

= Scientific Detective Monthly =

Scientific Detective Monthly (also known as Amazing Detective Tales and Amazing Detective Stories) was a pulp magazine which published fifteen issues beginning in January 1930 . It was launched by Hugo Gernsback as part of his second venture into science fiction magazine publishing , and was intended to focus on detective and mystery stories with a scientific element . Many of the stories involved contemporary science without any imaginative elements ? for example , a story in the first issue turned on the use of a bolometer to detect a black girl blushing ? but there were also one or two science fiction stories in every issue .

The title was changed to Amazing Detective Tales with the June 1930 issue , perhaps to avoid the word " scientific " , which may have given readers the impression of " a sort of scientific periodical " , in Gernsback 's words , rather than a magazine intended to entertain . At the same time , the editor ? Hector Grey ? was replaced by David Lasser , who was already editing Gernsback 's other science fiction magazines . The title change apparently did not make the magazine a success , and Gernsback closed it down with the October issue . He sold the title to publisher Wallace Bamber , who produced at least five more issues in 1931 under the title Amazing Detective Stories .

= = Publication history = =

By the end of the 19th century , stories that were centered on scientific inventions and set in the future , in the tradition of Jules Verne , were appearing regularly in popular fiction magazines . The first science fiction (sf) magazine , Amazing Stories , was launched in 1926 by Hugo Gernsback at the height of the pulp magazine era . It was successful , and helped to form science fiction as a separately marketed genre , but in February 1929 Gernsback lost control of the publisher when it went bankrupt . By April he had formed a new company , Gernsback Publications Incorporated , and created two subsidiaries : Techni @-@ Craft Publishing Corporation and Stellar Publishing Corporation . In the middle of the year he launched three new magazines : a non @-@ sf magazine titled Radio Craft , and two sf pulps titled Science Wonder Stories and Air Wonder Stories . These were followed in September 1929 by the first issue of Science Wonder Quarterly , and in October Gernsback sent a letter to some of the writers he had already bought material from , letting them know that he was seeing more demand for " detective or criminal mystery stories with a good scientific background " . He named Arthur B. Reeve 's " Craig Kennedy " stories as an example , and also mentioned S.S. Van Dine 's " Philo Vance " stories , which were very popular at the time . In the January 1930 issue of both the sf magazines , Gernsback advertised the new magazine that he hoped to populate with these stories : Scientific Detective Monthly .

Gernsback believed that science fiction was educational , claiming , for example , that " teachers encourage the reading of this fiction because they know that it gives the pupil a fundamental knowledge of science and aviation " . He intended Scientific Detective Monthly to be a detective magazine in which the stories had a scientific background ; it would entertain , but also instruct . The subgenre of scientific detective fiction was not new ; it had first become popular in the U.S. between 1909 and 1919 , and the appearance of Gernsback 's magazine was part of a resurgence of popularity in the subgenre at the end of the 1920s . The first issue was dated January 1930 (meaning it would have been on the newsstands in mid @-@ December 1929) . Gernsback was editor @-@ in @-@ chief , and had final say on the choice of stories , but the editorial work was done by his deputy , Hector Grey .

In February 1930 , an article by Gernsback appeared in Writers ' Digest titled " How to Write ' Science ' Stories " . In it , Gernsback offered advice on how to write stories for his new magazine , claiming that scientific detective stories represented the future of the genre , and that " the ordinary gangster and detective story will be relegated into the background in a very few years " . Science fiction historian Gary Westfahl comments that the article also serves as a guide to writing science fiction in general , and that the article is the first " how to " article published for the new genre of science fiction .

With the June issue , the title was changed to Amazing Detective Tales . Gernsback merged

Science Wonder Stories and Air Wonder Stories into Wonder Stories at the same time ; he was concerned that the word " Science " was putting off some potential readers , who assumed that the magazine was , in his words , " a sort of scientific periodical " . It is likely that the same reasoning motivated Scientific Detective Monthly 's new title . In the following issue , Grey was replaced as editor by David Lasser , who was already editing Gernsback 's other sf titles , and an attempt was made to include more stories with science fiction elements . Gernsback continued the magazine for five issues under the new title ; the last issue was dated October 1930 . The decision to cease publication was apparently taken suddenly , as the October issue included the announcement that the format would change in November from large to standard pulp size , and listed two stories planned for the November issue . Gernsback sold the title to Wallace Bamber , who published at least five more issues , starting in February 1931 ; no issues are known for June or July 1931 , or after August .

