

= Fantastic Adventures =

Fantastic Adventures was an American pulp fantasy and science fiction magazine , published from 1939 to 1953 by Ziff @-@ Davis . It was initially edited by Ray Palmer , who was also the editor of Amazing Stories , Ziff @-@ Davis 's other science fiction title . The first nine issues were in bedsheet format , but in June 1940 it switched to a standard pulp size . It was almost cancelled at the end of 1940 , but the October 1940 issue had unexpectedly good sales , helped by a strong cover by J. Allen St. John for Robert Moore Williams ' Jongor of Lost Land . By May 1941 the magazine was on a regular monthly schedule . Historians of science fiction consider that Palmer was unable to maintain a consistently high standard of fiction , but Fantastic Adventures soon developed a reputation for light @-@ hearted and whimsical stories . Much of the material was written by a small group of writers under both their own names and house names . The cover art , like those of many other pulps of the era , focused on beautiful women in melodramatic action scenes . One regular cover artist was H.W. McCauley , whose glamorous " MacGirl " covers were popular with the readers , though the emphasis on depictions of attractive and often partly clothed women did draw some objections from readers .

In 1949 Palmer left Ziff @-@ Davis and was replaced by Howard Browne , who was knowledgeable and enthusiastic about fantasy fiction . Browne briefly managed to improve the quality of the fiction in Fantastic Adventures , and the period around 1951 has been described as the magazine 's heyday . Browne lost interest when his plan to take Amazing Stories upmarket collapsed , however , and the magazine fell back into predictability . In 1952 , Ziff @-@ Davis launched another fantasy magazine , titled Fantastic , in a digest format ; it was successful , and within a few months the decision was taken to end Fantastic Adventures in favor of Fantastic . The March 1953 issue of Fantastic Adventures was the last .

= = Publication history = =

Although science fiction ( sf ) 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 undergoing its first boom . Gernsback lost control of Amazing Stories in 1929 ; it was sold to Teck Publications , and then in 1938 it was acquired by Ziff @-@ Davis . The following year Ziff @-@ Davis launched Fantastic Adventures as a companion to Amazing ; the first issue was dated May 1939 , and the editor of Amazing , Ray Palmer , took on responsibility for the new magazine as well .

Fantastic Adventures was initially published in bedsheet format , the same size as the early sf magazines such as Amazing , perhaps in order to attract fans who were nostalgic for the larger format . It started as a bimonthly , but in January 1940 began a monthly schedule . Sales were weaker than for Amazing , however , and with the June issue the schedule reverted to bimonthly again . The size was also reduced to a standard pulp format , since that was cheaper to produce . Sales did not improve , and Ziff @-@ Davis planned to make the October issue the last one . That issue carried Robert Moore Williams ' Jongor of Lost Land , and had an attractive cover by J. Allen St. John ; the combination proved to be so popular that October sales were twice the August figures . This convinced Ziff @-@ Davis that the magazine was viable , and it was restarted in January 1941 ? as a bimonthly at first , but switching to monthly again in May of that year .

Howard Browne took over as editor of both Amazing Stories and Fantastic Adventures in 1950 . Browne preferred fantasy to science fiction , and enjoyed editing Fantastic Adventures , but when his plans for taking Amazing upmarket were derailed by the Korean War , he lost interest in both magazines for a while . He let William Hamling take responsibility for both titles , and the quality declined . At the end of 1950 Ziff @-@ Davis moved its offices from Chicago to New York ; Browne relocated to New York , but Hamling decided to stay in Chicago , so Browne became more involved once again , and sf historians such as Brian Stableford and Mike Ashley consider the result to have been a definite improvement in quality . Browne 's interest in fantasy led him to start a new digest @-@ sized magazine Fantastic in the summer of 1952 ; it was an immediate success , and led Ziff

@-@ Davis to convert Amazing Stories to digest format as well . The move away from the pulp format to digests was well under way in the early 1950s , and with Fantastic 's success there was little reason to keep Fantastic Adventures going . It was merged with Fantastic ; the last issue was dated March 1953 , and the May ? June issue of Fantastic added a mention of Fantastic Adventures to the masthead , though this disappeared with the following issue .

