...INFORMATION...

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Our apologies, but due to the increase in paper cost, we are forced to increase the price of C.P.L. to 35¢. To offset the increase in price, please notice the quality now offered. For even more improvements, see next issue.

Last, but not least: Due to production problems (on the part of EPOCH), C.P.L. will not be producing that size. We apologize to all the fans who were informed of this, and sympathize with all those who ordered that size.

...IN THIS ISSUE...

Editorial...........................................Robert Layton & Roger Slifer
Page 4.
Revival-Survival on THE AVENGER...........................................Roger Slifer
Page 7.

ONE LAST DESPERATE CHANCE
DOC SAVAGE AT MARVEL...........................................Larry Brnicky
Page 14
Sterno's Hot Ones on THE SHADOWS NOSE AND OTHER ANATOMICAL COMMENTS...........................................Sterno
Page 9.

Comic Catalog #5...........................................Page 17.

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EDITORIAL

Big changes are on their way, if you couldn't tell already. C.P.L. #5 showcases the work of Canadian artist, John L. Byrne. You can be sure to see some of his talent in future issues.

The inside cover is the first in a projected series of Charlton characters to be offered in a big portfolio done by John and long-time fan, short-time pro: Duffy Vohland.

Speaking of Duffy, you'll see works by him throughout this issue, also. Duffy is perhaps the most prominent member of the "GANG" to date. Although answering to four different addresses, he never fails to send us his art, and he's a frequent contributor to Marvel's line, too.

Second on the list of prominent "GANG" members is Roger Slifer, who was recently kicked out of a small Mid-Western town and landed in the C.P.L. office. Since he refused to leave, I was forced to make him co-editor in an effort to discourage him from staying on. Rog will be co-editing C.P.L. with me until he becomes too talented to remain a fan and journey to the "Big Apple" to seek fame and fortune in comics (Look like he's here to stay, folks?). Roger's past credits include articles for Etcetera, Chronicle, and Epoch. This issue he contributes his column "Revival-Survival" on THE AVENGER!

You can be sure of seeing "Revival-Survival" here on a regular basis and in a few other fanzines, such as the Legion Outpost.

The third member is possibly the hardest to talk about, because he is also the hardest to understand. I'm speaking of the infamous Dr. Sterno, alias Roger Stern. Sterno was the originator of the comics course, now taught at Indiana University by Mike Ulan. He even taught the course himself for the first semester, but gave it up for a career in radio, as traffic manager at WQW in Indianapolis.

His prize possessions are a replica of Froggy the Gremlin and his Shadow article which he donates this issue.

The fanatical Doc Savage freak known as "Doc" Larry Brinkley contributed the Doc Savage article this issue. Larry also gave us permission to print his Doc Savageillo by Neal Adams (the smacking sound you hear is the sound of us kissing his feet. Ah! we had to get it somehow didn't we?) which Neal did for him at the New York Comicon. Thanks Larry! And thanks Neal; without you we wouldn't have the taste of worn leather in our mouths.

Be sure to be here next issue for we're sure to have some big surprises. Next issue features Jim Sterlin, Dan Adkins, Val Mayerik, Paul Gulacy, and there's more in the works!

Until next time...

Heavy Herongers, Bob and Rog
REVIVAL-SURVIVAL

THE AVENGER

Unlike the other articles in this issue, this isn't about a pulp hero who has been adapted to the comic book field. Rather, this article is about a pulp character who should be put into contemporary pictorial literature. The Avenger is a little over a year ago when I happened to notice it as I was looking over the paperback rack in a local comic book store. The cover art caught my eye: a man in a grey suit and a grey face to match blending into a purple background. Another thing about the cover that interested me was that the title was "101 Justice Inc." Now it wasn't the title that interested me as much as the fact that it had a number 1, denoting the first of a series of books. However, they probably built up some fun stories of this unique looking character.

Purchasing the book and the next two in the series which were also available at the same store, I rushed home to read them. In the first issue we learned that the Avenger was originally a millionaire adventurer. Also in this first book of the Avenger's exploits we find what prompted him to become the Avenger. A crime ring ruthlessly supplying a wife and child.

