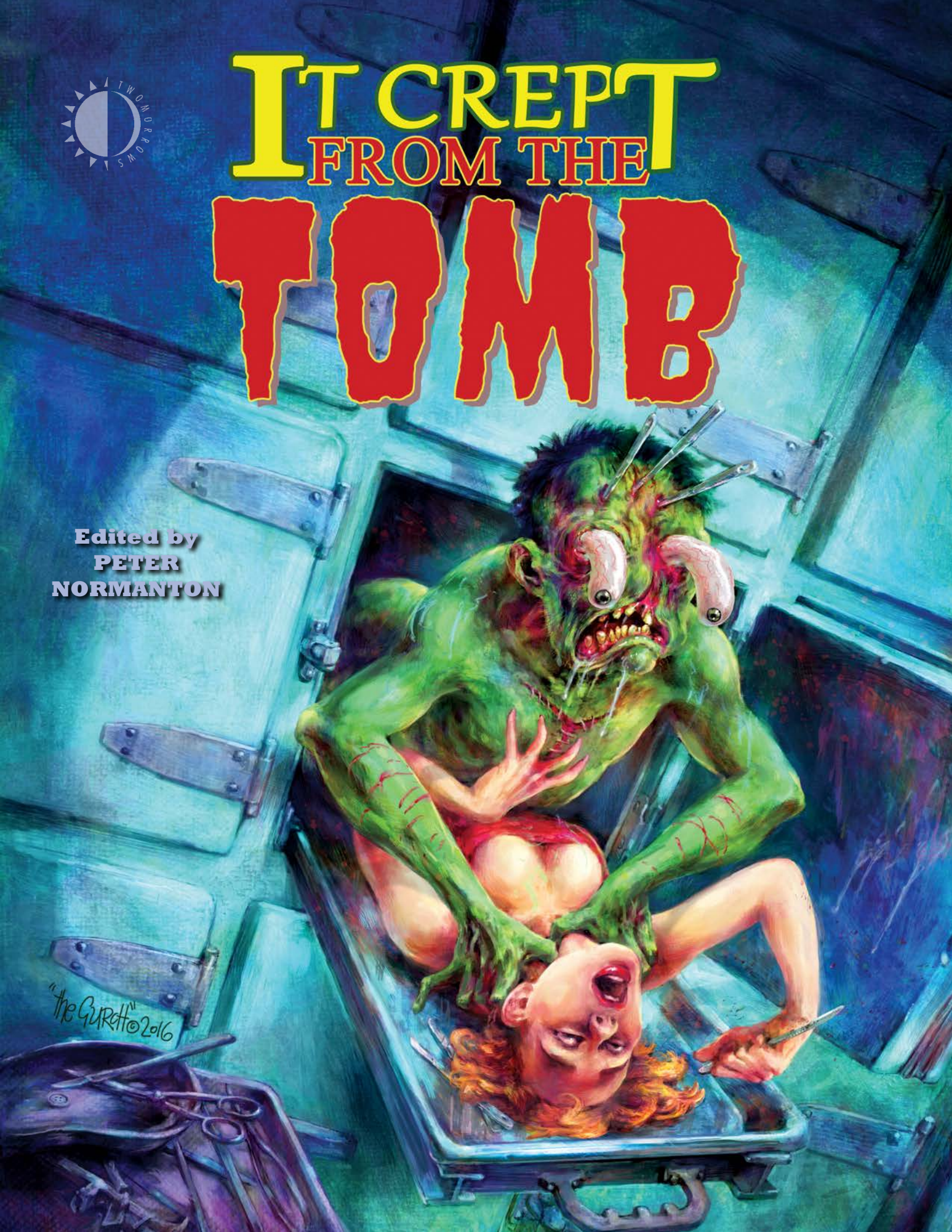




# IT CREEPT FROM THE TOMB

Edited by  
**PETER  
NORMANTON**



"The GURTH" © 2016



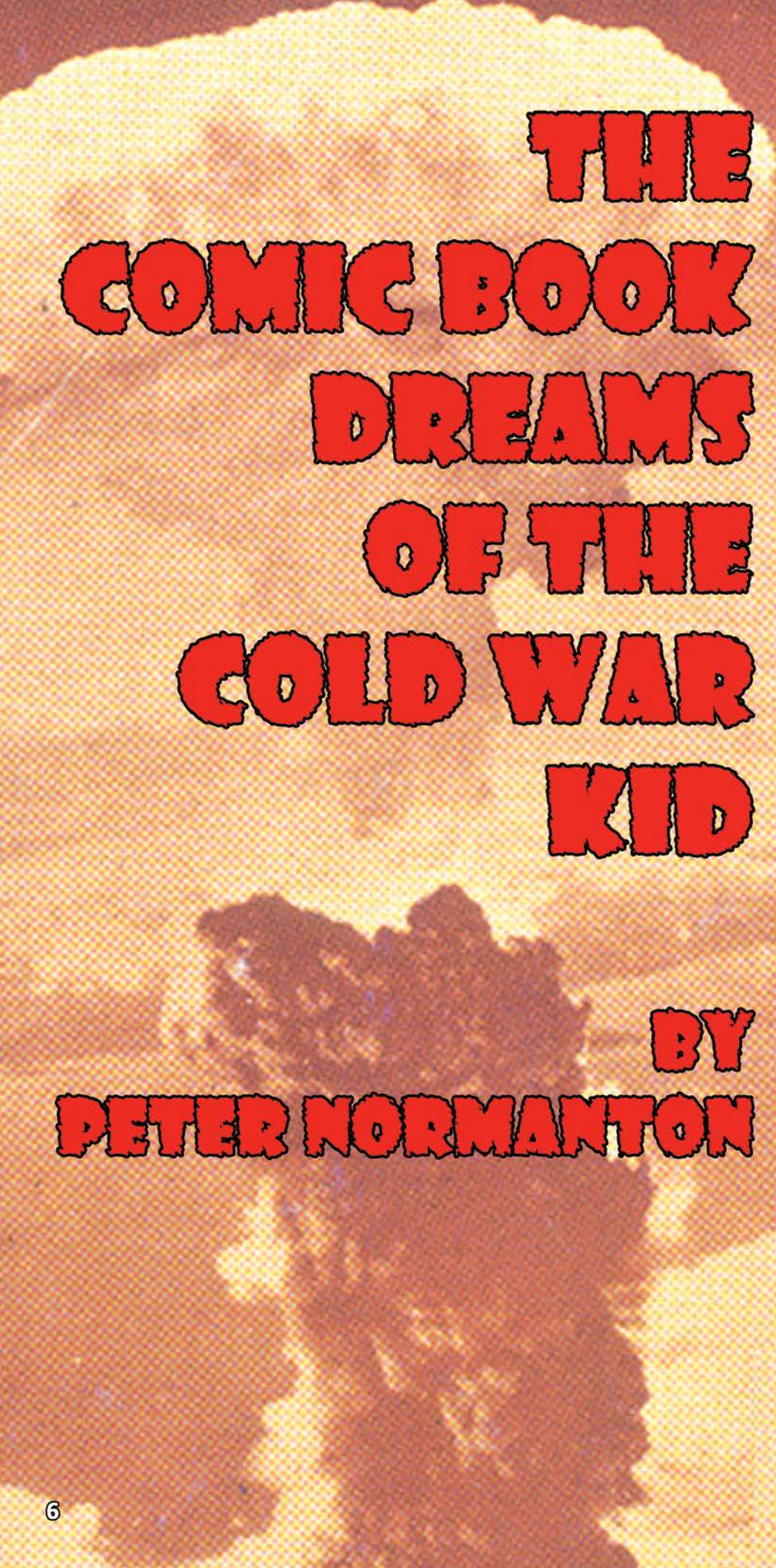
# IT CREPT FROM THE TOMB

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# **THE COMIC BOOK DREAMS OF THE COLD WAR KID**

**BY  
PETER NORMANTON**

For over four decades the Cold War held the world to ransom. While the super powers stockpiled an ever-expanding arsenal of atomic weaponry, the comic book publishers flourished just as they had during the Golden Age. In one way or another most of us will have memories of these years, some having experienced the duck and cover drills under the guidance of Bert the Turtle, whereas the less fortunate would have endured active combat in south-east Asia. For those of my generation it was the CND demonstrations united in their rallying call to ban the bomb and with it the annihilatory strategies of 'First Strike Capacity', 'Pre-emptive Nuclear Strikes', 'Counterforce' and the seemingly inescapable 'Mutually Assured Destruction'. The threat posed by the bomb would transform into the politics of a chilling pragmatism, casting a portentous shadow over our lives and ultimately influencing the content of the comics flowing onto the newsstands. It was these comic books, so many of them consigned to the waste bin by well-meaning parents, that would one day return to shape the dreams of the Cold War Kid.

