



According to you...

DEAR Miss Goldsmith:

Please, let us have some more of Leiber's Fafhrd-Mouser stories! Leiber is the only man now writing heroic fantasy, and this is a genre which gives a number of readers, when well done, and including myself, the purest pleasure we get out of any kind of fiction printed.

L. Sprague de Camp

- *A tribute from a peer.*

Dear Editor:

A few comments on the July issue:

I picked up this issue because of the remarkably good Kramer cover, and the fact that a Simak story was featured. As it turned out, the cover was a false representation, and the Simak story was the worst one in the issue! However, here is my rating of

the stories, rated with from one (terrible) to four (all-time great) stars; average is 2½.

1) "No Harm Done," by Shark-ey. It may seem surprising that the shortest story in the issue got first place, but for general excellence, I would consider this above the rest by a small margin, one of the better Sharkey stories I have read recently. Rating: ***

2) The "Forest of Unreason," by RF Young. This may be an overrating, but it is the third RFY story I've read, and the first that didn't leave me cold (the other two were "Goddess in Granite" and "Santa Claus," both from F&SF). The only objection I had was for Young's utter disregard for human values, which also appears in places in the other two. The ending was a horrible little surprise. The story turned out better as a whole than I expected. Rating: ***

3) "Solomon's Demon," by Arthur Porges. A fair idea, although sickeningly hackneyed, with a mediocre ending which upset the mood of the story. Again, a false blurb: to be a truly Gothic piece, this particular story would have to have a terror-filled ending. As it was, it was just another ho-hum monster yarn; the pace, however, was steady, and showed no real faults. Rating: **½

4) "The Goggles of Dr. Dragnet," by Fritz Leiber. After a terrible title, I was expecting the worst. However, I was not especially disappointed. This yarn held up the interest rather well, but had a dry, stale sort of ending, just like the one mentioned above. If I may say so, the story left me with a "so what" sort of reaction. Rating: **½

5) "The Creator," by Clifford Simak. Your featured story and your Fantasy Classic all rolled into one turned out to be a flop, in my humble opinion. I was expecting something completely different from what I got, I'm afraid. The story itself possessed a "sense of wonder," with an "idea"—that the universe was material substance, not infinitesimally small or infinitely large—but I didn't like the first ten pages *at all*—they were too coldly impersonal (after one reads what Simak has been producing lately) and matter-of-fact. Per-

haps this is how Simak of old wrote; but to me this is just another space-thriller. Rating: *½

Chuck Cunningham
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● *OK, now to comment on your letter. The first paragraph left us cold; too critical. The bulk of the letter improved, however, as you discovered much of the issue was better than you thought. Overall rating: ***, because you took the trouble to give us your constructive thoughts!*

Dear Editor:

Noticed a startling omission in the June issue. Where is the lettercol? Of all features, it's the one I'd least like to see dropped. Surely if it's a matter of space, you could make room for it by rejecting such junk as "A Small Miracle of Fishhooks and Straight Pins." This story seems more suited to my young brother's "horror" comics than to a mag of FANTASTIC'S standing.

The other stories were all good except for one—"The Face in the Mask." It was excellent. I can't give my opinion on the first installment of your serial, because reading half of a story and waiting a whole month for the second half is like eating the cake and leaving the frosting. Instead of carrying on with seri-

als, howzabout keeping both parts and printing them as one complete book-length novel with a few shorts? Incidentally, what's the percentage for or against serials? From the letters that get printed, I'd say it's about 3-to-1 against. Against such odds, ed, you haven't a chance. Sic semper tyrannis!

Jo Ann Imms
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● *Most letters are pro-serial. We print the others to show how fair we are to the minority. Editors über alles!*

Dear Editor:

I wrote to reply to Mr. Hulan's letter in the July *Fantastic*. I strongly agree with his suggestion of having the equivalent of an An Lab—and I believe it would pick up sales of each issue, because more fans would see a chance to show their prowess as a critic.

I also agree to his criticism of Leiber's Fafhrd-Grey Mouser story, and his series as a whole. However, I do not go along with all he says.

For example, he can not make the generalization that "for maximum effect, the hero must be larger than life—viz. Conan, Tarzan, John Carter . . ." This is certainly not true. Witness L. Ron Hubbard's adventure novels

(most notably "Slaves of Sleep"). The story in which the hero does everything *wrong* is dying out in recent years—fortunately. My idea of an ideal hero is one completely human—capable of error, and occasionally guilty of it, but *not* the kind (like in "Darker than you Think") that doesn't seem to be able to do anything *right*.

