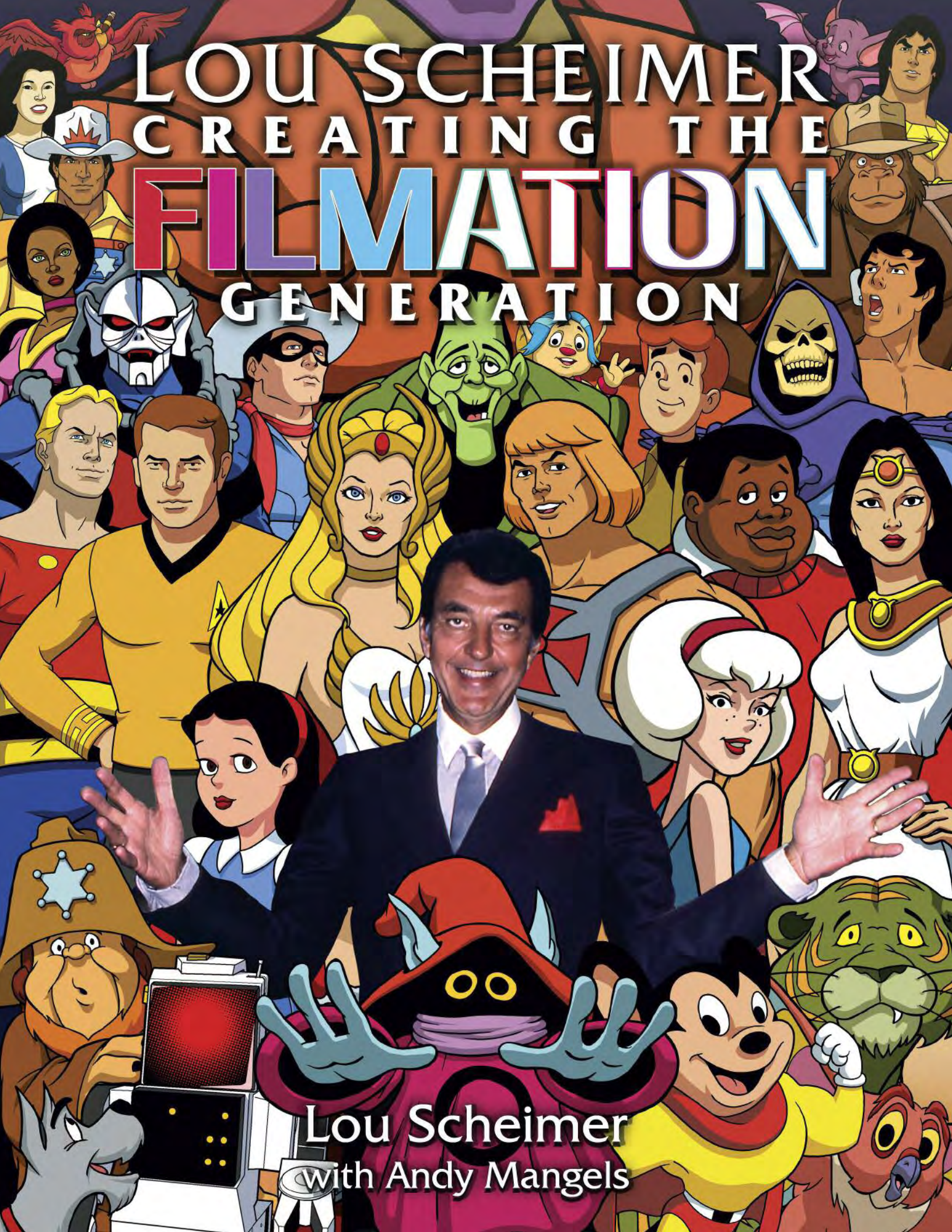

LOU SCHEIMER
CREATING THE
FILMATION
GENERATION
Lou Scheimer
with Andy Mangels

CONTENTS...

1955-1965

CHAPTER FOUR

CLOWNS, CATS, ROCKETS, AND JESUS

I'm not sure when the light bulb above my head went on, but it occurred to me that, although I had no experience specifically in the animation field, the experience in painting and illustrating that I did have would allow me to paint backgrounds, which are creatively very interesting and also take the least amount of technical knowledge. I didn't have to know how the animation cameras worked.

So, in the late summer of 1955, Jay and I went out to California on vacation and stayed at a motel on Sunset Boulevard that was near a couple of animation studios. I took my portfolio to all the animation studios I could find. I went to Ray Patton's, UPA, and some art service places too. I found one studio called Kling Studios, which was a commercial studio located on the corner of Highland and Sunset Boulevard. It had previously been the Charlie Chaplin Studio. The guys at Kling saw my stuff and said, "Gee, that's nice stuff. We'll hire you to paint backgrounds if you come out, but we don't want you to move out here just because of us." I said, "Hey, that's enough for me. If I have a job here, I'll move out here."

Jay and I drove back to Pittsburgh. I gave the advertising agency that I was working at their two weeks notice. Jay went into the school where she was working at the time and told them that she would not be able to return in September. We packed all of our stuff and drove back to California. *Again*. This was our third trip driving cross country in a very short period of time, but we were excited at the prospect of something new! We arrived here on September 9, 1955.

I went to Kling to report for duty. I was all ready to go to work, and they said, "Oh, I'm sorry, but we don't really need anybody now. We hired somebody else." That was really frightening. I thought I was going to die. What could I do now? I had no job, and we had very little money. We had a couple thousand dollars, which would not last very long. And the movers were bringing our stuff across the country already.

I started running around to some other studios, and nobody needed anybody. I didn't realize how bad the animation business was

Opposite:
Lou illustrating a background

Above:
Kling Studios

here. All the majors were actually closing their studios. Those were the days of the beginning of television, and all the theaters didn't want to pay the extra cost for having a cartoon because they weren't doing that well. A lot of the studios had moved to producing animated commercials. After a couple of weeks, I got a callback from the Kling people, and they said, "We need another guy. We'll hire you." Well that was terrific!

I went to work at Kling, and my desk was actually in what had been Charlie Chaplin's bedroom! It had been converted for us to work in, but I still had to get my water to paint backgrounds with from this strange little sink that was near the toilet. It turned out to be a bidet, which was something I had never seen before. I ended up with a wet face!

I was doing backgrounds for Kling, and I was working so long and so fast that I was putting out a lot of backgrounds. I was doing so many damn backgrounds that I was putting some of the other guys out of work. I got a call from the business agent of the union, and he said, "I've got to talk to you." I thought it was because I hadn't joined the union, which I had no problem doing. This was the first time that I really had to think about what unions were and how they worked. But that wasn't what he wanted. He said, "You're putting guys out of work. You're doing about three times the amount of work that's necessary." And I said, "I don't want any trouble from the boss." And he said, "Yeah, but your friends are having trouble. You're going to put them out of a job if you're not careful." So, I slowed down.

Chaplin's house was very quiet. There was another guy working near me named Roy, who I later hired at Filmation. He was doing assistant animation work, which means cleaning up the animators' rough drawings and putting them on a character. One day I was cutting a matte to paint a straight line, using an X-Acto knife. It went slicing through a finger on my right hand, and I screamed as loud as I could. Blood was spurting out of my hand. Roy fell over and fainted. He scared me more than the damned finger. They took me to a hospital, and they had it fixed up. But, ever since then, I've missed that fingertip! Thankfully, I'm not right-handed, so it didn't do much damage.

But the story isn't quite over. Jay had to take me to the doctor the next day. We were driving down the street, and we stopped at a red light. I looked over and saw a guy in a yellow Buick convertible. And I said, "My God, it's Clark Gable!" That was the first movie star we had ever seen. I started to point and said, "Jay, Jay look at this!" I didn't realize the window on the car was closed, and I hit it with my raw finger. I screamed in pain. Clark Gable saw me, hit the gas, and flew across the street. He must have thought he was being attacked. He was nearly a block away by the time Jay said, "It *is* Clark Gable!"

Despite all these problems, I still felt like animation might have some promise for me. Shortly after I got hired at Kling, Jay and I decided that it was silly for us to be paying rent on a place and began looking for a house. We went out and bought a house at 7430 Louise in Van Nuys for $17,500, which was pretty extravagant as I was making only $70–106 a week. When we called back to Pittsburgh and told our families that we bought a house, they thought we were crazy. It was a lovely little house though, with a back yard. There were two tiny bedrooms and a third larger bedroom. It was about 1,200 square feet, had lots of windows—and it was ours.

No sooner had we bought the house then there was a strike at Kling. I was forced to be out carrying placards, and I didn't even know what the hell was going on! I didn't dare tell Jay I was out of work again, but I had to. And she didn't dare tell her family because, as far as they were concerned, it was bad enough that she married a Jew. But now she had married a Democratic Jew!

When I wasn't striking, I worked my butt off to get freelance jobs, and that's how I kept going. I met up with a guy named Robert Givens, though we called him Bob. Givens was the guy who did the first model sheets for Bugs Bunny, and he was just one of the legends I got to work with over the years. With him, I got a freelance job at Walter Lantz Productions doing one of the cartoons they did for Universal Studios. I showed Lantz my portfolio, and he said, "I do have a job for you guys." They did three short cartoons a month. So we got to work on one called "The Talking Dog" a *Maggie and Sam* theatrical cartoon. What we didn't realize was that it was awfully similar to the now-famous Chuck Jones "One Froggy Evening" cartoon, which had been released in December 1955. That's the one with the talking frog. Well, we had a talking *dog*.

Anyhow, I worked with Bob, and we did a magnificent job painting the backgrounds for that. We did all sorts of wild stuff that Lantz had never seen the like of: collages, pasting up photographs, painting into the thing. It was really fun. Lantz looked at our stuff and said, "That's really not the kind of stuff we normally do. It looks like the sort of thing that UPA does." I said, "Did you like my portfolio?" He said, "I didn't need your portfolio." I said, "My portfolio that I showed you, so you could hire me," to which he responded, "I hired you because you look like my brother Michael!" So, apparently, I went to school for four years and got the job because I looked like his brother. Damn, that was really annoying!

But, he ended up using these crazy backgrounds we did, and it was released theatrically on August 27, 1956. I wasn't credited because they only listed a few people back then, but it was thrilling. I never saw the damn thing on film though, so I didn't know what it looked like. And then the strike was over, and I went back to work

1965-1966

CHAPTER FIVE

AND WHO, DISGUISED AS A REAL ANIMATION STUDIO...

The studio was now down to two employees—myself and Hal—and a shutdown was imminent. Norm was doing his best to try to raise money from someone, somewhere, somehow. We did have one other "person" in the office, but we never paid her, and she didn't say much.

At the front of our office was a desk, and behind it we had a secretary. She wore glasses and a hand-me-down dress from Jay, and sometimes when we would have visitors they would talk to her for a moment or two before they realized that she was a mannequin!

We had 24 empty desks and some equipment gathering dust. We didn't have a Moviola to sell, or it would have probably been gone already. One day the phone rang, and Hal answered it. A moment or so later his eyes got wide, and he said, "Louie, maybe you'd better talk to them!" Knowing we didn't have any money to pay bill collectors, I said, "Well, what is it? Did you tell...."

He had a peculiar look on his face, "He says his name is Superman Weisinger calling from DC. He's looking for Prescott!" I said, "Let me talk to him. Is it long distance?" He said, "Yeah." I said, "Is it paid for?" He said, "Yeah." So, I got on the phone and said, "Hello, Mr. Superman, are you calling from a phone booth?" I figured it was a prank call.

The voice on the other end said, "Mort Weisinger here. I'm the story editor on *Superman*, and I'd like to talk to Norm Prescott." I said, "Well, Norm's not here right now. Is there anything I can do to help?" He said, "No, I've got to talk to Prescott!" I explained to him that Prescott was in a hotel on Sunset Boulevard and was going to leave for New York the next day and told him to call him shortly.

I hung up and quickly called Norm and said, "There's some guy going to call you, and his name is Mort Weisinger. He's got something to do with Superman, but I don't know what in the hell is going on. It may be some kind of work for us. I won't close up the company until I hear from you."

He said, "Well, I know who the guy is! He's the story editor at DC Comics. The reason I know him is that I went up to see him when I was doing *Pinocchio* and talked to him about the story to get some suggestions!" So, Weisinger called Norm, and it turned out that Fred Silverman, who had just started at CBS, had decided that he

Above:
Norm Prescott, Hal Sutherland, and Lou in 1965

Opposite:
The super-hero who saved Filmation

Above:
Image from *The New Adventures of Superman*

Opposite:
Whitney Ellsworth

could turn around the Saturday morning schedule at CBS and do something that nobody had ever done, which was buy stuff specifically for Saturday morning. Up until that time, advertisers would supply shows, or the network would buy up used stuff. Nobody really programmed for Saturday morning, and Silverman had gotten in touch with National Periodical Publications—which is what DC Comics was called at that time—and told them he wanted to buy *Superman* as an animated show. The live-action show with George Reeves, *The Adventures of Superman*, had ended in 1958, but it had been put in syndication again and was a hit.

Weisinger had called Norm because he understood that Norm knew something about getting stuff animated overseas, and they were thinking about doing it overseas. He asked Norm to see him in New York, and Norm told them, "You'll never get it done overseas. You'll get over there, and they'll tell you it'll get done, but it won't." He wasn't lying; this was before the production companies overseas could really do anything regularly. It would take forever to get a project done, and there was no way of doing it on a weekly basis.

I got a phone call from Norm, and he said, "Lou, do you think we could do this series ourselves?" I said, "How much are they offering?" He said, "$36,000 a half hour." Well, I knew then that Hanna-Barbera was getting about $45,000 a half-hour for animation. I said, "Sure, we can do it. What the hell? We're out of work anyway. What's the worst that can happen? We can't do it?" I had no idea what we could do it for, but I knew that was better than we were getting.

Then he dropped the bomb. He said National wanted to send a guy named Whitney Ellsworth to come see the studio. I said, "What studio? There's me, there's Hal, there's 24 desks!" So I thought fast and came up with a story. I called Ellsworth and said, "I'm sorry, Mr. Ellsworth, but we really don't have visitors here during the working day. It's just too difficult, and people can't concentrate. We only allow visitors in the studio on Wednesdays between twelve and one. If you can come next Wednesday at lunch, I'll take you through the studio and show you what we're doing." Ellsworth had been the guy who was in charge of the live-action *Superman* show, too.

A short time before this, I had tried to get *The Lone Ranger* to do as a show, but it went to Herb Klynn at Format Films, also, coincidentally, for CBS. At that time we had a similar tour request happen, and I had "padded" out my staff to make us look bigger and more successful than we were. But that's when we actually *had* a staff! This was far more dire.

As soon as I was off the phone, I started contacting every animator I could think of. If we couldn't make this look like a working animation studio by Wednesday, we were going to lose the one job that could save us. I called one wonderful Korean assistant animator, Kim Wong, who had written me a letter saying, "I are starving, please hire." Another guy, Jack Mach, ran a fan mail service for celebrities. Some of the guys were already animators, like George Reilly, Eddie Friedman, Lou Kachivas, Rudy Larriva, and Eddie Green. There was one guy who I called, Harold Alpert, who was a CPA, but thankfully he couldn't make it. I found out later that Harold was a friend of Whitney Ellsworth, and, if Whitney had walked in and seen his CPA friend sitting behind a desk pretending to draw, it would've blown the whole scene.

