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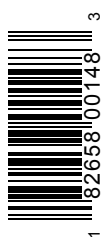
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Lon
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RETRO FAN

THE CRAZY COOL CULTURE

WE GREW UP WITH



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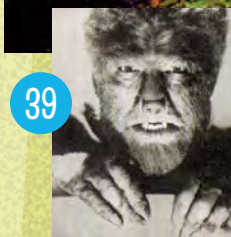
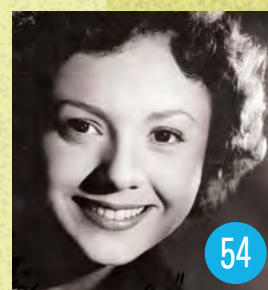
Super Collector

Collecting Collections, by Tom Stewart

80

ReJECTED

RetroFan fantasy cover



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The

HULK Speaks!

RETRO
INTERVIEW

An Interview
with Lou
Ferrigno

By Michael Eury

"Who's your favorite Hulk?" may be a fair question to ask of a fan of Marvel Studios' movies, but for us RetroFans, there's only one answer: Lou Ferrigno.

Giant in both muscle and spirit, the Brooklyn-born Louis "Lou" Ferrigno took a childhood disability—a profound hearing loss—and turned it into a catalyst to become a bodybuilder, partially in response to his fascination with muscle-bound heroes including screen Hercules Steve Reeves and comic books' own Incredible Hulk. After graduating high school he earned an International Federation of BodyBuilding & Fitness (IFBB) Mr. America title, followed by two consecutive IFBB Mr. Universe titles.

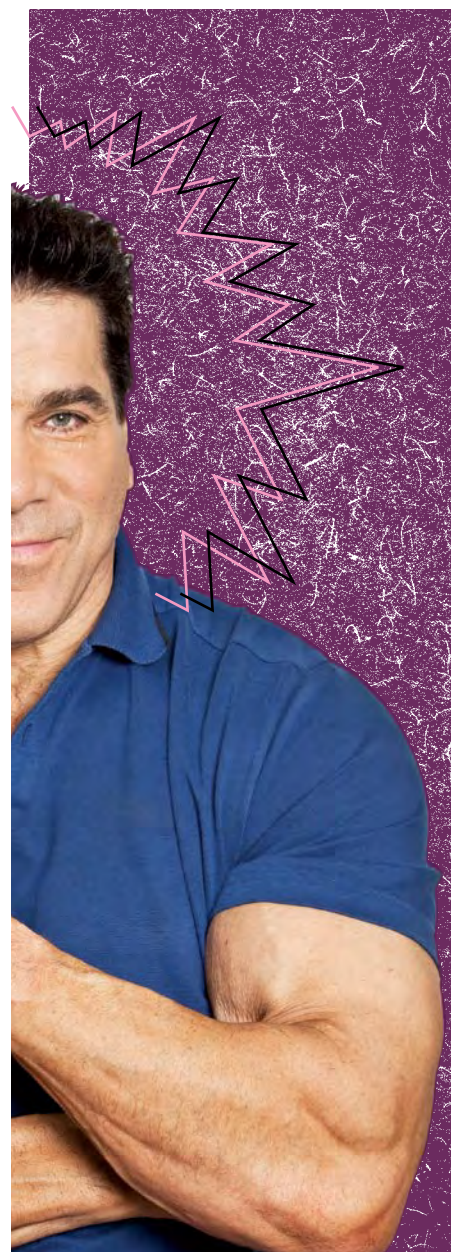
Before he flexed his way into the popular culture as Marvel Comics' "creature driven by rage," Ferrigno caught the attention of moviegoers as the ambitious competitor of Arnold Schwarzenegger in *Pumping Iron*, a 1977 documentary directed by George Butler and Robert Fiore that spotlighted the 1975 Mr. Universe and Mr. Olympia bodybuilding competitions. Soon he was cast to replace the quickly ousted Richard Kiel (best known as the toothy Bond movie menace Jaws) as the mean, green alter ego of Bill Bixby's Dr. David Bruce Banner on television's popular drama *The Incredible Hulk*, which ran on CBS for five seasons from 1977–1982.

From that point on, Ferrigno has been no stranger to audiences. He's starred as mighty man-gods in the movies *Hercules* (1983), *The Adventures of Hercules* (1985), and *Sinbad of the Seven Seas* (1989), co-starred in television series, and even shown a flair for comedy, playing himself as a semi-regular (along with his wife Carla) on TV's *The King of Queens* and in the 2009 buddy comedy *I Love You, Man*. To date he's appeared in over 40 films in a variety of roles.

Today, Lou heads "The First Family of Bodybuilding" as a bodybuilding consultant and private trainer, joined by his adult children (www.louferrigno.com). He's also an in-demand motivational speaker, frequently appearing at fitness events and comic-cons. And he's still a part-time crimefighter—in real life—occasionally volunteering as a sheriff's deputy in San Luis Obispo County in southern California.



Hulk TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.
TV Hulk © Universal Studios.





Lou Ferrigno first caught the eye of audiences as the impressive young bodybuilder in George Butler's 1977 docu-drama *Pumping Iron*. Lobby card from the Italian version of the film, courtesy of Heritage Auctions (www.ha.com).