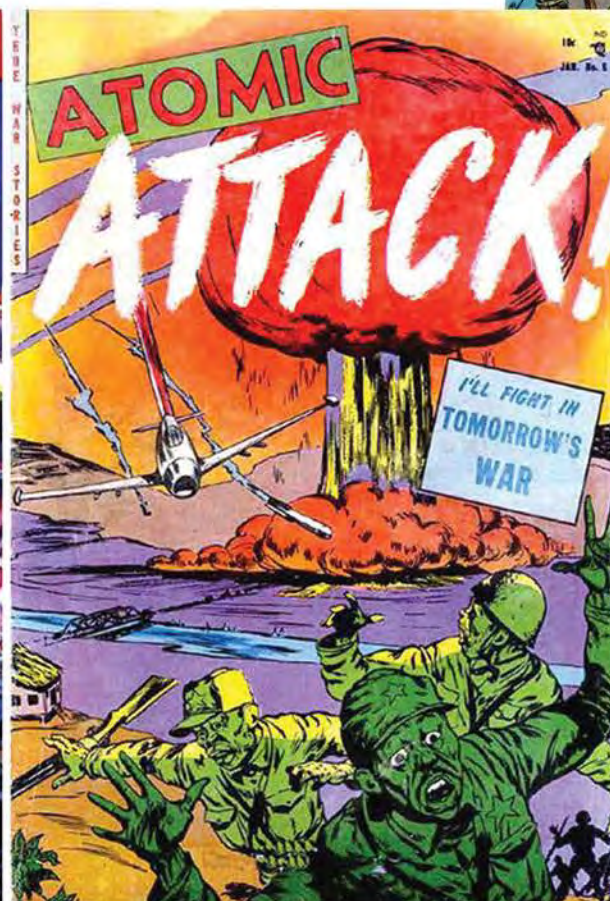
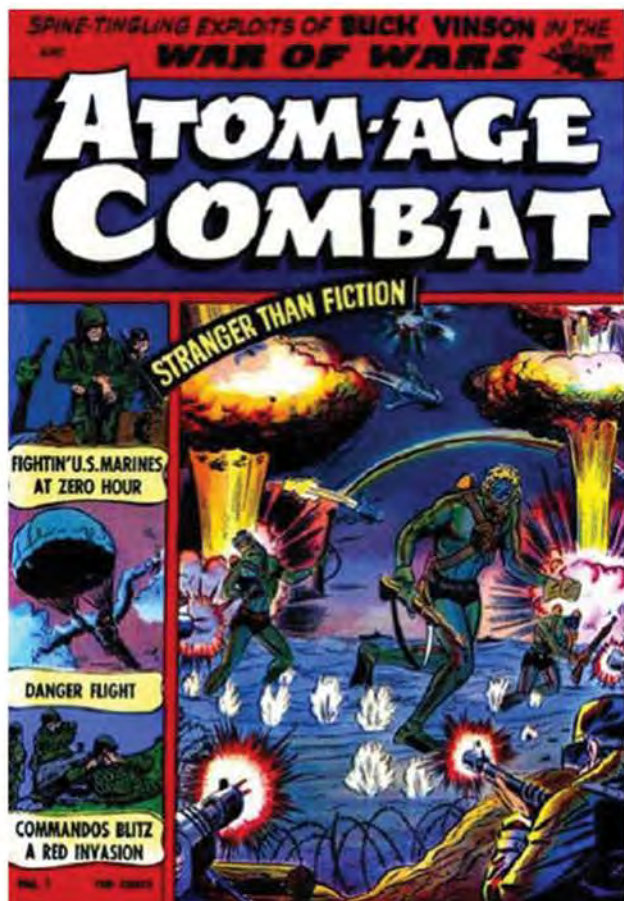
As to when the Cold War actually started is still the subject of considerable debate, but there is no doubt with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 the western world finally breathed a sigh of relief. Almost half a century earlier, the Allies and the Soviets had been united in their quest to destroy the Nazis, but their alliance was never truly stable. When the United States delivered their nuclear payload over the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, relations became even more fraught. The Soviets, recognising they could now face a similar fate, set out to acquire this deadly technology in the hope of restoring the balance of power.

The duplicitous means by which they set out to pursue their nuclear aspirations would inevitably come to light and have far reaching consequences. With this in mind, the Cold War may well have stemmed from a series of events which occurred in Canada during 1946, culminating on the evening of September 5<sup>th</sup>, when a



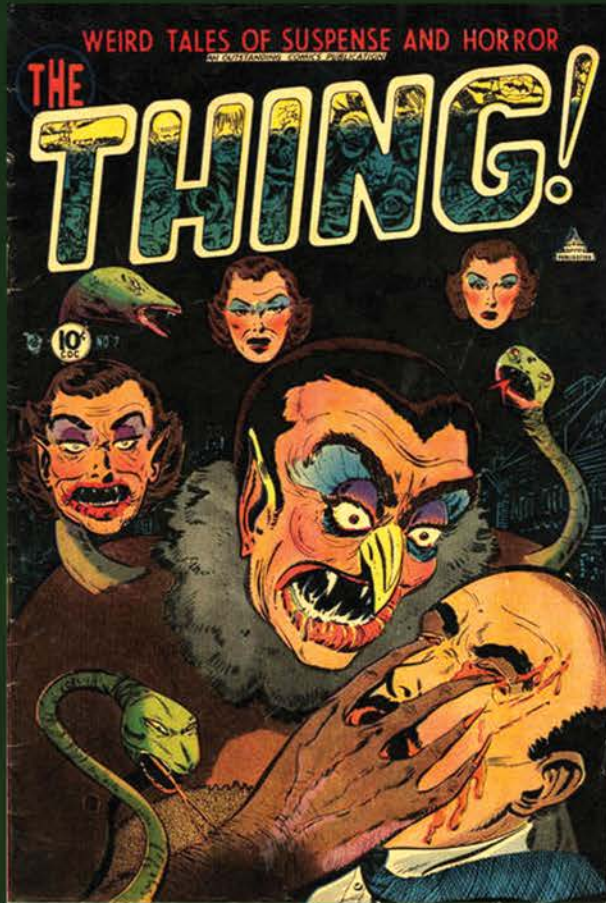
Saucers” and Ozzie’s “Look—Flying Saucers!” respectively. Murphy Anderson’s rendering for the cover to *Mystery in Space* #15, while being an absorbing piece of flying saucer memorabilia, hints at a technology way beyond its time. We would one day come to know it as the Star Wars weaponry or Strategic Defence Initiative of the 1980s, a proposed defence system that was to prove paramount in the latter stages of the Cold War. EC and Atlas would make the flying saucer their domain, with tales of such incredible creativity they would leave their readership looking to the skies, once, of course, their outlandish content had been thoroughly digested. Only recently there have been suggestions it was Stalin himself who was behind the happening at Roswell. It’s safe to say, that if the Soviets had developed a flying saucer, the West would have been held over a rather precarious precipice.

One way or another the saucers could be dealt with, but when the Korean People’s Army surprised the world with a full-scale offensive, which saw them cross the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel into South Korea in the hours before sunrise on 25<sup>th</sup> June 1950, the United Nations were presented with a more serious problem. This incursion would begin a most acrimonious campaign, one which was to rage for the next three years, leaving 2.5 million people dead, most of them innocent civilians. As the conflict escalated, a new comic book phenomenon emerged: The Korean War comic. These titles enjoyed considerable popularity, thriving upon a war which the United Nations could have brought to an end as early as 1951 when the communists were forced back to the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. However, there was a determination to drive these brainwashed aggressors from the Korean Peninsula, little realising the Chinese, still recovering from Civil War, would never accept the enemy encamped on their border. World War III loomed, as MIG fighters piloted by the Soviets and Chinese spiralled across the skies, dogfighting with American jet fighters. Such imagery roused the comic publishers; *Exciting War* promised ‘Blazing Korean Battle Action’, while Atlas’s *Battlefield* pledged ‘War Tales from Front Lines.’ These tales were indeed exciting, but even amid the excess of the pre-Code comic, the atrocities committed on the killing fields could never be fully

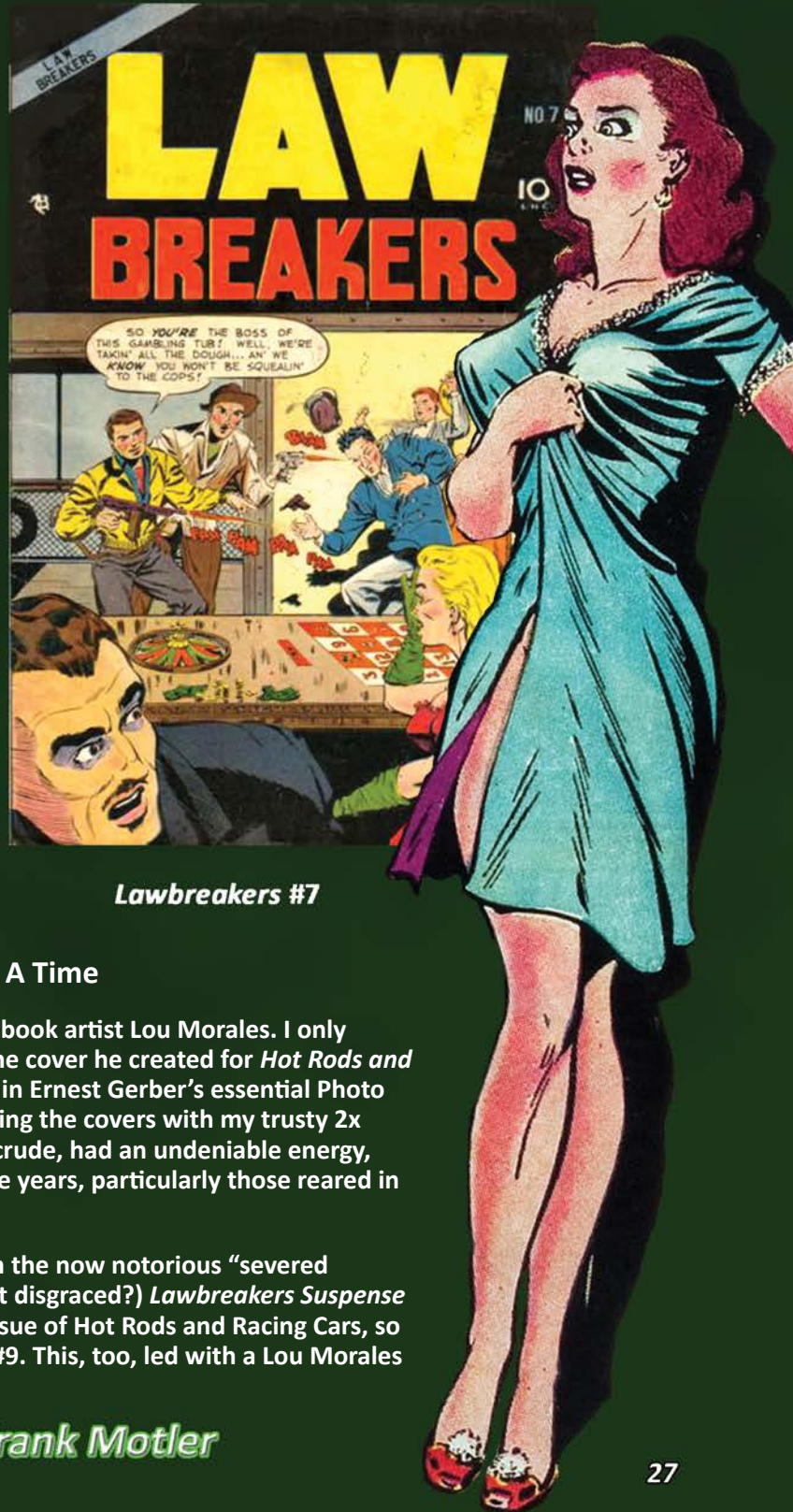




# The Exotic Art of *Lou Morales*



*The Thing! #7*



*Lawbreakers #7*

## Once Upon A Time

Little has been written about the comic book artist Lou Morales. I only discovered him by accident! The key was the cover he created for *Hot Rods and Racing Cars* #8 (July 1952), which I spotted in Ernest Gerber's essential Photo Journal Guide to Comic Books, while scanning the covers with my trusty 2x magnifying glass. His art, while seemingly crude, had an undeniable energy, quite suited to the covers of these pre-Code years, particularly those reared in the Charlton stable.

