. "You think he might maybe have something to do with those tenement fires?"

Callahan scratched his head. "Never thought of that...maybe."

"You think you might give me a call if you find something out?"

Callahan shook his head. "Mind your own business, shamus; this is a job for us uniforms, not for a private dick."

"Hey, no problem," Davis laughed. "Let's just say it's professional curiosity."

"Yeah, and you know what curiosity did to the cat. C'mon you," the patrolman grunted as he lifted the drunk's inert form. "Let's drag your butt out to the wagon."

I have a pretty good idea he's our firebug, Davis thought. And it's entirely possible that this address might lead me a

little farther along. I think it's time to call my friends in on this one. It looks like The Vindicators are back in business...

Davis smiled, tossed down the rest of his drink, and headed back to the office.

St. Nicholas, Maryland. April 2, 1936...

From the shadows across North Howard Street, Doug Davis peered at the warehouse and waited for total darkness. He was determined to check out the building's contents, but he wasn't going in alone; he'd brought reinforcements.

He could dimly see a huge silhouette close by him in the gathering dusk. That would be the man who called himself Prometheus; Davis didn't care if the guy called himself "Rumplestiltskin" so long as he got the job done. Davis didn't know the man's true identity, since he always wore a domino mask, but the investigator didn't ally himself with Prometheus because of who he was but, rather, what he could do. Prometheus was freakishly strong; Davis suspected that he'd once worked for a circus.

Davis couldn't see his other companion, but that was completely normal; he knew the man was nearby, vigilant in the shadows of the loading dock. His real name was Jedediah Singletary but only Davis knew that fact; the criminal element of St. Nicholas knew him as the Twilight Phantom. Possessing the ability to almost totally conceal himself in shadows and dim light, the Twilight Phantom had been the scourge of the city's underworld at the end of the Prohibition era. Since the repeal of the Volstead Act, though, the Phantom had lived fairly quietly, only donning his trademark black trenchcoat and bandanna when Davis called on him for help with "special" jobs like this one.

"What do you expect to find here, Doug?" Prometheus whispered.

"Those tenement fires? They're no accidents," Davis replied. "The one yesterday afternoon killed seven people - two of 'em were little kids. I'm pretty sure the guy who picked the fight with me in the bar is an arsonist - and I found that warehouse's address in his pocket."

"Maybe he's just a firebug."

Davis shook his head, even though he knew Prometheus couldn't see it. "Nah, it's more than that. There've been too many fires in too short a time. It's something bigger, more sinister. C'mon, let's get started."

Stealthily the duo left the loading dock, crossed the railroad tracks, and slipped across the street to the warehouse they'd been observing. The huge block building was dark and appeared deserted. Davis looked over his shoulder in time to glimpse a silhouette cross behind them; it looked like nothing more than a bit of black cloth being windblown across the road. Davis and Prometheus hit in the shadows at the building's corner and waited. After a few moments a third figure appeared beside them as though from thin air.

"The door's locked, as we expected," the Twilight Phantom intoned in a voice as deep as blackest midnight.

"Start checking windows," Davis said.

The trio split up. Davis pushed on the ground floor windows, hoping to find one that was unlocked or loose. The place was locked up tight as a drum. Davis hated to have to waste the

time picking one of the cheap padlocks, but it was starting to look like they'd have to break in - no one was going to make this easy for them.

"Hsst!" came a whisper from behind Davis. "I found one!"

Davis turned and followed Prometheus around the corner to the rear of the building. They stopped about halfway along the building's length and the large man pointed upward to a second story window. "Up there."

"How the hell'd you get up to that window?? That must be fifteen feet up!"

"Easy - I jumped."

Davis shook his head. "Brother, you are one strange character, but I'm sure glad we're on the same side. Let's go find the Phantom and -"

"I'm here," came a voice from the shadows behind them.

"OK, great. Now all we need to do is get up there."

