

## = Authentic Science Fiction =

Authentic Science Fiction was a British science fiction magazine published in the 1950s that ran for 85 issues under three editors : Gordon Landsborough , H.J. Campbell , and E.C. Tubb . The magazine was published by Hamilton and Co . , and began in 1951 as a series of novels appearing every two weeks ; by the summer it became a monthly magazine , with readers ' letters and an editorial page , though fiction content was still restricted to a single novel . In 1952 short fiction began to appear alongside the novels , and within two more years it completed the transformation into a science fiction magazine .

Authentic published little in the way of important or ground @-@ breaking fiction , though it did print Charles L. Harness 's " The Rose " , which later became well @-@ regarded . The poor rates of pay ? £ 1 per 1 @,@ 000 words ? prevented the magazine from attracting the best writers . During much of its life it competed against three other moderately successful British science fiction magazines , as well as the American science fiction magazine market . Hamilton folded the magazine in October 1957 , because they needed cash to finance an investment in the UK rights to an American best @-@ selling novel .

## = History =

In 1950 , science fiction ( sf ) magazines had been published successfully in North America for over twenty years , but little progress had been made in establishing British equivalents . The bulk of British sf was published as paperback books , rather than magazines ; a situation opposite of that in the US . Several short @-@ lived magazines had come and gone , both before and after the war . John Spencer launched four very poor quality juvenile magazines in 1950 , which continued into the mid @-@ 1950s , while one magazine , New Worlds , had survived since 1946 . Since 1939 , Atlas , a British publisher , had been producing a reprint edition of Astounding Science Fiction , one of the most well @-@ regarded American sf magazines . During the war the contents had often been cut severely , and the schedule had not been regular , but it was reputed to sell 40 @,@ 000 copies a month . This was enough to attract the attention of Hamilton & Co . , a British publisher looking for new markets .

In 1949 , Hamilton hired Gordon Landsborough as an editor . Landsborough did his best to improve the quality of the science fiction he was publishing , and was allowed to offer £ 1 per 1 @,@ 000 words for selected material . He also was joined at Hamilton by H.J. Campbell , who was hired as a technical editor . Campbell was a London science fiction fan ; he had been brought on by Hulton Press ( publisher of the very successful comic the Eagle ) to create a science fiction magazine , but the project had been abandoned before seeing print .

By the start of 1951 , Hamilton 's science fiction titles were being published every two weeks . On 1 January 1951 , Hamilton published Mushroom Men from Mars , by Lee Stanton , which was a pseudonym for Richard Conroy . A banner was added to the base of the cover reading " Authentic Science Fiction Series " ; the same banner appeared on the 15 January novel , Reconnoitre Krellig II , by Jon J. Deegan , also a pseudonym , this time for Robert G. Sharp . With the next book , Roy Sheldon 's Gold Men of Aureus , Landsborough changed the banner to read " Science Fiction Fortnightly No. 3 " , thinking that the caption might help sales . In addition to the banner , a contents page ( including a date and issue number ) , a letter column , an editorial , and an advertisement for subscriptions were inserted . According to Landsborough , the banner was only intended to indicate the publishing schedule to readers , but combined with the other changes the appearance became much more magazine @-@ like . These changes established the sequence in the minds of readers and collectors , and retroactively determined that Mushroom Men from Mars had been the first in the series : the first two issues had carried no issue number . Issue 3 was also the first issue to carry the editors ' names : Landsborough used the pseudonym L.G. Holmes ( " Holmes " was his middle name ) for his editing role on the magazine .

The caption did apparently help sales : Landsborough subsequently commented that while Hamilton 's other titles were selling perhaps 15 @,@ 000 copies , Authentic managed to sell 30

@, @ 000 . After the banners were in place , Hamilton proposed launching a monthly sf magazine . Landsborough was concerned about the workload , and also felt it would be difficult to find enough good material ; Hamilton refused to increase the pay rate , which was not high enough to attract the best stories . A compromise was reached , and Authentic was born as a monthly magazine in paperback format , with a single novel and a short editorial feature in each issue , plus an occasional short story . The eighth issue was the last on the fortnightly schedule . Issues 9 ? 12 were titled " Science Fiction Monthly " in the footer of the cover . In mid @-@ 1951 , Landsborough left Hamilton , and Campbell replaced him as editor of Authentic with the thirteenth issue , which was also the first one on which the title changed to " Authentic Science Fiction " .