I had heard his name in connection with the now notorious "severed tongues" cover, which had graced (or was it disgraced?) *Lawbreakers Suspense Stories* #11. I then recalled I had an early issue of *Hot Rods and Racing Cars*, so I hastily dug it out to discover it was issue #9. This, too, led with a Lou Morales

*by Frank Motler*

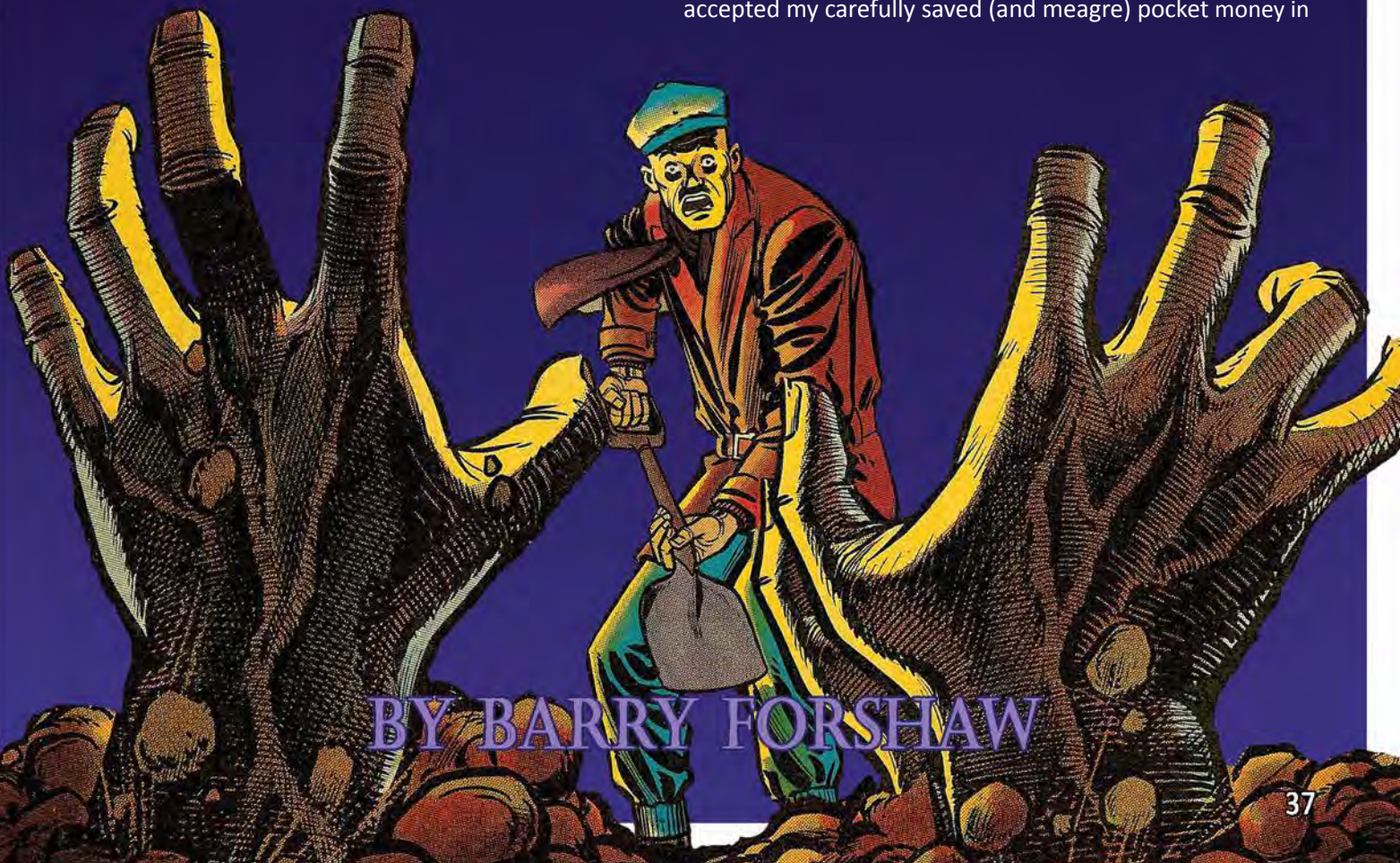


# OPENING THE CRYPT: EC HORROR HITS BRITAIN

*He may be better known these days for his books on crime fiction and films, but as a short-trousered schoolboy in the north of England, Barry Forshaw's real enthusiasm was for American comics—everything from Superman to Mystery in Space (always in the black-and-white UK reprints which were all that were available in that distant day). But then a taunting school friend's conversation opened his eyes to an exhilarating new genre in the comics field—a genre which (unbeknownst to him) had already been banned in the UK: reprinted American horror comics....*

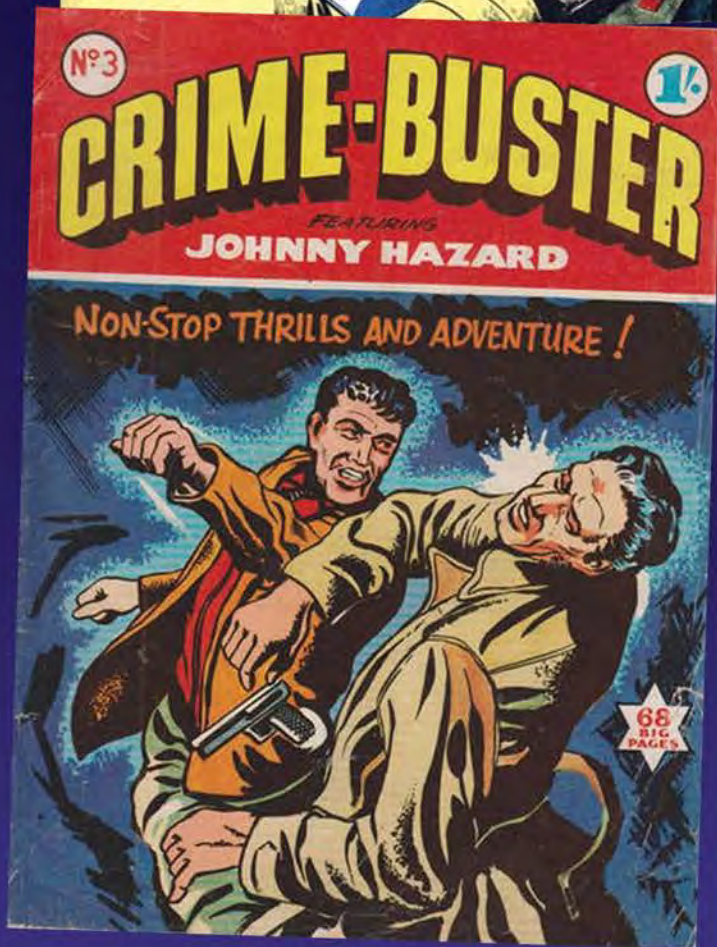
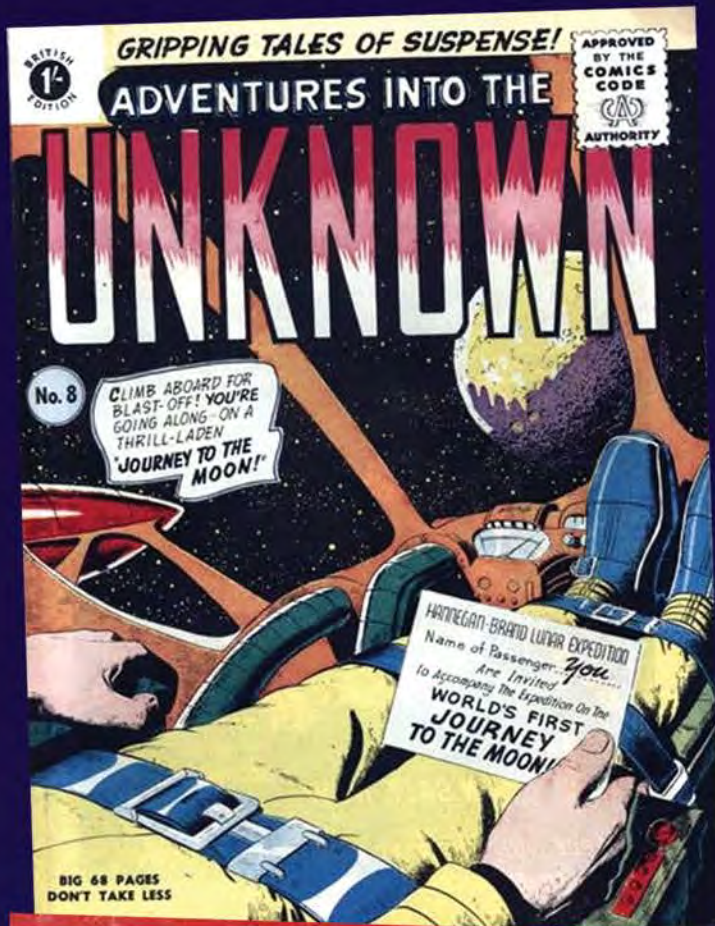
## Superadventure

Decades (many decades) later, I still remember it well. As a reading-obsessed boy in Liverpool in the 1960s (just before the advent of The Beatles), I had an ironclad weekly ritual that I looked forward to with keenness of anticipation. It involved walking past the towering walls of Walton jail (always wondering about the unseen miscreants behind that forbidding brickwork—as I still do when I revisit the city from London) and making my way to a small corner shop where I had a weekly standing order for a variety of comics. The plump, motherly ladies who ran the shop knew me well and handed over with a smile the latest *Superman*, *Batman* or *Superadventure* (the latter the awkward UK/Australian retitling of DC's *World's Finest*, which featured both superheroes), and accepted my carefully saved (and meagre) pocket money in



BY BARRY FORSHAW





The hard-to-find British versions of the American originals, *Adventures into the Unknown* #8 and *Crime Buster* #3.

exchange for these 32-page treasures. Who cared that these black-and-white reprints hardly matched the multicolour splendour of the American originals? They still comfortably fed a fantasy-hungry boy in a gray era well before videos (or, in my case, even TV; my family didn't own one). And there was another local shop which supplied even heftier doses of this fantastic American escapism than the slim sixpenny books mentioned above: chunky shilling reprints of inventive and imaginative American magazines such as *Adventures into the Unknown* and even a short-lived reprint series of an elegantly drawn superhero dressed all in scarlet, *The Flash*. All were, of course, excellent—if unthreatening—fare, post-Comics Code, as I later learned, with censorship firmly in place. But intriguing shadows beckoned. I had intimations that there was another forbidden genre of comics that occasionally surfaced and which had already been banned after a government decree in 1955: horror comics—gruesome and lurid tales of murder and monsters. As Liverpool was still a functioning port city, the occasional pre-censorship book would sneak in from the US as ship's ballast—such as something invitingly called *Adventures into Weird Worlds*, which dealt with everything from vampires rapacious for blood to killer robots, with illustrations far more grotesque and unsettling than the post-code material that was my usual fare. But even these rare horror titles paled into insignificance after one playground encounter—the repercussions of which are still (thankfully) with me in middle age.