Pumping Iron © 1977 White Mountain Films.

Despite his remarkably versatile résumé, Lou Ferrigno remains best known as the Incredible Hulk, a role he has continued to play in recent years as a voice actor. I got to meet Lou in person on Sunday, October 22, 2017, at the Fayetteville (North Carolina) Comic Con, where I interviewed him on stage before a boisterous crowd of fans. What follows is an edited transcription of that panel.

RetroFan: Lou, we share something in common other than our giant biceps [both Lou and Michael flex for audience, to laughter and applause]. We both have a hearing loss. I understand that was a motivating factor in your life. Could you tell us about that?

Lou Ferrigno: Yeah, by the age of three, I had an ear infection and had lost about 75% of my base hearing, and I was very introverted as a child and had a speech impediment. So, as a kid, I was bullied a lot. They called me “deaf Louie,” “deaf kid.” Children do not have the psychological maturity to defend themselves, so I became obsessed with reading comic books like *The Hulk* because I wanted to escape the pain. The more I read about it, the more I became obsessed with the power of the heroes, and that made me discover bodybuilding. Working out—that was

my platform to survive, and it changed my whole life. I had a lot of hardships like learning how to speak properly, and was ridiculed a lot. Some 50 years ago I felt like a freak, but I never, *ever* felt sorry for myself.

[to audience] I say, everybody in this room is handicapped in one way or another, but you have to go about being the best you can be. Sometimes you'll have naysayers saying, “You can't, you can't, you can't.” Every dream I've had, I've achieved because of my confidence and my drive. I'm saying to you, if you have a passion about something, embrace it, because if you have passion, you're unbeatable, you're unstoppable. [applause]

RF: Great advice! When did you start weight training?

LF: I started at the age of 12 or 13. It's funny, I didn't have weights. I couldn't afford them. So I would go to the junkyard and get cement pails—like, six cement pails. I'd filled some halfway with cement and some all the way and put in a broomstick. [demonstrates curls for audience] The first time I stood up and started to do a curl, I thought, “This feels good.” Because I was able to work out with makeshift barbells, I did something for the first time in my life that I felt good about. People laughed

about me, because back in those days, nobody had ever heard about weight training. My father would tell people, “My son works out with weights”; “he's doing weight training, he doesn't talk about school”; or, “he's obsessed with weights.” That really changed my life, because it connected my mind and my body.

RF: Who were your comic-book heroes when you were a kid?

LF: I read *Superman* comics and *The Hulk* comics. You know, it's funny, I traded my comic books as a kid for bodybuilding magazines. If I'd stayed with collecting comics, I would have made more money than bodybuilding, ten times over! [laughter]

RF: So, Steve Reeves was one of your childhood heroes?

LF: Yes, Steve Reeves was Hercules and I went to the movies when I was a kid. I saw him pulling two gigantic pillars, and that changed my life. It was the first time I had seen a bodybuilder on screen. He was about 31 years old and had a beautiful woman whose life he saved. In those days, I couldn't talk to girls and I always wanted a girlfriend. To see Reeves was the beginning of my era.

RF: When did you win your first bodybuilding competition?

LF: I decided to compete for the first time in the Open Mr. New Jersey Hercules. I came in 23rd place! I remember being on stage and people were taking pictures, with flash bulbs going off. My friends, they laughed at me, but I said to myself, “This is my path.”

This is funny, but I went home to my father and said, “I'll never do worse than third place again,” and from that point on, I started to win all the major competitions. But you have to understand, I trained very, very hard, harder than the average person, because to be the world champion, you'll have a lot of pain. I built my body. At first I was skinny—I was about 220 pounds at 19 and competed on and off for about 27 years.

RF: The first time I ever saw you was in the *Pumping Iron* documentary.

LF: [mimicking Arnold Schwarzenegger] With your favorite governor? Ahnald Schwarzenaga. [laughter]

[normal voice] Yes, we did *Pumping Iron*,

The Legends and Lore of the Incredible Hulk, Stretch Armstrong, and the Mego Elastic Superheroes

by John "The Mego Stretch Hulk" Cimino



Stealing An Idea for Survival

In 1979, toy manufacturer Mego Corporation was enjoying its 25th anniversary. But despite reaching such a milestone, the time for celebrating was not on the company's radar.

Earlier, in 1978, *Star Wars* toys came along and dominated the entire industry like never before. It was bad enough that Mego passed on the *Star Wars* license in 1976, because now, along with every other toy company, it was playing catch-up.

But it went a little further for Mego. Besides making some bad business decisions, they were in major debt due to a new state-of-the-art factory that had a bunch of internal problems, and sales were rapidly declining. The success that Mego once had in the earlier part of the decade was becoming a thing of the past. Mego was now in desperate need of a new toy idea to help get their company back on track.

For the last three years competitor Kenner, which had the *Star Wars* toy license, was also doing well with another toy called Stretch Armstrong. Stretch Armstrong was a 12-inch, corn-syrup-filled latex figure that could stretch into many different positions. By 1979, the toy proved to be so popular that Kenner introduced a variety of new figures into the line including the Stretch Monster and Stretch X-Ray. All the Stretch Armstrong figures remained unchallenged on the toy shelves because no other toy did what they did. Mego recognized this and wanted to do something similar. Having obtained the licenses for the Marvel Comics and DC Comics characters since 1972 and ruling the superhero toy market with its 8-inch "World's Greatest Super-Heroes" action-figure line,



Mego's Elastic Hulk figure. Hulk product photos in this article courtesy of John Cimino.
Incredible Hulk TM & © Marvel Characters, Inc.

