

THE TROPHY CASE

PULP FICTION * GAMES * COMIC BOOKS

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Games by Scott Casper News

Once upon a time it might have seemed like the ideal job to make and sell my own games (space for snickering by those who have tried it). It's a lot of work. The writing, always writing new material, is hard work. But what really surprised me was how much harder promotion and marketing is.

When I wrote The Invasion of Arun'Kid for Kenzer & Company, it was a lot of work - but as soon as the manuscript passed out of my hands my involvement was done. Self-publishing, though, requires that I constantly be pushing my product somewhere, whether it's starting a new HIDEOUTS & HOODLUMS campaign on the Paizo message boards, adding new content to the H&H website (so far the "hidden" Clock story hasn't garnered much interest, sadly), or just mentioning it on blogs. And, no matter how much I might think "Oh, you've done it now, Scott, you've oversaturated the game sites and now they'll just all be annoyed with you," I'm still surprised occasionally by a blogger or a gamer for whom H&H was, until that moment, still completely off his radar.

Of course, all this is about how self-publishing may not be the ideal job. But the ideal hobby? Heck yes! An even bigger kick than getting friends and strangers to all spend time playing a game you're running is having them spend time playing a game you created yourself. It's like the thrill of running a homebrew campaign setting - times three.

There are many plots afoot hereabouts (though who would want a plot about a foot escapes me), but the biggest remains the work-in-progress Supplement III: Better Quality. The new mobsters in the "Mobsters & Trophies" section is looking to be bigger than I'd originally planned. So far, I'm close to being on schedule for this bad boy.

This is unofficially my "Captain America" issue, as about a third of it is my in-depth reviews of the first issues of Captain America Comics. It's also our first issue to have three - count 'em, THREE - contributors. Now, before we move on, a few words about some H&H-related people!

MATTHEW KAY-CONWAY has a new job! With job hunting over, it looks like we're already hearing a lot more from Mantrell the Magician in the ol' rpol.net campaign!

NED MARTELL has been working hard at researching the Golden Age Flash so he can play in the new H&H: JSA campaign at Paizo.com, making him the only player to have played in all four H&H campaigns run online. Keep throwing all your free time this way, Ned!

STEVE LOPEZ, our Trophy Case fiction contributor, has got over an illness in time to get back to work on a "secret

project" for Avalon Games. Will it keep him too busy to ever write H&H modules? Only time will tell!

~Scott Casper

Mapping the Hideouts

Since publishing scenario/adventure/modules for H&H is not in our short-range plans, the would-be Editors out there might be curious about what is available that they can use, after converting from other rules systems.

Personally, I use the really classic D&D modules (1975-1980). They have just the Old School feel I'm looking for. I modify a lot, replacing humanoid monsters with human hoodlums, adding hi-tech trophies or replacing magic items with hi-tech trophies, and trying to insert period detail for a 1940-41 feel as much as possible. Ones I've used so far include "Temple of the Frog" (original version, from the Blackmoor supplement), S1 Tomb of Horrors, JG124 Escape from Astigar's Lair, Palace of the Vampire Queen, S3 Expedition to the Barrier Peaks, JG55 GenConIX Dungeons, and A1 Slave Pits of the Undercity. Since I Edit for low-level Heroes, obviously a lot of dropping the threat level goes on too.

Recently published sourcebooks that would fit well with H&H include M&M: Super-spies and Commandos of WW2 from RPG Objects (written for Mutants & Masterminds), Vigilance Force: Heroes of WWII from Vigilance Press (available for Icons, BASH, and Mutants & Masterminds), and Amazing Stories of WWII: Homefront Heroes from Vigilance Press (available for ICONS, Mutants & Masterminds).

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The H&H FAN CLUB

A new H&H campaign has begun on the Paizo messageboards online. This one is H&H: JSA and the first scenario is a loose adaptation of All-Star Comics #5. So far, we have Sandman, Flash, and Hourman represented, but more players will always be welcome.

As of today, the rpol.net H&H campaign is over 5,600 posts with both Mantrell the Magician and the Mountain Man topping 700 posts each. The "Reuter Mansion's Hideout" scenario is also over the 800 post mark and should easily surpass the posts in our last longest scenario, "Expedition to the Huron Peaks".

The live session H&H campaign at my library is now seven sessions long. New players continue to rotate in and try H&H while the group continues its epic quest to personally reach and stop Hitler. They are currently in occupied France trying to overtake a Nazi slave stockade.

ACTION FIGURE REVIEW

It's not easy finding good action figures that represent the H&H era of 1939-1941. DC Direct had produced a great run of Golden Age figures, called the First Appearance series, way back in 1998. The Golden Age figures (all from series I and II) consisted of Superman, Batman (or, Bat-Man, as he was called then), Flash, Hawkman, Captain Marvel, Robin, Green Lantern, and Wonder Woman. I only own two of them, Captain Marvel and Green Lantern. The cloth capes fall off easily, my only complaint. The detail is great. There is little articulation, but I see that as a plus. Best of all are the mini-reproductions of each character's first issue! The best site I could find to show all eight figures together was here:
<http://www.brianstoys.com/store/category.aspx?categoryID=2806>

Several figures from Darwyn Cooke's The New Frontier mini-series, though taking place in the '50s, retain their 1940s look, including Dr. Fate, Batman, Blackhawk, and Green Arrow (I cannot recall where I first found this picture, but you can see them all side-by-side at <http://games.groups.yahoo.com/group/Superland/>). I don't own any of these, but think they look great and wish I did. Also appropriate to the era is the Uncle Sam figure from DC Direct's Classic Heroes series. Note that the Phantom Lady figure in that series is sporting a later costume, not her original one!