### Tempting talk

In the schoolyard of St. John's Primary School (now as overgrown and derelict as any gloomy setting in any of the horror comics), there was one boy—not really a friend—who enjoyed taunting me with deeply desirable-sounding comics that were simply beyond my reach. With a broad malicious smile, he told me that he had bought some *Superman* and *Superboy* comics in full colour—British reprints, what's more, not the American originals. I didn't believe him until he produced them: short runs of these books which were haphazardly coloured in this country, before the black-and-white reprints once again took over. But such books were tantalisingly dangled under my nose, never lent or (God forbid!) *given*—his greatest enjoyment came from teasing. Don't we all learn about cruelty in the schoolyard? Preliminary tauntings over, he then came up with a dilly. With a wide grin, he produced a 68-page shilling title that bore the immensely tempting legend 'Not suitable for children' (what could be more intriguing?) and showed a scantily dressed young woman at a circus looking in horror as an axe thrown by a fellow performer is aimed straight at her head while onlookers gawp open-mouthed. The book was called *Tales from the Crypt*—and not only did it promise more gruesome material than anything I'd seen before, but it looked nothing like the other horror comics that had come my way—my tormentor flicked through the pages and I saw that it was much better drawn than most books I'd seen (I was already an aficionado of comics illustrators, having trained myself to



# LEATHERN WINGS IN THE NIGHT

## The Origins of the Comic Book Vampire

The chilling sight of leathern wings across moonlit skies was in evidence when the comic book was still in its nascence. From these skies, they would swoop down into the streets below, assuming human form, before stealing from the shadows with malice aforethought. In the years preceding the sanctions of the Comics Code, the vampire's kiss was never a prelude to romance, rather it was borne of evil, with a sole desire to satiate its lust for human blood, and in so doing spread its malfeasance from the graveyards into the avenues beyond.

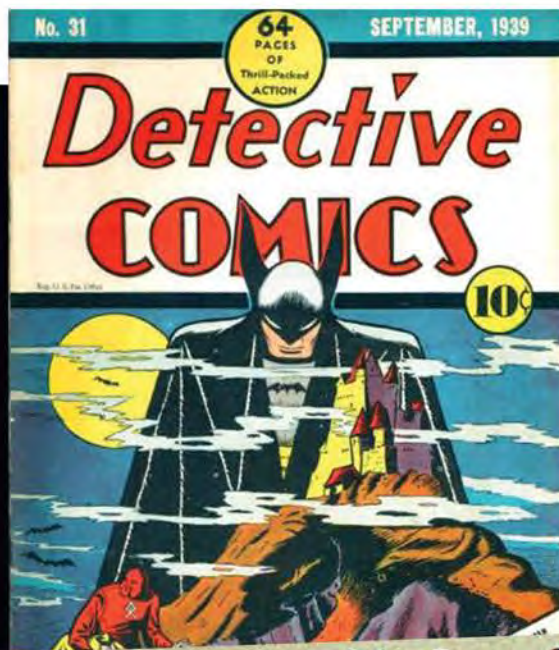
Long before horror comics became all the rage, the first of the vampire legion stole into four single page instalments in the contents of *New Fun*, starting with #6, in the October of 1935, when supernatural hero Dr. Occult set out to thwart the machinations of the villainous Vampire Master. Written by Superman's creator Jerry Seigel and ably assisted by the man of steel's artist Joe Shuster, whose

exquisite style embodied this halcyon epoch, this was the beginning of the vampire's reign in the comic book. Dr. Occult would eventually vanquish his nemesis, but was unable to stem this unholy tide, as the undead returned to leave their indelible mark on the newsstands of North America.

As the 1930s gave way to a new decade, the comic book flourished, just as the world once again prepared for war. With the democracies of the free world engaged against the slaughter of the Axis powers, the superhero ascended to become the champion of the comic book publishers and the youth of America alike. Shortly after his debut in *Detective Comics* #27 (May 1939), Batman was bound for Paris in a two part tale, introduced in #31 (September 1939). Initially he was assailed by the unscrupulous Monk,

*By Peter Normanton*





## DOCTOR OCCULT

By Leger & Reuths



before venturing on, in the next issue, across Europe into Hungary, where the vampire Dala waited in the shadows. The curtain would fall on their treacherous ways when Batman eventually traced their coffins. Maybe if they had chanced upon Bob Kane's iconic cover to *Detective Comics* #31, they would have been a little more wary of Bruce Wayne's alter ego. Alas, for them it wasn't to be; they were destined to fall before the caped crusader.

This episode went to press as the Nazis conspired to subjugate Europe in its entirety. It didn't take long for the vampire horde to enter into a pact with this evil force. When *Captain America Comics* #24 (March 1943) hit the stands, Cap was thrown into a confrontation with Count Vernis on Vampire Mountain, in the tale 'The Vampire Strikes.' It was a nail biting encounter, revealing this heinous breed at its most lethal. The Count wouldn't be the only supernatural villain to conspire with the Nazi abomination, zombie-like creatures together with demonic entities would follow suit, to gift the comic book its finest moment. These vampires weren't the misunderstood

Bob Kane's cover to *Detective Comics* #31, Timely's *Captain America Comics* #24, *New Fun* #6 (home to the first comic book vampire story), and Australia's *Gem Comics* #16. On this and the previous page, installments from Doctor Occult's first vampire saga.



# The ART OF TOM SUTTON

Charlton were never high on my wants list when I first started reading comic books; I was a dyed in the wool Marvelite. How I would like to say those garish looking comics grabbed me when I first saw them; but it never happened that way. I can't have been alone in my misgivings, because, God bless them, those Charltons always seemed to be the last to leave the racks, if they ever did. When there was nothing else to be had I would give one of their titles a go, but the result was invariably the same, leaving me feeling short-changed as they failed to stir my craving for the macabre.

The very appearance of a Charlton comic, during the 1970s, was tawdry when compared to their illustrious

competitors. The quality of the print quality suggested their product was destined for a short life, as it seeped into your pores. E-Man did hit a chord, albeit in the strangest of ways and every once in a while one of their weird tales did induce a degree of other worldliness, but for the most part Charlton's appeal was lost on me.

Now let's turn the clock forward to 1991, when I chanced upon a bunch of Charltons for almost next to nothing. The war books I confess were of little interest and a fair amount of the mystery stories weren't worth the paper they were printed on. However, amongst this bunch was a number of tales which did pique my curiosity, this was owing to the penmanship of Rudy Palais, Pete



Tom's macabre covers for Charlton were to attract a plethora of new readers. We begin with just a few, *Ghost Manor* #17, *Monster Hunters* #3, *The Many Ghosts of Doctor Graves* #39, *Haunted* #25. Above, the covers to *Ghostly Haunts* #33, *Haunted Love* #1 and *Ghostly Tales* #100.



## THOSE OBJECTIONABLE HORROR COMICS!

by Peter Normanton

If yours is the wish to spend a few hours lost in a stack of your favourite horror comics, let's just make sure you have combed your hair, washed behind your ears and polished your shoes and most importantly ensure your behaviour is absolutely impeccable. To be neglect in any of these details might draw the wrong kind of attention, which in turn may necessitate your beloved horror comics being removed pending a ban by Parliamentary statute. A bit of an overreaction you might think, but all it took, so it would appear, was one ill kept child to change the course of comics in what was then Great Britain. A few years hence, American-styled comics would fall under Parliamentary scrutiny, culminating in a mandate which remains on the statute books to this very day.

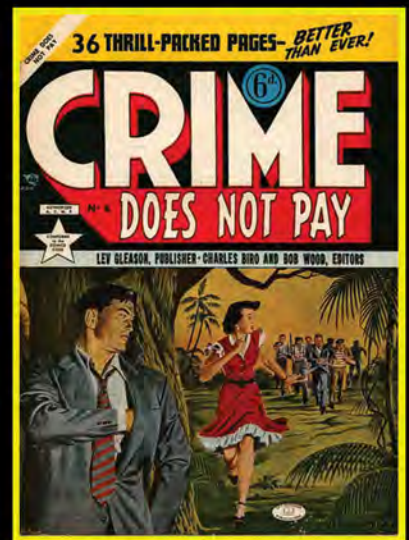
The war was almost twelve months over when George Pumphrey first considered the possibility of using children's comics as a viable source of reading material. He was looking to develop the reading skills of the children in his charge at a time when reading material was in very short supply. Poor Mr Pumphrey, his noble intent would never have imagined the iniquity coursing through so many of these seemingly innocent publications. When he set out on this quite admirable quest, he would have been unaware of the disparaging views held by his contemporaries for this cartoon-styled mayhem. As the weeks followed, it became obvious a large amount of these comics fell short of the standard for which he had hoped. It would have been better for all if he had just forgotten his experiment; resigning himself to the fact comic books were little more than a youthful diversion. It wasn't to be, for when young Ethel shared her choice of reading, his view was forever changed.

### A Disgraceful Publication

Ethel was only nine years old, poorly dressed and a tad grubby. She demonstrated an incessant need for attention and as a result was inclined to being unusually naughty. Furthermore, her temper bordered on the uncontrollable, evincing a cruel streak she readily inflicted on her playmates. These flaws in character paled into insignificance when she handed over the comic in her possession. *The Beano* and the more gentle *Every Girl's Magazine* were no longer her cup of tea, she favoured the tawdry contents of something going by the name *Eerie*. Given the timeline, there is a very good chance this was the original Avon edition dating back to 1947, as opposed to the later British reprint.

Now, if Ethel had been a quiet young lady, lovingly nurtured in the leafy suburbs of the English home-counties, with a disposition in keeping with the values espoused by the Great Britain of these years, would this offending copy of *Eerie* have been dismissed by Pumphrey? Probably not, I am quite certain this copy of *Eerie* would have still been a cause for grave concern, for the excess he uncovered in these pages was not in keeping with the accepted notion of a children's comic.

The review of Wertham's tome, which appeared eight years later in the *Times Literary Supplement*, would have further exacerbated Pumphrey's anxiety, but as Martin Barker's book *A Haunt of Fears* points out, by this time there were several other bodies driving the campaign to put an end to those American-styled comics, amongst them child protection groups, the



Soon to be banned, the British editions of the American-styled comics *Crime Does Not Pay* #6 and *Streamline's March of Crime* #2.