Under Campbell Authentic improved somewhat , and continued its metamorphosis into a magazine , with additional non @-@ fiction writing , and short fiction in addition to the main novel in each issue . Hamilton also ran a science fiction paperback imprint , Panther Books , which would go on to become one of the leading British sf houses . By 1953 the British sf market was going through a metamorphosis similar to the one going in the US at the same time : poor quality sf markets were failing , and the result was a reduced but active market , with four magazines : Authentic , New Worlds , Science Fantasy , and Nebula Science Fiction .

At the end of 1955 Campbell decided to give up editing in favour of his scientific career as a research chemist . He was replaced from the February 1956 issue by E.C. Tubb , who remained editor to the end of the magazine 's life . Tubb had contributed a great deal of material to the magazine under various pseudonyms , often amounting to more than half of an issue 's fiction , and he later recalled that Campbell 's way of hiring him as editor was to say to him , " As you 're practically writing it , you may as well edit it . "

The quality of material submitted to Tubb was " dreadful " , in the words of sf historian Michael Ashley , and included many stories that had previously been rejected by Campbell : he was able to recognize these because Campbell had kept a log of all submissions . One story was rejected that had been plagiarized from one that had appeared twelve years earlier in Astounding Science Fiction . Tubb 's overall acceptance rate was about one in twenty @-@ five submissions . As a result , he found it difficult to keep standards up , often finding himself forced to write material under pseudonyms to fill an issue .

In early 1957 , Tubb persuaded Hamilton to switch the magazine from pocket @-@ book to digest size format , in the hope that this would improve the magazine 's visibility on bookstalls . The circulation did indeed rise , to about 14 @, @ 000 copies per month ? a surprisingly low figure given Landsborough 's assertion that Authentic had been selling 30 @, @ 000 copies in the early days . However , later that year , Hamilton made the decision to invest a substantial sum in the UK paperback rights of an American best @-@ seller : it is not known for certain which book this was , but it is thought to have been Evan Hunter 's The Blackboard Jungle . Hamilton could no longer afford to have cash tied up in Authentic , and in the summer of 1957 Tubb was given two months to close down the magazine , printing stories that had already been paid for . The last issue was dated October 1957 .

= = Contents and reception = =

For the first twenty @-@ five issues , Authentic ran a full novel in every issue , but no other fiction , though there were various non @-@ fiction departments such as " Projectiles " ( readers ' letters ) , an editorial , book reviews , fanzine reviews , and science related articles , quizzes , and news columns . In issue 26 , dated October 1952 , the first installment of Frontier Legion , a serial by Sydney J. Bounds , appeared . With issue 29 , the full @-@ length novel , Immortal 's Playthings by William F. Temple , was accompanied by a short story , Ray Bradbury 's " Welcome , Brothers ! " as well as part four of Frontier Legion . The serial was stretched out over six issues by printing scarcely more than a dozen pages in each installment ; it finally completed in issue 31 .

With issue 36 ( August 1953 ) , the cover text changed from advertising a " Full @-@ length Novel " to " Full @-@ length Story " ; the " featured story " , as it was called in the contents page , was still the longest piece of fiction in the issue , but was no longer necessarily even close to novel length .

Issue 41 , for example , ran Richard deMille 's " The Phoenix Nest " as the lead story , with fewer than forty pages of text . Finally , in issue 60 ( August 1955 ) , the word " feature " was removed from the contents page , and with it the last vestige of the origin of the magazine as a series of novels .