Marvel Comics has, what I consider to be, terrible action figures. The hinge in the middle of their stomachs make them look hideous. Still, Hasbro's Marvel Legends series included a Golden Age Captain America back in 2007 that looked pretty decent. Original shield design!



THE VINDICATORS: CHAPTER TWO

Fiction by Steve Lopez

Tibet...

The sky was a blinding blue, but the only thing Jed noticed was the depths of Wei's impossibly dark eyes. They stood together on a rock ledge high above the green flowered valley hidden among the Himalayan peaks. It was a landscape painted from an artist's dream, but all Jed could see was Wei.

He'd first noticed her while he was still in training. She brought flowers to the monastery every morning; the first time Jed saw her face, he thought her to be the loveliest thing he'd ever seen. He remarked to Lo Han that her face was the most beautiful flower of the bouquet. Lo Han replied by striking Jed sharply with a *bo* stick.

"You have no time to think of such things! You must think of your training only!"

But Jed could never fully erase the beautiful Asian girl from his thoughts. He made sure his duties would take him to the courtyard each morning so he could be there when she arrived with the daily flowers for the temple. Jed marveled at her as she walked across the courtyard's stones; she didn't walk so much as glide - it was as though her feet never even touched the ground.

The flower girl never seemed to notice Jed. Finally, one morning, she saw him looking at her. Jed caught his breath, afraid that she would take offense. She paused for a moment, seemingly puzzled by the Occidental stranger who was gazing at her with rapt attention.

Then, her face framed by her raven hair which shone in the sunlight, she smiled. And, to Jed's surprise, she smiled at him each and every morning thereafter.

That was when he was in training. After many months his training was completed and he was free to leave the monastery. Jed chose to stay on in Tibet. He sought the flower girl out and, much to his surprise, won her heart. They were inseparable thereafter. Jed would accompany Wei to the monastery each morning as she brought flowers for the temple. In the afternoons they would ride horses, or hike to the bluffs above the valley. And sometimes, in the evening as they walked through the vast wild gardens of this hidden valley, Wei would sing to him. In the twilight, among those eternal blooms, Jed would listen to her voice and swear he was in heaven, listening to an angel.

Jed was in heaven in that sun-kissed mystical Tibetan valley. Each day was like a beautiful dream; Jed and his love were always together.

A warm breeze surrounded them as Jed lost himself in Wei's eyes here on the rock ledge high above the valley. He began to speak, but she softly placed a slim finger across his lips. As he silently watched in amazement, a single glistening tear

fell from one of those impossibly deep dark eyes.

"Beware, my love," Wei whispered. "Few things are ever what they seem."

Her hand snaked its way behind his neck and she drew his face to hers. As their lips touched, the temple bell chimed from far off down in the valley. The sound grew louder, then louder still...

St. Nicholas, Maryland. April 4, 1936...

The sound of the telephone on the nightstand cut into Jedediah Singletary's skull like a hatchet. His eyes flew open and the morning glare was like a second blade slicing into his head.

"Awwww, God, shut up!" He fumbled for the phone and pressed the receiver to his ear.

"Yeah?"

"Jed! Did I wake you?" Davis' voice was rough and not what Jed wanted to hear first thing in the morning, but it still beat the phone's awful ringing.

"Nah," Jed replied.

"I'm glad. Listen, I know you're still banged up from the other night, but I need a favor."

"Go on."

"There was another tenement fire last night. Four more people killed - one was just a baby."

"Oh, damn..."

"Yeah. Listen, I need you to go down to City Hall, to the records department. Find out who those buildings belonged to. And, while you're there," Davis continued, "see if you can find out who owns that warehouse with the bootlegger hideout in the basement."

"You think there's a connection." It was a statement, not a question.

"Maybe, but the cops won't tell me a thing. Listen, Jed, I know you're still healing up, so I hate to ask you to do this. I'd do it myself, but I can't show my face down there without a world of grief. There's an old bat named Horvath who runs the records and she hates my guts - won't give me the time of day."

Jed laughed. "I hear that's going around." He could hear Davis' derisive snort on the other end of the line.

"Wise guy. Would you do this for me?"

"No," Jed replied. "But I'll do it for *us*, and for those people getting hurt in those fires."

"Thanks, Jed. I mean it. Call me with the skinny when you get it."

Jedediah hung the receiver back on the hook and looked out the window across his manicured lawn, more like a park than a lawn. Tucked away in a far corner was a small garden of exotic flowers, none native to America much less to Maryland. He gazed wistfully across the lawn to that small garden and thought again of Wei.

His beautiful flower girl had been dead for many years, Jed's fault, and he wore his guilt like a dark shroud when he prowled the streets at night as the Twilight Phantom.

But he knew Wei forgave him and loved him yet, because she sometimes still came to him, gliding silently though the night before she softly spoke to him - in his dreams.

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FIGHTING MAN ADDITIONS

By Walt Jillson

I think that Fighting Men end up being the weakest class in the game. They are less powerful than Superheroes, have no powers to choose from, and yet require considerably more experience to advance in level. Their ability to use armor is something of a curative, but not much, especially at higher levels.

So, I have created my own fix (possibly for something that is not broken, you decide).

Fighting Man Skills and Gimmicks

A Fighting Man can choose any of the following two abilities at the beginning of the game.

Martial Arts: Permanent +1 bonus to hit and armor class.

Detective: Find clues or hidden objects and successfully 'tail' enemies without being observed on a successful saving throw, modified for Intelligence.

Spy: Disguise himself or automatically gain surprise (win initiative on the first combat round of a fight) on a successful saving throw, modified for Intelligence.



Hidden Items: Pick any three minor hi-tech trophies. The character starts each day with one of each completely concealed on his person.

Tough Guy: +1 bonus to hit points per hit die.

Lucky: +1 bonus to all saving throws and ability checks.

