



RETRO FAN

Fall 2018

No. 2 \$8.95

Trick or Treat,
kiddies!

Ben
Cooper
Halloween
Costumes



Open the vault of
TV horror-hosts,
with
ELVIRA
& fiendish friends



Take a
Look at
Superhero
View-
Masters®

Welcome to
Horrible
Hall... The
Groovie
Goolies



DIG



this crazy
Dinosaur
Land

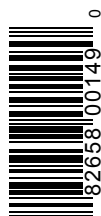


Super
Collector's
Legion of
Lunch
Boxes

Tune in to the Sixties' most bewitching, munsterific sitcoms!

Featuring **Andy Mangels** • **Scott Saavedra** • **Mark Voger** • and the **Oddball World of Scott Shaw!**

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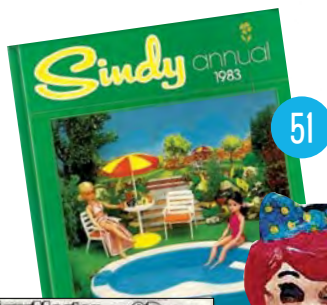
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ReJECTED

RetroFan fantasy cover



This is how I heard the story.

Early in 1965 my father won \$100 from a betting pool at work. He was then an elevator operator at the stunningly deco Bullocks Wilshire department store in famous Los Angeles, California. My parents had a fifth child on the way. Certainly, \$100 would help pay upcoming hospital bills, right?

The cash prize made it home in the form of a brand-new color television set—a \$400 color television set that knocked out the back window of my parents' Ford Comet station wagon because it wasn't tied down when it was brought home.

A new color TV set that we didn't need but my father bought—because that's what he told everyone at work he would do in the heat of his winning moment. That was fine by me and the rest of my siblings, current and to come. My mom? She got over it.

It was a big, beautiful, steel box, colored and imprinted to look like wood. It stood on

**BEN
COOPER**

Halloween Costumes

**AN
INTERVIEW WITH
IRA J. COOPER**

Masquerading on Halloween has long been an American tradition and is one of childhood's most beloved rituals. For the kids of yesteryear that scoured store shelves and racks for that perfect trick-or-treating costume, one manufacturer's name stood supreme: Ben Cooper.

From the late Thirties through the late Eighties, New York-based Ben Cooper, Inc. was one of the top producers of inexpensive retail masks and costumes featuring everything from generic goblins, popular licensed characters, and media figures (including U.S. presidents). Ben Cooper and his brother Nat Cooper recognized the commercial value of pop-culture icons and built an empire upon affordable dress-up ensembles, trading on their skills as theatrical costumers. Boys and girls who are now adult RetroFans fondly recall their Halloween candy quests disguised as their favorite characters, decked out in Ben Cooper costumes of everyone from Donald Duck to Cinderella, Fred Flintstone to Princess Leia, Pac-Man to Wonder Woman, Mr. T to Miss Piggy—even offbeat trick-or-treating personalities such as Chuck Norris and Captain Merrill Stubing from *The Love Boat*!

Ben Cooper products are best remembered for their vacuformed plastic masks, with eyeholes and usually with nostril holes and mouth slits, held onto a kid's face with a rubber band; and their vinyl costumes, brightly colored smocks that secured in the back with strings not unlike the ties on the backs of hospital gowns. The masks were sometimes dead-on depictions of their host characters—Ben Cooper's Dick Tracy mask, for example, almost looks as if cartoonist Chester Gould had drawn it; while others were less-accurate representations of their characters—such as Aquaman, whose generic white face with blond hair was covered with an orange domino mask with scales. Ben Cooper costume fronts sometimes recreated the outfit of the characters they represented, but more often than not displayed an illustration of the character (or of a TV show's cast), complete with the character's or show's logo for the benefit of those clueless, candy-shoveling parents who might otherwise ask of the well-costumed trick-or-treater, *Now who do we have here?*

Ben Cooper, Inc.'s costumes were usually marketed in a colorful box with a cellophane "window" which allowed the mask inside to be seen, although costumes could sometimes be found sold on cardboard hangers or in window-less boxes. Many of the company's masks were also sold separately. Ben Cooper masks and costumes not only helped define Halloween as we know it (and perhaps pointed some future cosplayers toward their passion), but the company itself also helped rescue the holiday in the early Eighties in response to parental fears over potential candy-tampering (copycatting the horrific Tylenol®-poisoning murders of 1982) by forming the Halloween Celebration Committee as part of a public-awareness



CONDUCTED BY MICHAEL EURY

ELVIRA

Mistress of the Dark

by Mark Voger



PHOTO: Mark Voger.