I also brought in Ted Knight, my actor friend. He knew nothing about animation except having done the voice work for us, and he wasn't famous yet, though he had been working in Hollywood since the late '50s. We borrowed a Moviola to make it look like we really had an editorial department, and I told Ted, "If the guy asks you any questions, just tell him there's trouble at the lab, and you can't talk to him right now because you don't know what you're talking about!" Ted always had a tendency to overact. He said, "Yeah, don't worry, Lou."

So, Ellsworth walked in, and I had the place packed. There was only one empty desk, and it was the guy who thankfully didn't show up, Harold Alpert. We'd passed out scenes on *Oz* to all the people there. Don Peters, who did gorgeous backgrounds, was in there pretending to paint backgrounds. Jack Mock didn't know what the hell he was doing. He just held a pencil and looked peculiar. The studio was humming. I think we even had the mannequin out there, but the mannequin looked okay. We may have passed that off as a joke. We had, like, 20 people in there, everybody furiously at work, but it was twelve o'clock, and half of these guys had to take off and get back to work! So, we showed Ellsworth some of the stuff from *Oz* that was sitting there in our little office that Hal and I had. It was really a pretty big office.

There was a knock on the door. It was George Reilly, and I knew George had to get back to Hanna-Barbera. George opened the door and said, "Can I come in?" I said, "Sure." He said, "Lou, I've got this toothache. Do you mind if I take off and go to the dentist?" I said, "Okay, George, you can go to the dentist." He shut the door, and I turned around to Hal and said, "Make sure we dock that son of a bitch!"

Everything was going fine, and Ellsworth seemed impressed, when all of a sudden we heard, "There's trouble at the lab! Trouble at the lab!"—in 20 different voices. Ted Knight was out there running around, pretending he was a lot of different guys, yelling that there was trouble at the lab. He had apparently gotten bored or wanted some attention or thought he was helping. Ellsworth said, "What the hell's going on? You guys must have an awful lot of work. There can't be that many guys involved with trouble at the lab!"

Whitney finally left. He called back to New York, to a guy named Jack Liebowitz at National Comics, and told him, "They have a little studio, but they run a tight ship." Liebowitz trusted us, without a completion bond or anything, and gave us the job. It was our first network show, with a budget of $36,000 per episode; although we didn't lose any money, I have no idea how we budgeted that show. And, it was all done in the United States.

Several of the guys who were part of our fake animation team to

Bulldog Bonnd holds a bit of a soft spot in my heart. It was a spy show, and it was the last picture that I ever laid out. I designed the characters as well. I really wasn't happy with it then, but, in looking at it recently, I like it. Tony Benedict, Hal's stepbrother, wrote the script for this. There was a radio show character named Bulldog Drummond, and then, obviously, James Bond was popular, so we kind of combined their names for this spy spoof. I don't think I ever showed it to a network. I was sort of embarrassed with it when I did it, but looking back it may have been way ahead of its time. It was limited animation. It was clean layout with very clean characters. It's kind of like some of the spoof shows that air on Cartoon Network these days.

Robert Strauss was the voice of Bulldog Bonnd. He was best known for his role in a war movie called *Stalag 17*, about American prisoners of war in Nazi Germany. He had this deep, gravely voice, which was a perfect voice for animation, but he couldn't do too many voices because his voice really was that gravely. Nice man. I think Ted Knight may have done some of the voices as well. I may have even voiced a little Japanese guy in it named Tomo, but I'm not sure. I'm a bit embarrassed by the racially caricatured nature of Tomo's design, but it was reflective of the times, and no other character was all that good-looking either.

The third pilot we announced was called *The Kid from S.P.Y.*, and it was about a group of teenagers who fought crime after school. I don't think we ever really did anything on it, at least in terms of formal animation. We dropped it from active development before 1966 ended.

Then there was *Dick Digit*, which we later called *The Adventures of Dick Digit*. Anybody who sees it now—and it's out there on the Internet—will wonder what we were smoking. It was a weird superhero show with a circus performer called the Jester, and he has a puppet named Dick Digit, except, as the pilot ends, Dick Digit gets replaced by a real guy—from outer space—who just happens to be supersmall. I think Ted did most of the voices, but I also think that Norm played the announcer. We did a seven-minute pilot for that one, but it was just too strange for anyone to want. We kept offering it to people for quite a while though. It did eventually get released in England by Video Gems, in 1982 on a *Blackstar* videotape!

In late December we made a deal with National to develop even more of their heroes for animation. DC actually asked us to do *Aquaman*, but I wasn't convinced the network would buy it without seeing a pilot. He wasn't as famous as Superman or Batman. So we did a beautiful looking pilot titled "The Great Sea Robbery," which I think we retitled and used when the show was played. Nothing like it had been on the air. The undersea stuff really looked interesting, and it was visually fascinating. That got Freddie Silverman's attention. Announced to the trades in early January were *Aquaman*, to begin on CBS in September 1967, and *Batman*, to begin as soon as the live-action show went off the air at ABC.

BULLDOG BONND

THE ADVENTURE OF DICK DIGIT

AQUAMAN

We didn't reveal anything about which network *Batman* was going to be on, as we were talking with ABC about another show, and yet CBS had our other DC heroes. It was kind of a touchy situation because ratings were already going down on the live-action *Batman* series, and the network had not yet ordered a third season for 1967–1968.

In March 1967 *The New York Times* did a piece on Saturday morning animation in which it was Hanna-Barbera, not Filmation, that had to take a beating over limited animation, and DePatie-Freleng who were attacked over content. They blamed the networks, saying, "Right now they want the blood, guts, and gore that are inherent in the 'supers.'" Now I'm not sure that I ever saw any blood, guts, or gore in any Saturday morning animation, but superheroes were definitely hot. In that same article, Norm talked about Filmation developing Green Lantern and Green Arrow, announced we would be doing the *Superman Hour of Adventure*, and gave them a photo to publish of Aquaman and Aqualad astride their seahorses. It was the first public image of the animated Aquaman.

Daily Variety gave us a huge compliment in April, saying that Hanna-Barbera and Filmation produced "the Tiffany stuff" for the networks, and *Broadcasting* magazine called us a "heavyweight contender" the following month. They also revealed what our fall line-up would be: an animated version of 20th Century Fox's *Journey to the Center of the Earth* for ABC, with half-hour complete stories; and *Aquaman* for CBS, now paired with DC guest heroes including The Flash, Green Lantern, Hawkman, Doom Patrol, B'wana Beast, and The Atom, among others as yet unannounced.

THE Archies

Archie's here...Betty's here, Veronica, too.

Reggie's here...Hey, here comes Jughead and Hot Dog, too. Now EVERYTHING'S ARCHIE.*

*from *Archie's Theme* copyright ©1968 by Don Kirshner Music, Inc. • Words and music by Jeff Barry

Watch for **"THE ARCHIES"** in color every Saturday morning on the CBS-TV network.

FILMATION ASSOCIATES Produced by Norm Prescott, Lou Scheimer and Hal Sutherland

CHAPTER SEVEN 1968

THE FANTASTIC SHRINKING BAT-TEENAGER

We did a ton of superhero shows, and by '68 it was obvious there were just too many of those types of shows around. So, we got the rights to Archie Comics, and it was interesting because it was the first of the non-superhero comic books that was brought to television, and it was an extraordinarily successful show.

The first word of our new 1968 schedule leaked out to the trade papers in late March. *Variety* did a story on the new CBS Saturday mornings, which were coming up on some changes since some of the series had two-year commitments. They revealed both *Batman* (alongside *Superman*) and *Archie* on the CBS schedule, and *Fantastic Voyage* on the ABC schedule, though they only gave Filmation credit for *Batman*. On April 21, CBS officially announced its ambitious fall schedule, with 2½ hours of comedy followed by 2½ hours of adventure, carrying a total $4 million price tag. Freddie Silverman was not going to let his Saturday morning dominance flag, and he had even stolen Bugs Bunny away from ABC. That same week ABC announced we would be doing *Fantastic Voyage* for them. In addition to the three new shows, CBS was going to rerun our *Aquaman*, now as its own half-hour show on Sunday mornings, and ABC was going to rerun *Journey to the Center of the Earth*.

With *Batman, Archie, Fantastic Voyage*, and an order for eight more *Superman* half-hours—16 "Superman" shorts and eight "Superboy"—our workload shot up dramatically. It was a total of 59 new half-hours for the season, with the budget moving upwards to around $60,000 per episode! Additionally, we had four animated specials we were working on, and we were still trying to sell *Yank and Doodle*. We had found our leads for *Yank and Doodle* when Norm and I were in New Orleans and spotted entertainers Marcus Grapes and Allen Yasni performing there.

Now, I liked *Aquaman* a lot, but the way the networks bought shows in those days was generally for two years unless they were a total flop, and then they had to figure something out. It didn't mean that they paid for new ones in year two, but they pretty much had to schedule them. And it wasn't that *Aquaman* was doing poorly in the ratings; it was doing great as part of the hour. But they wanted to do *Batman* as part of the hour to freshen it up, and, as you'll see in

Opposite:
The back side to the first record for The Archies.

Above:
An ad that ran in Hollywood trade papers showed Filmation's 1968 lineup.

This brings us to *Archie*. The concept was brought to us by Irv Wilson, who was our agent at the time. Irv had approached John Goldwater, who was one of the guys running Archie Comics, about licensing his books out for a TV show. Irv called me and said, "Do you want the rights to *Archie*?" And I said, "What the hell is *Archie*? Is it something kids know?" I had never seen the comic book, even though it had been around since 1942. I didn't read comic books that kids were reading then, which was a mistake, and I didn't know how successful a book it really was. He said, "Oh God, Lou, every kid in the country knows what it is."

I think I flew out to meet with John Goldwater, who was a very nice man. We made a deal, and it was a very legit deal. We both owned 50 percent of whatever shows we produced. We actually owned the negatives for the film as I recall. And it was an easy show to sell.

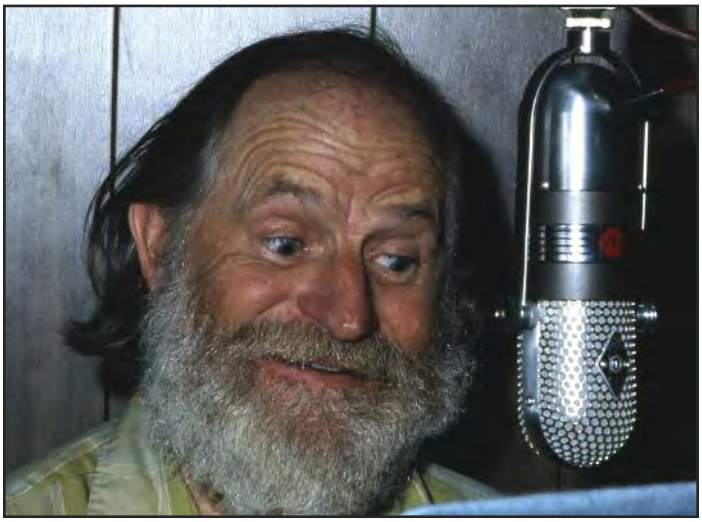
The show existed in a way already; the comic book was there; the characters were there. So we presented it to Freddie Silverman with a stack of comic books. It was the cheapest presentation we ever made and probably one of the most successful shows we ever produced.

The reason I knew it was going to be successful was that Silverman started laughing and clapping, and he never did that at anything. This really hit him right where he understood it; he knew what would happen with those characters, and how they could be used.

CBS liked it immediately because the air was polluted with adventure shows, and there was nothing like *Archie* on the air. And then we got the idea to make music an integral part of the show. That was not being done for children's shows; it became the first time that a children's show had a group created for them! The Beatles had been adapted, but it wasn't something new; it was just taking their already existing music and using it.

Now when I say, "We got the idea to make music an integral part of the show," I should point out that The Archies did have a band that first appeared in *Life with Archie* #60, in April 1967. In that issue the editors asked readers to write in and let them know if they wanted to see the band again. Whether we knew about that group or had been in talks with Archie by that point and perhaps influenced its comic book genesis is a mystery lost to the ages.

Back to 1968, when CBS bought *Archie*, we made the deal with



1970-1971

CHAPTER NINE

HEY LADY! MORE MONSTERS & MUSIC!

As a new decade began, we were firmly entrenched on television and on the music charts, and, for whatever early success the superheroes had enjoyed, *Archie* was eclipsing them. But the success wasn't enjoyed solely by Filmation; animation in general was booming.

In March the trades reported that an expected 100% of the animation workforce would be employed within a month. The animator's union IATSE 839 had 1,058 members locally, and more than a third of them were at Filmation. We had a firm order for 57 half-hours of new material for the fall, including one hour each for *Archie's Fun House* and *Sabrina and the Groovie Goolies* on CBS, plus reruns of *The Hardy Boys* and the new *Will the Real Jerry Lewis Please Sit Down* on ABC. The work meant our people could plan employment through October or November… or further if we got more projects going. Additionally, *Superman, Batman*, and *Aquaman* were going to enter into daily syndication in the fall, meaning that viewers would be seeing Filmation on their TV screens almost every day of the week.

One of the new shows we pitched was a favorite of mine and really struck at the heart of where I felt animation was lacking: educational entertainment that also showcased diverse casts. We pitched an educational series called *The Great Young Americans* that would have taken the great figures of American history—like Abraham Lincoln or George Washington Carver—and shown what they were like as youngsters. Norman Corwin, who had worked with us on *Guest of Honor*, wrote 26 scripts, and we shot four of them as pilot shows, but the networks weren't ready to bite at anything educational, despite the success of the weekday series *Sesame Street*.

On April 27th NBC reaired the *Hey, Hey, Hey, It's Fat Albert* special, sponsored by Mattel. It kept interest in the property alive, but behind the scenes things were changing for Cosby's hefty brainchild.

It was about this time that we had our first big lawsuit, by the way, and it was against CBS, represented by Ira Epstein. We had no ownership position on the National/DC heroes, though on one of them—either *Aquaman* or *Batman*—we had a ten-percent net profit participation. On *Archie* we actually owned or co-owned the negatives, and we got a license agreement with Archie Comics where they got a royalty. But CBS was controlling the syndication rights for foreign and domestic distribution of our shows, and that was an anti-trust violation. We sued CBS on that basis and got back the syndication rights to our series. We also got a very favorable settlement.

Meanwhile, the news that we would be working with the popular Jerry Lewis was met with a front-page story in Daily Variety, and ABC's *Will the Real Jerry Lewis Please Sit Down* gained buzz. The series was designed to showcase characters from throughout Jerry's film career and was expected to be goofy and loose with a laugh track and lots of jokes.

The title of the series may not make much sense to audiences these days, but back then there was a very popular game show called *To Tell the Truth*, and in it they would always say at the end, "Will the real _____ please stand up?" So, rather than calling this *The Jerry Lewis Show*, we felt that the title could reflect him playing multiple characters.

Now I'm going to say something you won't hear often from a

Opposite:
The cast of *Groovie Goolies*

Above:
The cast of *Will The Real Jerry Lewis Please Sit Down?*

producer: It was a terrible show. I mean, we didn't do him justice, and it was tough. We didn't *want* to do it terribly, but given the fact that we had a real interesting talent involved it was not as good as it should have been. But I will say that he wasn't involved that much. He didn't want to do any live material, which would have helped. I don't think he wanted to do the voices either; publicly, we said that he said it was because his voice was not the same as it had been when he made the movies. He also didn't want to be actively involved in the plotting or scripting, though he gave us some input, of course.