COMIC BOOK WORLD

CAPTAIN AMERICA: THE CLASSIC YEARS was released in 1998, well before the current wave of republishing that Simon-Kirby material has been enjoying more recently. Had it been released more recently, perhaps it would have enjoyed some real Jack Kirby art on the cover instead of a horrible copy of the cover art of Captain America Comics #1 some lesser modern artist attempted. Thankfully the interior is much better, including the first five issues of said series.

Issue #1 begins with Cap's famous origin story. It's a bleak world that Cap starts out in. We often ask ourselves why superheroes were not more involved in stopping WWII, and some writers have gone to extremes in inventing

explanations for that, but this story starts in a sort of alternate, darker history where the U.S. is already losing before it's even joined the war. Fifth Columnists have so paralyzed the national defense that a U.S. Army general reports to FDR that "there's no stopping" them. Clearly, Captain America is going to have to clean up the home front for awhile before he's free to do any fighting overseas.

There are some great touches to the origin story. Agent X-13, the beautiful G-Woman who peels off the mask of an old crone, setting the theme that there is more to everyone in this story than what they seem. The Army officer who turns out to be a murderous spy. And, of course, Steve Rogers himself, the lanky 4F reject who becomes a superhero.

J. Edgar Hoover is called Mr. Grover in this story, the scientist is called Dr. Reinstein instead of Einstein, and the President is never called by name. I can't decide if this is more of the same theme of no one being who they seem, a flimsy attempt to protect the publisher from liability for using real people's names, or some subtler game of Joe Simon's in parallel world-building. If Reinstein is Einstein and Reinstein is killed, does that mean that Reinstein is never able to help build the atomic bomb? We seem to be more and more in Harry Turtledove territory the more I think about it (of course, later retcons would reveal that the professor was neither Reinstein nor Einstein, but oh well...).

Ultimately, the story's biggest disappointment is never in the details, but in the brevity. The newspaper headline of "Captain America Prevents Dam Explosion" would have sure made for an interesting story to read. And Bucky's introduction is mercilessly tacked on to the last page of the story.

Like the origin story, the following story of Sando and Omar was later retold by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby to much improvement. It's a slight tale of saboteurs drawing attention to their own exploits by pretending to predict them on a stage in front of an audience. If you think about it too much, it's hard to imagine anyone would have not suspected Sando and Omar by now. Oh well. The real treat here is the introduction of Betty Ross, the FBI agent who may or may not have been X-13 in the first story (it would make sense if she was, as otherwise X-13 just vanishes without a trace, but she's never called X-13, so...). Betty's smart enough to have suspected Sando and Omar and has even saved Cap some time by figuring out for him which one of the two is the real criminal.

The third story starts off as a nice piece with a lot of atmosphere. Rathcone is a hideous villain, a hunchbacked cripple who walks with a cane, sees through thick glasses, but who's clawed nails and fang-like teeth make him look more sinister than pathetic. The chess motif, where Rathcone uses the board and carved figures to help him plan his moves, is - ahem - nicely played. His numbered agents (one of whom is "15") suggests the size and structure of his organization and the fact that his men never see his face, but hear his commands via radio further enforces Rathcone as a villain to be feared. The brutal murder of an admiral by the third page ups the ante and the deal-sealer is an interesting killer, Number 13 (also known as "Herr Strangler"), with the body of a bouncer, but a charming face and humorously Poirot-like moustache. The numbering seems to be only coincidental with Agent X-13 in the origin story, though it would be interesting if these two were actually opposing agents.

Then things take a weird turn. No. 13 lures Bucky into a trap by sneaking into the Army camp and going straight up to Bucky - while he's not in costume. No big deal is made of the fact that Rathcone's agents have stumbled upon Bucky's true identity; it just seems to be assumed that everyone knows the camp mascot, "Bucky" Barnes, who happens to pal around with Steve Roges, is also Bucky, the kid who happens to pal around with Captain America, but no one makes the connection between Steve and Cap.

Taken literally, it makes no sense at all. But then, the whole notion of a grown man taking an under-aged boy into danger doesn't make much sense either. The best way to look at it as the kid sidekick as bridge between the story and the reader. Bucky is supposed to be the personification of the reader and seeing him in danger is supposed to allow the reader to feel he is in danger too. As this bridge, Bucky has a metafictional connection to the story and is able to serve the plot in ways that would more clearly break the fourth wall coming from anyone else. Or Simon didn't really think this through. One of those two, anyway...

At least we get a nice page and a half fight between Cap and No. 13 out of the deal. Rathcone, when his turn comes, never lasts more than one punch before he's stunned and the final fight has to be padded out with four of his agents showing up and interrupting the showdown.

It's hard to believe from "The Riddle of the Red Skull" that this villain would go on to plague Captain America for the next 70 years. The Red Skull spends 10 pages just slinking around, avoiding run-ins with Cap and murdering people only when they're alone until their first showdown when the Skull gets lucky and manages to stun Cap by breaking a chair over his head. Bucky somehow swings into the scene from the window (using a curtain rope?) and kicks the Red Skull in the butt, distracting him long enough for Cap to get up and take out the Red Skull with a one-two punch combination that shatters his mask (the skull mask must be well-padded, as the Skull got knocked across a room and crashed skull-first into a mirror and was fine, but smack him in the front of the face and...). Although the Red Skull has been pretending to be a master Nazi agent, to the point of wearing a giant swastika on his shirt, he turns out to only be someone else entirely. Even the Red Skull's gimmick, staring into people's faces until they die, turns out to be kind of lame when it's revealed how he's really killing them.

Of course, the Red Skull's real gimmick is his distinctive look and this, more than anything else, is why the Red Skull came back and Rathcone never did. Poor Rathcone.