Mego yanked a good idea away from Kenner—Stretch Armstrong! Stretch Armstrong © Hasbro.

Ghost Who Stumbles

The Phantom Phollies of Philmland

By Martin Pasko

Welcome to the first installment of what is planned as a regular feature in each issue of *RetroFan*. It will be a quarterly tour of the outrageously memorable; the *kitschy* and the campy in the fantasy-oriented (and usually comics-based) film and television we all devoured in the Sixties, Seventies, Eighties, and Nineties, whether straight-facedly or not. Your guide on this decidedly subjective, highly opinionated trip down that memory lane haunted by our most hilarious screen nightmares is yours truly, Martin “Pesky” Pasko.

I got my start in the comics business by becoming known for my letters of comment that were published in the books. (You might recall that comic books had letter columns from c. 1958 to c. 1998.) My comments were more often than not what DC Comics’ Julius Schwartz, who was the editor who most frequently ran my “LoCs,” called “brickbats rather than bouquets.” He later told me he was always relieved to see a letter from me: he needed my sourness to cut the saccharin of the other, more adoring comments. So much so that if I actually liked something, he wouldn’t run my letter. I had been typecast. Julie dubbed me “Pesky Pasko,” and the nickname stuck.

I’ve reached that point in life where I prefer to try being mellow, perhaps even *praise* something for a change, or at least be temperate rather than scathingly critical. Nevertheless, for this column, I intend to don ol’ Pesky’s comical-curmudgeon cape once more, in a quest to provide you with amusement and entertainment. This, as well as a raft of useless facts that are less important to you than knowing how wide Kim Kardashian’s hips currently are, and which we’d much prefer to give you with hyperlinks; besides, nobody’s figured out how to do that on paper yet. Of course, with the long lead-times *RetroFan* works on, by the time you read this, somebody probably will have.

Herewith, then, the first in a series of (very sharp) tongue-in-(very large) cheek columns that will attempt to prove that, as the old saying goes, “no nostalgia is good nostalgia,” and that reminiscence can sometimes comically traumatize as well as idealize. Along the way, I’ll be interpolating anecdotes of personal experiences with some of my subjects, fictional or flesh-and-blood. (In this first outing, however, I’ll stipulate that I’ve had no experience with writing



The Ghost Who Walks’ best cinematic adaptation—1996’s *The Phantom*, from Paramount Pictures—failed to connect with moviegoers. Poster courtesy of Heritage Comics Auctions.

The Phantom © - Distributed by King Features Syndicate, Inc.

Phantom movie © 1996 Paramount Pictures.

Star Trek

The Animated Series

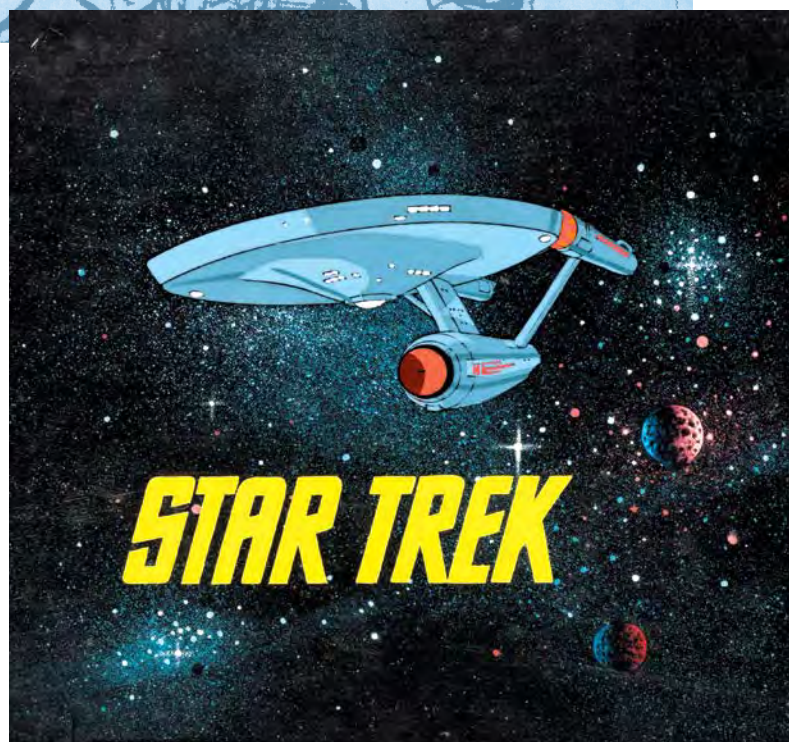
by Andy Mangels

Welcome to Andy Mangels' Retro Saturday Morning. Since 1989, I have been writing columns for magazines in the US 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. Which leads to this new column for *RetroFan*, which 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*!