Jerry suggested a guy named David Lander for his voice. I think he was working as Jerry's chauffer. Ironically, he was a graduate of Carnegie Tech as well. This is about five years or so before he got cast on *Laverne & Shirley* and really hit big. This may have been one of his first jobs. He certainly could do the Jerry Lewis character voice, so we used him principally for that. We used Jane Webb in the female roles, including the girlfriend, Rhonda, and Howard Morris played the rest of the characters other than Jerry specifically. The funny thing was that Howie had played Lewis's father in *The Nutty Professor* in 1963, and here he was playing the Professor!

The plot was that Jerry's character worked at the Odd Job Employment Agency. Out on jobs, he would meet characters he had played in his movies like *The Family Jewels, The Nutty Professor, The Bellboy*, and others.

One important change about the Filmation shows, starting with *Jerry Lewis*, I believe; in the closing credits, Hal Sutherland's name got written with a fancy script. Since Norm and I got the circle, he got his own bit of style, and believe me, he earned it!

Before we get into our next big hit show, I'm going to backtrack for a bit to cover where The Archies had been this year and where they went.

On January 4, 1970, *The Ed Sullivan Show* featured its third appearance of The Archies, with Ed introducing the animated clip for "Jingle Jangle." On February 7th, the song hit #10 on the pop singles chart. By mid-March "Jingle Jangle" had gone gold, and the next single, "Who's Your Baby?" had already sold 600,000 copies.

On Sunday, March 22nd, CBS aired its third *Archie* primetime special, titled *The Archie Sugar, Sugar, Jingle Jangle Show*. This was mostly a rebroadcast of *Archie and His New Pals*, but with a different opening title and the songs "Sugar, Sugar," "Jingle Jangle," and "Who's My Baby?" mixed in. It would be the final time this particular show was repurposed, though the music would survive for many decades thereafter.

Archie Comics was still supporting us in a big way. In addition to featuring blurbs about the shows on their covers and relentlessly pimping them in their news pages in the books, *Everything's Archie* featured the band regularly. And in *Archie's Pals 'n' Gals* #57 in April 1970, they did a third story that referenced the show and music directly, called "The Big Hit Fit," in which the halls of Riverdale High became awash with the sounds of "Sugar, Sugar."

Meanwhile, RCA pumped out more Archies records, with a new album called *Sunshine*, a re-release of the first Archies album under the new title "Sugar, Sugar," and, eventually, *The Archies Greatest Hits*. "Sunshine" was the sixth single, and by August the cumulative total for the six Archies singles was over ten million copies sold! This was better than The Hardy Boys were faring, who only managed two albums and three singles before fading away into bubblegum pop history.

As we began work, the Archie entry for the 1970 fall television season was given an unwieldy full title of *Archie's Fun House Featuring the Giant Juke Box*—though everyone called it simply "Archie's Fun House"—and the hour-long show was set to feature three new songs per episode. We also filmed a live-action opening with kids in the audience watching The Archies onstage by the Giant

Lovin' for Me" and "The First Annual Semi-Formal Combination Celebration Meet the Monster Population Party." The album featured live actors as the head trio. Our animation art only got a small clip on the front cover, but Filmation got some major PR on the back of the album, with our logo, plus Norm, Hal, and I getting noted.

All the new fall shows debuted on September 12, 1970. At 9:00 a.m. on CBS was *Sabrina and the Groovie Goolies* for an hour, followed at 10:00 a.m. on ABC by *Will the Real Jerry Lewis Please Sit Down* for a half-hour. The hour-long *Archie's Fun House* began at 11:00 a.m. on CBS, leading into *The Hardy Boys* reruns at noon on ABC. We didn't have any Sunday shows that year.

As expected, S*abrina and the Groovie Goolies* was a solid hit, and *Archie's Fun House* continued to do well in the ratings. *Jerry Lewis* didn't do as well though. Everyone thought it was going to be a very successful show. I'm not too sure whether it was the fault of ABC, whether it was the concept... I just don't know. It was not a disaster. It just didn't go through the roof. Jerry made no money on it to speak of, nor did we. But them's the breaks.

Also in September we set up a deal with one of the major oil companies to produce six one-hour cassette tapes of The Archies, offering a tour of the United States, to be available at gas station. Bill Danch and Jim Ryan did the scripts. We also planned a series of "spoken word" tapes for The Archies and Groovie Goolies, which we would own the rights to release without RCA since they did not contain music. I don't recall what happened to either of those projects! They may have never been released. We also began switching our old material from film to videotape and announced in *Billboard* that we would eventually be releasing videotape versions of our shows. Talk about prescient!

Thanks to our successes and the backing of TelePrompTer, on October 12th, *Journey Back to Oz* finally resumed production. We were doing 60–100 drawings per foot, a significant leap up from our television animation. We also made a bold public announcement that the film would be released for Easter 1972, along with a self-released soundtrack album and a spoken-word storytelling album with narrator and dialogue.

In early November, I spoke to officers of various government agencies in Washington DC, about how to incorporate themes such as ecology into children's programming. Following that, Jay, Lane, Erika and I went to Pittsburgh to visit family, and to be interviewed for my first cover story in my hometown. *The Pittsburgh Press TV Graphic* featured a wild picture of me sporting my goatee, a fashion move I received much ribbing for.

I have one funny story about *Groovie Goolies* that happened that year, similar to the Krypto story I related earlier. It was nearing Christmastime, and we were watching the dailies of the animation. All the directors were there and as many animators as could fit into the room because they wanted to watch the stuff. So we were watching *Goolies* footage with sound already cut in, and onscreen the Frankenstein monster walks on and says, "Hi, Lou, have a nice Christmas!" And the guys all started giggling. It was Hal who had organized it.

Just before Christmas in 1970, a *Daily Variety* article spotlighting Bill Cosby's expansion plans for his newly restructured company, Jemmin Inc., noted that he was doing another *Fat Albert* special for NBC and *Fat Albert and the Gang* for a future date—both with Filmation.

Above:
(across the top)
Images from *Groovie Goolies*

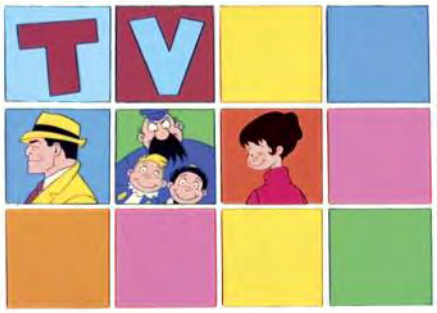
Opposite:
Opposite: Lou tries a "hip" new look for 1970

Below:
(across the bottom)
Model sheets for *Groovie Goolies*

series of shows on PBS called *Meeting of the Minds*, where he did interviews with people of the past. I don't know whether he ever saw any of our shows, but it sure was suspiciously close to our concept. I know that word got around Hollywood because our show used such big names, and TelePrompTer shopped it around.

The ecological show was a half-hour show to star Henry Silva and a group of students; we were planning to shop it to the networks first. *Kinder Kastle* was a kid's show set to provide educational and entertaining elements. And *Johnny Horizon* was being developed with the Department of the Interior, as he was their conservation mascot.

On February 1, 1971, more information came out about our deal with Warner. The agreement was that we would create animated films based on existing WB film and TV characters, titles, and properties, which would then be distributed exclusively off-network on a global basis. We were also supposed to animate feature films for Warner. Said projects would be sold around the world by Licensing Corp. of America (which was licensing Warner and National-DC properties at the time), although CMA remained our agent. Although WB TV head Gerald J. Leider announced the deal, our contact at Warner was Jacqueline Smith—no, not the later *Charlie's Angels* actress. This deal led to a very strange collaboration in 1972, and a few other interesting projects, before changing into something else entirely.



In early February CBS did some major restructuring of their schedules, and their early draft for Saturday morning seemed destined to be a very different place. Announced from us was *Alley Oop*, based on the long-running comic strip with ecological messages mixed in, and *Saturday Funnies*, an hour-long anthology series featuring various United Features comic strips. The popular Archie, meanwhile, was planned to move to Sundays, along with Hanna-Barbera's *Scooby-Doo*.

Don't remember that particular schedule? Probably because it didn't happen. Soon enough, a very different schedule emerged, with ABC rerunning *Jerry Lewis*, CBS combining franchises with the comic strip shows becoming part of *Archie's TV Funnies*, Sabrina getting her own show, and *Groovie Goolies* moving to Sunday. That meant less work for us on the face of things, but we were still developing the second *Fat Albert* special for

Above: (top to bottom)
Logo, images, and presentation art from *Archie's T.V. Funnies*

1972-1973

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THAT'S THE WAY THEY ALL BECAME... THE COSBY KIDS!

In mid-January 1972, Warner announced an expansion on their agreement with us from the previous year, with ten feature animated films—each budgeted at $1 million and set at 90-minutes—announced as a co-production. The three-year project was noted in trades as being the largest deal of its kind in animation history. The tagline for the series of films was "Family Classics," and Warner held network and syndication rights. Titles announced were: *Oliver Twist, Cyrano De Bergerac, Swiss Family Robinson, Don Quixote, From the Earth to the Moon, Robin Hood, Noah's Ark, Knights of the Round Table, Arabian Nights,* and *Jack London's Call of the Wild*. All of the works were based on books or concepts in the public domain, but not animated by any other studio. Warner was owned at that point by Kinney Services, a cable TV company, and with us owned by TelePrompTer the cable market—and the eventual home video market—was being closely eyed for these films as a continual revenue stream, not unlike Disney's features. For us it meant we could employ an animation team of 400 people year-round!

A potential change in unions occurred in February 1972, when the Writers Guild of America filed with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) to represent animation writers, who had previously been under the cartoonist's union with IATSE 839. It was seen as a smart move, as many of the writers we were using—as well as those Hanna-Barbera was using—were WGAW members. Plans were that when the IATSE four-year contract finished on January 31, 1973, WGAW would take over.

Nobody really objected… at first, but, by late March, IATSE 839 had voted to oppose the petition, citing the difficulty in separating WGAW-style script writers from "old animation-style" storyboard writers, who often wrote segments as they boarded. IATSE 839 ordered all writers and storyboarders to stop working on Hanna-Barbera's *Funky Phantom*, causing some trauma to that series as it entered preproduction. WGAW struck back in April, filing a new petition that would cover all animation companies in the Animated Film Producer's Association, not just the TV producers. The AFPA, by the way, included Filmation Associates, Hanna-Barbera Prods., MGM, UPA Pictures, Walt Disney, Walter Lantz Prods., and Warner Bros.

Meanwhile, back at Filmation, in mid-February we announced more on our bold expansion into live-action syndicated television, with five new series to be offered through TelePrompTer cable. They were *Guest of Honor, Judgment, The Origins Game, The Heroes*, and another show not yet revealed.

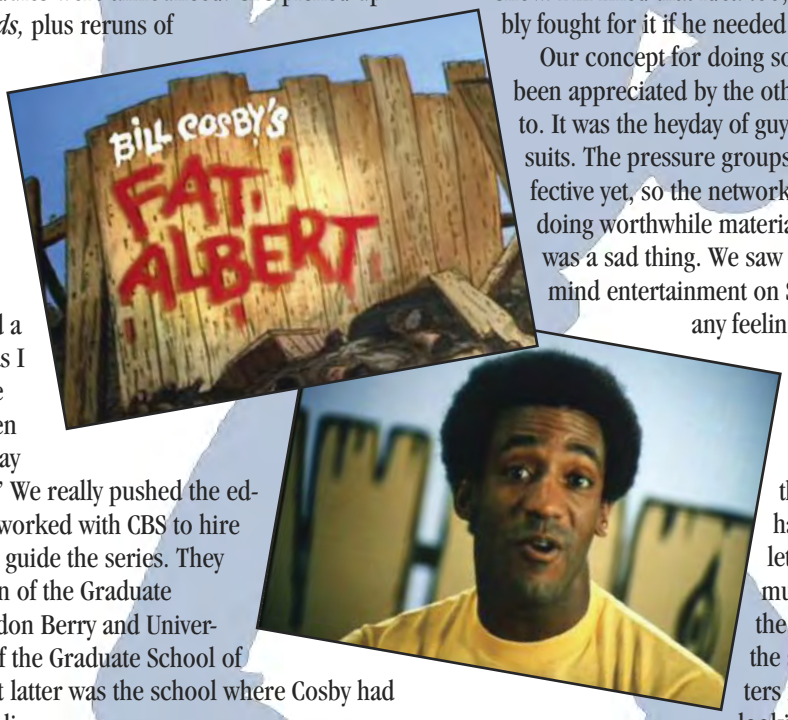
Opposite:
The cast of *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids*

Above:
Lou, Bill Cosby, and Arthur Nadel

We also planned a few more projects during the year, including a *Martin Luther King Special* and *The White House Kids Special*, but I don't recall what happened to them. Probably our strangest potential series was when we talked with CBS about doing a *Young Cannon* series. *Cannon* was a detective show that starred William Conrad. I'd try to sell anything that I knew we could do something interesting with. *Cannon* was really working, so I called Freddie Silverman and said, "What about doing Y*oung Cannon*? He's a fat kid who solves crimes!" We got the rights from Quinn Martin, who was a really good guy, and I did a presentation, but Silverman didn't buy it.

In early March *Aesop's Fables* garnered us our first major award, the Christopher Award, which was given to books, television shows, and films based on their "affirmation of the highest values of the human spirit, artistic and technical accomplishment, and a significant degree of public acceptance." Of the 16 awards presented at a ceremony in New York City, *Aesop's Fables* was the only animated program.

In April the new fall schedules were announced. CBS picked up *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids,* plus reruns of *Sabrina* and *Archie*. ABC picked up *The Brady Kids* from us, as well as segments of *The Saturday Superstar Movie*. NBC, as usual, ignored us on Saturday morning.



The order for *Fat Albert* was for 16 new episodes and a two-year commitment, and as I said in the press, "This is the first time a superstar has been involved in children's Saturday programming to this extent." We really pushed the educational elements and had worked with CBS to hire a board of educators to help guide the series. They included UCLA Assistant Dean of the Graduate School of Education Dr. Gordon Berry and University of Massachusetts Dean of the Graduate School of Education Dwight Allen. That latter was the school where Cosby had been doing some further studies.

After the NBC thing, it took a lot to convince Bill to go with us, but he finally did. But Filmation had to produce the second *Fat Albert* special for NBC as part of the deal. That made selling a series to another network a bit tricky. But, luckily, Freddie Silverman wanted Cosby to do a nighttime variety show for CBS. So, I met Cosby in New York in winter 1970, and we went up to see Silverman. I'll never forget it. He and I got onto the elevator at CBS. It's the middle of winter as far as I was concerned—really cold—and Bill was in a white tennis outfit with shorts as I recall. I think he had his cigar in his mouth, but he got rid of it before we went into Freddie's office.

Now, we had tried already to sell *Fat Albert* as a series to NBC, but the guy there made some nasty comments about Jews in the business and some racial comments as well. It was not very pleasant. I never told Bill some of the things he said because it was just awful. I went in with the idea of showing what we were doing with *Fat Albert* and how it would be a worthwhile show for Saturday morning and how Bill was always quoted as doing good work for kids—he later even won awards for his work in children's television—but it turned out that the NBC guy was a bigot. I was astonished that he was so racist and biased.

