

## = Startling Stories =

Startling Stories was an American pulp science fiction magazine , published from 1939 to 1955 by publisher Ned Pines ' Standard Magazines . It was initially edited by Mort Weisinger , who was also the editor of Thrilling Wonder Stories , Standard 's other science fiction title . Startling ran a lead novel in every issue ; the first was The Black Flame by Stanley G. Weinbaum . When Standard Magazines acquired Thrilling Wonder in 1936 , it also gained the rights to stories published in that magazine 's predecessor , Wonder Stories , and selections from this early material were reprinted in Startling as " Hall of Fame " stories . Under Weisinger the magazine focused on younger readers and , when Weisinger was replaced by Oscar J. Friend in 1941 , the magazine became even more juvenile in focus , with clichéd cover art and letters answered by a " Sergeant Saturn " . Friend was replaced by Sam Merwin , Jr. in 1945 , and Merwin was able to improve the quality of the fiction substantially , publishing Arthur C. Clarke 's Against the Fall of Night , and several other well @-@ received stories .

Much of Startling 's cover art was painted by Earle K. Bergey , who became strongly associated with the magazine , painting almost every cover between 1940 and 1952 . He was known for equipping his heroines with brass bras and implausible costumes , and the public image of science fiction in his day was partly created by his work for Startling and other magazines . Merwin left in 1951 , and Samuel Mines took over ; the standard remained fairly high but competition from new and better @-@ paying markets such as Galaxy Science Fiction and The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction impaired Mines ' ability to acquire quality material . In mid @-@ 1952 , Standard attempted to change Startling 's image by adopting a more sober title typeface and reducing the sensationalism of the covers , but by 1955 the pulp magazine market was collapsing . Startling absorbed its two companion magazines , Thrilling Wonder and Fantastic Story Magazine , in early 1955 , but by the end of that year it too ceased publication .

Ron Hanna of Wild Cat Books revived Startling Stories in 2007 .

## = = Publication history = =

Although science fiction had been published before the 1920s , it did not begin to coalesce into a separately marketed genre until the appearance in 1926 of Amazing Stories , a pulp magazine published by Hugo Gernsback . By the end of the 1930s the field was booming . Standard Magazines , a pulp publishing company owned by Ned Pines , acquired its first science fiction magazine , Thrilling Wonder Stories , from Gernsback in 1936 . Mort Weisinger , the editor of Thrilling Wonder , printed an editorial in February 1938 asking readers for suggestions for a companion magazine . Response was positive , and the new magazine , titled Startling Stories , was duly launched , with a first issue ( pulp @-@ sized , rather than bedsheet @-@ sized , as many readers had requested ) , dated January 1939 .

Startling was launched on a bimonthly schedule , alternating months with Thrilling Wonder Stories , though in 1940 Thrilling moved to a monthly schedule that lasted for over a year . The first editor was Mort Weisinger , who had been an active fan in the early 1930s and had joined Standard Magazines in 1935 , editing Thrilling Wonder from 1936 . Weisinger left in 1941 to take a new post as editor of Superman , and was replaced by Oscar J. Friend , who was an established writer of pulp fiction , though his experience was in western fiction rather than sf . During Friend 's tenure Startling slipped from bimonthly to quarterly publication . Friend lasted for a little over two years , and was replaced by Sam Merwin , Jr . , as of the Winter 1945 issue .

Merwin succeeded in making Startling popular and successful , and the bimonthly schedule was resumed in 1947 . At the start of 1952 Startling switched to a monthly schedule ; this was unusual in that Startling was notionally junior to Thrilling Wonder , its sister magazine , which remained bimonthly . Merwin left shortly before this switch , in order to spend more time on his own writing . He was replaced by Samuel Mines , who had worked with Standard 's Western magazines , though he was a science fiction aficionado .

Street & Smith , one of the longest established and most respected publishers , shut down all of

their pulp magazines in the summer of 1949 . The pulps were dying , partially as a result of the success of paperbacks . Standard continued with Startling and Thrilling , but the end came only a few years later . In 1954 , Fredric Wertham published *Seduction of the Innocent* , a book in which he asserted that comics were inciting children to violence . A subsequent Senate subcommittee hearing led to a backlash against comics , and the publishers dropped titles in response . The financial impact spread to pulp magazines , since often a publisher would publish both . A 1955 strike by American News Corporation , the main distributor in the U.S. , meant that magazines remained in warehouses and never made it to the newsstands ; the unsold copies represented a significant financial blow and contributed to publishers ' decisions to cancel magazines . Startling was one of the casualties . The schedule had already returned from monthly to bimonthly in 1953 , and it became a quarterly in early 1954 . Thrilling Wonder published its last issue in early 1955 , and was then merged with Startling , as was *Fantastic Story Magazine* , another companion publication , but the combined magazine only lasted three more issues . Mines left the magazine at the end of 1954 ; he was succeeded for two issues by Theron Raines , who was followed by Herbert D. Kastle for the last two . The final issue was dated Fall 1955 .