Prometheus laughed. "I'll carry you. Step right up - next stop, second floor." Grabbing each of his companions around the waist like sacks of flour, Prometheus tensed his legs and leaped. Light as a feather he landed on the sill of the large industrial window, shouldered open the unfastened hinged pane, and stepped inside. In the dim light the trio could just make out crates and pallets stacked around them. Prometheus set his companions down and announced, "We're in! Now where do we start?"

"This is just storage," Davis replied. "The offices will be on the first floor."

The Vindicators didn't find a whole suite of offices as Davis had suspected; instead there were just two - a small glassed-in affair containing dozens of waybills posted on pegs, and a larger, more private office which contained nicer furnishings. "If we find any evidence, it'll be in the larger office," said Davis. "That other one's probably just for the shipping and receiving manager."

The larger office was furnished with a couch, some plush chairs, a large desk, and a few cabinets. Although the furniture was a bit swankier than what Davis would expect to find in a warehouse, he noted that the carpet was a bit threadbare and somewhat soiled; it had definitely seen better days. Davis closed the door behind them, then switched on the desk lamp. "Let's go to work."

A quarter-hour later, after a thorough search of the desk and cabinets, the trio had to admit they'd come up dry. "Crap," muttered Davis. "Nothing. Let's put everything back and get -"

"Doug," the Twilight Phantom interrupted. "I feel a cold draft in front of this cabinet."

"It's a warehouse; of *course* it's drafty."

The Phantom placed his gloved hands on the side of the large, floor-to-ceiling cabinet and pushed. The wooden cabinet swung outward, revealing a doorway.

"You were saying, Doug?" said the Phantom. His mouth and nose were hidden by his black bandanna, but Davis could tell the Phantom was grinning by the glint in his eye.

"What in the Sam Hill is that?" Prometheus wondered.

Davis looked through the doorway and saw a long, brightly lit stairwell leading downward. "If I had to bet, I'd say

that this is a holdover from Prohibition."

"You mean a mob hideout."

"You got it. See, St. Nicholas was a center of mob activity, especially for bootleggers. This town has easy access to both Calvert and the Chesapeake Bay, and it's close enough to both the Pennsie and Delaware borders to suit the crooks - if they were in a vehicle chase with John Law, they could tear ass across the border where a state or county boy wouldn't have jurisdiction. Johnny'd have to stop at the line and the crooks would get away scot-free."

"And don't forget who the historic St. Nicholas was," added the Phantom. "He was patron saint of bankers, pawnbrokers...and *thieves*."

Davis chuckled ruefully. "Prohibition may be gone, but some things evidently never change. Let's check it out." Davis stepped through the doorway and began descending the stairs. Prometheus and the Twilight Phantom exchanged glances. The big man grinned and the pair followed the private investigator down the stairs.

After a straight descent of about twenty feet, the trio found themselves in a large well-lit square chamber. The air in the chamber was fresh and cool, not especially humid. The walls were of block construction, probably built sometime after the war. A wooden door was in the center of the wall straight ahead, while the two side walls contained openings to side passages. The chamber's floor was fairly clean, but the Vindicators could see some debris and refuse in the side passages.

Davis walked to the wooden door and listened. He could hear no sounds from within. Davis saw no hinges and reasoned that the door should thus open inward. He tried the knob and found the door opened easily. He motioned for his companions to join him; together they entered the dimly-lit room.

It took a moment for their eyes to adjust to the gloom. Davis smiled to himself, knowing that the Twilight Phantom was in his element. The room was surprisingly similar to the office in the warehouse above, albeit more cheaply furnished. There were a few chairs, a large desk, and some cabinets. But dominating the wall opposite the door was a large fresco of a feathered snake.

"Quetzalcoatl," said the Twilight Phantom's voice from somewhere in the shadows. "An Aztec deity."

"Weird," replied Prometheus. "What kind of mobster would have *that* on his wall?"

"One with bad taste," Davis shot back. "Get to looking."

A few minutes' search revealed nothing, although Davis did discover \$400 in bills in one of the desk drawers. "Crooked cash. Ours now. We'll split it later. Let's find out what else is down here."

