

the money goes

"Up, up and away!"

by Klark Cent

"Holy comicdom Bat-guy, do you think the world is ready to enter the high rolling world of comic books?"

The comic book is a series of cartoons or art panels collected in a book, to form a story.

"A collector or panelologist, one who collects panels...comes in many forms," says Bruce Thomson, co-owner of Hobbit's — a combination games, new and used comics, science fiction books, and video store in downtown Edmonton. Thomson is in charge of the comics and magazines, and is himself a collector.

"Myself, an art collector, it's an investment," he says, "a true fan is one who picks up anything doing with a comic. One who sticks through it thick and thin."

On the weekend of October 3rd, 1981, there was an annual comic book convention, called Wizard Con. On the sales floor approximately 200 people spent \$10,000 in two days.

Thomson describes the history of the comic book.

"There are three accepted ages of comic books." "The first Golden Age" falls into 1939-46.

"In the '40s and '50s there were an incredible number of comic companies," Thomson explains.

This era was to end in controversy.

"A number were put down by the Comics Code Authority," he says.

The Comics Code was instituted to control the content of comic books in the second era, the Silver Age (D.C. Age) from 1951-59.

"It (Comic Code) destroyed E.C. (Entertainment Comics formerly Education Comics)," says Thomson. MAD Magazine is its only remaining title today.

"E.C. was a bit on the gory side and liked to show scantily clad women," he adds. One of the titles of that time was *Weird Science*.

Comics demise in this era began with Dr. Frederick Wertham's book *The Seduction of the Innocent* (1953) which showed that comic books led to

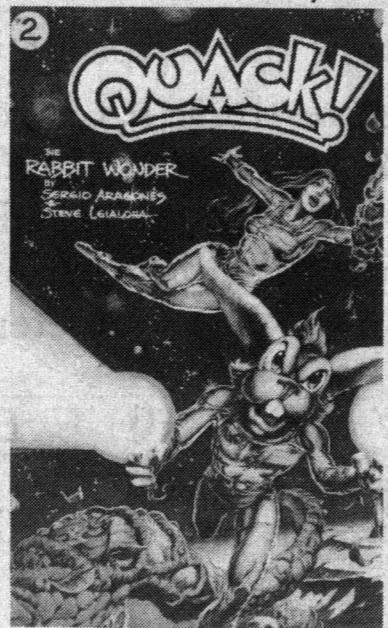
homosexuality, juvenile delinquency, rape and other crimes. This led to massive public book burnings.

"They (the government) picked E.C. as a scapegoat," explains Thomson. "They (E.C.) were not allowed to publish a story in which the hero was a black man. They published anyways."

"These events were perfectly timed for the Big Red Scare," he adds. "William Gains (publisher of E.C. at that time) appeared before the senate committee."

Only two companies managed to survive this era and eventually prosper. They are D.C. and Marvel.

"The were just the bigger companies. They had the stronger characters. D.C. had *Superman* and *Batman*", Thomson says.



"Marvel really had nothing at that time. It was composed of two companies, Timely and Atlas. They had *Captain America* and the *Sub Mariner* then."

"They sort of hung on and survived." Many of the companies were bought up by Marvel and D.C.

The Second Golden Age also became known as The Golden Age of Marvel Superheroes (now a part of their slogan).

"In 1962, Stan Lee came up with the concept of the *Fantastic*

***** NEW WONDER WOMAN PREVIEW *****



Four, the Avengers, the Incredible Hulk, Spiderman, and others," Thomson says. These characters gave Marvel the boost to compete directly and became predominant over D.C., who had dominated the field.

"Some people haven't believed it (Marvel Age) has ended but I consider it ended a long time ago."

"They (Marvel) use to publish 15 to 16 titles. 12 were good. Now they publish 20 to 30 and two may be good."

"I know for a fact when I started to collect comics (1969) the quality of comics were excellent." Thomson attributes a part of this success to artists like Neal Adams and Collin Smith.

"Today I find the storylines awfully juvenile."

Thomson points out a phenomenon of comics.

"Any media has to reflect its civilization."

"You can trace trends in civilization by reading comics." You can see changing attitudes, morality, clothing - it's all there. From a historical point of view, they are quite incredible really."

"An example in comics, we have witnessed the creation of a character called *Disco Dazzler*, and if that isn't a reflection of our civilization then I don't know what is."

A major step in comic books arrived when Neal Adams began working for D.C. in the late '60s.

"He (Adams) did a whole wave of things," Thomson explains. "He made them (comics and characters) realistic. Muscles rippled and women were no longer heavy chested...but very real."

Adams' most important contribution came in the D.C. title *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* (G.L./G.A.) issues 76 through 129.

"The whole storyline in G.L./G.A. took on the entire population, street drugs, pollution and other problems."



"It dealt not as a super villain doing it but as people doing it to themselves."

"The drug issue was not some super villain hooked on speed but *Green Arrow's* sidekick (aptly named) *Speedy*."

"It hit home." The regime of D.C. still ruled so that the tone of comics cooled for awhile, says Thomson. Later they noticed that this type of comic sold and the commercial market opened up to realism.

"Old artists gave way to the

new artists."

The most popular comic today is D.C.'s *The New Teen Titans*, a revival of an old title.

"Number 1 came out for 50 cents and is now selling for \$10," he says explaining the lucrative collectors' market.

"D.C. Presents number 26, which had an insert of *The New Teen Titans* is selling in Vancouver for \$20," Thomson says.

Thomson's interest of the business aspect began when he tried to complete his collection of D.C. comics after having a complete collection of Marvel comics.

"In a dollar value, I had to see if I wanted to do it (complete the D.C. collection) or stop. I stopped and started selling."

"That's when I saw the money potential in this business."

"It's a profitable business for sure. You just have to be careful your collecting instincts don't get in the way of your business instincts."

One of Thomson's mistakes came with the release *The Uncanny X-Men* number 94. This series had been reprints of earlier issues for some time until number 94, where a new storyline and characters began.

"I got 150 copies when they first came in and I thought 'how am I going to get rid of this shit'," he says. "I know I made a mistake when the store opened and I sold one for \$30."

"It (*X-Men*) became popular

continued on p.16

Baz

by Skeet

scribble the Gateway scribble
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 14, 1981

Hostage Crisis OVER

See page 5

dear floyd
an advice column to the lost

Dear Floyd,
I have just won the provincial lottery but all my friends are leaving me because I won't share the money with them.
What can I do?
signed: F. Opulent

Dear Filthy,
Money can't buy happiness but it's a helluva way to be miserable.
-Floyd