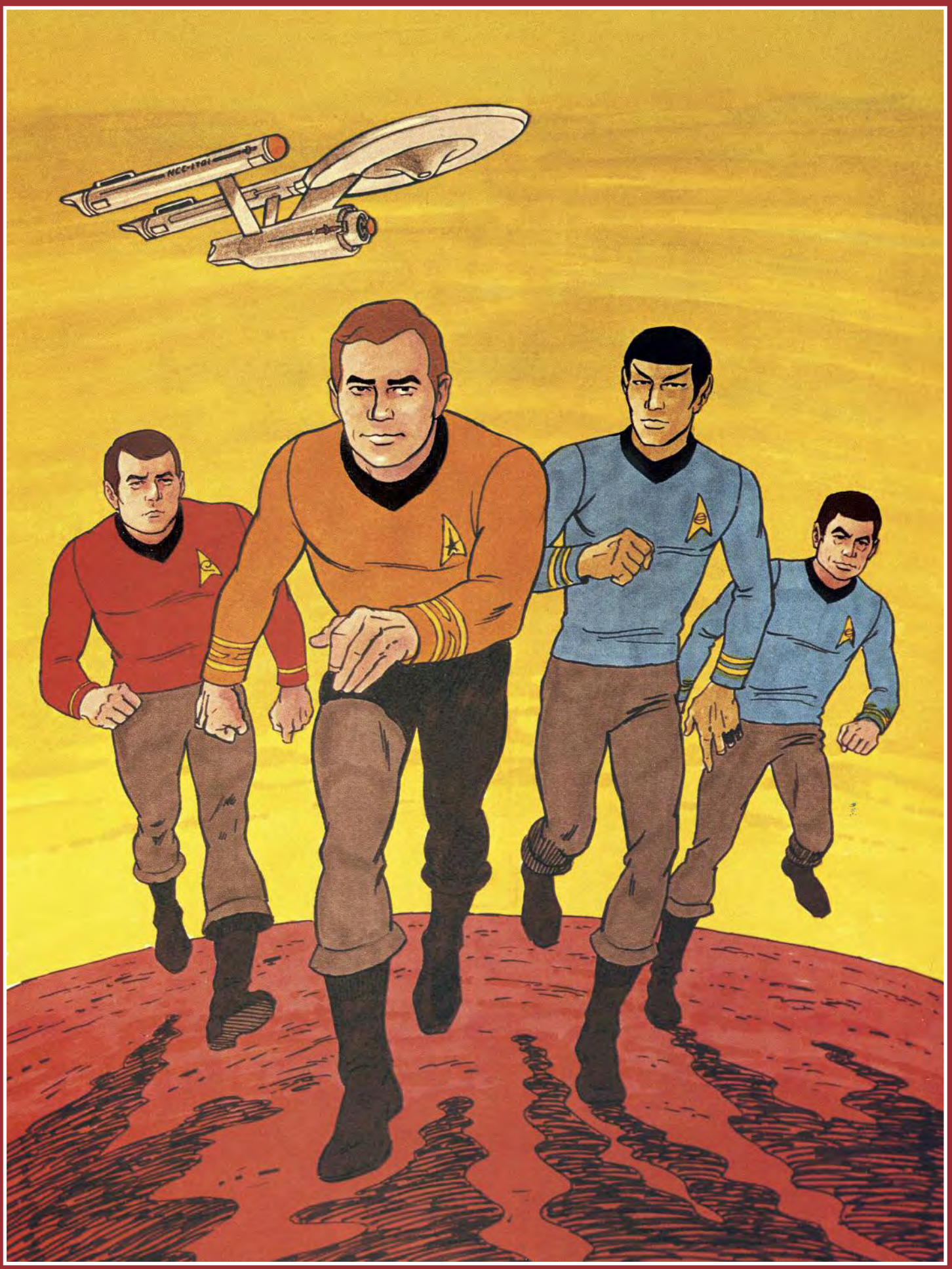
But Freddie wasn't a bigot. Unfortunately, he wasn't completely sold on *Fat Albert* either. But he wanted Cosby for the variety show, so if Bill would agree to do that, as a bonus he would pick up *Fat Albert*. Now, the funny thing is, *The New Bill Cosby Show* that premiered that fall wasn't a big hit at all—there were too many variety shows on the air—and I'm not sure it even lasted a whole season. But *Fat Albert* lasted on CBS for 13 years!

Silverman was concerned about one thing only in regard to the animated show, and that was that he wanted us to create a show that had some values that were not like normal Saturday morning shows. That's what we wanted to do anyway! He thought he could use the show as a demonstration to the Action for Children's Television people that CBS was aware of the necessity for worthwhile entertainment for children. And that was his second reason for trying to do the show. Bill liked that idea too, and I think he would have probably fought for it if he needed to because he had power.

Our concept for doing something worthwhile had really not been appreciated by the other people we had pitched the show to. It was the heyday of guys flying through the air in union suits. The pressure groups hadn't really started to become effective yet, so the networks didn't have much reason for doing worthwhile material. To those of us in the business, it was a sad thing. We saw mindless chewing-gum-for-the-mind entertainment on Saturday morning, and, if you had any feeling for the health and welfare and mental health of the audience, it was time to do something worthwhile.

We had already been working on the second NBC show because we had gotten TelePrompTer to agree to let us do it, even though there wasn't much money, in order for us to make the deal with Bill for the rights to sell the show. We re-designed the characters for that second special, pretty much looking like you saw them the rest of the series. Most of the designs were by Randy Hollar, with Michelle McKinney, working under Ken Brown. The second special wasn't very good because we had to produce it so fast, and Bill didn't film any of his live-action segments for it. It eventually aired on NBC on May 4, 1973, as *Weird Harold Special* (listed in some sources incorrectly as "Bill Cosby's Weird Harold Special")—not even using the *Fat Albert* name, most likely due to inter-network rivalry—although the title of the story was "The Great Go-Cart Race!" I never liked the damn thing, and I never used it on the series; in fact, I don't even think it was included in the episodes that we syndicated. But it got us the rights, and Bill saw what we could do with his characters, and it enabled us to design everyone how we wanted.

Once we got the series sold, we dove into making it. I had gotten Bill to agree to introduce and pop in and out of the shows, which meant that he had a live presence on-screen. And we designed it so he could do a whole season's worth of intros and pop-up segments within one or two days of filming. All of his material was written beforehand,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1973-1974

CHAPTER TWELVE

EXPLORING STRANGE NEW GALAXIES

In February we made a deal with Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Records to release the soundtrack to *Fat Albert*, and Ringling was considering concert and fair appearances. It was supposed to be through their Wheel Records label.

In March Norm gave an interview to the *Hollywood Reporter*, boldly proclaiming "Disney Yesterday—Filmation Today." It was hyperbole, but at that point we were riding high. Our production deal with Warner meant the films we were doing had funding; on the boards at that time were *Oliver Twist, Treasure Island*, and *Huckleberry Finn*. And our production deals for *Star Trek* and *My Favorite Martians* became public knowledge as of this article.

At the end of March, NBC announced their new fall schedule, decimating their previous line-up. Seven first-season shows were cancelled in an attempt to stop the hemorrhaging that the network was feeling on Saturday mornings. They finally bought a series from us: the aforementioned *Star Trek*. William Shatner, who had already worked with us on several previously mentioned live-action projects, agreed to reprise his voice as Captain James T. Kirk, which gave us a powerful chip in dealing with the other actors and the sure-to-be-vocal *Star Trek* fans. Nichelle Nichols signed on in May.

A few weeks later, ABC and CBS both announced their schedules. ABC was keeping *The Brady Kids* and adding new episodes, as well as picking up *Lassie's Rescue Rangers* and *Mission: Magic!* as new series. CBS dropped *Sabrina* from the schedule, but kept *Archie* under a new title, *Everything's Archie*—although no new episodes were ordered, making this a rerun season—in addition to keeping *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids* and adding *My Favorite Martians*. That meant four new shows, two returning series with new episodes, and one all-repeat show, on all three networks. To put it mildly, we were doing well.

In June CBS stole our consultants. By now Allan "Duke" Ducovny was director of children's programs for CBS, and he liked our use of consultants on *Fat Albert* so much that he hired Dr. Gordon Berry and Dr. Roger Francesky to oversee the development, planning, and concept for all of CBS's kids shows. Berry credited Filmation in interviews, noting that we had responded well to any changes or critiques

Opposite:
Presentation art for *Star Trek*

Above:
Image of the animated *U.S.S. Enterprise*

in developing worthwhile material for youth and also gave praise to Bill Cosby. The hiring meant that we couldn't use Berry on any shows not on CBS, but we knew the type of people we wanted now if we needed them on another network's series.

I'll also point out that hiring Gordon and Roger was a wise move on Duke's part for multiple reasons; not only was he working to bring more quality to the shows, but the move also insulated the network somewhat from the increasing clamor from the Action for Children's Television (ACT) group. ACT was a group formed in January 1968, in Newton, Massachusetts, by Peggy Charren and other housewives who banded together to begin a grassroots campaign to make the quality of children's programming better. Charren was publicly anti-censorship with the group, but ACT clearly wanted to have an effect on what was offered in television programs and often interacted with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). Over the years they lobbied about violence, education, and particularly the commercials that were aimed at kids. The move by CBS—and our promotion of strong educational and moral values in *Fat Albert* (which won The Children's Theater Association Seal of Excellence this year)—made us friends with ACT more often than not.

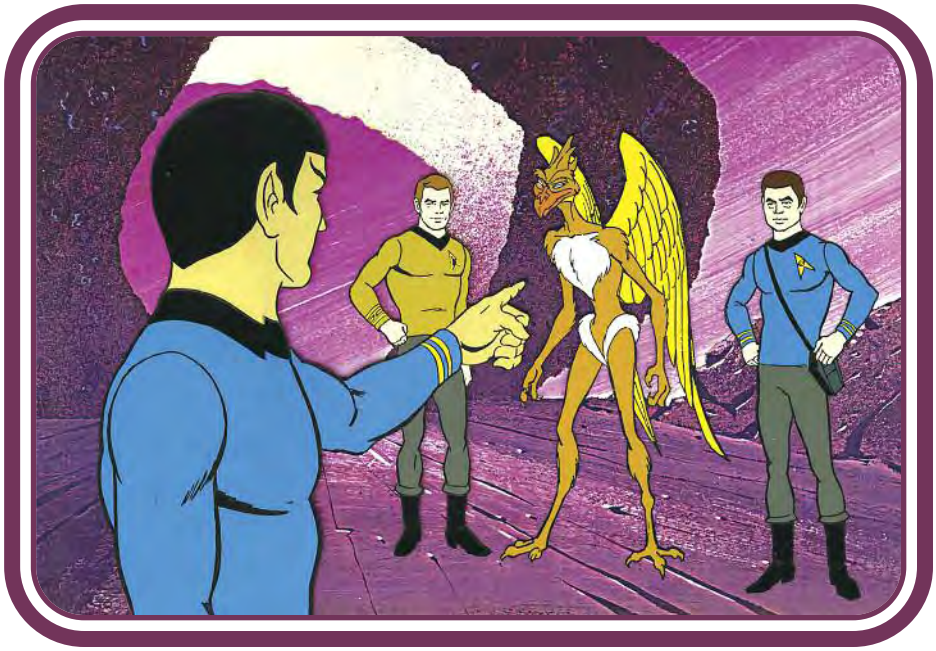
By far, the show that would garner us the most attention in 1973 was the animated *Star Trek* series. If you skipped over some chapters, you may want to go back to the one for 1969, in which I wrote about the early days of us working with Paramount to develop a new television series. While those plans were abandoned, we were able to finally make the deal in 1972. Dorothy C. Fontana would later say that the date she was told about the deal was February 14, 1972, so it would appear that it was sometime close to that time that papers were signed. And it was a guaranteed two-season show with 22 episodes planned over two seasons.

I had been talking to Paramount, but they could not do any series without Gene. And there had been a schism that had developed between Roddenberry and Paramount. So, I would talk to the guy at Paramount and then go talk to Gene and his attorney. It took a lot of doing to get the deal finalized, and I had to get them talking to each other first. I think the way that we worked it out is that Paramount had a third, Gene had a third, and we had a third. Paramount would do the selling internationally, but not domestically. We sold it domestically to the network. And Roddenberry had total creative control, which made him happy.

The network had absolutely zero creative control for *Star Trek*; they had to accept the show or not accept the show, and I believe that was the first time that happened in the history of Saturday morning animation. I actually don't think it ever happened again either. NBC wanted *Star Trek* so desperately that they gave us that creative control. It was so wonderful. If they'd say, "Well, gee, Lou, we've got a problem here," I'd respond with, "Well, Gene likes it that way." I loved having Gene involved with the show!

Gene was an easy man to talk to. I expected nothing but difficulty with him at first because we kept hearing how he demanded stuff to be the way that he wanted it. He was always fighting with the networks or the studio. But our relationship was easy. Despite the direction of our earlier proposal, we didn't want to do a children's version of *Star Trek*, and neither did Gene.

In June 1973, Norm was interviewed for a Newspaper Enterprise Association story about *Star Trek*, in which he said, "This is the first attempt to do an adult show in animation. Never before has an adult audience been challenged to watch a Saturday morning show. We feel it is a bold experiment." Hal Sutherland added, "The problem is



and we sure couldn't change the budget. Golod told me to fire Bostwick and hire somebody new, as we had threatened to do. Bostwick was a nice kid, but his agent or manager was really pulling some bad strings for him.

We had a crew sitting there with cameras and audio equipment, and they could film other scenes that day, but I had to find a guy in the next couple of hours to film on July 2nd. So, I and our casting lady, Meryl O'Loughlin, called an agent I knew named Ivan Green, and he represented a guy named John Davey, an ex-boxer-turned actor, who was the right size and look to fit the costume. The agent called Davey, and Davey apparently tried to call his wife to consult with her, but couldn't reach her, so he asked his eight-year-old son, Tommy, what he thought of the idea. When his son exploded with excitement, Davey called back and took the job.

I remember that, after I first spoke with the agent and gave him the deal and the address, I called him back and said, "If he's got a moustache, tell him to shave it before he gets there." Wouldn't you know it, Davey had a moustache. Two hours after he agreed to do it, he was suited up on-set out at Topanga Park doing stock stunts as Captain Marvel. In addition to filming the episode that was already delayed, we had to replace all of the credits footage and stock scenes of Captain Marvel as played by Bostwick. The first thing he had to do was jump off a seven-foot ladder onto a pad, to look like he's landing from flying. Then they did shots of him running, lifting a vehicle, and flying on the slant board. I think that Norm and I drove out to go look at him in costume to make sure he looked right.