Horror movie nerds can be a lonely lot. Well, what do you expect when your best pickup line is: “Wanna come to my place and watch *The Four Skulls of Jonathan Drake*?”

Maybe that’s why Elvira—the horror hostess with, *ahem*, the most—has endured and flourished. With her ribald jokes, not to mention her va-va-voom décolletage, Elvira makes us feel a little less alone as we indulge our passion for fright flicks.

The role of the horror host has traditionally been filled by local talent in a given television market. But actress Cassandra Peterson, who co-created and plays Elvira, established herself as the *nation’s* horror host. She did it with savvy branding... and pure hustle.

It all began in the early Eighties, when Peterson, then a member of Los Angeles’ famous Groundlings improv-comedy group, landed a hosting gig on *Movie Macabre* for KHJ-TV in L.A. On the program, she presented films from *The Incredible 2-Headed Transplant* to *The House That Dripped Blood* to *The Torture Chamber of Dr. Sadism*. Not surprisingly, Elvira attracted much attention, and it wasn’t long before her appeal spilled—no pun intended—into the national consciousness.

There was her subsequent syndicated series... her “ThrillerVideo” line on VHS (remember those?) and the “Elvira’s Movie Macabre” line on DVD... TV appearances on *The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson*, *The Arsenio Hall Show*, *Wrestlemania 2*, *Hulkamania 6*, the reality show *The Search for the Next Elvira*, and even a Bob Hope special... her movies *Elvira: Mistress of the Dark* (1988) and *Elvira’s Haunted Hills* (2001)... her comic book *Elvira’s House of Mystery* from DC Comics, home of Superman and Batman... her Coors Light endorsement (which faithfully placed life-sized Elvira cut-outs in taverns at Halloween time)... her countless convention appearances... two Elvira-themed pinball machines... and a return to comic books, first from Claypool Comics in 1993, and recently in a new series that launched in July 2018 from Dynamite Entertainment.

Elvira’s costume is sexy-creepy in the tradition of Morticia Addams and Vampira (who once sued Peterson unsuccessfully), but with a sexy-trashy twist. When in character, Peterson wears Elvira’s trademark gravity-defying, trailer-park-friendly hair-do in jet black; Vegas-showgirl makeup (heavy on the eyeliner and rouge); black nails; a plunging black dress that could double as a shroud; sheer black stockings; and shiny black stilettos. Yep, black is her color.

The Groovie Goolies all jam in Horrible Hall in this rare piece of 1970 promotional art. (INSET) Filmation Studios co-founder and producer Lou Scheimer, c. 1970. © the respective copyright holder.



GROOVIE

by Andy Mangels

Welcome back to *Andy Mangels' Retro Saturday Morning*. Since 1989, I have been writing columns for magazines in the U.S. and foreign countries, all examining the intersection of comic books and Hollywood, whether animation or live-action. *Andy Mangels Backstage*, *Andy Mangels' Reel Marvel*, *Andy Mangels' Hollywood Heroes*, *Andy Mangels Behind the Camera*... nearly three decades of reporting on animation and live-action—in addition to writing many books and producing around 40 DVD sets—and I'm still enthusiastic. In this new *RetroFan* column, I will examine shows that thrilled us from yesteryear, exciting our imaginations and capturing our memories. Grab some milk and cereal, sit cross-legged leaning against the couch, and dig in to *Retro Saturday Morning*!

"Everybody shout, come on now, sing out! It's time for the Goolies get-together! We got jokes for everyone, with laughter, songs, and fun, so let's go to the Goolies get-together!"

So began the theme song for *Groovie Goolies* in 1970, and Saturday morning television was never quite the same. An mélange of monster movies, soft rock songs, fourth-wall-breaking

self-awareness, and counterculture humor, nothing quite like the *Groovie Goolies* had ever aired on television before.

But what led to the international hit, and why did it burn so brightly... then disappear like a ghost?

Horrific Inspirations

In the realm of cinema horror, three monsters reigned supreme. Dracula, Frankenstein, and the Wolf Man had been immortalized onscreen by Universal Studios in feature films in 1931—the Tod Browning-directed *Dracula* starring Bela Lugosi and the James Whale-directed *Frankenstein* starring Boris Karloff; and 1941—in *The Wolf Man*, directed by George Waggner and starring Lon Chaney, Jr.—alongside other creatures and spooks such as the Mummy, the Invisible Man, the Phantom of the Opera, the Bride of Frankenstein, and more. Many of the creatures were based on either novels such as Mary Shelley's 1818 *Frankenstein* or Bram Stoker's 1897 *Dracula*, or they were based on European legends of lycanthropy, or whispers of Egyptian curses.