# The Forgotten Terrors of AL EADEH

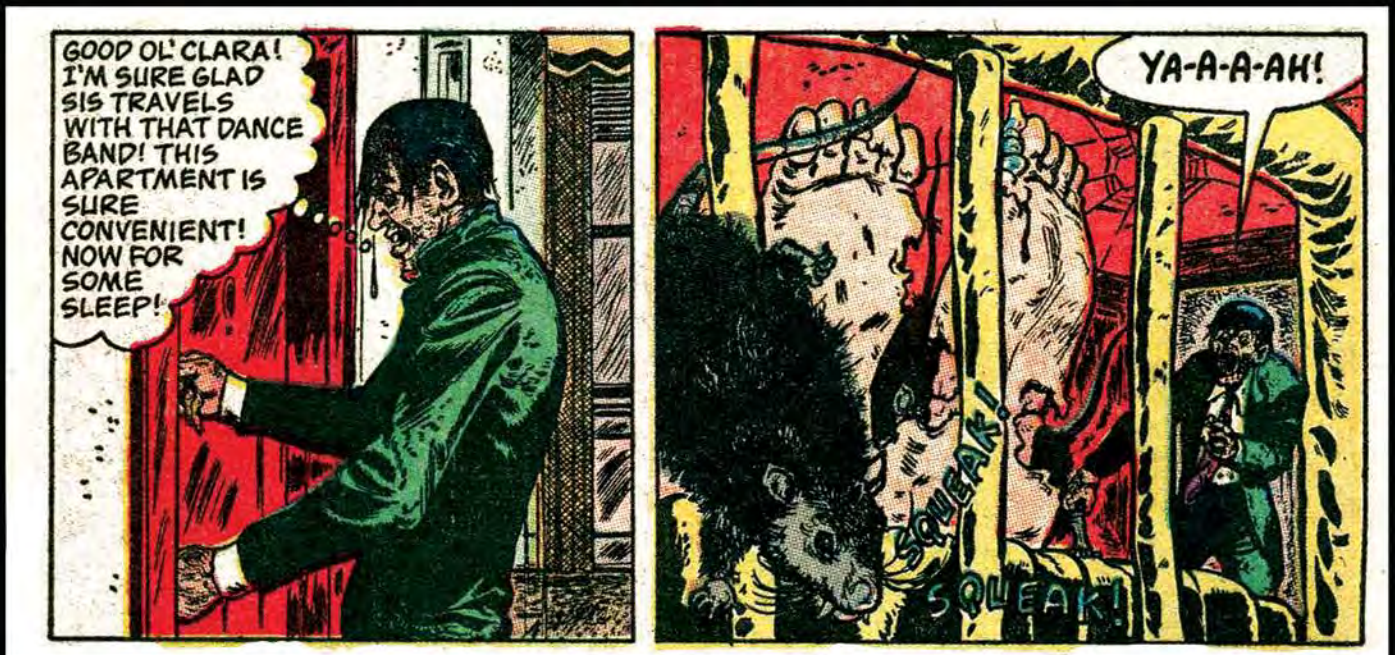
by Peter Normanton

When the family of Cleveland-born Alfred Richard Eadeh moved to Brooklyn, New York, they brought their son to a city that would one day yield him work as a commercial artist. Only a part of this lengthy career would be spent in the employ of the comic book industry, at what was one of the most fascinating periods in the history of this four-coloured mayhem. Al was to live to a ripe old age, but there is so little known about his time in comics, which amounted to a mere seven years. For all of the ingenuity he displayed at the drawing board, he would never distinguish himself as one of the luminaries of the medium. Only those with a passion for pre-Code horror would have ever truly appreciate his perturbing sense of design, the majority of which was picked up by Atlas for their infamous line of horror titles.

Having attended the Pratt Institute in New York during the 1930s, he found work as a commercial art, before

enrolling in the armed forces in Jamaica, New York on 7<sup>th</sup> March 1941. This was nine months prior to the attack on Pearl Harbour. His enlistment papers reveal he was a single man, employed as an artist. By the end of the war, Private Eadeh had been promoted to the rank of sergeant, while receiving commissions as a cartoonist from the incredibly popular serviceman's journal, *Yank Magazine*. On his return to civilian life, Al's story was very similar to that of many other young servicemen, in finding it difficult to acquire a steady flow of work. Positions in the city's advertising agencies were few and far between, but there were a growing number of openings for freelance comic artists. This had the added bonus of allowing him to work from home, away the busy humdrum of the comic book publishing houses.

An opportunity arose in the studio owned by Joe Simon and Jack Kirby, in which he spent quite some time,



A hideous sequence from *Chamber of Chills* #16's "Cycle of Horror," suggesting Al's grisly penmanship was just too much for Harvey Comics.



I first came upon Richard Corben's breathtaking artwork as a very impressionable fifteen-year-old, following the excitement of my first trip to London. It was supposedly a school outing to the London Science Museum, but I had one thing in mind, slipping off to the country's premier comic shop of the day, Dark They Were and Golden Eyed, situated in St. Ann's Court, just off Wardour Street slap bang in the middle of the capital's Soho district. During the morning I did as was expected, traipsing around the science museum, which turned out to be a very enjoyable experience, but all the time I was hankering to get through the hustle and bustle of the city to make my way to Wardour Street. How on earth I managed to get there is beyond me; this was the summer of 1977, a long time before the advent of the internet and Google maps. When I think back, somebody up there must have been guiding me, for those who know me well enough, will tell you my sense of direction leaves much to be desired.

Rummaging through the boxes I chanced upon a copy of the fourth issue of *Unknown Worlds of Science Fiction*, one of my favourite titles of the day. As with so many of the contributions to this magazine's short-lived run, it was a mind blowing affair, which took me back to the elation I had felt on first reading the Damon Knight-edited science fiction anthologies *Beyond Tomorrow* and *Worlds to Come*. Richard's only appearance in this title, "Encounter at War", had previously seen publication in the fourth issue of underground title *Anomaly*, dating back to 1972. This was quite a bold move by Marvel Comics, daring to reprint material from a province considered by many to be utterly anarchic. There's nothing unusual about violence in the pages of a comic book, but "Encounter at War" escalated the levels of mayhem, taking them to fever pitch. This was the first time I had ever seen an airbrush used in a comic book, having yet to behold Alex Schomburg's covers for *Wonder Comics* and *Startling Comics*. These thirteen pages were a euphoric overload of the senses; surely this had to be comic book nirvana. The excess inundating this tale may have sprouted from the science fiction films of the 1950s and the social turmoil of 60s America. However, the inferno he witnessed as a child, which engulfed his parents' farm house in Anderson, Missouri, would have left an infinitely more resounding impression.

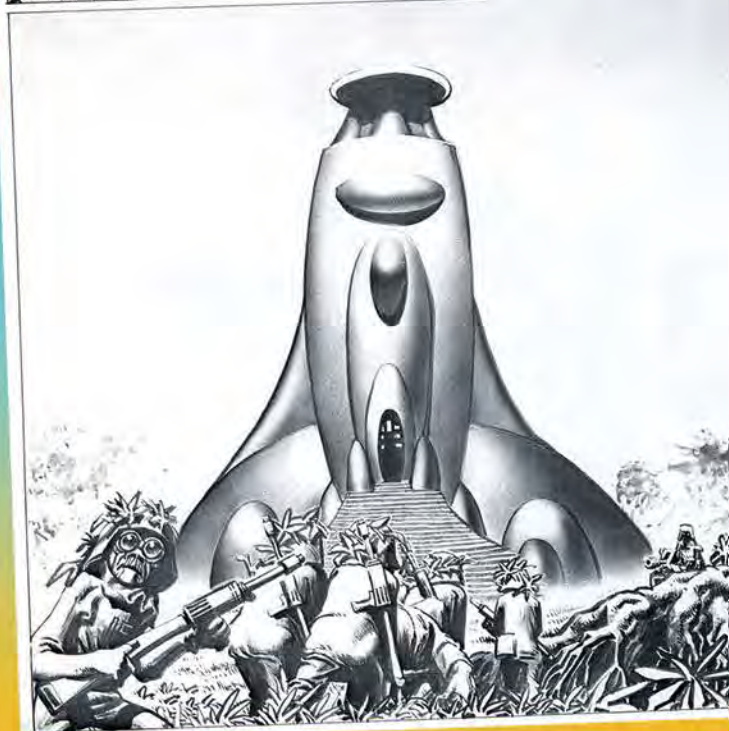
An admirer of EC's science fiction and horror titles, Richard insists he started drawing a long time before he was able to read and write, tracing the characters from his elder brother's comic books, then fleshing them out into something new. In the field of comic books, Frank Frazetta, Wallace Wood, and Alex Toth would be his inspiration, but his interest in art would develop to encompass the masters, Da Vinci, Michelangelo, Caravaggio, Durer, Vermeer, Rembrandt, Parish and quite significantly Rodin, each of whom would play their part in ennobling his stylistic panache. Before being exposed to their genius, Richard completed his first comic book, *Trail Comics*; a joyous eight part narration recounting the escapades of the family's pet dog, Trail.

*Trail Comics* was but the beginning. Alongside his love of art and comic books emerged a fascination for film making, having received his first cine camera as a teenager. The possibilities inherent in this medium would coalesce to expand his sense of creativity, later influencing his approach to comic book design. The flip page animations conceived in his school exercise books were already a thing of the past, replaced by experiments with clay-based animations. These would culminate in his 16mm film "NeverWhere," completed while in the employ of a Kansas City industrial film company. Assisted by some of his colleagues, he spliced graphic animation with live-action to win a CINE Golden Eagle.