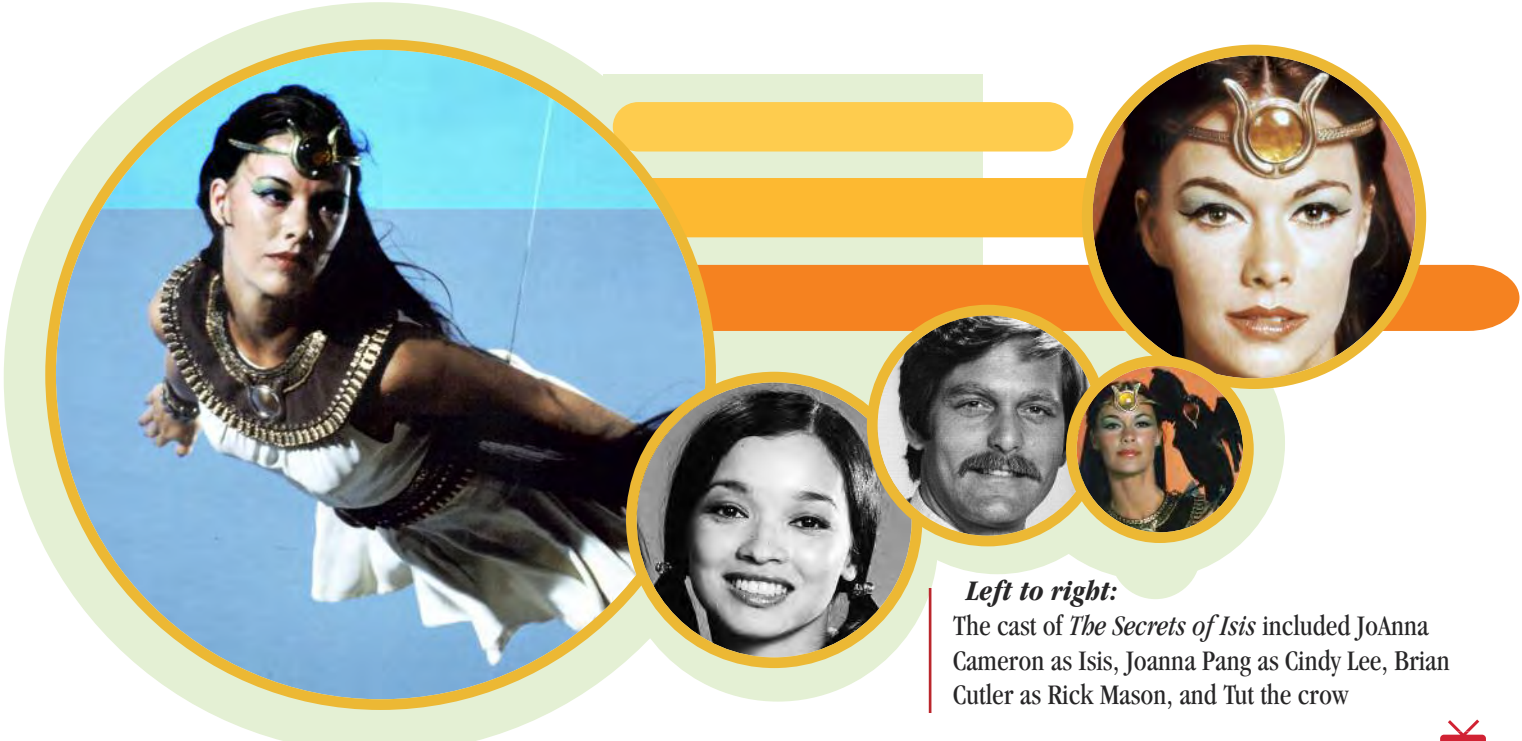
He was a good guy, and he looked great in the role, though he was a bit rougher looking than Jackson. He had to lose a little bit of weight, too, because the costume didn't really forgive a belly. But he got along with the cast and crew really well, and everybody liked him; Les Tremayne had not been too fond of Bostwick apparently. John never caused any problems, and I don't think we ever got a single letter about why Captain Marvel suddenly looked different. It's funny that fans tell me now that they knew there was a different guy—and they pick their favorites, even though Jackson did 17, and Davey did 14 counting the Isis shows—but at the time we didn't hear from anybody about the change.

Unfortunately for Davey, the role did kind of trap him in typecasting for a while. He was a good actor, but I guess he was in some movie that had intense scenes in it. And I hear that when he came on-screen, people said, "Look, there's Captain Marvel." He didn't have a huge career, although he should have. And for that matter, neither did Bostwick, though we continued to have troubles with him, which I'll tell you more about shortly.

As mentioned, we had created a live-action companion show to *Shazam!* called *The Secrets of Isis*. It was easy for me to come up with wanting to do a show that involved a heroine—I was surrounded by females at my house with my daughter, Erika, and my wife, Jay. I had thought about this for a long time. You've got to think about doing shows that relate to girls too. There weren't any superheroines on TV at the time; there had been an awful *Wonder Woman* telefilm for primetime in 1974, but the Lynda Carter show wouldn't debut until November 1975, two months after us. The Bionic Woman had appeared on two episodes of *The Six Million Dollar Man* in March 1975, but we had already sold *Isis* to the network by then.

We needed a concept though, and that's when I brought in Marc Richards to develop it. The man was phenomenally gifted. He came up with the concept of a chemist named Andrea Thomas who went on an archaeological trip and dug up an ancient Egyptian piece of jewelry that gave her all sorts of powers. The mythological background explained the powers, and that kind of exotic feel always helps the superhero stories. I went back to CBS, showed them what we had done, as well as a bunch of drawings—similar to the stuff we used in the main title—and they bought it.

The original storyline was more of a mystery show, with the cast of characters helping to solve crimes using forensics and Isis saving the day and helping them. But, before Allen Ducovny left CBS, he came in for a meeting with us and the writers, and we changed the



Left to right:
The cast of *The Secrets of Isis* included JoAnna Cameron as Isis, Joanna Pang as Cindy Lee, Brian Cutler as Rick Mason, and Tut the crow

ARK II

1976–1977

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

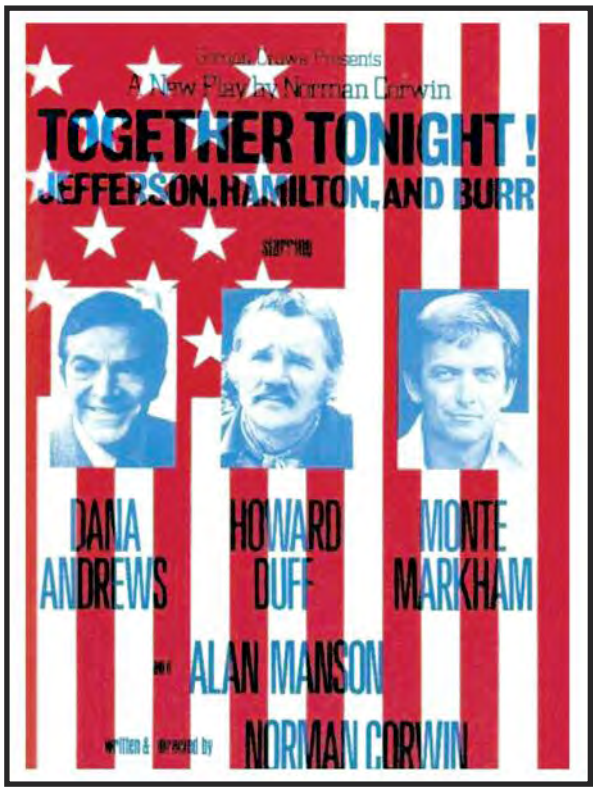
OF APES AND ARKS

In 1976 we embarked on our first-ever legitimate live theatre production. Remember the *Guest of Honor* and *The Great Young Americans* shows we commissioned, shot, and pitched as an educational series? With those shows functionally dead in the water, we decided to take three of the best scripts and create three one-act plays for the college theatre circuit. We used Norman Corwin's scripts about Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton, and Aaron Burr and began approaching colleges, and Columbia Artists in New York. We got producer and actor John Houseman—from *The Paper Chase*—involved as a potential director, but he wanted us to combine them all as one single play.

Corwin rewrote them, but we had some theatrical flash-forwards and asides to the audience, which Houseman didn't like, so he dropped out, as did Columbia. Then one day Joe Cotler, who worked at Warner Bros. TV syndication, called us from the offices of Gordon Crowe, a theatrical producer and agent. Shortly thereafter Crowe signed on as a co-producer. We began booking the show, now called *Together Tonight*, in which the fictional John Lenox moderated a conversation between the tough Aaron Burr, the humble Thomas Jefferson, and the elitist Alexander Hamilton, set at a Philadelphia meeting hall in winter 1799. Corwin directed it.

Together Tonight! Jefferson, Hamilton, and Burr debuted at Indiana University in January 1976, with Monte Markham as Burr, Howard Duff as Hamilton, Dana Andrews as Jefferson, and Alan Manson as Lenox. It played Western Michigan University on January 24th, at Philadelphia's Philadanco as of April 20th, and in Huntsville, Texas. Because of the bicentennial, we did 75 playdates set up at 65 colleges nationwide, touring through mid-April. We had put about $200,000 into the entire project from the original pilots to the stage show, though only about $75,000 of it was for mounting the show. Little by little it brought in a profit.

Together Tonight! was later broadcast on National Public Radio on election day—November 5, 1996—under the title "No Love Lost" with voices by William Shatner as Jefferson, Lloyd Bridges as Hamilton, Jack Lemmon as Burr, and Martin Landau as Lenox. It was a live performance at the Museum of Broadcasting in Los Angeles, which had been filmed and recorded on August 6th of that year. And on May 7, 2011, Corwin celebrated his 101st birthday at a new performance of the show at the Beverly Garland Holiday Inn in Hollywood, with Markham returning to the show as well, though this time playing Jefferson. Filmation's involvement in the play isn't well known or well publicized—we weren't even listed in the ads—but we were there from the start.

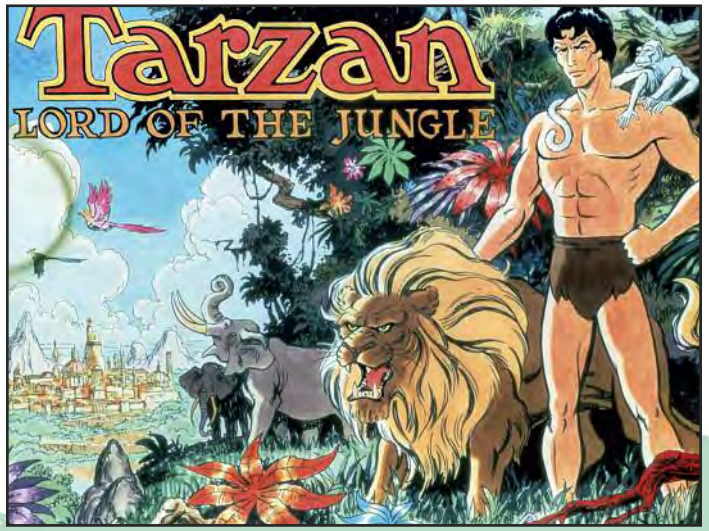


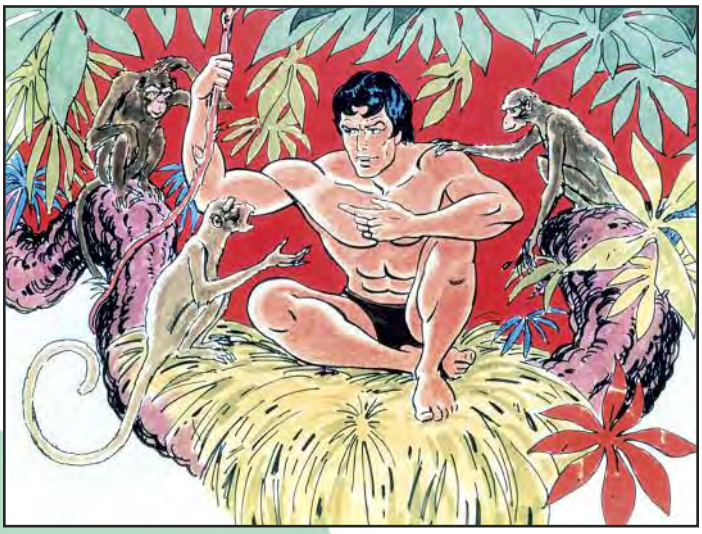
Opposite:
Promotional sell sheet for *Ark II*

Above:
Program cover for *Together Tonight!*

Also in January NBC aired a news segment on one of their shows, about nonviolent shows for kids, and made a rare request; they asked us for permission to use clips from *Shazam!* and *Isis*. This kind of cross-network promotion wasn't common at the time, but we quickly granted it. Betty Rollins was the news correspondent, but I don't recall which show it was on. Shortly thereafter, under a headline of "Laughs and Lessons through the Looking Glass," CBS took out an ad in the trade papers, highlighting the "fun, fantasy, knowledge and guidance" their shows provided, noting several Filmation shows as leaders.

Fall lineups came out in March, as usual. As mentioned, ABC never bought another show from us, having cancelled *Uncle Croc's Block*—and the reruns of *Groovie Goolies*—on February 14th. Instead, ABC became the domain of mostly Hanna-Barbera and Krofft shows, while NBC similarly dumped *The Secret Lives of Waldo Kitty* and spread their schedule between reruns of vintage toons and new live-action shows.





Thankfully, our loyal friend at CBS, Jerry Golod, stuck behind us, giving us two-and-a-half hours of their four-and-a-half hour schedule, buying *Tarzan, Lord of the Jungle*; new episodes of *The Shazam!/Isis Hour;* our new live show, Ark II; and eight new shows of our stalwart, *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids.* This bottom line was not great, however, as we were down from 96 half-hours in 1975 to only 53 half-hours for 1976.

In mid-April the Daytime Emmy nominations were announced for the 1975–1976 season, and we were in the running again. This time *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids* scored its second nomination in the Outstanding Entertainment Childrens Series category. Ultimately, it did not win, but it was far from the only accolade the series was garnering. One syndicated article called Bill Cosby's humor on *Fat Albert*, "inherently delightful, graceful and dignified as his approach to the issues and children he speaks to."

In late May word started hitting the press about our newest educational gambit; we were teaming up with McGraw-Hill Films to put videos of *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids* and teaching guides out to schools for use in the third grade. The materials were prepared by our staff, working with Dr. Gordon Berry, and episodes included our stories about stereotyping, making new friends, lying, going to the hospital, using drugs, and accepting personal limitations. The move was the first time a commercial property had been used in that manner; public television's *Sesame Street* had predated it for earlier grades.

We were also working with the governmental Bureau of Land Management on their "Johnny Horizon" campaign, to produce *Fat Albert* PSA commercials urging kids to help preserve and protect the environment and to not litter. And in June the Westwood Methodist Church in Los Angeles began teaching a religious school class called "Learning Values with *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids*."

Meanwhile, Bill Cosby was working on a new variety series for ABC, and, for the past six years, he had also been working on something else between gigs: his doctorate degree in education at the University of Massachusetts (where he had earned a master's degree in 1972). His 242-page, 48-footnote dissertation was titled "The Integration of the Visual Media Via *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids* into the Elementary Schools Culminating as a Teacher Aid to Achieve Increased Learning"; I think you can guess what it was about. He was awarded his doctorate degree in May 1977. At the party at his home after the graduation ceremony, a Fat Albert ice sculpture was on the buffet table.

Other than *Fat Albert*, one of our most beloved shows—and from my understanding, the one fans most want to see on DVD other than *Shazam!*—was *Tarzan, Lord of the Jungle*. It took a while for me to get the rights. By this time our family lived in the town of Tarzana, on top of one of the tallest hills. Our home looked down on pretty much everything in the valley. Tarzana was named after Tarzan because Edgar Rice Burroughs

1977–1978

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

HOLY SPACE ADVENTURES, BATMAN!

As the year began, we exhibited the Ark II and the Roamer at the Greater Los Angeles Auto Show, to great fanfare. It may have been the only time we actually allowed the public to see the vehicles in person, although the show was doing gangbuster ratings. Later in the year, Curt Brubaker noted in a *Variety* interview that he was actually getting fan mail for the vehicles!