The Animated Frontier

No matter how knowledgeable about *Star Trek* or television animation one is, chances are that the origins of *Star Trek: The Animated Series* occurred much earlier than most fans realize. Founded in the early 1960s by Lou Scheimer, Norm Prescott, and Hal Sutherland, Filmation Studios was a scrappy young company that was changing the face of the nascent Saturday morning culture only a few years after they had broken out of studio animation jobs and formed their own company. Although they were working on *Journey Back to Oz*, the first animated feature film to have an all-star voice cast, Filmation was best known as the studio behind popular animated superheroic television exploits for *Superman*, *Aquaman*, and *Batman*, as well as the musical adventures of *The Archies*. That latter series was the first of its kind; aimed at preteens and featuring pop music and dancing, several songs from the series—including “Sugar, Sugar”—earned gold records!

Filmation had already worked with several veterans of the primetime live-action *Star Trek*, which debuted on NBC on September 8, 1966. They had done animated film titles for special effects artist Joe Westheimer, whose Westheimer Company worked on *Trek*, and several *Trek* writers also wrote for Filmation. Recognizing the value in working with licensed pre-existing characters and shows—a built-in audience was a plus for *Batman* and *Journey to the Center of the Earth*—Filmation had talked with multiple networks about animated spin-offs, including *Bewitched*, *Godzilla*, *Fantastic Voyage*, and *Star Trek*.



Boldly going—to Saturday mornings! Licensed cel sold through *Starlog* of the *Star Trek* cartoon's title, courtesy of Heritage Auctions.

Star Trek © CBS Studios Inc.

Scheimer was already in talks with Paramount and NBC about an animated spin-off during *Star Trek*'s third season (1968–1969) when the axe came down on the parent series, and it was canceled as of the fall season. “We saw the opportunity to do something cool with it,” said Scheimer in my interviews with him for the 2012 *TwoMorrows* book, *Lou Scheimer: Creating the Filmation Generation*. “We had gotten in touch with them while the show was still on the air, but I remember that Paramount and Gene Roddenberry, the creator, weren't really getting along.”

The Filmation team worked with Philip Mayer, the director of special programming for Paramount shows, and a company writer/animator named Don Christensen to create a proposed



when Roddenberry wanted last-minute changes. “He and Gene were friends, and worked very closely together,” said Scheimer. “Truthfully, the series would not have been as successful as it was without the hard work of Hal. But I remember that one day, Roddenberry wanted to change something. Hal said, ‘We can change that, but we are not going to make the air date.’ And Gene knew how important that was, so he told us not to change whatever it was.” Roddenberry so liked the Filmmation crew that he invited some of them to the christening of his son with Majel Barrett.

While it didn't get a primetime airing, the first footage of *Star Trek* did air in primetime. On Friday, September 7th at 8:30 p.m., NBC aired the *NBC Starship Rescue* special, hosted by *Emergency!*'s Randolph Mantooth and Kevin Tighe and the cast of *Sigmund and the Sea Monsters*. As one could glean from the title, the gem in the crown was a preview of *Star Trek*, showcasing its footage.

The fall season began the next morning, on September 8, 1973. *Star Trek* aired on NBC at 10:30 a.m. The same morning saw the debuts of two other animated series that sprang from live-action series: Hanna-Barbera's *The Addams Family* cartoon and Fred Calvert's *Emergency + 4* show. Like *Star Trek*, they used most of the same voices as the original series, though *Emergency!* was the only show not in reruns.

Oddly, not everyone in the country saw the same debut episode of *Star Trek*! George Takei was running for the 10th District Councilman seat in Los Angeles, and FCC television rules said that for any local candidate that got airtime, the station had to give equal airtime for other candidates. Because Sulu appeared in the pilot episode “Beyond the Farthest Star” with about 30 seconds of dialogue—thus giving him some kind of unfair advantage in the election

process—L.A. audiences saw “Yesteryear” instead!

The debut episode of *Star Trek* had two other elements that made it historically important. “Beyond the Farthest Star” was written by Samuel A. Peeples, who had written the first-aired *Star Trek*, “Where No Man Has Gone Before” (Peeples later wrote for Filmmation's live-action *Space Academy* and *Jason of Star Command* series). More importantly was that the debut date, September 8, 1973, was exactly seven years to the day that the original *Star Trek* series had debuted in primetime!

The reviews for *Star Trek* were terrific. The *L.A. Times* (September 10, 1973) wrote that “*Star Trek* is as out of place in the Saturday morning kiddie ghetto as a Mercedes in a soapbox derby... It is fascinating fare, written, produced and executed with all the imaginative skill, the intellectual flare and the literary level that made Gene Roddenberry's famous old science-fiction epic the most avidly followed program in TV history, particularly in high IQ circles.” A *Variety* columnist (September 12, 1973), meanwhile, said that Filmmation's *Trek* was “superior enough in animation, scoring and narrative to create an atmosphere of reality against the frenzied product all around it.”

Star Trek had an auspicious beginning, and the five-year mission was underway once again.

Mission Highlights of Season One

Past the debut, the second episode of the series was “Yesteryear,” written by Dorothy Fontana. The story dealt with Spock's childhood and the death of his pet sehlat, which was groundbreaking for children's programming; few

Images from multiple episodes of *Star Trek*.

Star Trek © CBS Studios Inc.

I Met the Wolf Man!

(and lived to tell about it)

Famous Monsters of Filmland © Philip Kim.