The Big Thing about issue #2 is that Cap's shield is now round instead of shield-shaped. Very likely, the original shield design was seen as too similar to the design on the chest of the original patriotic superhero -- MLJ's the Shield -- and Timely already saw Cap as too potentially successful to risk a lawsuit over. No explanation for the change in shield is given; it was just a tweak of the character design and explanations would have to wait for much later retcons.

Issue #2 starts out with the return of Betty Ross and what appears to be a grizzly alien menacing her, but the title banner proclaims this is actually an oriental. And we weren't even at war with the Japanese yet! Betty's solo investigation gets the whole second page of the story before we see the master villain share his plan with the "Ageless Orientals Who Wouldn't Die". Luckily, Cap and Bucky have nothing better to do than just follow Betty around and see if she gets into

trouble as she's attacked by the Orientals. Excuse me, *giant* Orientals, standing 8 or 9 feet tall. Oh, and bullets pass right through them. And for some reason they only wear loin clothes. Bullets pass right through them, but punches effect them just fine. And somehow they're able to vanish when Cap's not looking.

Had someone been reading Jack Cole's *The Claw* one too many times...?

At least the next page has some fun interplay between Steve Rogers, Bucky, Betty (who just happens to show up at the Army base), and Steve's as-yet-unnamed sergeant. But all that gets interrupted when one of the Orientals - who now appear to be 12 feet tall! -- invade the camp. Machine guns don't bother them, but Bucky manages to kill him with a grenade. The secret of how to kill the Orientals is the only suspense left in this story as the Orientals go on a crime spree and Cap allows himself to be captured so the master villain can "monologue" to him and reveal the secret. The secret - I'm not going to protect you from spoilers here - is that loud noises, like firecrackers, kill them. Apparently, guns being shot at them aren't noisy. Huh, I thought they would be...

Okay, so the lead story isn't so hot, but the second story pays off on the promise of the first issue's famous cover, where Cap punches Hitler in the face. This story is "Trapped in the Nazi stronghold." It's not Cap or Bucky trapped, though. It's Henry Baldwin, an old man with a lot of money who promises to make a huge loan to Great Britain to help them fight the Nazis. Private Steve Rogers sees Baldwin being kidnapped by Nazis and intervenes, but some of the Nazis still manage to escape with Baldwin. So far, so good.

Now, at this point the story takes a strange turn. After reading in the newspapers that Baldwin may have been taken to Europe, Steve gets the notion to fly to Europe in disguise. He makes Bucky dress up in a Little Lord Fauntleroy costume and then dresses himself up like an old woman. Okay, this looks just disturbing to me, but maybe this passed for funny back in 1941.

The story moves past this weird bit when they reach France. We get a nice collage scene showing the cruel subjugation of France at the hands of the Nazis. Then we get to find out why Steve and Bucky keep seeing Baldwin and losing him - he's been impersonated by a Nazi spy all along and he just takes off his disguise every time Steve, as Cap, gets too close to catching him. The plan was to get Britain's hopes up and then crush them with disappointment. Hitler himself shows up to tell us that this will surely "swerve Europe to our side." Well, it's been working for him so far!

Incredibly, Steve and Bucky are *still* dressing like an "aged woman and her grandson" when the fake Baldwin shows up again, but fool Nazi that he is he makes the oldest mistake in the book - using the wrong hand. Cap is back in his fighting skivvies in no time and unmasks the fake Baldwin. Curiously, his mask peels off completely in the same way that X-13's mask peeled off - and it's worth noting how Kirby was able to envision this new technology working and portray it consistently.

One thing Simon and Kirby were never consistent on was the strength of their superheroes. Usually the plot only required them to be strong enough to knock out a full-grown man with one punch - which is admittedly pretty strong. Occasionally, though, one of their heroes would have to pull

off a stunt that in no way made sense for a human, even in peak condition. Here, "with the strength of a two ton truck," Cap halts a speeding car by grabbing the back bumper in one hand and a light post in the other hand. Now, the car is pulling away from the curb with such force that the light post *actually bends*, but Cap is fine.

After beating up some more spies and impressing the British so much that they shout to Cap, "Don't leave," Bucky finds a note with a poem on it. The note is written in English, but they know is an authentic Nazi secret note to its agents because it has a swastika in yellow at the bottom. Cap is able to discern from the simple three-line poem the exact location of the Nazi concentration camp where Baldwin is being held. Of course, there might be thousands of imprisoned Jews there as well, but what's really important to Cap is that an American might be held there! Cap and Bucky steal into Germany, storm the camp, and blow up with grenades any Nazis they can't reach with their fists.

Up to this point, the story has been more chore than pleasure to read, but this is where the real payoff starts. Suddenly the tone shifts. The Nazis are no longer realistic humans, but become caricatures with the appearance of Hitler and Goering themselves into the story. They serve the story as a sadistic Mutt and Jeff team, politely inviting each other to Baldwin's ridiculously over-the-top execution by giant canon - out of which Cap and Bucky emerge in classic Looney Tunes style. Infantry, tanks, and planes are called in to deal with the threat of Captain America, with one German pilot making the clever joke, "Now serve the Fatherland with Captain America on toast!" When Cap and Bucky smash through to Hitler and Goering, they both choose to fight Bucky, hoping the other will fight Cap - but Bucky beats them both up personally.

The last four pages, then, are a delightful wish-fulfillment fantasy of American involvement in the war causing a swift defeat of the Nazis. Cap is infused with mythic might and has, indeed, never held more potency than as a symbol of Good U.S. ethos vs. Evil Nazi ethos. Bucky too becomes more than just a sidekick, or even a conduit to the young reader, but is elevated to the role of "our boys". They may have taken most of Europe, but clearly "our boys" would make short work of those Nazis - as Bucky does himself!