But the biggest news was to come in February. We had made a deal with Jerry Golod at CBS to do *The New Adventures of Batman*, and he wanted to do an unprecedented mid-season debut on the series. By reusing designs from our previous *Batman* show, we were actually able to get a jump on production and make the deadline for February airing. The debut would be February 12th. I think we made the deal in November or December.

One of the biggest coups that we got for the new *Batman* was in hiring Adam West and Burt Ward to vocally reprise the character roles they had played in the 1960s live-action series. Adam was delightful to work with, and Burt had already worked with us on some live pilots before. We had them tone down the campy elements of their live approach, though we did have some of Robin's "Holy Insert-the-word-here, Batman!" phrases pop up again.

Many fans have asked how we got the rights to do Batman and Robin on CBS, when both characters were also starring in *Super Friends* over on ABC, for Hanna-Barbera. The truth is, I don't recall, but it was likely some loophole that DC Comics had in their contract, allowing the exploitation of the characters by two companies for two networks, simultaneously. But we never heard from Hanna-Barbera about that. Basically, we didn't talk to them, and they didn't talk to us.

As for the look of the show, as I mentioned, we mostly reused earlier designs for the characters, though there were some differences here and there. One big difference? Robin's costume got a black "R" on a yellow circle, instead of the other way around. Batgirl was a bit sexier as I recall, and so was Catwoman. We didn't use Alfred the Butler this time. And strangely, although we put the Riddler in our opening credits, he wasn't in the show because Hanna-Barbera had the rights for him!

Other than the Riddler, we were limited in terms of which DC villains we could use. We used Joker, Penguin, Catwoman, Clayface, and Mr. Freeze, but we also created some new villains such as the Moonman, Sweet Tooth, Professor Bubbles, Electro, the Chameleon and Dr. Devious, and Zarbor, who was like an evil version of Bat-Mite from the same magical dimension.

And then there was Bat-Mite. Now, some fans blame Filmation for Bat-Mite, but they don't know their history very well if they do. Bat-Mite first appeared in *Detective Comics* #267 in May 1959, and he was in about 19 stories through the 1950s and 1960s, including *Batman* and *World's Finest* tales. He always had the magical powers which complicated the adventures, and he always wore the goofy version of Batman's costume, but I think we may have added that he had a crush on

Above:
Storyboards, model design and logo for *Batman*

Opposite:
CBS promotional image for *The New Adventures of Batman*

Batgirl. We also changed up the costume some so that he didn't look exactly like a shrunken-down caped crusader, and we gave him a greenish tint to his skin, yellow eyes, and buck teeth.

I was the voice of Bat-Mite (and the Bat-Computer and Clayface), but I didn't work with the other voice actors in an ensemble setting. I worked by myself after-hours. I felt uncomfortable working with those people because they were the veterans. I didn't hide that I did it from them. I just told them I wasn't good enough to do it with them around watching me and laughing at me.

Doing the voice of Bat-Mite was the first time I think I used a machine called a "harmonizer." It was a way that we could control the pitch of the audio without altering the speed of the sound. I couldn't really talk as high as Bat-Mite, though I did try to record it as closely as possible to that sound, so that we didn't have to mess with it too much. "All I wanna do is help!" was the phrase Bat-Mite said in almost every episode.

Melendy Britt came on to do Batgirl and other female voices. It was the first voice she did for us, and I think it may have been the first voice she did for animation. Later on she became our She-Ra. Lennie Weinrib played Commissioner Gordon and all of the villains. Lennie was a standup comedian and a talented guy. These people who do voices are usually more talented in many ways than the people who are just face actors. I mean, they have to do with their voice what a face actor has to do with their whole body. They're terrific. Lennie went to live in Chile for a number of years after he did *Batman*.

One of the biggest changes between our old *Batman* and the new *Batman* was that we did all the writing this time; DC Comics didn't have anything to do with the scripts. They were pretty much straight-out adventure, with very little in the way of educational elements to them. We did the Bat Messages at the end of each show to bring in a moral point, but they were a bit weaker than our other series.

Like *Tarzan*, we shot some live-action footage of running, jumping, swinging, and other things, and rotoscoped over the footage to create extremely fluid superheroic movement for Gotham City's protectors. We also beefed up our background art and made some changes to the various Bat-gadgets and Bat-vehicles.

The February 12th debut of *The New Adventures of Batman* necessitated another schedule change for CBS. Now the shows aired in the following order: *Tarzan, Lord of the Jungle* at 10:00 a.m.; *Batman* at 10:30; *The Shazam!/Isis Hour* at 11:00; *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids* at noon; and *Ark II* at 12:30 p.m. That meant a three-hour uninterrupted block of Filmation on CBS! Almost immediately, the new *Batman* was a big hit. CBS was happy, and it meant that our spring pitch sessions to the networks went more smoothly.

In April we furthered our prior announcement of evening expansion by revealing to the press that we had deals in place for several more properties for CBS and NBC, and that we were in talks with ABC for primetime shows, now the domain of Fred Silverman (we were still locked out of Saturday morning). Confirmed at CBS for the fall Saturday line-up were: *The Batman/Tarzan Adventure Hour; The Secrets of Isis*, now under its complete name; the live-action *Space Academy;* and *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids*. CBS planned to move *Ark II* to Sundays and bring back *The Ghost Busters* for reruns there as well. NBC, meanwhile, had picked up *The New Archie/Sabrina Hour*—with longer stories instead of the skits—and *The Young Sentinels*. Sonny Fox was newly in charge at NBC, and he literally redid their entire Saturday morning schedule!

Announced further by us in the press were: two primetime *Fat Albert* specials (Halloween and Christmas); a feature-length *Flash Gordon* movie for NBC for fall 1978; a 90-minute live-action *Plastic Man* movie for NBC, based on the DC Comics character; and the return of *Groovie Goolies, The Adventures of Gilligan*, and the singing group for *The Archies*. And we were in discussions with Bill Cosby to introduce another animated series we would create with him.

The *Plastic Man* movie wasn't the only live-action DC project we were planning for the year, although *Shazam!* was leaving the air. In addition to doing the voices for their characters, Burt Ward and Adam West were initially going to reprise their characters for live-action wraparounds on *The Batman/Tarzan Adventure Hour*, even

Above:
The *New Adventures* Batgirl

Left:
The Clown Prince of Crime, the Joker

Opposite: (top to bottom)
The Space Academy model

The young cast of *Space Academy*

Brian Tochi, Ric Carrott, and Ty Henderson aboard The Seeker

though we weren't doing any new episodes. By mid-July the plans for a live *Batman and Robin* had dropped, though I don't recall why. Nor do I recall what scuttled our plans for *Plastic Man*, other than that we tried our best to sell him to the networks, but they weren't interested. The following year Ruby-Spears sold him for a 1979 animated show, and the show we had tried our best to sell got us in a bit of legal trouble. More on that soon.

We weren't the only ones making a *Flash Gordon* feature; so was Dino de Laurentiis, who licensed the film rights from King Features in August. More about that in a future chapter, but the era of science fiction was about to explode on television and film—and licensing—thanks to two words that shook the galaxy: *Star Wars*.

Now, for those readers who feel that we were riding the wave of *Star Wars* mania that swept the country by creating *Space Academy*, I'll point out that *Star Wars* didn't premiere until May 25, 1977, and nobody knew it was going to be a hit. We had already developed and begun creating *Space Academy* before Luke Skywalker ever took up his lightsaber!

That isn't to say that we didn't benefit from *Star Wars* when it came to production. Several of the people who worked on *Space Academy* were *Star Wars* veterans, and others were effects designers who had grown up in a post-*2001: A Space Odyssey* and *Star Trek* world. I went out to a little place in Van Nuys, and I was looking for people who could make three-dimensional models, because we had to make some ships. And there was an outfit out there that had been doing a movie in England that was going to be released later on that year… *Star Wars*! And in the corner of their shop was a robot—R2-D2—and it's got cobwebs all over it, and there was C-3PO, and X-Wing fighters, and ships lying around all over the place. I thought these guys were nuts! I mean, how can you do that stuff? So, I hired a bunch of them.

Rob Maine, who ended up being one of the effects supervisors, had actually talked us into building the Academy on an asteroid rather than a space station. The asteroid was painted Styrofoam, while the three geodesic domes were inverted champagne glasses and the exhaust pipes were painted cigar tubes. The original Academy model cost about $200 in supplies. John Erdland, Lorne Peterson, and Paul Houston also did models for *Space Academy*, creating the spaceship and the Academy itself in a garage workshop, out of model kit parts from tanks and other vehicles.

Sets for *Space Academy* cost about $300,000 and included the interior Academy sets, a planet set with a movable cyclorama backdrop, the Seeker launch bay (with the nose of the Ark II doubling as The Seeker spaceship), and an effects set. Chuck Comisky, who is now a pretty big name in special effects with James Cameron and such, also helped supervise the effects; we didn't know he had kind of fudged his résumé to get hired, but he did an excellent job. He came up with a great way to do outer space, which was to hang a black curtain on a wall, and to have little Christmas tree lights all over it that they could make twinkle.

But I'm getting a bit ahead of myself. Just in case you aren't familiar with the show, here's the gist of *Space Academy*: Under the guidance of their instructor Commander Isaac Gampu, the young cadets of Blue Team One who are attending Space Academy in the year 3732 include Captain Chris Gentry; his telepathic sister, Laura Gentry; action-oriented Tee Gar Soom; brainy Lieutenant Paul Jerome; and the pretty, young Adrian Pryce-Jones. Joining the group for learning and adventure are the robot Peepo and the blue-haired, mysterious space orphan Loki.

I owe thanks for this show to Allen "Duke" Ducovny, who at that point was working for ABC on special programming. He called me and said, "I've really always wanted to do a radio show called *Space*

show). Norm also made a not-so-subtle dig that Fred Silverman would know how to properly deal with *Fat Albert* if he were still in charge. It was a risky move to publicly gripe about network programmers, but we wouldn't know what it meant for some time to come.

Meanwhile, thanks to a Nielsen report that showed that certain kinds of animation were big hits with older audiences—as proven by our two top-rated *Fat Albert* specials—CBS primetime put in an order for three more *Fat Albert* evening shows, and NBC announced that *Flash Gordon* would have a spring 1979 debut.

Originally, *Flash Gordon* had been written as a live telefilm by Sam Peeples, who wrote the *Star Trek* pilots (live and animated). But, when we told NBC the budget for live would be $10 million, they balked and asked us to do it animated. We managed to get a commitment out of them for $1 million, but even that was too low. The film was going to have 22 voices and be done with full animation, and King Features wanted a hefty percentage of the fee. Norm solved the budget problem by pre-selling *Flash Gordon*'s foreign television and theatrical release rights to Dino de Laurentiis for $1,500,000.

That latter deal was essentially a pay-off fee, as de Laurentiis wanted to do his own $12 million live-action *Flash Gordon* film, but, because we owned those rights, he had to make a deal with us, even if he wasn't going to do anything with the animated version. But we had another deal in place with him.

In early May we made a bold announcement in the press. Producer Dino de Laurentiis was backing us with a $4 million dollar budget to produce our first full-length live-action theatrical film. The film was to be called *Seven Warriors–Seven Worlds*, and it was to be scripted by respected science-fiction author Harlan Ellison.

We were also prepping a network presentation for NBC for a two-hour live-action *Batman* reunion show that would catch up with Adam West and Burt Ward ten years after their series left the air. Filmation animator Darrell McNeil described the story in an article once, saying that it was originally 20 years in the future, and all the heroes and villains were retired until aliens came to Gotham City and used their technology to de-age everyone by ten years. According to him, we also planned to give them an orbiting headquarters and a space-worthy Bat-ship. I don't recall any of those details, but Darrell was quite the comics fan, so I suspect that they're true. Reportedly, the script was either by Marc Richards or Sam Peeples.

Meanwhile, we put out casting notices in June for *Jason of Star Command*, and they were as follows: Jason, 20s, athletic, young Errol Flynn type, lead, regular; Nicole, mid-20s, pretty, athletic, lead, regular; Parsafoot, 40s, scientific character, Jason's sidekick, mentor, and friend, regular; Vanessa, 30s, femme fatale, sultry, seductive, bewitching, hard, regular; Dragos, any age, play half-human and half-robot villain type, will be costumed, regular; available guest stars with recognizable names to play cameos.

We were originally going to use Jonathan Harris as Gampu, reprising his role from *Space Academy*, but we had a falling out. We had to negotiate with him for a raise, and Jonathan wasn't happy about what we offered. He came to me and said, "Louie, never take me for granted. I am a professional, and I demand to be treated as a professional. I do not negotiate." And I said, "Jonathan, you're absolutely right, and I apologize," and asked him what he wanted. He responded, "I want not to do it from now on," and he walked out. I had apparently hurt his ego, and he didn't speak to me for a long time. Years later we finally made up, and used to go to lunch once a week or so. But, since we didn't have Jonathan, we brought in Jimmy Doohan to play the role of the Star Command leader, Commander Canarvin. He was the perfect guy to do a Saturday morning live-action sci-fi show.

By the way, my daugther, Erika, had come to work for us that summer, working for Joe Mazzuca. She was supposed to answer phones, but she wasn't very good at it and kept hanging up on people. So, Joe assigned her to help with casting on *Jason of Star Command*, and she did a lot better at that. It helped her push her limits. She had previously hung around Hal Sutherland a lot because he was such a family friend, and he taught her animation directing. He even let her direct a small sequence on a *Fat Albert* episode!

Jason of Star Command was really a breakthrough show. It was a sequel to *Space Academy*, and even used some of the same sets,

1979–1980

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

THE YEAR OF LEGAL DISCONTENT

Despite the fact that they hadn't bought anything from us since *Uncle Croc's Block*, we actually made some headway with ABC as 1979 began. As reported in the press in mid-January, we were negotiating with Squire Rushnell, ABC's vice president in charge of children's programming, and Peter Roth, the West Coast head of the same division, for a very unusual Saturday morning star. The project we were planning to deliver was *The Dracula Hour*, which was going to include animated short adventures of Dracula, Frankenstein, and The Phantom Spaceman, as well as a new live-action serial called *Dracula in Space*. Unfortunately, ABC head Michael Eisner killed that project after we had gained some serious momentum.

Days after the *Dracula* news broke, NBC made an early pre-buy of *Flash Gordon* for Saturday mornings, even though we had yet to finish the feature-length movie for them. Mike Brockman, who was then the vice president of daytime programming offered us 24 episodes of the series for a two-year run, and our old buddy Fred Silverman quickly signed off on the deal. At the time, when networks were buying 13–16 episodes for a first season, and three to eight for a second year, the fact that NBC pre-bought 24 episodes was "precedent-shattering," as Norm Prescott told reporters.

In mid-February, TelePrompTer announced its revenues for the year, and, for the first time, Filmation was down from a previous year. The discrepancy was easily explained, however; the 1977 grosses had included the very large amount paid to us for syndication rights for the *Archies* packages, whereas no huge sale like that had been made in 1978.