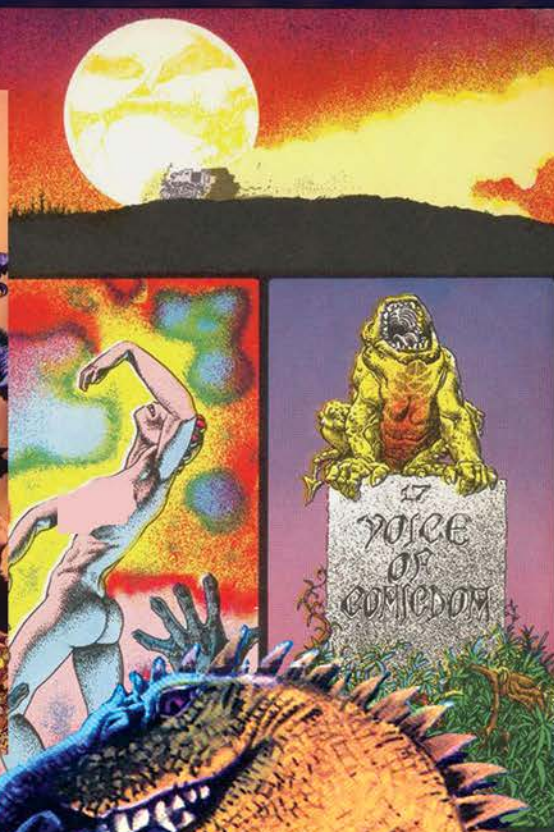
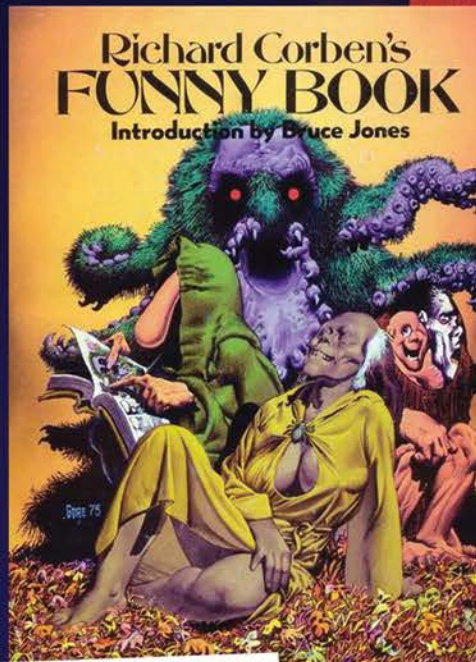
# RICHARD CORBEN

## THE EARLY DAYS

by Peter Normanton







## LYCANKLUTZ

YES, *FRIGHT FREAKS*, WE'RE ENCOUNTERING ANOTHER *FOREST FIEND*! BUT THERE IS A DIFFERENCE THIS TIME. THIS TREMBLING TRAVELER IS AN ENTERPRISING OLD COOT WITH A PLAN TO AID THE MEEK FOLKS OF THIS PLAGUED LAND... AND HIMSELF.

**FOR GOD'S SAKE, LET ME IN!**

GIVE ME REFUGE. I BEG OF YOU LEST I PERISH AT YOUR DOOR.



STORY, ART: RICHARD CORBEN





# THE ESSENTIAL GOOD GIRL



The 'good-girl' has a long and successful career upon which she can readily call. During the 1920s, our heroine appeared in the pulps of the period as louche, often en déshabillé and promiscuous. This good-girl was an object of unending desire, flirtatious, pliable and persuadable for extra-marital sexual trysts. These risqué titles were often referred to as bedsheets, owing, if for no other reason, to their large format. When it became clear that the carping censors and their noisome acolytes were displeased with her near constant state of undress and wanton tendencies, her role had to be reviewed.

Following this reappraisal, the good-girl was soon fit to be tied, passively awaiting a decidedly horrible fate. On numerous covers she could be seen clamped within all manner of elaborate devices, each designed to either impale, immolate, immerse or decapitate, at the hands of evil criminals, dwarves or Igor-like henchmen; who in turn were directed by deviously manipulative Machiavellian overseers. These iniquitous men saw the undressing a woman as a focus for humiliation, torture or her ultimate

destruction. On some of these covers, the hero could be seen arriving not a moment too soon, to relieve the luckless good-girl from her distress, whilst restoring off-camera some much-needed clothing. The good-girl's second coming was initiated by publisher Henry Steeger, in a format which was to become known as 'weird menace' or 'shudder pulp' magazines. This change in emphasis began late 1933, with a revamped *Dime Mystery*, followed in 1934 by Steeger's *Horror Stories* and *Terror Tales*. Whilst Steeger was both the progenitor and leader in the field, rival companies soon joined the fray.

## Rough Around the Edges

American pulps of the 1930s were crude publications, printed on cheap quality, coarse wood-pulp paper. They were designed to be enjoyed, maybe passed on a couple of times, and then discarded. The covers were flimsy affairs, although made of decent coated-stock, which was glued to the interior spine; with the whole left untrimmed. Any rough handling

**BY FRANK MOTLER**



Peter Driben. Harrison became notorious following the launch of his ground-breaking, but vicious, Hollywood celebrity-tattle magazine, *Confidential* in 1952, which culminated in the infamous Confidential Magazine Trial of 1957. In addition, the good-girl was represented via photos of numerous wannabe starlets, or occasionally the genuine Hollywood stars themselves. A staple of these titles was the photo feature of a seemingly plucky, optimistic but ultimately fallible femme. These hapless females were seen in a variety of improbable poses, photographed from all possible angles as they tried to accomplish a task that was plainly beyond their skills. Mostly, these were tasks that men would accomplish with ease; you get the idea... The conceit, she doesn't realise what is being glimpsed while striving to remain upright, covered and decent. Equally presumptuous, the innocent reader has chanced inadvertently upon these candid photos or illustrations. More knowing, the would-be censors were not always convinced.

Another premise was the natural-history magazine, wherein the native tribe could be photographed in its natural habitat. This was usually accompanied by an obligatory shot or two, featuring bare-breasted tribeswomen. Here, the native innocence seemed real and hence the viewers' voyeurism was probably guaranteed. During its formative period, the Hollywood fan magazine also used idealised painted illustrations before opting for the now traditional colour close-up but still ideal photograph. Post-war, the flag-waver would evolve into the adult humour digest, many featuring risqué pinup covers and thinly veiled double entendre. These proliferated from the





# JAYME CORTIEZ

While horror comics became the scapegoat for the delinquency evinced amongst the youth of North America during the 1950s, attitudes in Brazil were appreciably different. Brazilian commentators take great pleasure in celebrating the legacy bequeathed by their country's horror comics. As with the United States, the boom came at the dawn of the 1950s, but in this instance continued well into the 1960s, before receding in the face of the superhero early in the subsequent decade.

Comic books weren't entirely without their critics, having been attacked by conservative groups in the country as far back as the 1930s. They were cited for being detrimental to children, with left wing groups questioning the role of the heroes in these tales, considering them distanced from reality. Pressure was also exerted by Brazilian creators, keen to limit the amount of comics entering the country from the United States. They had a need to ensure there was a bountiful supply of work lined up for their studios. Initially

Brazil's approach to horror was heavily influenced by the comics coming in from the United States, but it wasn't long before they developed a virtuosity inspired by the local folklore spiced with a dash of racy eroticism. The 1960s would be harrowed by an unsettled period of intense political turmoil, yet the horror publishers maintained their huge readership. While much of the country suffered at the hands of the oppressive military dictatorship which seized power in 1964, the comic book industry remained largely untouched.

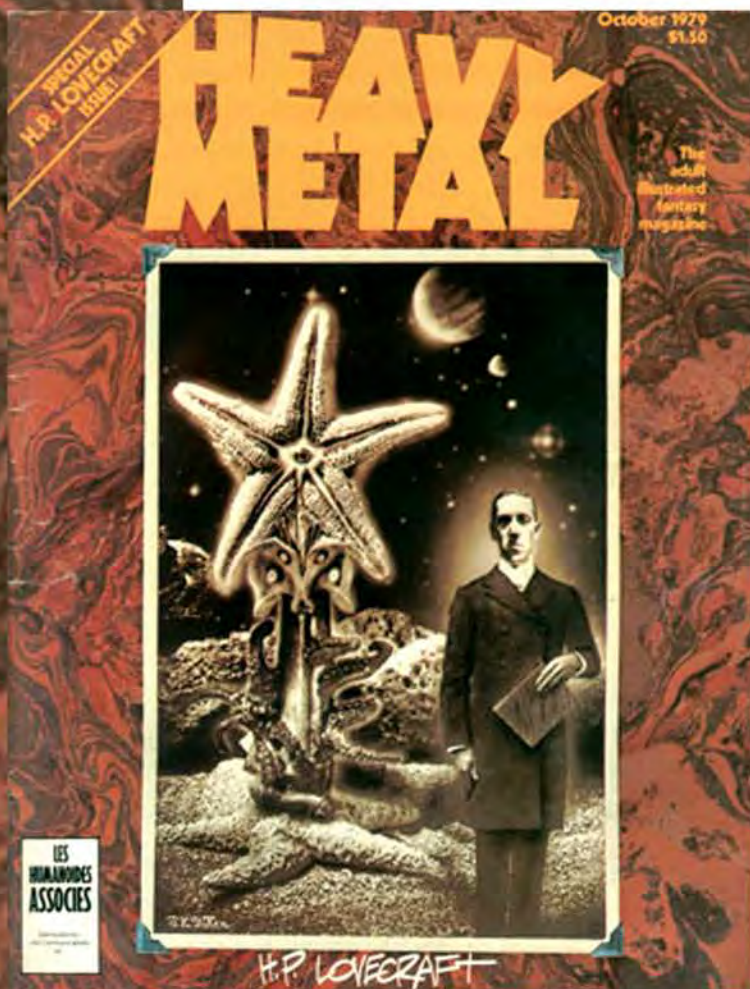
Two years after the American Comics Group released *Adventures into the Unknown*, the fledgling publishing house Editora La Selva first experimented with a line of home-grown horror comics. It was the beginning of a twenty-year run, which would see their readers, who were supposedly adult, subjected to rivers of blood, as voodoo conspired with blighted bandits, cannibals gorged on the grisly contents of their cooking pots and



## THE TERROR FROM BRAZIL

by Peter Normanton



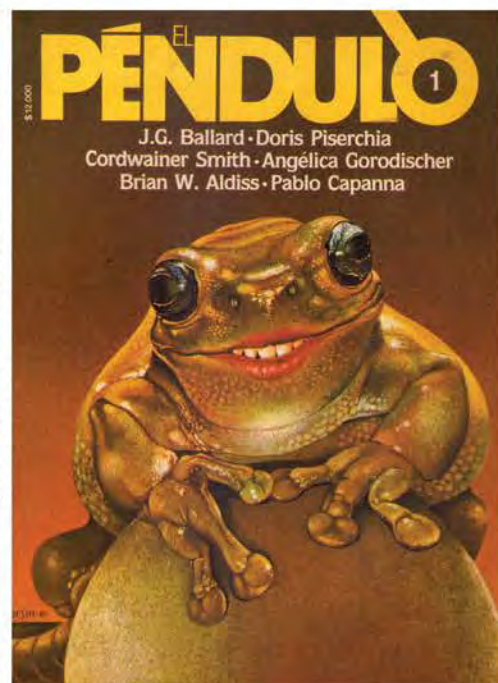
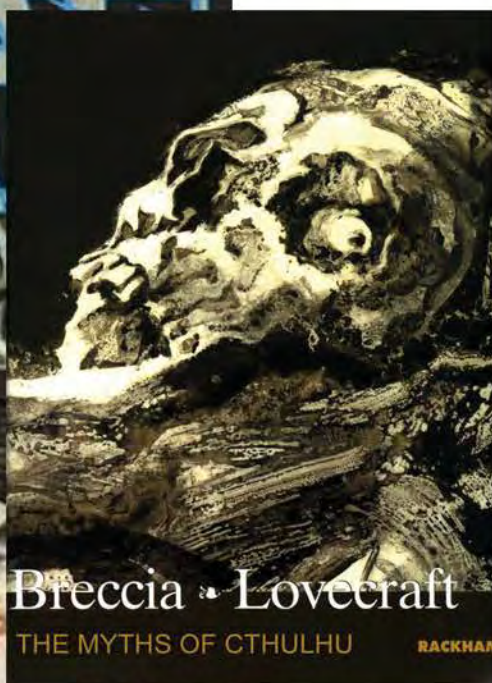


# H. P. LOVECRAFT GOES

# HEAVY METAL

BY PETER NORMANTON

There are certain moments in your life that never leave you, such was a damp Friday evening in the mid November of 1979, when I was looking forward to getting home from an interview in North Wales. It was the first of my university evaluations, which possibly might account for this long-ago memory, but there was a little more to the tale. In the months that followed I would choose not to include Bangor on my shortlist, although I have since wished I had seriously reconsidered. But on that eve my thoughts were elsewhere, for in my lap was the latest issue of *Heavy Metal*, number 31, cover-dated October 1979.