The last story in issue #2 is "Captain America and the Wax Statues that Struck Death". Interestingly - perhaps amazingly - this story seems to follow in continuity with the last story, which was so remarkably status quo-shaking that most companies would have treated it as a dream sequence. Germany is still in turmoil in this story. On page 5, the Wax Man tells his Nazi soldiers, "Today we must strike the first blow against the Yankee fools who blocked our plans to mastery of the world!" To avenge themselves, the Nazis are taking the rest of the fight to our home soil. The ante has been upped. To lead the Nazis, they have chosen - not the Red Skull, who is no more than a Nazi dupe at this point in the mythos - but the Wax Man, whom Cap and Bucky have to battle "once again", even though this is the Wax Man's first published appearance. There are plenty of places in the timeline where an unpublished story could have taken place, as Cap stories often showed newspaper headlines about spy rings Cap had broken up, some of which clearly match no published stories like the aforementioned dam explosion.

Unlike the parodies of Hitler and Goering fought in the last story, the Wax Man is treated as a serious threat and is a

particularly grizzly one at that. His motif is established early on when he sculpts a wax mask in front of his underlings. The one that it resembles will know that he is doomed for having failed the Wax Man, as that underling is then held down and suffocated with the wax mask placed over his own face.

The next person to suffer that fate is Senator Keats, right after a visit from Private Steve Rogers. If I was an admiral, general, or senator in 1941, the last person I would want to see is Private Steve Rogers, as they tend to wind up dead as soon as he leaves the room with them.

Meanwhile, the Wax Man is ready to roll out his Nazi army to take over America - and they've got really cool looking tanks to do it. Not a lot of firepower, since they only have twin machine guns mounted on each side, but they look like the Cadillacs of tanks. This whole sequence is very cool and very imaginative, with elevators raising the tanks to the surface and rolling out of a giant garage disguised by giant trap doors with fake forest on top of them. You don't get a big splash page of any of this because this is early Kirby and he doesn't do splash pages yet. There is, though, a nice three-panel page where the largest panel isn't focused on the technology, but on the grim resolve of just one tank crew inside their massive Cadillac-tank. It's a mature choice from an artist who wants to show that the enemy really means business. And then the Cadillac-tanks "thunder into Camp Lehigh" like "juggernauts of doom". Very nice set-up.

It's almost inevitable that, once Cap shows up and trashes their plans, that you're left disappointed. What, it's over already? Just by stealing into one tank, Cap is able to turn it against the other tanks and wipe out the rest of the division in the space of a single page. Gee, thanks, Cap. Couldn't you have stretched that out a bit and made it a bit more fun to watch? Especially since the rest of the story quickly goes downhill at that point. Two panels are wasted on the false-drama of a U.S. soldier almost gunning down Cap because he thinks it's a Nazi escaping and doesn't recognize *the big red and white shield*. Six panels are wasted on some comic relief at the expense of Steve Rogers' still unnamed sergeant.

Then we get a new sub-plot that Bucky's been kidnapped by the Wax Man. Hurry, Cap, you've only got seven pages left! Oh wait, there's suddenly a strange subplot about the mayor (the mayor of where now? Camp Lehigh still seems to be floating in limbo somewhere) threatening to pull some strings and close Camp Lehigh if they keep up these Wax Man shenanigans or some such thing. Okay, back to Cap searching for Bucky. Amazingly, the Wax Man uses the wax museum *closest to Camp Lehigh* as his hideout and Cap just now thinks to check there. And, ew, those heads in there aren't wax - they're real human heads! Bookmark that page, Frederick Wertham! Cap allows himself to be captured by two mobsters with pistols and the Wax Man, brandishing nothing but a knife, and allows himself to be tied up so he can get the villain to monologue about his next master plan, which is to launch giant rocket bombs from his hideout. Luckily for Cap, the Wax Man is so willing to demonstrate the control panel for the rockets that Cap has plenty of time to lean back into some conveniently nearby fire and burn the ropes off of him. Now there are five hoodlums around, but Cap makes short work of him as he and an untied Bucky chase the Wax Man around. There's a nice, almost Where's Waldo feel to the two panels of Cap and Bucky looking through the wax museum displays for the hiding Wax Man.

Can you spot him reaching out for Bucky before Bucky does? No, Bucky gets to him first and headbutts him with the unimpressive sound effect of "biff", followed by a knockout "sock" from Cap. And who is the Wax Man? Naturally his face was just a wax mask the whole time and the only reason we know his true identity is because of a subplot that seemed to have inexplicably come out of nowhere earlier. The story ends with more of the comic relief sergeant, but ...ooo, it would have been nice to have one more look at those Cadillac-tanks. I feel like I just watched Warrior of the Lost World and miss Mega-Weapon already!

The last story I'm going to cover in this installment is the first from issue #3 ---The Return of the Red Skull". Yes, the first page finally explains that, when Cap thought the Red Skull was dead in their first encounter, he had simply left the body there instead of waiting for the police or the army to take the body into custody. Turns out, the Red Skull was able to survive his own poison (probably from building up an immunity to iocane powder) and already has his next plan in mind.

Quickly on display is more evidence that Steve Rogers might actually be some sort of banshee or grim reaper, heralding death. This time, all he has to do is think about how Major Douglas might be in danger and, in the next scene, the Red Skull shows up to kill him. The Red Skull's last gimmick was pretending to kill people by staring into their eyes; this time his gimmick is that he pretends that them punching him in the face kills them - his "touch of death". No sooner does he leave with the major's plans for a giant power drill than - no, Steve, don't do it! Don't walk in now, there's a chance that Major Douglas might pull through! No, too late. Steve Rogers, Messenger of Death, and Bucky have showed up so of course Major Douglas is dead now. And the Red Skull even had time to leave his new calling card, a miniature red skull.