= = Contents and reception = =

= = = Palmer = = =

Palmer 's goal for Fantastic Adventures was to create a magazine which published fantasy fiction but was the literary equal of the quality magazines ? the " slicks " , such as The Saturday Evening Post . Although mixing science fiction with fantasy was not popular with sf fans of the era , Palmer consciously promoted the magazine as containing the best of both worlds : the slogan on the cover read " The Best in Science Fiction " , but Palmer also wrote blurbs in Amazing Stories for Fantastic Adventures in which he extolled the value to a reader of getting both genres in a single magazine . Fantastic Adventures ' competition included Unknown , which had been launched just a couple of months earlier , in March 1939 , and Weird Tales , which was first published in 1923 ; but instead of attempting to emulate either one , Fantastic Adventures focused on adventure stories in the style of Edgar Rice Burroughs . Palmer probably acquired some fantasy @-@ oriented material that had been submitted to Amazing Stories , which gave him an immediate stream of submissions to work with . However , according to Ashley the first issue was quite weak : the cover story was " The Invisible Robinhood " by Eando Binder , and other contributors included Harl Vincent , Ross Rocklynne and A. Hyatt Verrill . Features included a quiz , an author profile , and a comic strip , titled " Ray Holmes , Scientific Detective " ; the reader was supposed to solve the mystery based on the clues given in the strip . It was a failure and disappeared after the first issue . The back cover , " The Man from Mars " , by Frank R. Paul , was more successful , and illustrated back covers became a regular feature of the magazine .

The next issue contained " The Scientists ' Revolt " , by Edgar Rice Burroughs , a name guaranteed to help sales . Ashley comments that the story was unimpressive ; it had been written as a palace intrigue set in contemporary Europe , but Burroughs had been unable to find a buyer . Palmer eventually acquired it , and rewrote it , setting it in the future . Despite the weakness of the lead story , the second issue was a marked improvement over the first , with well @-@ received stories by Nelson S. Bond and John Russell Fearn ( as " Thornton Ayre " ) . Burroughs returned to Fantastic Adventures in 1941 , with a series of novelettes in his Carson of Venus series ; there were four in all between March 1941 and March 1942 , each with cover art by J. Allen St. John , and the result was a significant boost to Fantastic Adventures ' circulation .

A majority of the stories in Fantastic Adventures came from a small group of writers who often wrote under house names . The main members of the group were William P. McGivern , David Wright O'Brien , Don Wilcox , Chester S. Geier , Rog Phillips , Leroy Yerxa , Robert Moore Williams , Robert Bloch and Berkeley Livingston . Most of this material was of little lasting value , in Ashley 's opinion , but Palmer was often able to get good stories from outside this group : August Derleth sold several stories to Palmer , for example . Ray Bradbury also sold a story to Fantastic Adventures ? " Tomorrow and Tomorrow " , which appeared in 1947 , was his only appearance in the magazine , but Ashley regards it as " among the best stories [ Fantastic Adventures ] published in the 1940s " . An early contributor was Nelson S. Bond , whose story " The Judging of the Priestess " appeared in the April 1940 issue . This was the second in a highly regarded series of three stories about a priestess in the future , after civilization has collapsed ; the first and third in the series appeared in Amazing Stories and Astounding Stories respectively . Bond also wrote a humorous short story called " The Amazing Invention of Wilberforce Weems " , which appeared in the September 1939 issue and described the consequences of a potion that allowed the instant absorption of knowledge from any book . Palmer encouraged his stable of writers to follow up with more whimsical ideas ,

and the resulting offbeat stories gave *Fantastic Adventures* a reputation for light @-@ hearted and entertaining fantasy . These stories often had absurd names ; early examples include " The Quandary of Quantus Quaggle " , " Sidney , the Screwloose Robot " ( both by McGivern ) , and " The Weird Doom of Floyd Scrilch " , by Robert Bloch ? one of his series of stories about Lefty Feep , almost all of which appeared in *Fantastic Adventures* between 1942 and 1945 . Robert Moore Williams contributed two sequels to his successful *Jongor of Lost Land* : *The Return of Jongor* appeared in 1944 , and *Jongor Fights Back* in 1951 .