The early novels published by Hamilton were of generally poor quality . Michael Ashley , a historian of sf , described the first issue , Lee Stanton 's Mushroom Men of Mars as " of abysmal quality " , and the third , Roy Sheldon 's Gold Men of Aureus as " atrocious " . However , Campbell contributed some better work , beginning with Phantom Moon , under the house name Roy Sheldon , which appeared in issue 6 , dated 15 March 1951 ; his first novel under his own name was World in a Test Tube , which appeared in issue 8 , dated 15 April 1951 . He continued to write for the magazine after he became editor ? his work has been described as " enjoyable " , though " not especially sophisticated " . Tubb was also a regular contributor , often under house names , which according to Landsborough were used by Hamilton to prevent authors gaining name recognition under a pseudonym and then taking that name to another publisher .

Regulars in the magazine included Sydney J. Bounds , William F. Temple , Bryan Berry , and Ken Bulmer . At the start of 1953 , Authentic began to include material that had been previously published in the US ; this practice ceased later that year , but began again in 1956 , and led to the reprinting of material by well @-@ known names such as Isaac Asimov , whose 1951 story " Ideals Die Hard " was reprinted in issue 78 , dated March 1957 . Other well @-@ known names that appeared in Authentic included Brian Aldiss and John Brunner . Campbell had encouraged science articles during his tenure , but under Tubb 's editorship these were gradually eliminated .

Perhaps the most notable story Authentic published was Charles L. Harness 's " The Rose " , which appeared in the March 1953 issue . Other than this , Authentic published little of note : the Nicholls / Clute Encyclopedia of SF commented that it " seldom published stories of the first rank " , specifically excepting Harness 's " The Rose " . David Kyle , in his Pictorial History of Science Fiction , states that Campbell improved the magazine , making it " remarkably good " , and sf expert Donald Tuck 's opinion was that it eventually achieved " a good standard " , but in Michael Ashley 's opinion , the magazine " sadly lacked originality " , and ran fiction that was " stereotyped and forced , frequently because Campbell had to rely on the same small band of regulars to supply the bulk of the fiction " .

The cover artwork was initially poor : the very first issue has been described as " British pulp at its most infantile " , but the covers began to improve from mid @-@ 1953 . Josh Kirby , now well known for his Discworld art , contributed seven covers , beginning with issue 61 in September 1955 . There were also many covers on astronomical themes : these were clearly influenced by the US artist Chesley Bonestell , and were fairly successful .

= = Bibliographic details = =

Authentic was pocket book size ( 7 @. @ 25 × 4 @. @ 75 inches ) for most of its life , changing to digest size ( 7 @. @ 5 × 5 @. @ 5 inches ) for the last eight issues . The issue numbering was consecutive from 1 to 85 , with no volume numbers . The first issue had a publication date of 1 January 1951 , and the first eight issues had publication dates of the 1st and 15th of each month . From the ninth issue to the end Authentic maintained a completely regular monthly schedule ; the publication date was given in the magazine as the 15th of each month from issue 9 through issue 73 ; thereafter the date was just given as the month and year .

The price began as 1 / 6 ( one shilling and six pence ) ; the price was raised to two shillings with issue 60 , February 1955 , and stayed at that price until the end of the run . Interior artwork was not used for the first issues , which contained no fiction other than a single novel ; illustrations began to appear with issue 29 . Tubb announced in issue 85 , which turned out to be the last issue , that he had dropped all interior artwork .

The title of the magazine changed several times :

The first six issues were 132 pages , with the page count dropped to 116 for issues 7 through 25 . Issue 26 saw the page count return to 132 . The cover layout for all these issues remained

essentially the same , despite title changes . With issue 29 a layout using a yellow inverted " L " to frame the cover picture was introduced , and the page count was increased to 148 . Another cover redesign with issue 39 saw the yellow " L " removed , and the page count went up again to 164 with issue 41 , then back to 148 with issue 47 . The cover design varied further , with different title fonts ; the page count went back to 132 with issue 57 , then returned to 164 from issue 60 through issue 77 , the last in pocket @-@ book format . The eight issues in digest format all had 132 pages .

The editors were :

L.G. Holmes ( pseudonym for Gordon Landsborough ) , issues 1 ? 27 ( 27 issues )

H.J. Campbell , issues 28 ? 65 ( 38 issues )

E.C. Tubb , issues 66 ? 85 ( 20 issues )