In a scene that doesn't advance the story at all, but lets Jack Kirby draw some nice acrobatics, Cap and Bucky are ambushed while just walking down a random street sometime later by four Nazi agents of the Red Skull who promptly get their butts kicked.

The Red Skull is too busy to care anyway. He's so confident in his new plan that he brags out loud to no one that he'll "even make Hitler shake with fear!" (The Red Skull might not know, at this point, about the turmoil Cap has thrown Nazi Germany into since they last met). The new plan is ready to be put into action when the giant drill is completed. The drill itself is mounted on the front of a long, segmented tank that looks like a big metal worm, with tank treads just on the first segment and the rest of the tank apparently just dragging behind. In an impressive, two-panel page, this machine smashes out of a subway station and begins burrowing through skyscrapers, "killing thousands". We even know this is New York City because a policeman announces that it's heading towards Brooklyn. And, because he's so evil that he wants to kill people while they're having fun, the Red Skull aims his drilling machine for a stadium where a team that must surely be the Brooklyn Dodgers is playing to a packed house!

Amazingly, Cap and Bucky were watching the Brooklyn Dodgers game in costume (or, admittedly, they could have been somewhere nearby and changed really fast) and jump on top of the machine. Like the Wax Man's tanks, the drill machine looks impressive, but doesn't carry a lot of firepower

- all it has are one or two turrets on top from where the Red Skull's henchmen can shoot sub-machine guns from. The Red Skull is not worried about Cap and Bucky or the police firing their own sub-machine guns at the drill, but the threat of them both combined seems to make the Red Skull panic and he orders a full retreat. Astonishingly, *no one* pursues this enormous drilling machine, but just lets it get away. Everyone is just so glad they "scared them off".

This allows everything to go back to normal and for another sub-plot to be introduced. Elsewhere in the city, two mobsters with the height and build of Cap and Bucky don costumes and decide - master criminals they ain't - to be carnival attractions at Coney Island and charge ten cents for kids to feel their muscles. A scene that could have looked a lot creepier than just villainous is thankfully cut short when Steve Rogers and Bucky happen to show up in their army uniforms and mop the floor with the pretenders.

The imposters are resting in a dressing room later when, remarkably (though, really, no coincidences surprise me anymore in a Captain America story), the Red Skull shows up and actually believes these two schmucks are the real Cap and Bucky (apparently he didn't hear how they got their butts kicked earlier). Not even when they beg for their lives does the Red Skull seem to have a clue, so intent on he in hanging them, that these guys are fakes. So, imagine his surprise when the real Cap and Bucky show up just after the imposters die, swinging on their nooses. And how did Cap and Bucky find the Red Skull's lair? Oh, they finally figured out to look in the subway station where the drill machine had first appeared. Little late there, guys!

Ah, but there's one moment of the good stuff left. Kirby, even this early in his career, was such a master of layout that we get a one-panel fight scene so masterful that it shows what a lesser artist would have drawn in four panels, all scrolling across from one side of the long panel to the other side. I sure wouldn't want to be one of those five hoodlums who go down under Cap and Bucky's fists.

Yeah, yeah, then there's the obligatory explanation of the Red Skull's gimmick. He's wearing an electrified mask, but Bucky is able to punch him in the face because he and Cap thought to insulate their gloves. No word on how they even knew about this gimmick, because the Red Skull never bragged about it in earshot of anyone still alive this time. The Red Skull beans Bucky with a chair (you might recall he used the same weapon on Cap last time; I'm tempted, as an H&H Editor, to assign him Mysteryman levels and have "chair smash" be his signature move!) and then threatens Cap with a bomb while he climbs into his drill machine. But Cap just catches the bomb, throws it in behind the Red Skull and - well...it's gonna be hard to explain how the Red Skull lived through that one next time!



TRICKSTERS: A NEW CLASS FOR H&H

The line between good guy and bad guy magic in comic books is seldom equally drawn - bad guys usually wind up with the short shrift. The bad guy usually cannot throw fireballs or disintegrate others, but tries to compensate with trickery - and charms and illusions. This subtler magic-user, half-wizard and half-charlatan, relies on his wits as often as his spells. Though intended as a non-Hero class like the Villain class (see Supplement II: All-American), players who want to play this kind of Magic-User may choose it as well.

The Prime Requisite for Tricksters is Charisma, in which they must have a score of 14 or higher (and only earn a 10% xp bonus for 16 or higher). Their HD is d4. Tricksters can use any magic items useable by the Magic-User class. They can also use slightly more weapons than the Magic-User class, but are still limited to caltrops, clubs, daggers, darts, knives, slings, and staves.

Tricksters can counterspell, as per Magic-Users, but always as if one level lower.

Tricksters also have unnatural glibness, giving them a +1 bonus to SCM rolls. The effect wears off, so that after one week per level of the Trickster, all loyalty/morale saves of their SCMs are made at -1. These ability also makes them natural hagglers, giving them a 10% discount on all purchases.

Lastly, all Tricksters can, once per week, hold a séance. They can summon 1d4+1 per level people to the séance and even Heroes have to save vs. plot at -4 to resist an invitation. There is a cumulative 1 in 20 chance per level that the séance will actually work and function as a Contact Other Plane spell. The Trickster can instead opt to tell a prophecy that will have a cumulative 1 in 10 chance of coming true, either imparting the equivalent of the Bless spell on all participants or the reverse of it (Trickster's choice). Lastly, the Trickster can use the séance to cast Suggestion on one participant only. There is a flat 15% chance per séance of one random participant (including the Trickster) having a random curse put on him or her (at the Editor's discretion).

