

FANZINE ARTICLE from ECHOES #52 (December 1990):

THE WRITERS OF CAPTAIN FUTURE

by Jerry Page

The first issue of Captain Future was dated Winter, 1940 and featured the novel "Captain Future and the Space Emperor", by Edmond Hamilton. What followed were seventeen issues, all featuring novels about the good Captain and his unusual trio of helpers: Grag the Robot, Otho the Android, and Simon Wright, a scientist who's brain had been transplanted into a box. Together they were to the spacelanes what Doc Savage and his pals were to the jungles and back alleys of the thirties. After the last issue of the magazine, a trio of the novels

appeared in Startling Stories. In 1950 and 1951, seven more Captain Future stories appeared, these of short story and novelet length.

Most of the novels and all of the shorter works were written by Hamilton, but two other writers wrote novels in the series when it appeared Hamilton would be unable to continue the series, and the purpose of this article is to discuss them.

The Captain Future stories were as follows.

In Captain Future:

CAPTAIN FUTURE AND THE SPACE EMPEROR	Win 40	Edmond Hamilton
CALLING CAPTAIN FUTURE	Spr 40	Edmond Hamilton
CAPTAIN FUTURE'S CHALLENGE	Sum 40	Edmond Hamilton
THE TRIUMPH OF CAPTAIN FUTURE	Fall 40	Edmond Hamilton
CAPTAIN FUTURE AND THE SEVEN SPACE STONES	Win 41	Edmond Hamilton
STAR TRAIL TO GLORY	Spr 41	Edmond Hamilton
THE MAGICIAN OF MARS	Sum 41	Edmond Hamilton
THE LOST WORLD OF TIME	Fall 41	Edmond Hamilton
THE QUEST BEYOND THE STARS	Win 42	Edmond Hamilton
OUTLAWS OF THE MOON	Spr 42	Edmond Hamilton
THE COMET KINGS	Sum 42	Edmond Hamilton
PLANETS IN PERIL	Fall 42	Edmond Hamilton
THE FACE OF THE DEEP	Win 43	Edmond Hamilton

(The remainder of the novels in Captain Future were published under the house name "Brett Sterling." The name given is the actual name of the author of the story.)

WORLDS TO COME	Spr 43	Joseph Samachson
THE STAR OF DREAD	Sum 43	Edmond Hamilton

(There was no Fall 1943 issue.)

MAGIC MOON	Win 44	Edmond Hamilton
DAYS OF CREATION	Spr 44	Joseph Samachson

(At this point Captain Future ceased publication.

The remainder of the series was published in Startling Stories.)

RED SUN OF DANGER	Spr 45	Edmond Hamilton
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(At this point the "Brett Sterling" name was dropped and authors' real names were used henceforth.)

OUTLAW WORLD	Win 46	Edmond Hamilton
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THE SOLAR INVASION	Fall 46	Manly Wade Wellman
(This was the final novel in the series and the last of the Futuremen for three years, at which point the series resumed in Startling, in novelet length.)		
THE RETURN OF CAPTAIN FUTURE	Jan 50	Edmond Hamilton
CHILDREN OF THE SUN	May 50	Edmond Hamilton
THE HARPERS OF TITAN	Sep 50	Edmond Hamilton
PARDON MY IRON NERVES	Nov 50	Edmond Hamilton
MOON OF THE UNFORGOTTEN	Jan 51	Edmond Hamilton
EARTHMEN NO MORE	Mar 51	Edmond Hamilton
BIRTHPLACE OF CREATION	May 51	Edmond Hamilton

At that point, the series ended. Startling died in 1954, and while the company responsible for the magazines continued to publish pulps, primarily westerns, into 1970, there was no further attempt on their part to publish any magazines of new science fiction stories, much less to resume Captain Future. Some of the novels were reprinted by them in paperback form, and that was it.

But what about the men who wrote the novels.

The writer most associated with the series, of course, is Ed Hamilton. He was born in Youngstown, Ohio in 1904 and studied physics with the intention of becoming an electrical engineer. His first story, "The Monster God of Mamurth" appeared in *Weird Tales* in 1926. He published many stories in WT in the twenties, including a series called "The Interstellar Patrol," said to be a favorite of A. Merritt. In the 60s, all but one of them appeared in the two Ace paperbacks, *Crashing Suns* and *Outside the Universe*.

Science fiction was an important factor in the survival of *Weird Tales* during the twenties and in his early stories Hamilton seems to have originated most of the conventions of space opera, and many of early sf in general. Sam Moskowitz has argued, however, that he was less influential than might appear to be the case because of the sf field's disdain of the sort of "weird stuff" to be found in WT. His first story in *Amazing* was "The Comet Doom", in the January 1928 issue.

In the thirties he became one of the most prolific of sf writers. While popular, he was sometimes patronized by sf fans as "World Wrecker" Hamilton, and regarded as inferior to such writers as E.E. Smith, John Campbell and even his old pal Jack Williamson, despite the fact he published this sort of fiction before they had.

This attitude continued to plague him even after the war when his sf output slowed down, but his writing became stronger and more polished. Time and again he demonstrated, superior talent, but never seemed to get the full credit he deserved for it. It is said that he considered Edgar Rice Burroughs one of the most underrated

of science fiction writers. That may be so, but Hamilton is right up there with him.

In an interview about Captain Future he admitted that he was not too pleased with the juvenile slant he was ordered to give it initially, and he made efforts to improve the series as he went along. Because of the low rate of payment on the first few books, he was forced to concentrate on better paying work during the day and write his Captain Future novels after hours, a chapter a night.

Manly Wade Wellman wrote just about everything: westerns, mysteries, even non-fiction. He won the first short story competition held by Ellery Queen's *Mystery Magazine*, and he beat out writers like William Faulkner to do it. He was also the winner of an Edgar from the Mystery Writers of America for a collection of true crime pieces.

He appeared in *Weird Tales* as far back as 1927. The first sf magazine in which he appeared was the Spring, 1931 *Wonder Quarterly* ("When Planets Clashed"). During the early 40s he was a frequent contributor of space opera to the Thrilling magazines, as well as *Planet Stories* and *Amazing*. He was also an occasional contributor to John Campbell's *Astounding* and *Unknown*.

His major talent was in the horror field where he created a number of memorable phantom fighters, not least of them John the Balladeer in *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*, but also including John Thunstone and Judge Pursuivant. He sometimes wrote under the names Gans T. Field and Levi Crow. He used the house names Will Garth (Thrilling) and Gabriel Barclay (Popular Publications).

Joseph Samachson has written quite a bit of science fiction, all of it but his Captain Future novels as William Morrison. For a time he wrote the column "Science Stage" for *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*. He was a chemist who wrote juvenile novels and, in fact, is the author of a juvenile sf novel



(Mel Oliver and Space Rover on Mars, 1954). He also wrote a pair of non-Captain Future novels for the Thrilling pulps: "Two Worlds to Save" in the Sep 1942 issue of Startling, and "The Gears of Time" in April 1952 issue of Space Stories. But most of his science fiction has been in short form and though much of it has been memorable, he never had a collection and thus is virtually forgotten.

Mort Weisinger, who edited the first several issues of Captain Future (and who may have originated the idea), later left the pulps and went to work for DC Comics where, for years, he guided the destiny of Superman Comics. He was responsible for bringing several writers from the sf field to the comics, including Ed Hamilton.

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