By late February we were back with our regular announcements of big plans, this time touting to the press that we were developing a slate of five films for self-distribution to theatres. We gave a date of October 5th for a full-length feature of *The Fat Albert Movie*, but did not name the other four films-to-be. Additionally, we were opening up the remainder of the Filmation library for syndication as of September 1980, including 36 *Fat Albert* episodes, 22 *Isis* shows, 15 each of *Ark II, Ghost Busters*, and *Space Academy*, and 13 each of *Space Sentinels* and *Fabulous Funnies*. We felt that we could make a better deal by selling the syndication to specific advertisers and letting them place the shows where they wanted them, not unlike some of

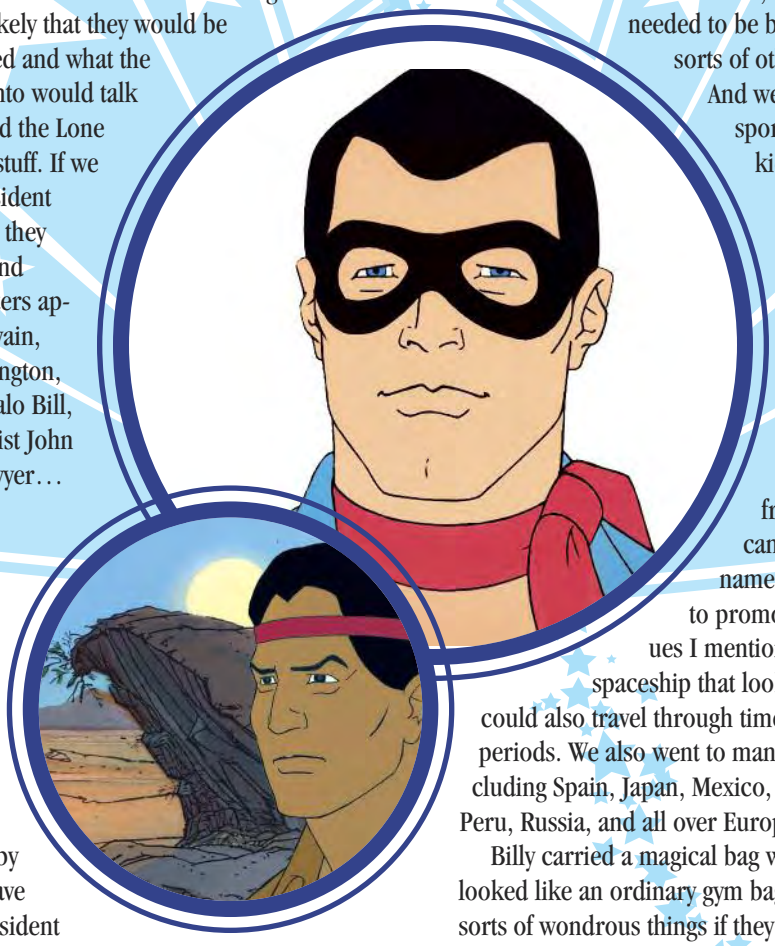
Opposite
Flash Gordon promotional art and model sheets

Above:
Model design for Emperor Ming

on *Lone Ranger*. This time out, we had to rotoscope some stuff with horses though, to make sure we got the movements to look right.

One of the toughest things about doing *Lone Ranger* was that we had to be very sensitive about the use of weapons. Even in the radio show, he used a gun, but he only used it to keep people from hurting themselves or being hurt, never for purposely hurting others. And he got in lots of fistfights and brawls. We had to come up with tricky ways to get around that, using his guns for sharp-shooting techniques, and taking out the fighting. Despite the fact that it was in all the original TV shows and kids saw reruns of those and other westerns all the time, it wasn't okay for Saturday morning cartoons to show gun or fist violence. But the Lone Ranger was the best guy on a planet with a six-gun, so it was okay to shoot a gun out of a bad guy's hand or use trick shooting to save a life or foil an evil plan. But he never shot to kill, and he never shot at anyone.

This was a period show, so we came up with an interesting tactic to bring in some of the prosocial or educational messages in the stories. It was more likely that they would be talking about where they lived and what the world was like then, and Tonto would talk about stories of the West, and the Lone Ranger would do historical stuff. If we featured somebody like President Ulysses S. Grant in the show, they would discuss who he was and what he did. We had characters appear like Nellie Bly, Mark Twain, Alfred Nobel, Fredrick Remington, Jesse and James Frank, Buffalo Bill, Annie Oakley, famed naturalist John Muir, even fictional Tom Sawyer… you name them! If they were around, they were used! We also put little educational tags on the end of each episode, with Lone Ranger or Tonto describing some historical fact about the episode.



Most of the episodes were written either by story editor Arthur Browne Jr. or by Dennis Marks, but we did have one episode called "The President Plot," written by the talented Tom Ruegger, who later helped create *Animaniacs*, *Tiny Toons Adventures*, and *Pinky and the Brain* among others. In it, the Lone Ranger and Tonto were helping at the Promontory Point, Utah, golden spike ceremony for the first transcontinental railroad. There was a villain who was trying to stop it, and our story had President Grant on the way to Promontory Point. In 1999, when they did the *Wild, Wild West* feature film, it had almost the exact same story! I wonder if they watched the *Lone Ranger* cartoon from Filmation?

Above:
Images of Lone Ranger and Tonto

Despite what it says in online sources, although preliminary development had begun in 1979, we didn't animate *Sport Billy* until 1980, and the show was first broadcast in Germany that year. We made the deal with this German group, and we had no ownership in the show as I recall; we produced the show, and they sold it all over the world themselves. We did make a royalty profit from it past the initial production fees of $200,000 per episode, for a total of $5,200,000. The biggest reason we took it was so that I could keep my animators working during the off-season. The Germans didn't have the same kind of delivery time for the fall that the U.S. networks did, so it enabled me to give more work to the people working at Filmation. I guess it was the opposite of "runaway production," as we were bringing work to the United States instead of taking it away like other studios.

The Sport Billy character was already really popular throughout Europe and South America in comic books and toys, mainly connected to soccer, but we knew that the character needed to be broadened out, so we brought in all sorts of other sports that he got involved in. And we could teach fair play, teamwork, sportsmanship, and healthy concepts to kids watching.

I don't remember how much of the backstory came from the comics, if any of it did, but the initial early concepts were by Rolf Deyhle. We had a twin planet for Earth called Olympus that rotated on the opposite side of the sun from Earth, so we never saw it. That's where all the god-like beings from mythology were from. And Billy came to Earth, along with a little girl named Lilly and a talking dog named Willy, to promote sportsmanship and the other values I mentioned. They travelled around in a spaceship that looked like a giant wind-up clock, and it could also travel through time, so we could go to different time periods. We also went to many different countries on the show, including Spain, Japan, Mexico, China, Norway, the Middle East, Peru, Russia, and all over Europe.

Billy carried a magical bag with him called the Omni-Sack, which looked like an ordinary gym bag, but from which he could pull all sorts of wondrous things if they needed them on their adventures. He would pull out a miniature car or helicopter or baseball bat and they would grow to full size for him to use. And because every hero needed an adversary, they had an evil witch chasing them around who hated fairness. She was Queen Vanda from Vandalusia, and she had a groveling little henchman named Snipe. The head guy from Olympus was named President Sportikus XI.

The shows were generally dubbed, though sometimes they were subtitled. The English language voices were my son Lane Scheimer as Sport Billy; Joyce Bulifant, who was in CBS's primetime series *Flo* at the time, as Lilly and Queen Vanda (not Linda Gary as has been

guidelines to come into play, largely because Teleprompter and Westinghouse did not carry his Cable News Network (CNN). A temporary stay was ordered by the U.S. Court of Appeals on August 13th, but the stay was lifted on August 18th, and the merger went through. As of that date, the ownership of Filmation for the future was going to change. We just didn't know how much or when. And, so, business continued as normal.

I already noted that *Zorro* was being sent overseas, so let me fill in more about the show and how it came to be in the state it was in.

Zorro was an interesting story. It had never been done in animation. It was based on a 1919 short story written by Johnson McCauley, but the character had been in numerous serials, movies, and TV series since the 1920s. We sold *Zorro* because it was a recognizable name. It was always difficult to sell shows that had never been seen or heard of before. But with this show, even if you had never seen one of *Zorro*'s adventures, you knew the name.

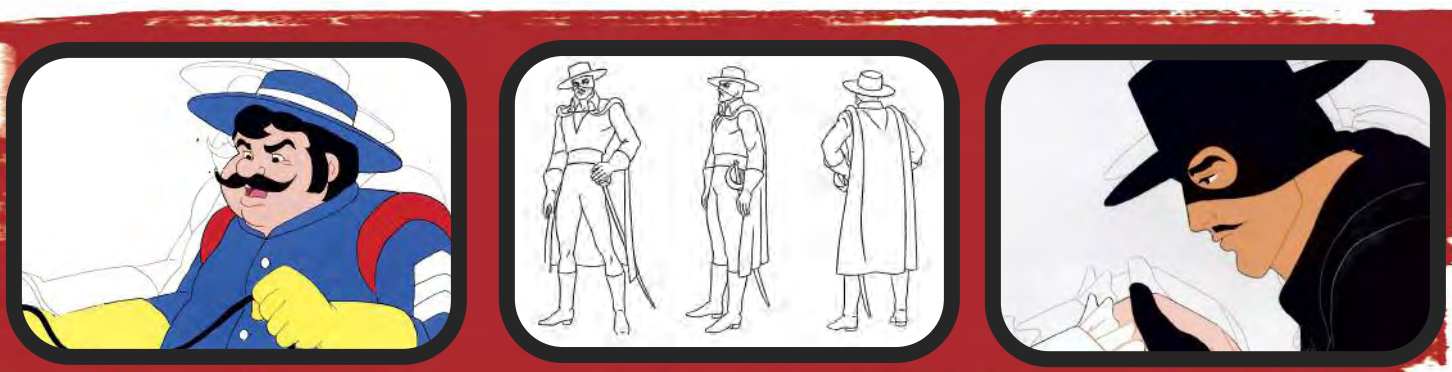
Zorro was the first animated show for certain—and possibly the first U.S. show of any sort—which featured a cast composed entirely of Spanish or Latino actors and actresses. Originally, we announced that Fernando Lamas would be the voice of Zorro, but in July, as production began, Lamas had to cancel out on us. We chose Henry Darrow to replace him as the voice of Zorro and his alter ego, the wealthy Don Diego de la Vega. Julio Medina was his faithful sidekick, Miguel, a.k.a. Amigo, and the female leads on the show were Christina Avila, who played Diego's love interest Maria de Varella, and Socorro Valdez, who played sexy pirate Lucia.

Don Diamond, who played Sgt. Gonzales—and who had starred in the 1950s *Zorro* live-action show—was an incompetent bad guy mostly played for laughs. We also had Eric Mason as the ruthless villain Captain Ramon, Carlos Rivas as Zorro's father, Governor General Don Alejandro de la Vega, and Ismael "East" Carlo as the Mission's priest, Fray Gaspar.

Arthur Nadel was in charge of the writing department for the company, but the scripts were mostly written by Arthur Browne Jr. or a talented young guy named Robby London, except for a few by Ron Schultz and Sam Schultz and by Marty Wagner. Robby was a fan of swashbuckling stories and told me he even had fencing lessons as a kid! Arthur liked him a lot, and Ted Field, one of the guys in control at CBS, liked his stories as well.

As noted, this was the first show we had to send overseas, and it was all due to the network being so late at approving story premises and scripts. There was no way we could deliver all the work in time with the people we had working, who were already working on our other shows to deliver. So we sent the 13 episodes overseas to an outfit called Tokyo Movie Shinsha (TMS), who were a very good Japanese animation studio. But they had a terrible time. They only had five weeks to deliver the first episode back to us completed.

We sent Don Christensen over to Japan to work with TMS. He loved the way the Japanese worked; he said they would come in and work all day, then sleep at night at the office, and wake up in the morning at their job. He was a very close friend of mine, but we had been drifting apart; he said I was a roadblock to getting things done, without me yet knowing that the opposite was the case. So, it was getting difficult for me to work with him. He wanted to go off to Japan, and I said, "Whatever you want to do Don." He was in charge of all the layout people at Filmation, and when he left, the place really started to hum and work. He had apparently driven them crazy. He would stay there at night and work overtime, and he had actually become the bottleneck. But now he was off to Japan to work with TMS to get *Zorro* produced correctly, and Filmation's layout department became a calmer place.



It was not a good way to work, but TMS tried hard, and Filmation tried hard, and we all did as well as we could. I probably should not have taken the show on; I should've refused to produce it. We just had too many shows to do this year. It hurt a lot to send this stuff overseas, and TMS broke their bones to try to get it to us on time, but there were little mistakes in it. The work looked good, but in some places it was not up to our normal standard, and it was not TMS's fault; they did an impossible job.

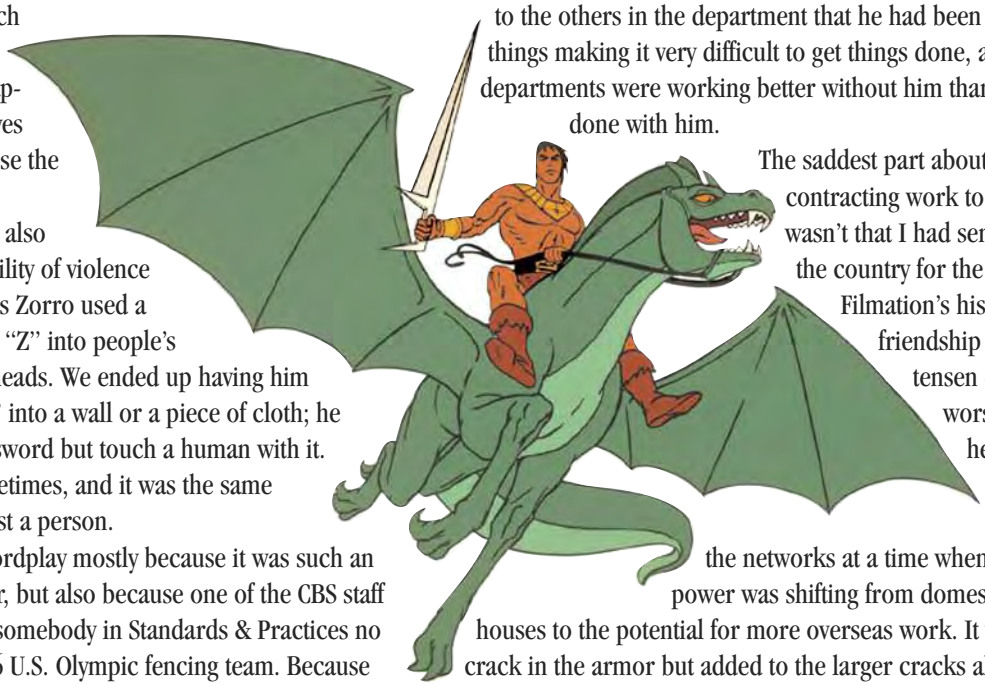
One of the elements that made this show difficult was that it's hard to animate a character dressed completely in black. You have to use white lines instead of black lines to encompass the body, so that you know where to do the

Opposite & Above : Designs and images from *Zorro*

paint in the back. If you watch the episodes closely, you'll probably see some stuff disappear right in front of your eyes every once in a while, because the lines were colored wrong.

As with *Lone Ranger*, we also had an issue with the possibility of violence portrayed by the good guy, as Zorro used a sword and slashed the letter "Z" into people's chests and cheeks and foreheads. We ended up having him generally slash the letter "Z" into a wall or a piece of cloth; he would do anything with his sword but touch a human with it. Zorro also used a whip sometimes, and it was the same story; he never used it against a person.