Leaving the room, the companions took one of the side passages from the main chamber. Various wood and metal debris littered the floor, along with small piles of a foul-smelling substance. The farther they proceeded through the tunnel, the dimmer the light became while the piles became more numerous. Davis double-checked to make sure his sword cane was still strapped to his back. He paused to pull a flashlight from his backpack and slipped a set of brass knuckles onto his right hand. He couldn't see the Phantom

but he hoped Jed was carrying his trademark twin truncheons.

They came to a four-way intersection and turned to the right. After another ten paces or so the passage opened into a pitch-black chamber. Davis thumbed the switch to turn on the flashlight. Instantly there was an ear-splitting screech from overhead and something like a heavy black blanket dropped down on them.

It was a quick little melee; when it was done, the trio stood panting and looking at a large black hairy shape on the floor. It was a huge bat.

“Holy mackerel!” Prometheus exclaimed. “That thing must have a five foot wingspan!” It was no exaggeration; the beast was indeed unnaturally huge.

“That passage was an educational experience,” Davis grinned. “Now we know how big a pile of guano a five foot bat leaves.” He couldn’t see the Phantom but he could sense Jed’s disapproving expression. “In case we’re ever on one of those radio quiz shows,” he finished.

The Vindicators could see a large number of shiny objects littering the floor, gleaming in the light of their electric torch. Many coins, mostly dimes and quarters, littered the floor. Davis guessed they were dropped by previous visitors who’d cut and run after being surprised by the bat. The trio quickly gathered up the change and moved on.

They left the chamber into another dimly-lit hallway. Gingerly they picked their way around refuse and debris, moving slowly and silently. They turned another corner and the passage widened. As they approached a “T” intersection, they were surprised when six men rounded the corner from the right. They were dressed in an assortment of workman’s togs and cheap suits. After a startled moment, the six produced an assortment of knives, pipes, and blackjacks. In a flash the fight was on. Davis popped one of the pipe-wielders in the jaw with his brass-knuckled fist and was gratified to see the man drop in a heap. Another assailant flew backwards into the wall and slumped at its base, felled by one of Prometheus’ huge fists. A third thug went down, and the remaining trio dropped back to regroup. Davis took a step back and stumbled slightly; he was surprised to see the Twilight Phantom lying on the floor, a rivulet of blood running across the concrete floor from under his inert form.

“Lucky shot,” Prometheus said. “One of them took a wild swing at me with a knife and missed, but accidentally got him.”

“Grab him up and let’s go. We’re outta time.”

Prometheus picked up the Phantom; he and Davis ran back the way they’d come. Taking the steps two at a time, they ran back through the office and paused in the darkened warehouse long enough to apply first aid to their wounded comrade. The Twilight Phantom opened his eyes and looked around. Then he swore under his breath. “Sorry, Doug.”

“It’s not your fault. We’ve learned enough for one night. Let’s get out of here – but, rest assured, we’ll be back...”

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TIPS FOR SUCCESS WITH LOW-LEVEL HEROES

By Scott Casper

It’s no secret: when you game with level-based mechanics, characters don’t get really fun until at least 3rd level. That’s when most character classes have enough options and hp to be versatile in a variety of situations. Until then, adventuring is often a tough game of survival with little access to special abilities and not many hp between your characters and defeat at any given time. Some players might prefer to start playing at 3rd-level or higher and just skip the lower levels entirely, while others prefer that tough, gritty genesis of starting at 1st-level. There is a deeper appreciation one has for one’s character when this “baptism of fire” has been endured. Fortunately, in H&H, there are ways to make that “baptism of fire” a little less dangerous.