This personal loss which inspired him to use his great wealth to destroy this and other crime rings also had an interesting side effect. The nerve shock of his wife and daughter's death caused his face muscles to become paralyzed, unable to portray expression although he could prod the skin with his fingers to form the features of almost anyone he wished to impersonate. Using his paralyzed facial muscles, his wealth and contacts in the business world, as well as his superb physique, Dick Benson, destined to become known as the Avenger, obtained vengeance on the killers of his family.

Another important event of the Avenger's first episode was his acquiring of his first aide. Fergus MacMurdo, a Scottish chemist who had lost his family to a powerful crime ring. His second aide was Emmit, a six-foot plus giant who was framed in a police station, and spent a year in jail for a crime he had nothing to do with. In the next two books of the series the Avenger acquired three more aides as well as a block long headquarters on Bleek Street, an appropriate title for the tragedy struck members of his little band.

The Doc Savage fans among you out there are probably saying The Avenger is just a cheap imitation of Doc Savage. After all, Doc Savage was a wealthy adventurer who was prosed into fighting crime by the murder of his father. Other similarities include Doc Savage's aides and his being master of disguise.

In fact, they were even used the same pen name; that of Kenneth Robeson, for both characters. Street and Smith probably looked at the success of Doc Savage and intentionally modeled The Avenger after ol' Doc in order to see if they could double their success.

However, The Avenger is far from being a cheap imitation. It seems to me the creators of the Avenger went out of their way to improve various aspects of the Doc Savage character. I'll proceed to delve into these various improvements.

Motivation — The death of a parent, as in the Doc Savage origin, is a very difficult thing to lose. However, the loss of a wife and child is infinitely harder to take. A parent you are born to; you have no choice in the matter. A wife on the other hand you choose, with no one else involved, except of course, the person with whom you marry.

A child is a great loss because it is the creation of you, your wife and God. The ties between a man and his child are much stronger than a child's ties to his parent. Thus, The Avenger has a greater motivation for his crime-fighting career than Doc Savage.

Disguise — Doc Savage is known as a master of disguise. But Doc Savage's disguises have to be purely fake-up and mack; whereas The Avenger can mold his very features to match the person whose place he's taking. So, the Avenger is a better master of disguise than Doc Savage.

Alden — Although Doc Savage's aides were different in appearance they were all basically the same. All were white, Caucasian, and male. When reading a Doc Savage novel the (continued on page 18)
One Last Desperate Chance

DOC AT MARVEL

Right off I’ll confess that I’m a Doc Savage aficionado. So rest assured this history of Doc’s recent four-color career comes from the heart and is not just an assignment. After my introduction to the Man of Bronze by a friend, I soon surpassed his collection and continued to this day. Imagine my shock when, after reading more than 60 Doc paperbacks, I read in December, 1971, that Marvel planned to soon release a Doc Savage comic book.

First news on the project had Roy Thomas scripting with John Severin inking Ross Andru’s pencils. Original stories would be adapted over three issues with initial release scheduled for March 1972. But as per usual when Marvel announces a definite team on a new book, time and circumstances result in an entirely new combination. Doc Savage #1 finally hit the stands in July of ’72. In the interim Roy Thomas became editor of the Marvel line and understandably had to drop many writing commitments. With the first two pages scripted, writing responsibility shifted to Steve Englehart. John Severin’s work load needed alleviating so Jim Mooney inked the first issue.

But it was a good first issue even without the promised team. An excellent John Buscema cover, misleading as only a Marvel cover can be, set the starting pace. Which was immediately dropped with the Andru-Mooney interior art. Almost no feeling for depth of shading is evident. Everyone looks like Saturday morning cartoon escapees. (Note: Examine Marvel-Man-Up #7 for some good work by this team.) And in a really idiotic move, Monk is drawn in bell bottoms and 4-inch ‘chunky’ heels.

Thankfully the writing chores were handled superbly. The Thomas plotted-Englehart scripted adaptation case astonishingly close to following the original. Moreover, no half-witted attempt at trying to condense half the pulp in one issue occurred. Doc Savage #1 covered only the first 28 pages of the original, allowing for the laying of much needed groundwork.

Two major changes occurred in Doc #2. Ernie Chua took over the inking and Jim Steranko drew the cover. With Chua’s inking, Ross Andru’s pencils looked great, especially in medium shots; those scenes 3-6 feet from the viewer. Layouts improved and characters took on a gratifying 3-dimensional look. (especially Princess Konia...ahem) The Steranko cover was his best during this latest return stint. Color only lessened its impact. A pity this and the next issue’s Steranko cover were largely the causes of this comic’s cancellation.