Furthermore, I don't think Harold Shea is an optimum example. I will admit freely that "The Incomplete Enchanter" is the best fantasy novel ever written—I will also admit that "Castle of Iron" (the book, not the original edition) is one of the worst.

Finally, we come to Mr. Hulan's remark concerning Mr. de Camp. It is true that not all of de Camp's stories are classics—but is Mr. Hulan ready to cast judgement on "Lest Darkness Fall," or "The Undesired Princess," both of which contained heroes of the exact type that he was campaigning *against*. I would also like to contest his criticism of "The Tritonian Ring"—this, too, was an excellent story, not meant to teach or edify—just for sheer entertainment. I thoroughly enjoyed this yarn, and thought it was closer to the vein of "The Incomplete Enchanter" than any other of de Camp's works. And I do *not* understand his blasting of the type hero at all.

Mr. Hulan, can you explain yourself?

Charles Dixon
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● *Perhaps it is all a matter of superlatives. If the hero does everything wrong, he is also "larger than life." In sf, a hero should be life-size: i.e., capable of brilliance and error. But in fantasy, a hero can be anything the author wants him to be. Yes? No?*

Dear Editor:

Although AMAZING is generally considered the superior of the two Ziff-Davis science-fantasy twins the publication of "Second Ending" has made the June and July issues of FANTASTIC surpass its companion. I believe that this novel is the best either of your magazines has published in the last few years. The conflict between the futility of the protagonist's existence and the enforced continuance of his life was dramatically presented. I hope James White will be making appearances in future issues.

The gothic "tale of terror" by Porges in the July issue didn't stir me a bit. The story was too hurried and matter-of-fact to create the mood necessary for a successful horror tale. The real stunner in the issue was Shark-

ey's "No Harm Done." There just aren't words in the English language to describe the feeling that the climax of this story left. The piece had what might be called a pleasing grotesqueness about it. Not pleasing in the sadistic sense but pleasing because the author succeeded in putting over the story.

Jack Chalker's discussion of the faults of "The Violin String" was interesting. I went back and reread both the story (April issue) and Moskowitz' article on Lovecraft in the May, 1960 issue. In the "Violin String" I believe Hasse did what Moskowitz points out as a tendency of HPL in his later years, that is, to explain the supernatural by scientific means. "The Violin String" could have been a good weird-horror tale but by explaining the Doctor's narrative as madness Hasse makes the story rather poor science-fiction.

David B. Williams
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Dear Editor:

I have just read the June and July issues of FANTASTIC, and am sending my customary comments.

First, "Second Ending." I usually read each installment of a serial as it comes out, but for various reasons I hadn't gotten around to reading the June ish

until the July one had arrived, so I read it all in one sitting. It was *superb!* The best science fiction novel I've seen in a magazine in years! Who is James White? I don't remember hearing about him before, but surely this is not a first effort! Come clean—isn't he really some well-known favorite in a red wig and dark glasses? This is twice this year you've scored high on my list with a serial by a relative unknown—"Worlds of the Imperium" was also excellent.

The cover was simply awful. And Schomburg can do so well when he wants to, too. Covers like this are what stop people from buying magazines. The interior illos are improving, though—Ivie is quite competent, and Adkins is developing a Cartier-like style (more in evidence in the July ish) which *might* bring him up to the top level some day. Francis I don't like.

July cover—better than June, but still not up to your standards. It was very good as an illustration for the story, but not the type cover to attract readers. Incidentally, was the story written around the cover? Maybe that explains the odd form of Pan. Adkins' illos for "Second Ending" were excellent; the rest nothing to brag on.

The lettercol was the high spot of the ish, naturally—since I wrote half of it.

Here's one reader whose tastes you won't have to wonder about. As regards your comment about my request for an An Lab—maybe *you* get a good idea from readers' letters, but none of the readers do. Now if you'd just enlarge (my continual refrain), and give us a lettercol of 8-10 pages in a smaller-size type, then I'll admit it a better solution. But two or three letters don't tell much, and an An Lab wouldn't consume the space. Another thing, you might get more reader response if they knew that it would mean something.

However, I think that you're doing a good job of putting your mags together, all things considered. You're closer to publishing good stuff than any other magazine presently out. The difficulty is that you're getting mostly good ideas only passably handled, while ASF gets mediocre ideas very well handled. But keep improving and Long John will have to look to his laurels—you've already left everybody else far behind.

David G. Hulan
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• *Once more about the "An Lab." So long as we know what readers like or dislike, why do the other readers have to know, too? What are you—a bunch of conformists?*