Above, the cover to the US *Heavy Metal* #31; below, its French cousin, *Metal Hurlant*. Alongside are the covers to the Breccia Lovecraft collection and Argentina's fantasy magazine *El Pendulo*.



# A BRIGHTER TOMORROW

The  
Promotional  
Comics  
of the  
Cold War

by Frank Motler

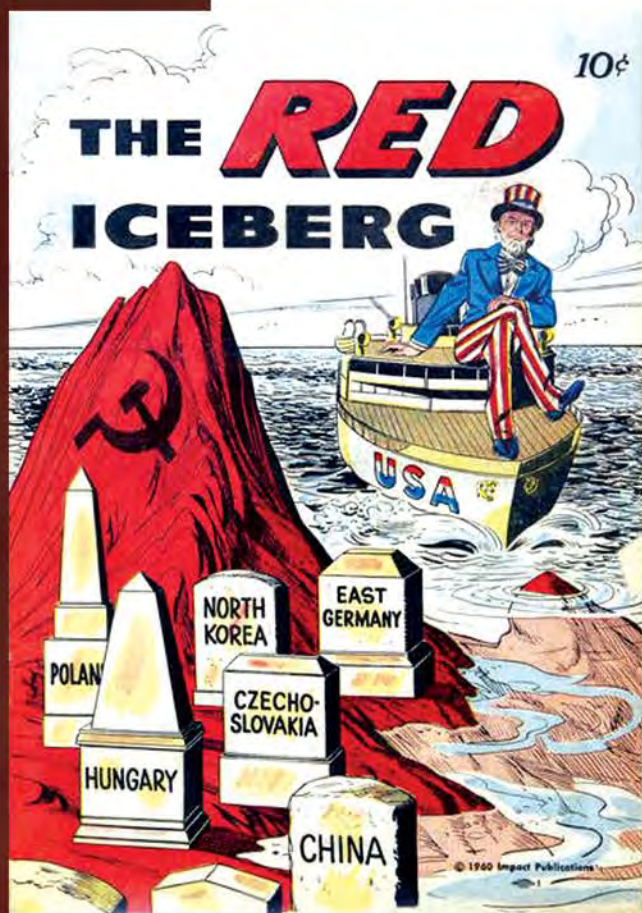
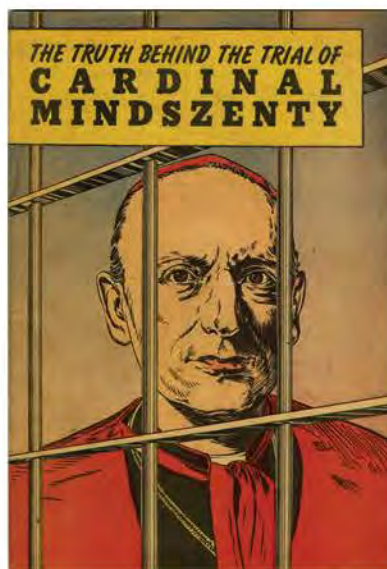
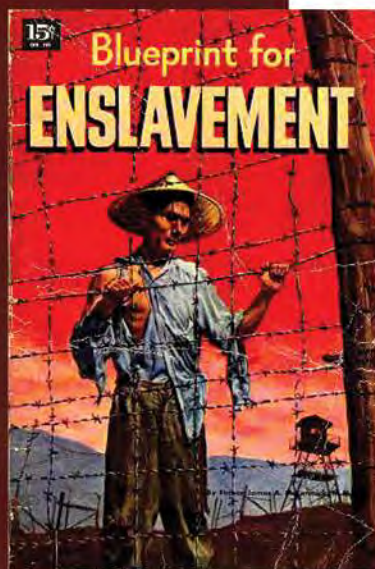
Cultural Attaché

Concluding his epic presentation to the House Un-American Activities Committee on March 26, 1947, FBI director J. Edgar Hoover likened Communism to a disease: *"Communism, in reality, is not a political party. It is a way of life; an evil and malignant way of life. It reveals a condition akin to disease that spreads like an epidemic; and like an epidemic, a quarantine is necessary to keep it from infecting the Nation."* During World War II (1941-45 in U.S.A), The Soviet Union was considered America's ally. Post War, however, the Communist ideology and imperial aims exemplified by Soviet leader Josef Stalin (1878-1953) were seen as an evil influence on World affairs. Allied fears were compounded when Russia (also as: The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics/U.S.S.R) detonated its own atomic bomb on September 24th, 1949. In the East, the 'Hammer and Sickle' symbolised the collective strength of Soviet farmer and industrial worker. It was first employed in 1922, following the Russian Revolution of 1917. To the West, the emblem was visual shorthand for evil; similar to the 'Red Star' favoured by the Communist Chinese. These symbols would adorn anything or anyone with a Communist taint. Into this fevered climate,

**The emotive 1947 Catechetical Guild publication  
*Is This Tomorrow* was followed three years  
later by *If the Devil Would Talk*.**







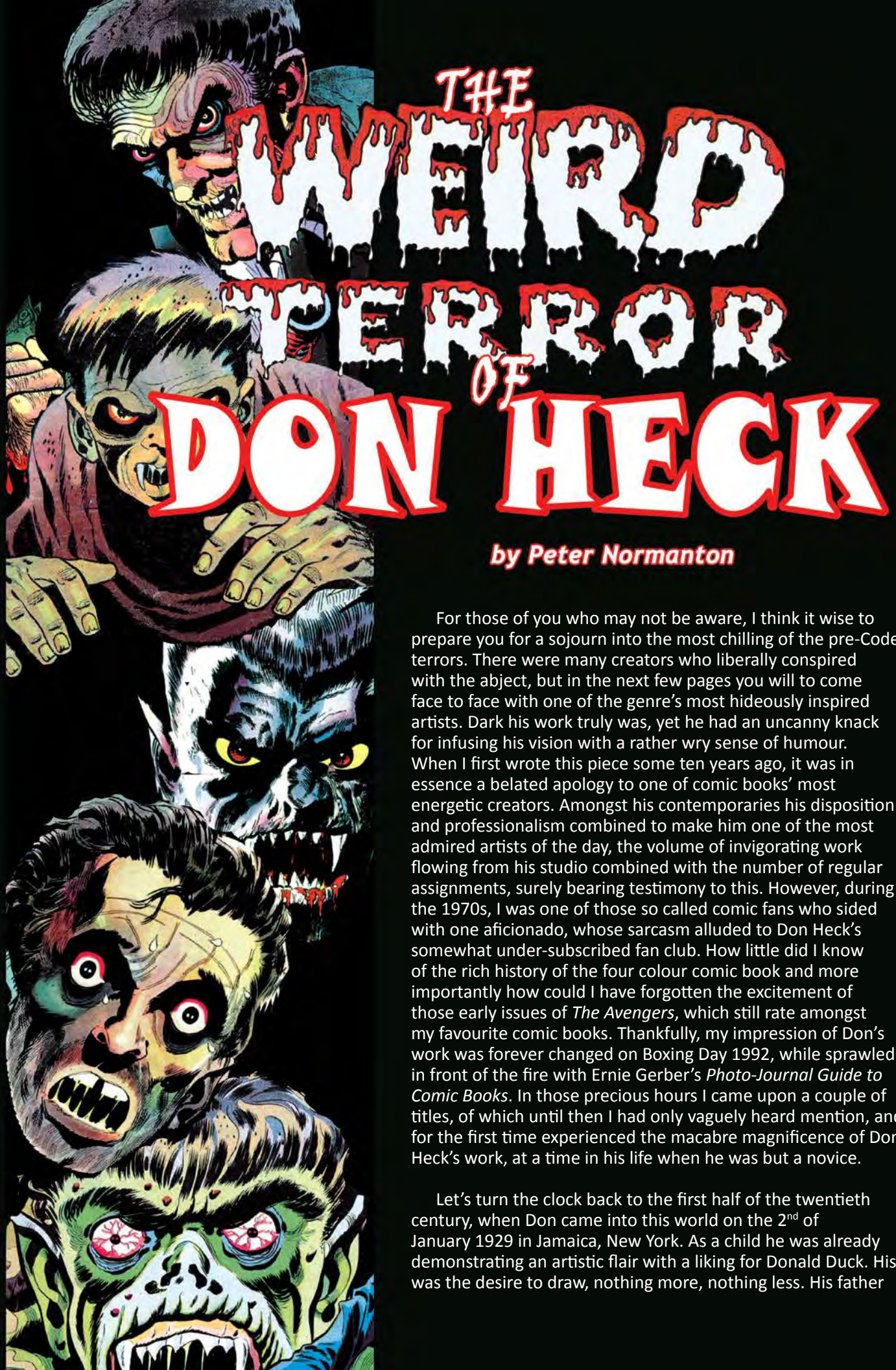
U.S. interest groups released numerous anti-Communist pamphlets, leaflets, articles etc. Many reflecting the tone and rhetoric of Hoover's testimony. Among them were several comics from the Catechetical Guild Educational Society, based in St. Paul, Minnesota. A publisher founded in 1936 by Father Louis Gales, assisted by Fathers Paul Bussard and Edward Jennings. *Catholic Digest* premiered that November and remains in print to this day. From 1942, the *Guild* was the publisher of *Topix* (until 1952) and other religious comics.