By Ernest Farino

1964. My Favorite Year.

I was living in El Paso, Texas, and it was Prime Time for this 12-year-old MonsterKid—

the double-bill reissue of Hammer Films' *Curse of Frankenstein* and *Horror of Dracula*, Aurora monster model plastic kits, and *Mars Attacks!* bubble gum trading cards (which actually came out in 1962 but were still the rage). And, of course, the "godfather" of monster magazines, *Famous Monsters of Filmland*. My first issue—all true MonsterKids remember their first issue of *FM*—was #26 [above], with the "Thetan" monster from *The Outer Limits* episode "The Architects of Fear" on the cover. I read and re-read that magazine so much that the covers actually fell off and went missing. I wish I'd kept that battered copy but it was eventually replaced. For some reason—I think I'm a little slow on the uptake from time to time—I didn't catch on that this was a recurring magazine, a periodical. The next issue I stumbled across was issue #30 with the great Russ Jones painting of Bela Lugosi on the cover, and I was stunned. Wait—I started with #26... this was #30... I missed three issues?! From that moment on I was an obsessive newsstand junkie, which sparked a passion for collecting all magazines even remotely related to horror or sci-fi, even Stan Lee's *Monsters to Laugh With*, one-shots like *Chilling Monster Tales* and *The Official Munsters Magazine*, and *Cracked's For Monsters Only*. When James Warren and Forry Ackerman came out with *Monster World* in 1964, a great and glorious day, I was convinced they had made it just for me.

Famous Monsters #26 had an installment of the multi-part "Inside Darkest Ackerman" feature which opened the doors to the Forry's Ackermansion. That was a MonsterKid's dream: to be able to wake up in the morning and go downstairs to "work" in that environment, taking care of all things monsters. Over the years my own two-bedroom apartment evolved into a mini-Ackermansion—The Farinomansion—and now there's

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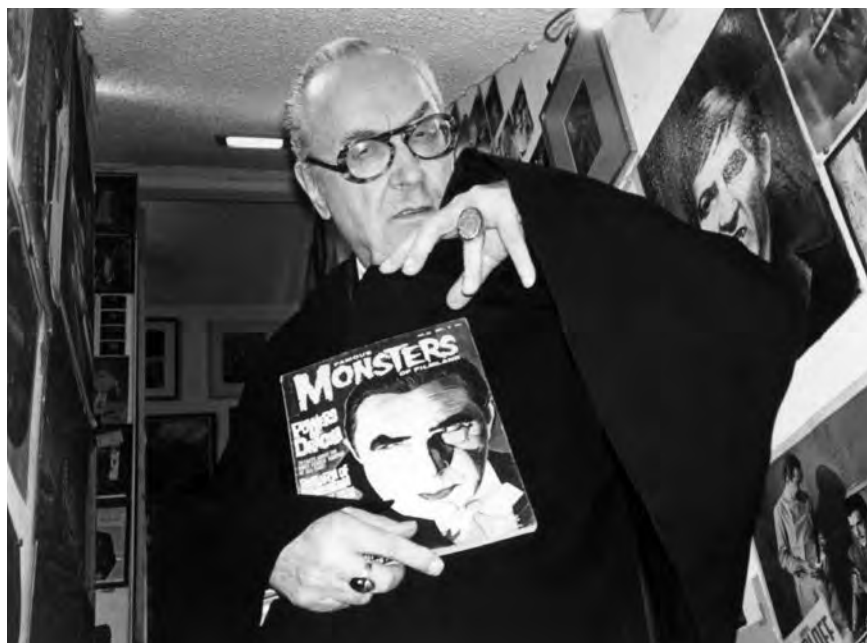
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Meet the "Horror Man," Lon Chaney, Jr.! Actual event poster from young Ernest Farino's 1964 encounter. Poster courtesy of Jay Duncan.

The Wolf Man © Universal Pictures.



(TOP) Forry Ackerman in the original "Ackermansion" (1951–1971), c. 1967.
(BOTTOM) Forry in the second Ackermansion (1971–2002) dressed in his authentic Bela Lugosi Dracula cape, holding a copy of *Famous Monsters of Filmland* magazine, issue #30 (1964).
Famous Monsters of Filmland © Philip Kim.



nary a square inch of wall space left amidst all of the framed posters, photos, paintings, and other ephemera. (The ceilings are starting to look mighty inviting...) In the early 2000s I became friends with one of Forry's assistants and gradually gained considerable and frequent access to the Ackermansion long after the regular Saturday morning tours ended. That one-time MonsterKid's dream became real, a pinch-me moment each time.

At one point the fire marshal instructed Forry to remove the brush down in the backyard gully behind the house. The rallying cry went out and I joined a handful of others taking care of that problem over a full weekend. Allergies be damned, it was a way to "give back" a little, and I didn't hesitate for a second.

Television in 1964 was seemingly custom-made for me with a wide selection of new

series and holdovers in reruns: *The Munsters*, *The Addams Family*, *The Twilight Zone*, *One Step Beyond*, *Bewitched*, *My Favorite Martian*, *I Dream of Jeannie*, *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea*, *The Alfred Hitchcock Hour*, and *Fireball XL5*. When "The Control Voice" opened each week's episode of *The Outer Limits* by informing viewers that "There is nothing wrong with your television set... We are controlling transmission..."—I believed it. I can distinctly remember yelling out at my younger brother, "Don't touch the TV!," eventually relaxing with a sigh of relief at the end of the hour when we were informed,

"We now return control of your television set to you." Whew!