Palmer enjoyed hoaxes , such as printing a photograph of a writer when in fact the name in question was a pseudonym . In the February 1944 issue of *Fantastic Adventures* he printed a letter in which the writer claimed to be a time @-@ traveling scientist born in 1970 , whose time machine was inspired by a story in the magazine . Palmer pretended to take it seriously , and printed an appeal to readers to find the scientist . Palmer 's most successful hoax was the " Shaver Mystery " , a series of stories in which the author , Richard Shaver , explained all the wrecks and accidents on Earth as the result of interference by ancient machinery hidden underground . The series was enormously popular ; all the Shaver Mystery stories were published in *Fantastic Adventures* ' companion magazine , *Amazing Stories* ( which led Ashley to describe *Fantastic Adventures* as a " haven " from the Shaver stories ) but Shaver did also publish some competent fantasies in *Fantastic Adventures* . The increased circulation enabled both *Amazing* and *Fantastic Adventures* to return to monthly publication in the late 1940s .

= = = Browne = = =

When Browne took over at the start of 1950 , William Hamling was doing most of the editorial work . Browne did not fully take control of the magazine until the end of the year , when Hamling and Palmer both left Ziff @-@ Davis ; the quality of the fiction promptly improved at that point , and the first year or two of Browne 's tenure are regarded as the high point of *Fantastic Adventures* ' run . Theodore Sturgeon 's novel *The Dreaming Jewels* appeared in February 1950 , and Lester del Rey , William Tenn and Walter M. Miller all published notable material . In April 1950 , Mack Reynolds ' first story , " Isolationist " , appeared in *Fantastic Adventures* . Reynolds became more strongly associated with *Astounding Science Fiction* than with the Ziff @-@ Davis magazines , but some of the radical political themes of his later work are evident in " Isolationist " . The story describes helpful alien visitors abandoning Earth to atomic war because of the hostility of the first Earthman they encounter . John Jakes also debuted in *Fantastic Adventures* that year , with " The Dreaming Trees " , in November 1950 .

Overall the quality was low , but according to sf historian Brian Stableford , " sf writers given carte blanche to write pure fantasy for [ *Fantastic Adventures* ] did often produce readable fiction with a distinctive whimsical and ironic flavour " . Critic John Clute 's assessment was that it was inconsistent , " but there were some terrific tales in it . Not enough , but some . " Notable stories from the post @-@ war era include Theodore Sturgeon 's " Largo " and Raymond F. Jones ' " The Children 's Room " . The artwork was generally of higher quality than the stories ; Ashley describes *Fantastic Adventures* as " one of the best @-@ illustrated magazines around " . Regular artists included Virgil Finlay , Henry Sharp , Rod Ruth , and Malcolm Smith . In Palmer 's words , " It has been our experience that covers sell magazines ? simply because they attract attention . " For the first year the cover art , while dramatic , was more likely to show an action scene with a male hero than a damsel in distress , but in August 1940 H.W. McCauley 's cover showed a glamorous woman in a sparkling dress . Similar covers followed with increasing frequency , with readers and editors giving the various heroines the name of " MacGirl " . Science fiction historian Paul Carter , commenting on the change from action scenes to alluring women on the covers , suggests that " surely the war had something to do with this " . Science fiction art often included spaceships as phallic symbols ; author and critic Brian Aldiss remarked on a *Fantastic Adventures* cover , from March 1949 , that included a submarine as a phallic symbol instead . Readers ' letters often objected to the attractive women and the implied sexual content , but the stories themselves were quite tame .