= = Contents and reception = =

= = = War years = = =

From the beginning , every issue of Startling contained a complete novel , along with one or two short stories ; long stories did not appear since the publisher 's policy was to avoid serials . When Standard Magazines had bought *Wonder Stories* in 1936 , they had also acquired rights to reprint the stories that had appeared in it and in its predecessor magazines , *Air Wonder Stories* and *Science Wonder Stories* , and so Startling also included a " Hall of Fame " reprint from one of these magazines in every issue . The first lead novel was *The Black Flame* , a revised version of " Dawn of Flame " , a story by Stanley Weinbaum that had previously appeared only in an edition limited to 250 copies . There was also a tribute to Weinbaum , written by Otto Binder ; Weinbaum had died in 1935 and was well regarded , so even though the story was not one of his best , it was excellent publicity for the magazine . Otto and his brother , Earl , also contributed a story , " Science Island " , under their joint pseudonym Eando Binder . The " Hall of Fame " reprint was D.D. Sharp 's " The Eternal Man " , from 1929 . Other features included a pictorial article on Albert Einstein , and a set of biographical sketches of scientists , titled " Thrills in Science " . The letter column was called " The Ether Vibrates " , and there was a regular fanzine review column , providing contact information so that readers could obtain the fanzines directly . Initially the stories for the " Hall of Fame " were chosen by the editor , but soon Weisinger recruited well @-@ known science fiction fans to make the choices .

Startling was popular , and soon " became one of the core science fiction magazines " , according to science fiction historian Mike Ashley . The target audience was younger readers , and the lead novels were often space operas by well @-@ known pulp writers such as Edmond Hamilton and Manly Wade Wellman . In addition to space opera , some more fantastical fiction began to appear , contributed by writers such as Henry Kuttner . These early science fantasy stories were popular with the readers , and contrasted with the hard science fiction that John W. Campbell was pioneering at *Astounding* .

Weisinger set out to please the younger readers , and when Friend became editor in 1941 , he went further in this direction , giving the magazine a strongly juvenile flavor . For example , Friend introduced " Sergeant Saturn " , a character ( originally from *Thrilling Wonder Stories* ) who answered readers ' letters and appeared in other features in the magazine . Many subscribers found the approach irritating .

The interior artwork was initially done by Hans Wessolowski ( more usually known as " Wesso " ) , Mark Marchioni and Alex Schomburg , and occasionally Virgil Finlay . The initial cover art was mostly painted by Howard Brown , but when Earle K. Bergey began to paint covers for Startling in

1940 , soon after its launch , Bergey quickly became identified with the magazine ; between 1940 and 1952 ( the year of Bergey 's death ) he painted the great majority of covers . Bergey 's covers were visually striking : in the words of science fiction editor and critic Malcolm Edwards , they typically featured " a rugged hero , a desperate heroine ( in either a metallic bikini or a dangerous state of déshabillé ) and a hideous alien menace " . The brass bra motif came to be associated with Bergey , and his covers did much to create the image of science fiction as it was perceived by the general public .

= = = Merwin and after = = =

When Merwin became editor in 1945 he brought changes , but artist Earle K. Bergey retained the creative freedom he had come to expect given his relationship with Standard . Some argue that Bergey 's covers became more realistic , and Merwin managed to improve the interiors of Startling to the point of being a serious rival to Astounding , acknowledged leader of the field . Critics ' opinions vary on the relative quality of the magazines of this era ; Malcolm Edwards regards Startling as second only to Astounding , but Ashley considers Thrilling Wonder to be Astounding 's closest challenger in the late 1940s . Merwin 's discoveries included Jack Vance , whose first story , " The World Thinker " , appeared in the Summer 1945 issue . He also regularly published work by Henry Kuttner and C.L. Moore , who wrote both under Kuttner 's name and as " Keith Hammond " : in a four @-@ year period from 1946 to 1949 the writing team of Kuttner and Moore had seven novels published in Startling , mostly science fantasy , a subgenre not common at that time . Notable novels that appeared in the late 1940s include Fredric Brown 's What Mad Universe and Charles L. Harness 's Flight Into Yesterday , later published in book form as The Paradox Men . Arthur C. Clarke 's novel The City and the Stars first saw print in Startling in abbreviated form , in the November 1948 issue , under the title Against the Fall of Night .

One novel that did not appear in Startling was Isaac Asimov 's Pebble in the Sky , which Merwin had commissioned from Asimov in the early summer of 1947 . After the unusual step of allowing the editor to twice read the work @-@ in @-@ progress and receiving nothing but approval , Asimov delivered a completed draft in September . This time , Merwin asked for revisions : Leo Margulies , Merwin 's boss , had decided that Startling needed to focus more on action and adventure in the style of Amazing , and less on cerebral stories in the style of Astounding . Asimov , " for the first and only time of [ his ] life ... openly lost [ his ] temper with an editor " , stalked out of the room with his manuscript and never submitted anything to Merwin again , though he later expressed a softening of feeling and admitted Merwin had been within his rights .

Another title in the Standard Magazines stable was Captain Future , which had been launched a year after Startling , and featured the adventures of the superhero after whom the magazine was named . When it folded with its Spring 1944 issue , the series of novels was continued for some time in the pages of Startling ; over the next six years ten more " Captain Future " novels appeared , with the last one , Birthplace of Creation , printed in the May 1951 issue .