To say nothing of *Shock! Theater*. That was the package of Universal horror movies syndicated to individual markets. I don't think the version in El Paso was called *Shock!*, but I didn't care about such details. Oddly, the show ran on Sunday afternoons, so my brothers and I would close off the living room to make it as dark as possible. We sat enthralled by *Son of Frankenstein* and *The Wolf Man*—movies that previously existed only as stills in *Famous Monsters*—while our parents and some neighbors held their weekly card game in the kitchen. Another late-night horror-movie

Mayberry Lives!

Andy Griffith's Hometown



by Michael Eury

In the 1998 comedy-drama *Pleasantville*, Tobey Maguire plays David, a reticent teenager obsessed with a wholesome, *Father Knows Best*-like vintage TV sitcom. Via a magical remote control, he and his frisky, polar-opposite twin sister Jennifer (played by Reese Witherspoon) become trapped inside the show's black-and-white reality.

There's a much easier way to personally experience a television classic: by visiting Mount Airy, North Carolina, birthplace of legendary entertainer Andy Griffith and an inspiration for pop culture's most beloved small town, Mayberry, of *The Andy Griffith Show* renown.

Nestled within view of the magnificent Blue Ridge Parkway, Mount Airy, once the site of textile mills and furniture manufacturers, is now, according to the town's mayor, David Rowe, the corporate headquarters of several companies including Renfro Corporation, Insteel Wire Products, South Data, AES, Pike Electric, and Starrett. It is the location of the largest open-faced granite quarry in the world, which has provided stone for structures in Washington, D.C., Fort Knox, and Kitty Hawk. The famous "Siamese" (conjoined) twins, Chang and Eng Bunker, settled in Mount Airy in the 1800s. Country singer Donna Fargo called Mount Airy home before becoming the happiest girl in the whole U.S.A.

But the town of 10,000-plus' indisputable claim to fame is homespun humorist and musician Andy Griffith (1926–2012), the only child of a blue-collar worker and his wife. Andy's roots were humble, spending his first three years bunking with relatives before his folks finally bought their own house—in the poor side of town. It was on the stage at Mount Airy High School that young Andy's passion for performing began, after which he earned a music degree at the University of North Carolina and briefly taught high school band and drama. Soon, Griffith's toothy grin and Southern drawl whisked him from the Carolina stage (*The Lost Colony*) to the comedy circuit (with the hit record, "What It Was, Was Football"), then on to teleplays (*No Time for Sergeants*, which later became a theatrical film starring Griffith) and a stunning dramatic movie role (1957's *A Face in the Crowd*) before rocketing him into America's living rooms and hearts as Sheriff Andy Taylor, Mayberry's peacekeeper, in eight seasons of *The Andy Griffith Show* (1960–1968).

Things haven't changed all that much on Mount Airy's Main Street since the days when young Andy lugged his trombone case to and from music lessons with his pastor. You can amble down its rustic walkways while licking a cone of homemade peach ice cream, laze

(ABOVE) Tours of Mount Airy are available from replicas of the Mayberry sheriff's squad car.

Photos by Michael Eury, unless otherwise noted.



The Mayberry courthouse doors and signs are among the most popular exhibits at the Andy Griffith Museum.

Meet

Thelma Lou

An Interview with Betty Lynn

by Michael Eury



Mayberry Star



BETTY
LYNN

Ol' Barn and Thel, in a not-so-private moment from *The Andy Griffith Show*.

© Mayberry Enterprises, Inc.

That Barney Fife—he beats all, you know that?

Mayberry's quirky, jerky, by-the-book deputy might've had an eye for the ladies, from his phone flirtations with Juanita at the diner to his impromptu rendezvouses with Skippy the Fun Girl, but there was only one girl for Barney. She was "the cats," the only one he ever really loved—the affectionate, infinitely patient and forgiving, strong-willed but sometimes temperamental, occasional matchmaker Thelma Lou.

When meeting Betty Lynn, the lovely actress who brought Thelma Lou to life in *The Andy Griffith Show* (as well as in the 1986 reunion movie *Return to Mayberry*), it's easy to see why ol' Barn was smitten. The eldest surviving Griffith cast member (age 91 at this writing), Ms. Lynn is a sheer delight—warm and accessible, as friendly as you'd expect someone from Mayberry to be.

Of course, she's not really from Mayberry. Nor is she "just" Thelma Lou.