= = Bibliographic details = =

The editorial succession at Fantastic Adventures is usually given as follows :

Ray Palmer : May 1939 ? December 1949

Howard Browne : January 1950 ? April 1953

However , the editorial responsibility did not always reside with the named editor on the masthead . The editor @-@ in @-@ chief was senior to the managing editor , but at some points in the magazine 's history it was the managing editor who was primarily responsible for the magazine . The following table shows who held which title , at which point :

Fantastic Adventures was initially bedsheet @-@ sized and had a page count of 96 , which increased to 144 when the publication was reduced to pulp @-@ size in June 1940 . It was initially priced at 20 cents . With the April 1942 issue the price increased to 25 cents , where it remained for the rest of the magazine 's run , and the page count went up again to 240 . From June 1943 to July 1945 there were 208 pages , and the count dropped to 176 with the October 1945 issue ; then to 160 in July 1948 , and only two issues later , in September 1948 , the page count went down to 156 . It dropped again to 144 with the June 1949 issue , but rose to 160 from September 1949 to August 1950 . The September 1950 issue had 148 pages , and all the remaining issues had 130 pages .

The magazine began as a bimonthly , but switched to a monthly schedule in January 1940 , though this only lasted six issues . June 1940 was followed by August and October 1940 and January and March 1941 . The May 1941 issue inaugurated another monthly period that lasted until August 1943 , when the schedule switched back to bimonthly until the June 1944 issue . Fantastic then went on a quarterly schedule , beginning with the October 1944 issue ; in October 1945 it became bimonthly again , though there was a gap between February and May 1946 . From September 1947 to the end of the run the magazine was monthly . The volume numeration was regular , with a new volume starting at the beginning of each calendar year ; the result was a variable number of issues in each volume , from a low of four in 1944 to a full 12 when the magazine was monthly , as it was for the last few years of its life . The last issue was volume 15 number 3 .

There were two British reprint editions . The first consisted of two numbered and undated issues , which appeared in May and June 1947 from Ziff @-@ Davis in London . This was pulp @-@ sized and 32 pages long ; it contained stories from the wartime U.S. edition . The second series was published by Thorpe & Porter , in Leicester , and consisted of 24 undated issues , all but the first two of which were numbered . These began at 160 pages , and decreased , first to 128 and then to 96 pages . They were released between June 1950 and February 1954 , and were abridged versions of U.S. editions dated from March 1950 to January 1953 , as follows :

The contents were initially identical to the U.S. editions , but starting with issue # 13 at least one story was dropped .

Starting in 1941 , unsold issues of Fantastic Adventures were rebound , three together , with a new cover , titled Fantastic Adventures Quarterly . There were eight of these quarterly issues between Winter 1941 and Fall 1943 ; they were priced at 25 cents and given a volume numbering from volume 1 number 1 to volume 2 number 4 . Another similar series was started in Summer 1948 , for 50 cents ; there were eleven of these , running from volume 6 number 1 to volume 9 number 1 , finishing with the Spring 1951 issue and omitting Spring 1949 .

In 1965 , Sol Cohen acquired both Amazing Stories and Fantastic from Ziff @-@ Davis , along with reprint rights to all the stories that had appeared in the Ziff @-@ Davis science fiction magazines , including Fantastic Adventures . Cohen published multiple reprint titles , and frequently reprinted stories from Fantastic Adventures . In particular , the following issues took their contents mostly or completely from Fantastic Adventures :

Fantastic Adventures Yearbook . One issue in the summer of 1970 , no number , dated only with the year . Reprinted six stories from Fantastic Adventures that had originally appeared between 1949 and 1952 .

Thrilling Science Fiction . Issues 16 and 20 ( Summer 1970 and Summer 1971 ) .

Science Fiction Adventures . January 1974 issue .

Science Fantasy . All four issues , from 1970 to 1971 .

The Strangest Stories Every Told . One issue , Summer 1970 .

Weird Mystery . There were four issues of this magazine between Fall 1970 and Summer 1971 ; the contents were drawn largely from Fantastic Adventures .