The most common mistake I see Fighters make is to go without armor. A suit-wearing tough guy might be more fun to roleplay, but if that Fighter insists on going into the Hideout accessorized with nothing but his hat and tie, then maybe there isn’t quite enough meta-gaming going on there. Let your Fighter look cool at 3rd level; at 1st-level he should be playing it safe and sporting a flak jacket, helmet, and riot shield. Arm your Fighters with automatic pistols, especially if your Editor is using the optional weapon damage that makes firearms extremely deadly. The range bonus of a rifle isn’t worth the sacrifice of not having that left arm free for carrying some light cover like that aforementioned shield. At 1st level, the combination of a flak jacket and riot shield is even better than the AC of an alien. Put them both on a Fighter with a high DEX and you’ve got the party’s point man right there.

The temptation for a Magic-User to take Charm Person or Sleep as his first spells is great, but someone needs to take a “hit” for the party and be the healer. Sure, it’s less fun casting Cure Wounds I than Charm Person, but the party is going to need the first spell much more than the second. Magic-Users are awful vulnerable by nature. Maybe consider an Alien Magic-User. And don’t forget that Magic-Users are allowed to use cover, which means they get to hold shields in this game!



Superheroes are not Fighters with superpowers. The Superhero, without compensating with powers, has several disadvantages in combat when compared to the Fighter class. So leave the fighting to the Fighter. The Superhero should be in there wrecking things. Wreck the enemy guns. Wreck their armor so it’s easier to hit them. The low-level Superhero should be complementing the Fighter, not

upstaging him. At 2nd level, choose a defensive power like Nigh-Invulnerable Skin. You'll last longer. Playing an Alien Superhero would help too, with the special abilities the Alien race brings to the table.

Morale saves are your friend. Low-level mobsters have lousy saves and should seldom be sticking around long in combats. Bringing along a Mysteryman with his intimidate skill may keep fights from even starting.

Recruit supporting cast. At 1st level, having a few supporting cast members who are good in a fight with you can make a world of difference. They don't need to all come into the hideout with you. Approach hideout-raiding like war. Soldiers always have support staff nearby. A med tent with a doctor waiting, if possible, would be a huge boon. So your Heroes don't have to rely on carrying their own canteens and rations, have a cook somewhere nearby who can have meals waiting for you. You can be the toughest Heroes in the world and still die of starvation if you stay in the hideout too long without eating. Leave some guards outside, guarding your vehicles, or at the nearest payphone to call for the police or an ambulance if things go badly.

Don't rush to a hideout. Obviously, if your Editor has a specific scenario planned for you, you'll have to, but if the Editor is running a "sandbox" campaign and open-ended scenarios, then there is no need to hurry until you feel you are ready. Keep in mind that you can earn XP doing good deeds and recruiting supporting cast without ever going into a hideout. One good deed and one new supporting cast member a day will see a Superhero to 2nd level in just 8 days and a Magic-User to 2nd level in 13 days. The Editor has a lot of latitude for deciding what constitutes a good deed, of course. After so many times of helping little old ladies across the street or rescuing cats out of trees, you might have to get more creative. At the same time, you should be able to ask your Editor to help you come up with ideas by having you run into fresh opportunities. Be observant; that confused-looking man on the street might be a plot hook for your next adventure or simply a good deed waiting to happen!

GAMES BY SCOTT CASPER NEWS

The following products are currently available for sale on drivethrurpg.com:

Book I: Men and Supermen

Book II: Mobsters and Trophies

Book III: Underworld and Metropolis Adventures

Reference Sheets

Supplement I: National

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The three core rule ebooks are \$2 each, the sheets are free, Supplement I is \$2.50 and Supplement II is \$3 - a total of well over 300 pages of material for just \$11.50!

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HIDEOUTS & HOODLUMS



By Scott Casper (after Dave Ameson)

Illustrations by Irv Novick (Shield), Jack Cole (Silver Streak), Joe Simon (Claw), Walt "Frank" Fichtel (Dime), unknown (Marvel), Fletcher Hanks (Stardust), Scott Casper (two-headed giant, gorilla-men), Luis Horta (Hurricane Hanson), George Brenner (Hugh Hazzard)

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Games by Scott Casper
6300 Church Rd., Apt. 112-C
Hanover Park, IL. 60133