Trickster Advancement

Level	XP	HD	BHB	ST
1	0	1	+0	15
2	2,625	2	+0	14
3	5,250	3	+0	13
4	10,500	4	+0	12
5	21,500	5	+1	11
6	42,500	6	+1	10
7	67,500	7	+2	9
8	102,500	8	+2	8
9	160,000	9	+3	7
10	285,000	10	+3	6
11	482,500	10+1	+3	6

12	680,000	10+2	+4	6
13	878,000	10+3	+4	6

Trickster Spell Advancement

Level	Spell Level				
	1	2	3	4	5
1	1	-	-	-	-
2	2	-	-	-	-
3	3	1	-	-	-
4	4	2	-	-	-
5	4	2	1	-	-
6	4	3	1	-	-
7	4	4	2	-	-
8	4	4	2	1	-
9	5	4	3	2	-
10	5	5	3	2	1
11	5	5	4	3	2
12	5	5	4	3	3
13	5	5	5	4	4

Trickster Spells

Level 1	Level 2
Darkness	Blindness/Deafness
Detect Magic	Charm Person
Disguise Self	Fog Cloud
Light	Hypnotic Pattern
Obscuring Mist	Invisibility
See Invisibility	Minor Image
Silent Image	Mirror Image
Ventriloquism	Misdirection
Level 3	Level 4
Detect Thoughts	Confusion
Fear	Crushing Despair
Hallucinatory Terrain	Dispel Magic
Hold Person	Heroism
Invisibility Sphere	Invisibility, Greater
Major Image	Minor Creation
Nondetection	Polymorph
Rage	Shadow Conjunction
Level 5	
Animate Dead	
Hold Mobster	
Major Creation	
Mobster Summoning I-III	
Persistent Image	
Seeming	
Shadow Evocation	

For spells not currently available in H&H, see any SRD d20 documentation. For Mobster Summoning I-III, the Trickster may choose which level of mobster to summon.

NAMING H&H HEROES

Is Clark, Bruce, or Billy a good name for a superhero? Opinions may vary, but one surer method of naming period characters well is to use the U.S. Social Security

Administration's Popular Baby Names page at <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/cgi-bin/popularnames.cgi> to find out what babies were really being named in the year a given character was likely born. For example, the following is a public domain list of the top 20 baby names from 1920:

Popularity in 1920

Rank	Male name	Female name
1	John	Mary
2	William	Dorothy
3	Robert	Helen
4	James	Margaret
5	Charles	Ruth
6	George	Mildred
7	Joseph	Virginia
8	Edward	Elizabeth
9	Frank	Frances
10	Richard	Anna
11	Thomas	Betty
12	Harold	Evelyn
13	Walter	Marie
14	Paul	Doris
15	Raymond	Alice
16	Donald	Florence
17	Henry	Irene
18	Arthur	Lillian
19	Albert	Louise
20	Jack	Rose

RETRO-CONVERTING MODULES

In issue #2, I looked at how to run the classic Marvel Super Heroes introductory module "Day of the Octopus" using H&H rules. This time, I am going to try the even more ambitious task of retro-converting module MH-1 The Breeder Bombs. This module, like its predecessor, is from 1984, but even if you don't have a copy to follow along in, hopefully some H&H Editing tips can be gleaned from this.

Although written for six of the X-Men who were actively published in 1984, this adventure could be played for any Heroes of levels 6-9. The X-Men are not quite so well-balanced, with Colossus being the equivalent of an 9th level Superhero, Nightcrawler being a 3rd-level Superhero, Rogue being an 8th level Superhero, Storm being a 6th-level Magic-User, and Ariel and Wolverine being 5th-level Superheroes. Lockheed the Dragon, who can come along to assist Ariel, could be treated as a 5 HD red dragon.

The first issue an Editor would have to handle is whether or not to treat mutants differently from other Superheroes, game mechanics-wise. Some mutants, just because of the diversity of their powers, might be better represented by the Magic-User class. With a little tweaking, like taking away their wands and counter-spelling, the Magic-User class could be changed into a Mutant class. Also, Editors might wish to consult the psionic rules in the upcoming Supplement III to decide if all mutants are simply psionic-endowed instead.

The second issue is that the X-Men start with an HQ that is much too hi-tech for a 1940s HQ. One solution is to have the Professor X-like Supporting Cast Member be a Magic-User and explain all the benefits of the HQ as magic that cannot leave the mansion. Or perhaps the mansion belongs to a very powerful alien, one with really advanced

technology, who will only invite the Heroes here as a one-time offer. Substitute Professor X with a character who has psionics as if 20th level, an 18th-level Magic-User, a 14th-level Scientist (see Supplement III for the Scientist class), or some combination of the three.

Chapter One: The first chapter starts with the Heroes in their Danger Room overcoming the following challenges: a robot lion (treat as a large robot), flying, constricting hoops (that attack as 5 HD mobsters), telescoping robot tentacles (that attack as 6 HD mobsters), and holographic ghosts (that attack as 4 HD mobsters and do 1d10 points of illusionary damage).

Replace the Fixer with a mad scientist or a 4th-level Magic-User, depending on whether you decided the mansion was stocked with advanced tech or magic. If a mad scientist, equip him with a capture sphere (a bubble that expands around a target and then solidifies to the hardness of a brick wall), a high-potency knock-out gas bomb (10'x10' area, -4 to saves vs. poison), and a scrambler missile that makes the mansion's electrical systems go haywire. At that point, the robot lion becomes capable of electrocuting on touch for 2d8 damage, the hoops constrict for 1d10 damage, the tentacles constrict for 2d6 damage, and the ghosts do real damage. If the Fixer is replaced with a Magic-User, then perhaps he has a magic scroll that makes the enchantments in the mansion surge out of control temporarily.

After every chapter, the Heroes will be given the chance to heal in the mansion's "auto-doc" room for the equivalent of a Cure Wounds II spell. If the mansion is magical instead, then the Professor X-like SCM will have a Staff of Curing that can do the same thing once for each Hero.