That’s correct, issues of Doc with Steranko covers were poor sellers. Disregarding the first issue which almost always sell well, Marvel had only the sales figures for #3 & #4 to scrutinize when deciding Doc’s fate. If only the mind-less pre-adolescent masses who comprise the bulk of comic buyers would have opened #3 it would have been a sell-out. This story heralded the start of Palmer’s three issue reign as inker. And reign it was. Palmer’s genius with zip-a-tone and shadow are striking, especially when you consider this was the same Ross Andru who pencilled issue 1. With this art and script Doc Savage 3-4 gets my nomination as best adaptation of the series. Too bad the choice of story also helped bring about the book’s demise.

Think about it. What can a Steranko or a Palmer do when there is little to work with? “Death In Silver” made for a decent story, but certainly could not have produced the same reactions as later adaptations. Put another way, would your average ten-year-old buy a comic with a ‘werewolf’ or with ‘silver death’s-heads’? The actual scripting of ‘Silver’ equalled Englehart’s usual great work especially in bringing out the who-done-it aspect inherited in any Doc story.

Issues #3 & #4 also began the 1930’s setting after the ‘timeless’ Mayan background. Office decor, public phone booths, armored cars, Pat’s beauty salon, the Indian Head Club; in fact just a cut every panel had a 30’s flavor to it. But gratifyingly Doc’s bullet proof vest appears and the reader is first exposed to the copyrighted Savage ‘weird, unearthly trilling’. (Admittedly hard in a medium based solely on sight.)

More obviously horror-oriented stories began with #5. Andru-Palmer again outdid themselves on the visuals. Too bad the Gardner Fox script didn’t justify that such effort. The monster theme allowed for two of the comic’s best covers most
Notably Issue 6. It's doubtful anyone picking up these stories for their cover would buy the following issues after experiencing Fox's peculiar writing ability.

Most of the dialogue took on a forced, unnatural aspect. Monk, Ham, and the others became stooges for the all-powerful Bunco. The pulp followed but which English-hart successfully avoided. A lot of what Doc had to say could have more effectively been done in captions. Witness Doc's dialogue from pages 3 & 4 of #5: "Close! Another few inches and that BOOMIN' has already killed me!" "THIS time they hit me!" and "This will give me...BREATHE ING ROOM!". Try comparing it to the amount of dialogue in an English-hart scene. One glaring error in plotting also occurs. A character named Jean Morris appears as a lion tamer who speaks Swahili. In one of her first appearances she starts taking pot shots at Doc, Monk and Ham. Why is she shooting at them? Why is it necessary that she speak Swahili? How do the gangsters expect a lion tamer to control 50-foot monsters? These questions all point out the glaring deficiency in trying to adapt a 120-page paperback in a 40-page comic book. But the real problem is coherence in lost. If Doc went (or maybe he could have) to monthly publication three-parters could have made for a much more intelligent telling of a story.

The last two issues of Doc's short-lived mag ran "The Brand of the Werewolf" and "The Man of Bronze's" more famous adventures. The Buckler cover for #7 proved the existence of stretch pants in the 1950's. Frank Springer's inks muddied Ross Andru's pencils on this issue but his finished art over Rich Buckler's breakdowns looked clean and uncluttered, nearly as good as #2. Fox got a co-scripter in issue #7 and with issue 8 Tony Isabella took over total authorship. The improvement that resulted bodes well for future titles. He works on one small change occurs in the final issue. Pat asks to formally join the group and Doc readily agrees. Future issues (if any) must now contend with writing a girl's role, making it all the more difficult for the writer.

Thus ends Doc's brief, but illustrious career at Marvel. I strongly believe the possibility exists for the title's resurrection. The emphasis on horror in the later issues and the better covers which develop from the horror will result in better sales. Letter writing and picking up extra copies have their effect on the higher ups, too. However about taking the time and help bring Doc back.

Running boards forever!