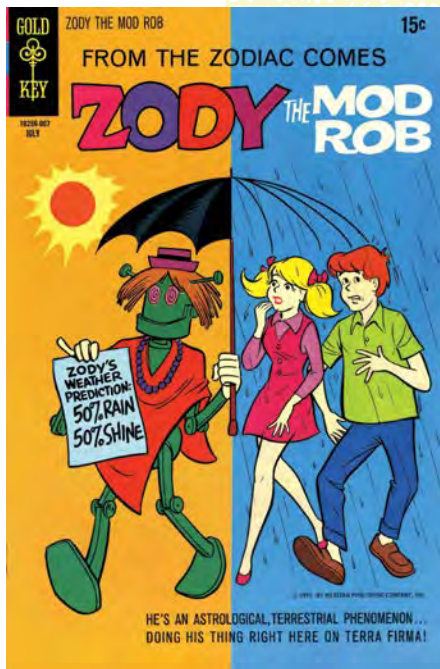
Betty Lynn, a native of Kansas City, Missouri, started taking dance lessons at age five, and by her early teens was acting and singing on radio. Once she turned 18 she was contracted as a U.S.O. entertainer, wooing U.S. troops across the globe during World War II. Postwar, as a New York-based actress, Lynn appeared on stage in productions including *Park Avenue*. She soon broke into Hollywood, making her film debut in *Sitting Pretty* (1948), for which she won a Photoplay Gold Medal. A flurry of films followed, including *Apartment for Peggy* (1948), *June Bride* (1948), *Cheaper by the Dozen* (1950), *Payment on Demand* (1951), and *Many Roads to Cross* (1955). She transitioned to television, appearing in everything from anthologies (*Schlitz Playhouse of Stars*) to comedies (Ray Bolger's *Where's Raymond?*) to Westerns (in the *Walt Disney Presents* serial *Texas John Slaughter*), as well as a slew of guest-spots on series before and after her days as a semi-regular on *The Andy Griffith Show*.

But it is as Thelma Lou that Betty Lynn will be forever remembered. Introduced in the Season One episode "Cyrano Andy," Thelma Lou curiously lacked a last name, although she had two lady cousins (Karen Moore and Mary Grace Gossage) who visited Mayberry. She seemed to spend virtually no time at her unspecified "office," yet lived in a roomy, neatly decorated house all her own. She was seen in a mere 26 of the 249 episodes of *The Andy Griffith Show*, but their rerunning in perpetuity has created the illusion of hers being a much more frequent role. Certainly her wide smile and chemistry with Don Knotts have made Betty Lynn's status as a Mayberrian seem larger, as has her continuing devotion to the fans of

Oddball Comics

ZODY THE MOD ROB #1

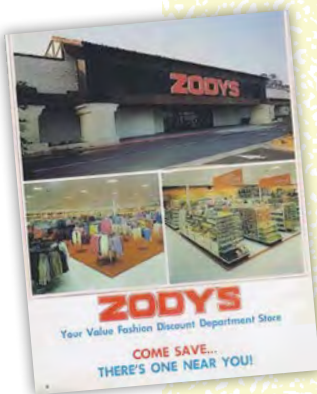
by Scott Shaw!



The outasite automaton, *Zody the Mod Rob*. Issue #1 (and only) cover art by Roger Armstrong.

© the respective copyright holder.

Title: *Zody the Mod Rob*
Issue Number: No. 1
Cover Date: July 1970
Publisher: Western Publishing Company, Inc. (Gold Key Comics)
Cover Artist(s): Roger Armstrong



Scott Shaw! suspects that *Zody the Mod Rob* got its name from a chain of Los Angeles “fashion budget department stores,” Zody’s, which was similar to Target. This ad is from 1974, but Zody’s was around a decade earlier.

The Metal Men! Machine Man! Adam Link! Yes, these are some of comicdom’s greatest robot characters... and then there’s *Zody the Mod Rob*, the groovy star of this issue’s Oddball Comic—from the same people who brought us *Magnus, Robot Fighter*! And as his comic’s cover claims, “He’s an astrological, terrestrial phenomenon doing his thing right here on Terra Firma!” Like wow, man, what were the folks at Gold Key smokin’ back in 1970 when they came up with this far-out funnybook—hashish-oiled mechanical joints?

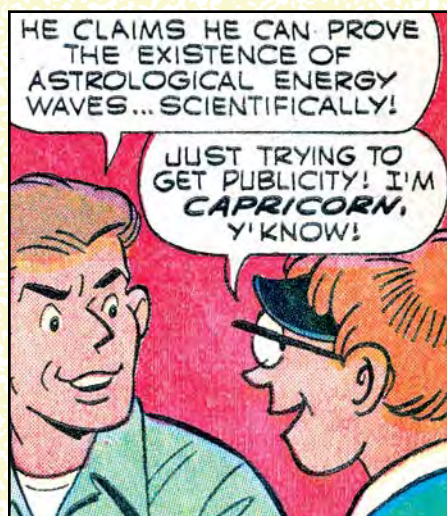
Zody the Mod Rob is one of those multi-tiered oddities that’s as good a children’s comic as it is a relic of the Sixties (although it was published a full three years *after* the so-called “Summer of Love”) that’s hilarious in its middle-aged un-hipness! Plus, it’s liberally sprinkled with drug references that are used without any cognizance of the catchphrases’ real meanings!