Chapter Two: The videotape will likely be replaced with a reel of film. Anyone watching the film has a 1 in 8 chance of recognizing the location in the background, except for the framed Hero who has a 1 in 6 chance.

It is left to the Editor's discretion if the Heroes have access to a mutant-detecting machine or computer like Cerebro. If the Editor has chosen a magical theme for the adventure, then the Heroes are likely not mutants and a magic-detecting magic item can be substituted, if not a Crystal Ball.

The heavy, reinforced steel doors at Minski's Cannery are wrecked as if generators. Replace the Robot Wolverine with a large robot and the Robot Mentallo with a robot, but one carrying a high-powered semi-auto pistol that does 1d12 damage. Two automated automatic rifles also shoot at any Heroes approaching the machine where a Mentallo-like mobster is bound. The forcefield around the machine is as strong as a battleship (though, if this seems too hi-tech for the Editor, it can be replaced with a steel wall that slides up from out of the floor). Lastly, replace Mentallo with a 3rd-level Magic-User (or Trickster, or psionic-endowed hoodlum).

Chapter Three: This chapter introduces several factors for the Editor to decide on while adapting the module. One is that the Professor X-like character would be unlikely to be able to make a video from a robot's memory banks. The Editor is going to need some other way of getting the Heroes to the four locations they need to go. More obvious ways are to have the Mentallo-like mobster know vital information or have plans and maps found at the cannery.

Further, the whole MacGuffin of nuclear reactors doesn't work in a pre-WWII scenario. Something else will need to

replace it, like bombs that will release mustard gas over a wide range, or mystic artifacts that will spread a curse over a wide area.

The third factor from chapter three that the Editor will have to think about is the distances involved. The module, as written, is intended as a globe-trotting adventure for superheroes with a super-sonic jet at their disposal. The Editor may wish to shrink distances between chapters, or expand the adventure to include more things going on while the Heroes travel at a slower rate of speed.

A factor that is going to come up in the following two chapters is how much advanced technology is in government hands and, particularly in chapter four, being used wrongly. This is not in keeping with the themes of the Golden Age. The Editor might wish to alter the scenarios so that the next two MacGuffins are located near the lairs of ultra-mad scientists. Clearing out those lairs could then be sub-plots added to the main adventure.

Chapter Four: This chapter takes place in the Colorado Rockies, or perhaps a remote area of Indiana if the Editor is shrinking distances. Augie Hickman should be treated as a 1st-level Fighter. Deactivating the bomb Augie is guarding should take at least 10 minutes, with a 3 in 6 chance per minute thereafter of deactivation. Replace the Sentinels with giant electrum robots, but with 13 HD (and 52 hp). There will likely be three. One can also fire knock-out gas missiles (5'x5' area, -3 to save vs. poison), one has a hand that can shock for 2-14 points of electrical damage (instead of being a second gun), and the third has a glue gun instead of its second machine gun (anyone hit must save vs. science or be held fast to the spot unless the glue is wrecked as if a dam).

Chapter Five: This chapter is supposed to be in Afghanistan, but the whole Cold War-Soviet thing going on here with Afghanistan makes less sense in a pre-WWII context. Shrinking distances could move the location to wartorn Greece, or perhaps even occupied France. Replace the Crimson Dynamo with a 6th-level Fighter inside a suit of huge silver robot armor (but with 9 HD and 45 hp) and the Soviet Super-Troopers with 1st-level Fighters in huge bronze robot armor (28 hp each). There will likely be twelve troopers.

Chapter Six: This chapter is supposed to be in Australia, though distance shrinking could move it to Burma. Replace Magneto with a 7th-level Villain with psionic powers at 19th level, a 16th-level Magic-User, a 14th-level Scientist, or some combination thereof. It is important that he have a Wall of Force to simulate his force field, even if he has to be equipped with a hi-tech or magic item that creates Walls of Force.

Chapter Seven: This chapter takes place in Chile, or perhaps on one of the Cook Islands in the Pacific. Replace the Deviants with a stone giant, a floating eye, and a giant (small) spider.

If the theme of the module has been science-based so far, then the final encounter is with robots. Replace the False Blob with a 14 HD huge silver robot (56 hp), the False Scarlet Witch with a large brass robot (20 hp), the False Quicksilver with a large copper robot (16 hp), the False Toad with an iron robot (12 hp), and the False Magneto with a huge silver robot (42 hp). Because of the massive amount of cumulative damage all their cone and ray attacks can do to the Heroes, it would be best if the stone giant or floating eye was allowed to warn the Heroes to split up and attack the robots from

different angles.

If the theme of the module has been magic-based so far, then the final encounter is with golems. Replace the False Blob with a stone golem, the False Scarlet Witch with a 6 HD flesh golem (25 hp), the False Quicksilver with a 5 HD flesh golem (20 hp), the False Toad with a 4 HD flesh golem (15 hp), and the False Magneto with a regular flesh golem. Because of the massive amounts of melee damage the golems can dish out, it would be best if the stone giant or floating eye was allowed to warn the Heroes to attack at range.

Lastly, it will be important to sprinkle Minski's Cannery, Augie Hickman's cabin, and the ruins at the finale with trophies for the Heroes to claim.

GAMES BY SCOTT CASPER NEWS

The following products are currently available for sale on drivethrurpg.com:

Book I: Men and Supermen

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HIDEOUTS & HOODLUMS



By Scott Casper (after Dave Ameson)

Illustrations by Irv Novick (Shield), Jack Cole (Silver Streak), Joe Simon (Claw), Walt "Frame" Fisher (Domino), unknown (Mara), Fletcher Hanks (Sardonyx), Scott Casper (two-headed giant, gorilla-men), Luis Horta (humane hansom), George Brenner (Hugh Hazzard)

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