Although recorded in *Overstreet's Comic Book Price Guide* with nominal values, the Guild's anti-Communist tracts were largely unseen, before copies materialised in 1979. This occurred, when a Priest attended a comic mart in Philadelphia; his briefcase bearing comics from the defunct publisher's files. The Cleric was soon involved in intense discussions with three comic dealers, before departing the scene "with a fistful of thousand dollar bills." (*Overstreet* #10 Market Report, 1980). The Guild's anti-Communist titles include: *Is This Tomorrow*, 1947 (preceded by *Confidential*; an all-black-and-white pre-publication proof), *Blood Is the Harvest*, 1950 (uncommon; a black-and-white side-stapled prototype also exists), *If the Devil Would Talk*, 1950 (Roman Catholic Guild imprint) and *The Red Iceberg*, from 1960. There was even a slim 64-page 1952 paperback condemning Communist China, *Blueprint For Enslavement* by Father James A. McCormick, with an evocative cover by artist Stanley Borack. Whilst, *The Truth Behind the Trial of Cardinal Mindszenty* (1949) was a religio-political comic (with a French-Canadian version from the Montreal-based *Editions Fides*; *La Vérité Concernant Le Cardinal Mindszenty*). József Mindszenty (1892-1975) had opposed Communism in his native Hungary, suffering torture, a criminal 'show trial' and imprisonment, before living in exile for his final years. The religious leader was also portrayed by actor Charles Bickford in the 1950 movie release, "Guilty of Treason," based on Mindszenty's memoirs. *Unconquered* was a giveaway from National Committee for A Free Europe, Inc, which described the show trial in Communist Czechoslovakia of Milada Horakova (1901—1950), with twelve co-defendants and her subsequent execution, despite pleas in the West for clemency. It is made more memorable by the artwork of Alexander Toth.

### America Menaced!

Under an iconic holocaust cover, the Guild released *Is This Tomorrow, America Under Communism!*, in 1947. With alarming images, the 48-page 4colour story conjures the nightmare scenario how US Communist conspirators could suborn the American democratic system into a totalitarian state. Two priced (10c) and two unpriced versions are known. The former were distributed by *Hearst's International Circulation Company (ICC)*. The original unpriced edition can be identified by the flames in top right hand corner, whilst the later unpriced version has a telltale blank yellow circle. The original unpriced and at least one priced edition were released by the Guild, who also the copyright holder. It was also reprinted in three consecutive issues of the Guild's *Catholic Digest* (July to September, v12#9 to v12#11). A later unpriced/undated edition was released by the Chicago-based National Research Bureau. More from them shortly. With an estimated 4-million copies all told, *Is This Tomorrow* remains common to this day. The chilling hypothesis was also restaged for foreign markets. It was adapted by author Neil Alexander McArthur, with new cover art and some interior





# THE WEIRD TERROR OF DON HECK

by Peter Normanton

For those of you who may not be aware, I think it wise to prepare you for a sojourn into the most chilling of the pre-Code terrors. There were many creators who liberally conspired with the abject, but in the next few pages you will come face to face with one of the genre's most hideously inspired artists. Dark his work truly was, yet he had an uncanny knack for infusing his vision with a rather wry sense of humour. When I first wrote this piece some ten years ago, it was in essence a belated apology to one of comic books' most energetic creators. Amongst his contemporaries his disposition and professionalism combined to make him one of the most admired artists of the day, the volume of invigorating work flowing from his studio combined with the number of regular assignments, surely bearing testimony to this. However, during the 1970s, I was one of those so called comic fans who sided with one aficionado, whose sarcasm alluded to Don Heck's somewhat under-subscribed fan club. How little did I know of the rich history of the four colour comic book and more importantly how could I have forgotten the excitement of those early issues of *The Avengers*, which still rate amongst my favourite comic books. Thankfully, my impression of Don's work was forever changed on Boxing Day 1992, while sprawled in front of the fire with Ernie Gerber's *Photo-Journal Guide to Comic Books*. In those precious hours I came upon a couple of titles, of which until then I had only vaguely heard mention, and for the first time experienced the macabre magnificence of Don Heck's work, at a time in his life when he was but a novice.

Let's turn the clock back to the first half of the twentieth century, when Don came into this world on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of January 1929 in Jamaica, New York. As a child he was already demonstrating an artistic flair with a liking for Donald Duck. His father was the desire to draw, nothing more, nothing less. His father



# THE HOUSE OF HAMMER

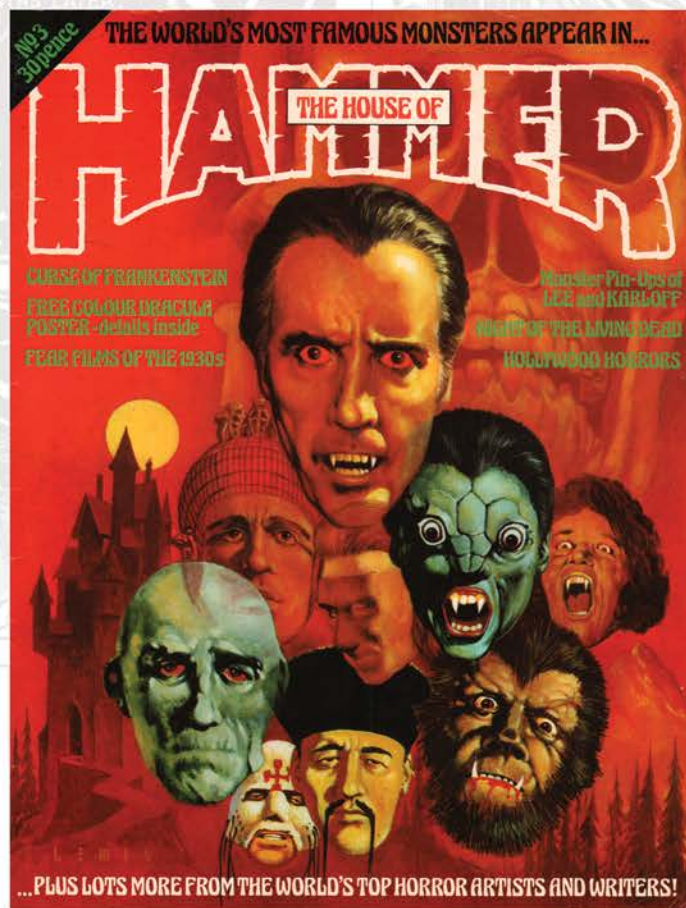
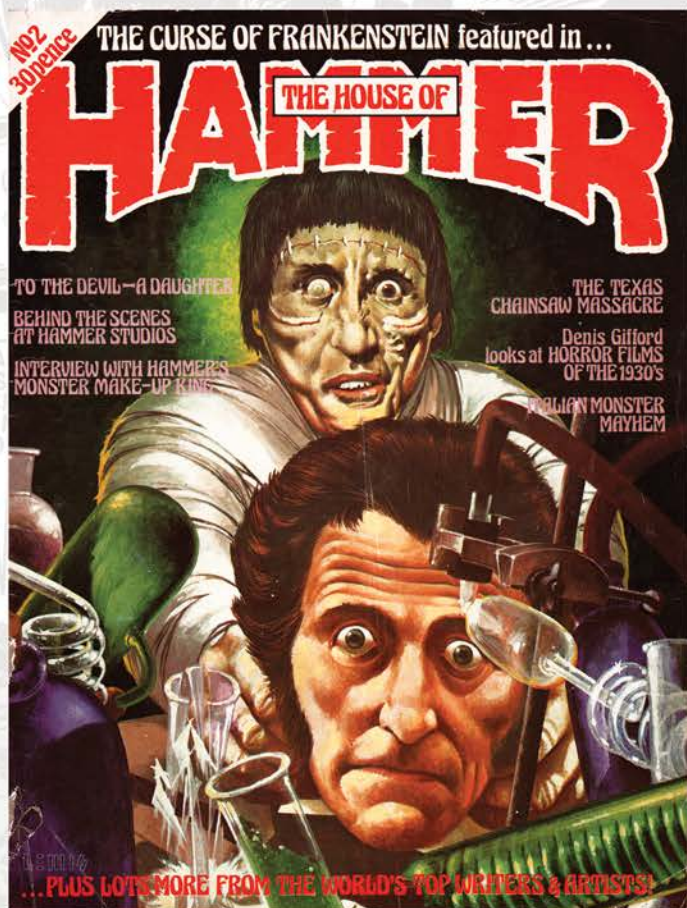
by Peter Norman

The kid wanders into his local newsagents having dodged the local thugs. It's early on a Sunday morning, so the lowlifes will still be wallowing in their pits and morning mass is but a distant memory. He pores through the magazine rack in the hope of finding something special, even though the horror magazines have been scarce of late, including his beloved *Dracula Lives* which has merged with his other favourite, *Planet of the Apes*. Poor kid, he is still looking for one of those deranged Skywalds. Maybe a copy of *Nightmare* or that really sick-sounding *Psycho*. Ah, but this is the autumn of 1976 and the Skywald Publication Corporation had bitten the dust more than twelve months ago, victims of the escalating cost of paper, which had precipitated the demise of this latest fad for the horror comic. The kid wasn't to know; how could he?

The revolving rack did carry a rather pleasant surprise though, two issues of a magazine he hadn't previously seen,

each evocative of the inveigling Skywald horroremood. The covers to these, the second and third issues of *House of Hammer*, insisted he dip into his pockets to secure the pair. However, there was a snag, an all too common one: The price tag. These magazines were thirty-five pence a go, and what was left of yesterday's pocket money would only run to a single issue. He stumps up the pennies and five-penny pieces from his pocket in exchange for a copy of the second issue. If it hits the mark he will be back next week to pick up the one he has had to leave behind.

Hit the mark *House of Hammer* most certainly did, but that following week there was no sign of anything bearing its name on the revolving rack, now laden with more adult fare. It would be another twenty-five years before I tracked down that elusive third issue.



Brian Lewis was brought in as cover artist on issues #2 and #3. His style made *House of Hammer* stand out on the shelves and spinning racks of every local newsagent.





Brian Lewis continued his reign as the *House of Hammer* cover supremo with the hard-to-find issue #4's "Legend of the Seven Golden Vampires," then came the gore-in-space image for #5. On this page, Alberto Cuyas's rendition of "The Curse of Frankenstein," a telling which ran between the second and third issues.

Paul Neary returned to illustrate "Moon Zero 2" for issue #5 with layouts that should have garnered him far greater acclaim. In that same issue, Martin Asbury delivered "One Man's Meat," seemingly thriving on the bloodthirsty direction of this issue's "Van Helsing's Terror Tale."