Merwin 's successor , Mines , also published some excellent work , though increased competition in the early 1950s from Galaxy and The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction did lead to some dilution of quality , and Startling 's rates ? one to two cents per word ? could not compete with the leading magazines . However , Startling 's editorial policy was more eclectic : it did not limit itself to one kind of story , but printed everything from melodramatic space opera to sociological sf , and Mines had a reputation as having " the most catholic tastes and the fewest inhibitions " of any of the science fiction magazine editors . In late 1952 , Mines published Philip José Farmer 's " The Lovers " , a taboo @-@ breaking story about aliens who can only reproduce by mating with humans . Illustrated with an eye @-@ popping cover by Bergey , Farmer 's ground @-@ breaking story integrated sex into the plot without being prurient , and was widely praised . Farmer , partly as a consequence , went on to win a Hugo Award as " Most Promising New Writer " . New authors first published by Mines include Frank Herbert , who debuted with " Looking for Something ? " in April 1952 , and Robert F. Young , whose first story , " The Black Deep Thou Wingest " , appeared in June 1953 . The artwork was also high quality ; Virgil Finlay 's interior illustrations were "

unparalleled " , according to science fiction historian Robert Ewald . Other well @-@ known artists who contributed interior work included Alex Schomburg and Kelly Freas .

Startling 's instantly recognizable title logo was redolent of the magazine 's pulp roots , and in early 1952 Mines decided to replace it with a more staid typeface . The covers became more sober , with spaceships replacing the women in brass bras . With the Spring 1955 issue , at the start of its final year , Startling dropped its long @-@ standing policy of printing a novel in every issue , but only three issues later it ceased publication .

= = Bibliographic details = =

The editorial succession at Startling was as follows :

Mort Weisinger : January 1939 ? May 1941 .

Oscar J. Friend : July 1941 ? Fall 1944 .

Sam Merwin , Jr . : Winter 1945 ? September 1951 .

Samuel Mines : November 1951 ? Fall 1954 .

Theron Raines : Winter 1955 ? Spring 1955 .

Herbert D. Kastle : Summer 1955 ? Fall 1955 .

Startling was a pulp @-@ sized magazine for all of its 99 issues . It initially was 132 pages , and was priced at 15 cents . The page count was reduced to 116 pages with the Summer 1944 issue and then increased to 148 pages with the March 1948 issue , at which time the price went up to 20 cents . The price increased again , to 25 cents , in November 1948 , and the page count increased again to 180 pages . This higher page count did not last ; it was reduced to 164 in March 1949 and then again to 148 pages in July 1951 . The October 1953 issue saw the page count drop again , to 132 , and a year later the Fall 1954 issue cut the page count to 116 . The magazine remained at 116 pages and a price of 25 cents for the rest of its existence .

The original bimonthly schedule continued until the March 1943 issue , which was followed by June 1943 and then Fall 1943 . This inaugurated a quarterly schedule that ran until Fall 1946 , except that an additional issue , dated March , was inserted between the Winter 1946 and Spring 1946 issues . The next issue , January 1947 , began another bimonthly sequence , which ran without interruption until November 1951 . With the following issue , January 1952 , Startling switched to a monthly schedule , which lasted until the June 1953 issue which was followed by August and October 1953 and then January 1954 . The next issue was Spring 1954 , and the magazine stayed on a quarterly schedule from then until the last issue , Fall 1955 .

There was a British reprint edition from Pembertons between 1949 and 1954 . These were heavily cut , with sometimes only one or two stories and usually only 64 pages , though the October and December 1952 issues both had 80 pages . It was published irregularly ; initially once or twice a year , and then more or less bimonthly beginning in mid @-@ 1952 . The issues were numbered from 1 to 18 . Three different Canadian reprint editions also appeared for a total of 21 or 22 issues ( sources differ on the correct number ) . Six quarterly issues appeared from Summer 1945 through Fall 1946 from Publication Enterprises , Ltd . ; then another three bimonthly issues appeared , from May to September 1948 , from Pines Publications . Finally 12 more bimonthly issues appeared from March 1949 to January 1951 , from Better Publications of Canada . All these issues were almost identical to the American versions , although they are half an inch taller . A Mexican magazine , Enigmas , ran for 16 issues from August 1955 to May 1958 ; it included many reprints , primarily from Startling and from Fantastic Story Magazine .

= = = Derivative anthologies = = =

Two anthologies of stories from Startling have been published . In 1949 Merlin Press brought out From Off This World , edited by Leo Margulies and Oscar Friend , which included stories that had appeared in the " Hall of Fame " reprint section of the magazine . Then in 1954 Samuel Mines edited The Best from Startling Stories , published by Henry Holt ; despite the title , the stories were reprinted from both Startling and its sister magazine , Thrilling Wonder Stories . The anthology was

reprinted twice in the UK under different titles ; as Startling Stories in 1954 , published by Cassell , and then in 1956 as a Science Fiction Book Club edition titled Moment in Time . P. Schuyler Miller praised it as " an excellent collection by anyone 's standards . "