We got away with the swordplay mostly because it was such an integral part of the character, but also because one of the CBS staff members—I believe it was somebody in Standards & Practices no less—had been on the 1976 U.S. Olympic fencing team. Because he was so supportive of the show—and had the chops—we filmed him as our rotoscope model for the Zorro swordfights.



to the others in the department that he had been one of the things making it very difficult to get things done, and the departments were working better without him than they had done with him.

The saddest part about us subcontracting work to TMS in the end wasn't that I had sent work outside the country for the first time in Filmation's history, nor that my friendship with Don Christensen ended. The worst part was that it helped a Japanese studio get a foothold into the networks at a time when the balance of power was shifting from domestic animation houses to the potential for more overseas work. It was only a small crack in the armor but added to the larger cracks already caused by Hanna-Barbera, Ruby-Spears, and DePatie-Freleng—and the actions of the animation union that were to come in 1982, it was a crack that I regret ever having contributed to.

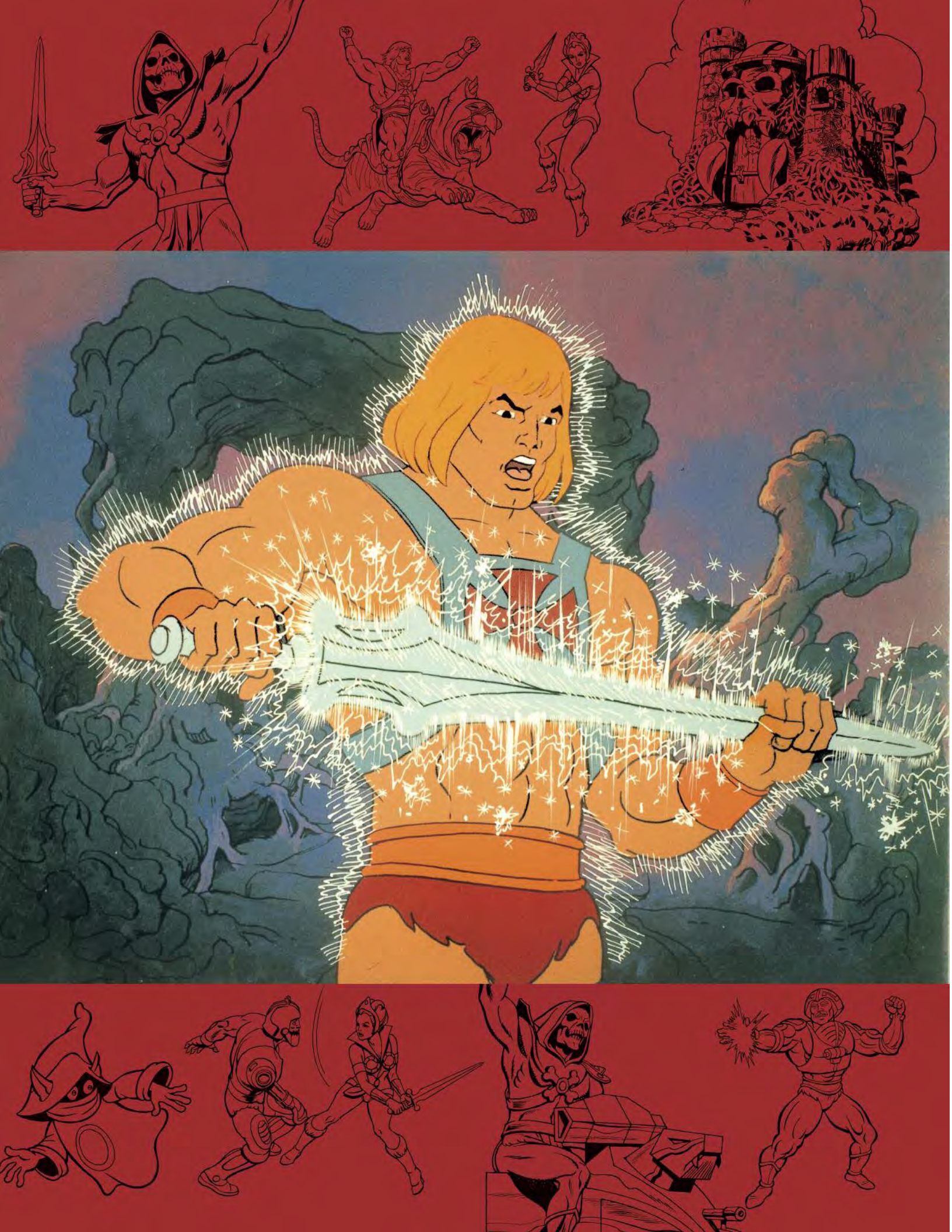
As with *Lone Ranger*, we had Zorro do little informational educational messages at the end of each episode, often talking about the history of California, or teaching viewers Spanish words or phrases. It was nice to have an ethnic character that no one else had ever used quite like this before. We did the tags that would appeal to a Spanish audience and yet also be of interest to a non-Spanish audience.

Speaking of history, in 1983, Henry Darrow starred as Zorro in a live-action Disney sitcom called *Zorro and Son*, and from 1990–1993, he played Zorro's father in another live-action syndicated *Zorro* series!

After *Zorro* was over, Don Christensen came back and told me that he didn't want to work anymore for anybody else. He wanted to give a shot at trying to start his own series. He tried to sell stuff on his own, but you just couldn't do that at the time. So, eventually, he and I went to lunch, and he asked to be hired on again. I told him that he could come back at the same wage—which was a lot more than the other guys were making—but not doing the job he had been doing. He got angry and wouldn't even look at me or shake hands with me. And I lost a friend. But I knew by then from talking

In addition to the 13 new *Zorro* shows, we did twelve new 11-minute *Lone Ranger* episodes, which could bracket around the *Tarzan* or *Zorro* episodes to create the hour-long shows. Most of those were written by a new female writer, Misty Stewart. We also got another eight-episode order for *The New Fat Albert Show*, plus the Easter special. And then there were our other two new shows.

Blackstar was a fantasy show with magic in it. I said, "Let's get a guy from Earth, put him in outer space someplace, make him a superhero, and give him some powers that would allow us to have some fantasy on Saturday morning." We came up with an astronaut named John Blackstar whose space shuttle is pulled through a black hole, and he finds himself crash-landing on the distant planet Sagar. There, he's rescued by the tiny Trobbits, who were seven little dwarf-like creatures. The planet of Sagar was threatened by the Overlord, a dark magician who possessed the Power Sword, which was one half of the powerful Powerstar. After Blackstar gained the other half of the weapon—the Star Sword—he allied himself with the Trobbits, plus a shape-shifter named Klone, a sorceress named Mara, and a dragon named Warlock, to fight the Overlord and bring



CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO 1983-1984

WE HAVE THE POWER!

Our announcement of first-run syndication on *He-Man* was almost immediately echoed by new company DIC, which announced that they would also do a new first-run series for fall 1983 daily syndication, called *Inspector Gadget*. DIC was a French company at that point, and partnered for the series with Nelvana in Canada. DIC was very anti-union; they did their writing, designs, storyboards, and some other things in the U.S., but they outsourced all the animation work to Japan's Tokyo Movie Shinsha and Taiwan's Cuckoo's Nest Studios. Like *He-Man*, they were offering 65 new half-hours, but they didn't have the track record that Filmation did, and so sales weren't as brisk.

Gadget's creator and DIC's chairman and CEO was Andy Heyward, a former Hanna-Barbera writer. On January 27th, he wrote a piece for *Variety* extolling international co-productions as a way to "maximize production income and secure a quality of production otherwise unavailable." Glossing over the loss of jobs for American animators, he discussed how subcontracted foreign labor was cheaper—even if costs were rising—and how the rise of computer-assisted animation would get rid of "the time-consuming process of inking and painting individual cells (sic)." He also talked about working with licensing companies and manufacturers early in the creative process of a show, citing DIC's work with Bandai and Filmation's work with Mattel as examples. Nowhere in the article did it state he owned one of the companies discussed. Nor was he privy to exactly what our relationship with Mattel was. More on that in a bit.

As we began marketing our library internationally, some of our ads pointedly included a new tagline: "All made in the U.S.A." Alice Donenfeld traveled to Monte Carlo in February, repping Filmation at the Group W booths. She signed Rete 4, a major Italian station, for *He-Man*. Other markets soon followed. By the time of March's NATPE conference, we had presold *He-Man* to 38 markets, domestically and internationally, and started discussing a major deal with RCA-Columbia Home Video.

We also licensed five titles from our library in the U.S. to Family Home Entertainment (FHE) for home video distribution: *The Lone Ranger, Lassie's Rescue Rangers, The New Adventures of Zorro, Blackstar*, and *Shazam!* They released the five as one-hour titles in the spring at $29.95 each, which, in the early days of the market, was an excellent price for a kid's video. FHE had broken records with their sales of *Strawberry Shortcake*

Opposite:
Image and character art for *He-Man and the Masters of the Universe*

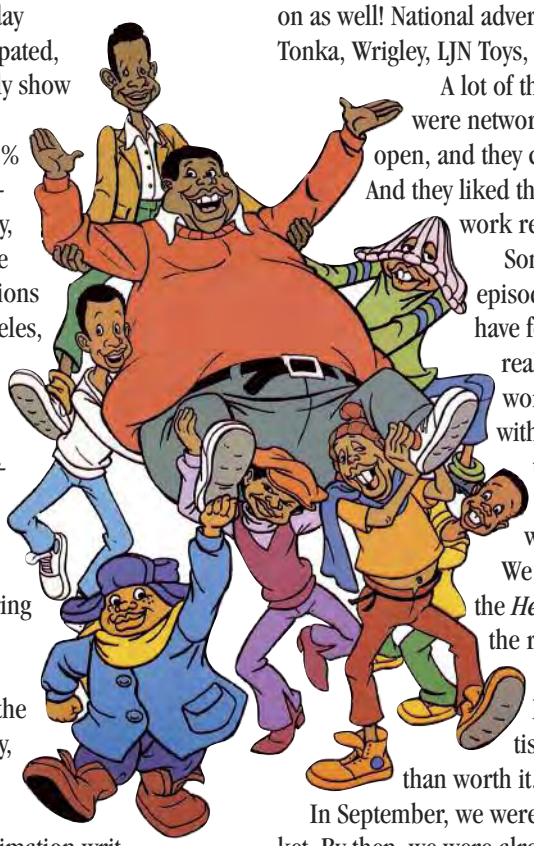
Above:
Castle Grayskull

videos at that price; most "kidvid" titles sold about 5,000 copies, while Ms. Shortcake took a much larger bite with initial orders of 25,000 copies. Keep those numbers in mind….

For April's MIPTV market in Cannes, I attended to help sell our shows, and brought my wife and daughter, Erika, along. There, we closed our deal with RCA-Columbia, but couldn't announce it yet. We also made a deal with Thorn EMI Home Video to release videocassette volumes for *Fat Albert* and *The Archies*. And we contracted with Western World Television to sell and distribute the Filmation library in Asia, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Spain, Latin America, and South Africa.

Meanwhile, on network television, by spring 1983, CBS had ganged all of our shows together. *Gilligan's Planet* was running at noon, followed by *The New Fat Albert Show* at 12:30 p.m. and *Blackstar* at 1:00 p.m. On March 30th, CBS repeated *The Fat Albert Easter Special*. And in late April the fall Saturday morning schedules were announced. As anticipated, the networks had all but boycotted us. Our only show was on CBS: *The New Fat Albert Show*.

By early June we had cleared more than 70% of the country for *He-Man*, as well as eight foreign markets including England, Australia, Italy, and Argentina! It was a success already, and we hadn't even aired anything from it. Among stations carrying it were heavy-hitters KCOP in Los Angeles, WNEW in New York, and WFLD in Chicago. Stations signed up for eight airings of the 65 episodes over two years on a barter basis, meaning that they got four minutes of commercial time per show, while Group W and Mattel got two minutes. Video game company Coleco had already signed up as a national advertiser for a 30-second ad on a 52-week cycle. Bartering meant that the advertising money would more than make up the show's budget—and lead to profitability—before the shows were even on the air. England's ITV, which didn't run shows daily, bought eight runs of each episode for a five-year period.



In mid-July a dust-up occurred between animation writers represented by IATSE 839 and the Writers Guild of America (WGA). That latter group still wanted to rep animation writers—and took the fight to the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB)—as they had since they first petitioned for the change back in 1972. NLRB refused to review the request, a decision backed by not only IATSE 839, but in a rare move of solidarity, also by Filmation, Marvel, and Hanna-Barbera!

In late July we announced our deal with RCA-Columbia; they would bring out the first of three volumes of *He-Man* videotapes to the market in August, prior to the show's official debut, at the lowest price ever offered for home video content. What made the deal so rare was that, at the time, most product was priced for the video rental market, not for home buying, and an untried property was seen as a risk. RCA-Columbia was doing the video with two episodes on it, for $24.95. Videodisks were also planned. Even *Variety* called the plan "unprecedented."

In mid-August, we made a deal with The Corporation for Public Broadcasting to do a one-hour *Fat Albert Special* as part of a new show they were developing called *WonderWorks*. I'm not sure what happened to that project, but new *Fat Albert* was very much in the forefront of Filmation's mind, even if new shows seemed an impossibility for CBS to consider.

Also by mid-August, with only a month to go before airing, *He-Man* had cleared 90 stations in the U.S., including the top 20 markets, meaning it would reach about 80% of homes with televisions. And our foreign market had exploded. In addition to the previously mentioned countries, we were now set to air in Chile, Bolivia, Peru, Columbia, Ecuador, Uruguay, Paraguay, Costa Rica, the Bahamas, Trinidad, Jamaica, Barbados, Puerto Rico, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and Hong Kong. Oh, and the Armed Forces Network had signed on as well! National advertisers now included Nabisco, Shasta, Atari, Tonka, Wrigley, LJN Toys, Lever Bros., and Leisure Dynamics.

A lot of the stations that ended up buying *He-Man* were network stations that had an afternoon block open, and they could put children's programming in there. And they liked the idea of an all-new show, not just old network reruns or even older theatrical packages.

Some people have asked why there were 65 episodes. That number allowed the stations to have four runs a year, Monday to Friday. That was really about the same amount of reruns a network would do for a Saturday morning show with 16 episodes per year—with preemptions, they'd get about four airings—but the difference was that they were on only once a week.

We were well on our way to completing half of the *He-Man* episodes by the end of August, with the rest finishing up by November. The total cost for the 65 episodes would be $14 million, but the returns from the barter advertising prices looked like they would be more than worth it.

In September, we were off to sell at the London Multi-Media Market. By then, we were already getting approached by videogame companies to use our characters and animation in their upcoming games; the entertainment market was buzzing with the success of *Dragon's Lair*, a game which combined Don Bluth animation with laserdisc technology.

On Saturday, September 24th, Mattel and Filmation screened a special *He-Man and the Masters of the Universe* movie event in ten cities throughout the country. We combined three episode of the show into a 70-minute story, and Mattel did a focus invite to children's groups in each city. The biggest of the events was at Mann's Chinese Theatre on Hollywood Boulevard, where live-action versions of He-Man, Teela, Skeletor, and Orko marched down the street, engaged in a mock battle in the shadow of a full-size He-Man hot air balloon, and did a live stage show indoors. It was a red carpet show for me and my family, and others from Filmation, who saw the excitement of the audience, and knew, without a doubt, that we had a