= = Contents = =

The stories in Scientific Detective Monthly were almost always detective stories , but they were only occasionally science fiction , as in many cases the science appearing in the stories already had practical applications . In the first issue , for example , " The Mystery of the Bulawayo Diamond " , by Arthur B. Reeve , mentions unusual science , but the mystery is solved by use of a bolometer to detect a blush on the face of a black girl . The murderer in " The Campus Murder Mystery " , by Ralph W. Wilkins , freezes the body to conceal the manner of death ; a chemical catalyst and electrical measurements of palm sweat provide the scientific elements in two other stories in the same issue . The only genuine science fiction story in the first issue is " The Perfect Counterfeit " by Captain S.P. Meek , in which a matter duplicator has been used to counterfeit paper money . Van Dine 's Philo Vance novel , The Bishop Murder Case , began serialization in the first issue , which probably assisted sales , since the hardcover edition of the novel , which had appeared only a few months previously , had sold well . It was not science fiction , however , and throughout the magazine 's run , only one or two stories per issue include elements that would qualify them as science fiction . Mike Ashley , a historian of the field , suggests that Gernsback was more interested in stories about the science of detection than in imaginary science : most of Scientific Detective Monthly 's contents were gadget stories , of a kind which Gernsback had been publishing in his other magazines for some time . The cover for the first issue , by Jno Ruger , showed a detective using an electronic device to measure the reactions of a suspect .

Later issues included stories by some writers who either were already well @-@ known to readers of science fiction or would soon become so , including Lloyd Arthur Eshbach , David H. Keller , Ed Earl Repp , Neil R. Jones , and Edmond Hamilton , though even these stories were not always science fiction . Hamilton 's " The Invisible Master " , for example , describes a way to become invisible , but at the end of the story the science is revealed to be a hoax , and the story is straightforward detective fiction . Clark Ashton Smith , later to be better known for his fantasy than for science fiction , contributed " Murder in the Fourth Dimension " to the October 1930 issue ; the protagonist uses the fourth dimension to dispose of his victim 's corpse .

As well as fiction , there were some non @-@ fiction departments , including readers ' letters (even in the first issue ? Gernsback obtained letters by advertising the magazine to readers who subscribed to his other magazines) , book reviews , and miscellaneous crime or science @-@ related fillers . The first issue included a test of the readers ' powers of observation : it showed a crime scene , which the readers were supposed to study , and then posed questions to see how much they could remember of the details . There was also a questionnaire about science , which asked about scientific facts mentioned in the stories , and a " Science @-@ Crime Notes " section containing news items about science and crime . Gernsback 's editorial argued that science would eventually end crime , and suggested that both the police and criminals would make growing use of scientific innovations in the future . Gernsback included on the masthead the names of several experts on crime , such as Edwin Cooley , a professor of criminology at Fordham University ; he also listed members of his staff on the masthead with made @-@ up titles : C.P. Mason , a member

of his editorial staff , was listed as " Scientific Criminologist " , for example .

After the sale , Bamber filled the magazine with ordinary detective fiction , including Edgar Wallace 's The Feathered Serpent .

The first few covers of the magazine did not advertise the names of the authors whose work was inside , which was probably a mistake as existing science fiction readers might have been attracted by the names of writers with whom they were familiar . Conversely , the readers who might have been interested in the more sedate topics covered by the non @-@ fiction were probably discouraged by the lurid cover artwork . Gernsback was unable to obtain enough fiction to make Scientific Detective Monthly a true mixture of the two genres , and the result was a magazine that failed to fully appeal to fans of either genre . It was , in sf historian Robert Lowndes ' words , a " fascinating experiment " , but a failed one .

= = Bibliographic details = =

Scientific Detective Monthly was published by Techni @-@ Craft Publishing Co. of New York for the first ten issues , and then by Fiction Publishers , Inc . , also of New York . The editor @-@ in @-@ chief was Hugo Gernsback for the first ten issues ; the managing editor was Hector Grey for the first six issues , and David Lasser for the next four . The editor for the 1931 issues is not known . The first volume contained ten numbers , the second contained four , and the last contained only one . The title changed to Amazing Detective Tales with the June 1930 issue , and again to Amazing Detective Stories in February 1931 . The magazine was in large pulp format throughout ; it was 96 pages long and priced at 25 cents .