Grackle borgward, "Doc" Larry Briticky

The Shadow's Nose and other Anatomical Comments

Okay, so it's the middle of the 30's and you're a kid in the 1930s. You go into town on a Saturday afternoon, you sit in the bus station, or the main square to the train, and you pluck down your nickname for the latest copy of THE SHADOW. Even then it's hurry home, sit under a tree while your mind lurks in the darkened halls of a cheap Manhattan dive.

Why the Shadow? Well, why not? Just think such a minute back to your youth...no, younger than that...back to the age of a few weeks...in your memory of those days hasn't been totally obscured. Remember the dark? Remember it used to absolutely take over the world at night? There it was...night-time...and there you were...in bed...with the guano half-scared out of you. And even when there was a bright, moonlit night, the darkness was still there, hiding in the shadows, frightening you to death...and you loving every wretched minute of it. Down deep inside was this almost primal urge to become part of that darkness, to live in it fully. You didn't know it, but somehow it seemed that if you could become the darkness, it could not hurt you. You dreamed of being able to pull the darkness around you and then to release it, overwhelming your enemy, by a true Shado's surprise attack.

So why the Shadow? The sound, the name, even a kind of feel...it was all there. The Shadow...it was a natural!

So you're a kid during the Thirties and you're reading the Shadow. And your very proper Sunday school mind is in that cheap dive. You're the type to get on somebody's nerves, or a white slaver, or some sort of underworld power baron. Suddenly the scum you've been walking for has his appearance and here come, scowling out of the darkness...the form of the SHADOW! And what a form! Big blotch of darkness with only three distinctive features: A razor-sharp hawk-like nose, two incredibly clean, open, blazing eyes, and a pair of hands! It was the eyes & nose that commanded the attention, the hands often going unnoticed. And there was always a definite fear on the part of the Shadow's victims! They were long hands, the fingers especially long.

Sterno's Hot Ones

Long, sensitive...yet not effeminate...hands that were at the same time firm & strong...equally at home felling out the tumblers of a complex safe, heaving twin .45's, or forming mighty clubs to pound the heads of blackguards.

The Shadow! A devil on the side of the angels! Picking out all the lesser punishments to those who used them regularly as a matter of course. Doc Savage might pinch a sensitive nerve to subdue his foes, the Avenger would trick the villains into falling on their own swords, but the Shadow would just make in with his twin .45's & pull everyone full of lead! (true, the Spider was a bit on the bloodthirsty side, too. But he was little more than a Shadow surrogate...if not the Shadow himself!) Right, Mr. Farner?

So you've got the Shadow...king of the pulps and superhero of the golden age of radio. He even makes a few appearances on the screen. He, of course, makes it into the comics. The first time for Smith & Street is something to really gas. The second time for Archie...well...only the Shadow is the same. But the rest of the Shadow's comics are plagued by darkness once more, and it's the thirties all over again. Autogiros, the EI, the Hawks, Harry Vincent...the Shadow! And kids in the 1930s get a chance to get the same thrill from there fathers had, hiding in the darkness of that old faithful dive. Thanks, Danny. Thanks, Mike. The nights are just a little scary again.
characters all seemed to run together. Their personalities just weren't distinct and different enough.

On the other hand, the Avenger's aides are of a more varied type. Besides the bony Soot and the giant, Smitty; Benson also has Nellie Gray, a girl adept at judo, and Josh Newton and his wife Rosebel, the black member of the team. This was a real advancement for 1940; having blacks used in a comic story as equals. These more diversified aides make it easier to follow the story than if it were a Doc Savage novel.

Weapons—In addition to his scientific weapons similar to Doc Savage's devices, the Avenger also has a couple of weapons that he uses time and again during his adventures. These are his gun and throwing knife (which he affectionately calls Mike and Ike), which he uses with extreme skill. Extreme to the point that he can "crease" people on purpose. By using weapons that the reader knows about, the authors didn't always have to pull escapes out of the hat, thus keeping from stretching the reader's credulity every other page.

These things I have listed are what make me like the Avenger more than Doc Savage. Why don't you pick up one and see if you agree? Also, you might prod DC into putting out a comic based on the Avenger. After all, Warner owns both DC and the Avenger series so who knows what a little pushing in the right direction might produce...

For those interested in the Avenger, here is a list for the Avenger titles out, thus far; and the ones that should be out in the future following the same numbering system that Warner Paperback Library has used so far.

Continued from page 7