During the mid-to-late Sixties, many mainstream comic-book publishers desperately tried to exploit aspects of the hippie era in their funnybooks. Most of their editors were middle-aged white men with absolutely no identification—or even a basic understanding—of the youth movement that was revolutionizing American society. For drama or for laughs, many major publishers were trying to lure young readers with their (mostly) sanitized new (or made-over) titles with a synthetically “groovy” theme: DC’s *Brother Power the Geek* (“the real-life dangers of hippie-land”), *Prez* (“the first teenage president of the United States”), *Swing with Scooter* and *Windy and Willy* (the latter featuring touched-up reprints of the officially licensed *The Many Loves of Dobie Gillis* comic from only a few years earlier); Harvey’s *Bunny* (“queen of the in-crowd”) and *Rock Happening*; Archie’s *Madhouse Ma-ad Freak Out*; and Charlton’s *Go-Go*, among others. Since the results were usually lame and unintentionally hilarious, no actual hippies would be caught dead reading these comics, not when they could instead peruse an issue of *Zap Comix*, *Mr. Natural*, *The Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers*, *Air Pirates*, *Harold Hedd*, *Dope Comix*, or any number of other under-the-counter (cultural) “underground comix,” sold in “head shops” catering to the psychedelic crowd. Only young children were naïve enough to find the neutered mainstream “hippie comics” to be entertaining.

Speaking of kids, although perceived as a rather staid and conservative publisher of children’s comic books, Gold Key made occasional attempts to approach hipness. One of these, *The Close Shaves of Pauline Peril* by creators Del Connell and Jack Manning, was actually impressively cool and innovative, even though the uniquely Oddball series only lasted for four issues. Other efforts in this direction were generally less successful, although Gold Key’s editors seemed to hang a lot of expectations on the word “mod”; hence such titles as the Oddball romance comic *Mod Love* (one issue), the Oddball teenage comic *The Modniks*, (two issues), the Oddball hot rod comic *Mod Wheels* (a whopping 19 issues)... and this single issue of the Oddball hippie robot astrologer comic *Zody the Mod Rob*. How appropriate for the first issue of TwoMorrows’ *RetroFan*. Hopefully, this magazine will last a *lot* longer, maybe to when the 2010s will be considered nostalgia, at least by the mutants staggering

FROM THE ZODIAC COMES **ZODY** the MOD ROB

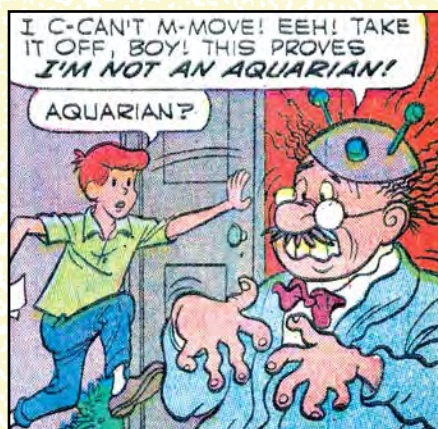
The issue's 25-page, book-length *Zody the Mod Rob* cover story, titled "From the Zodiac Comes Zody the Mod Rob." It begins in the student newspaper office of Tinker High School, where "your sensational, erudite, articulate, charming and modest editor-in-chief" Corby Kane hands clean-cut teenage reporter Randy Martin his first "real" assignment for the *Tinker High Times* ("high times!?!"), to "wing a feature" on Professor Ipsof Acto, who's booked to speak at the next week's school assembly. Grabbing an armload of pencils and note pads, Randy—who already knows where the scientist resides—eagerly rushes out the door while Corby explains his motives to a young copy editor on staff:



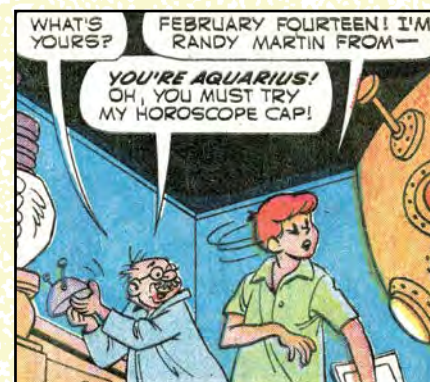
While on his way to the scientist's home laboratory, his girlfriend, Sharon Gordon, anxious to confirm their date later that night, joins Randy, but the teen reporter can't stop to chat:



As he approaches Professor Acto's home, Randy hears yelps of pain from inside. Entering the place, Randy is alarmed to find the frazzled-looking scientist quivering under a strange metal helmet.



As Randy helps the rumpled research scientist remove the device from his noggin, the Professor explains the zodiac sign of Aquarius and asks his visitor his birthdate.



Despite Randy's protests, the eccentric-scientist jams this "horoscope cap" onto the student journalist's head and adjusts its controls:

PROFESSOR IPSOF ACTO: Don't worry! It's designed for an Aquarian brain! It won't hurt YOU! It will magnify Aquarius energy waves so you're sure to get the most good from them!

Reacting to Randy's genuine interest, Professor Ipsof Acto delightedly pulls out two large charts covered with esoteric configurations and formulas:

PROFESSOR IPSOF ACTO: You see? My lecture charts show how the stars and planets send patterns of influence criss-crossing the universe! Now YOU will be TUNED IN on yours!

But despite the professor's hopes, Randy doesn't feel any effect from the horoscope cap. After examining the teen reporter for over an hour, Professor Acto declares his experiment a failure and tells Randy to remove his invention from his sight. While leaving the lab, he expresses a determination to help the nutty scientist.

Walking down the street, a passing motorist heckles Randy about his unusual headgear. Self-conscious about attracting more unwanted attention, he drops by a shop specializing in "bargain wigs."