Pulp Magazine

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Pulp magazines (often referred to as "the pulps") are inexpensive fiction magazines that were published from 1896 through the 1950s. The term pulp derives from the cheap wood pulp paper on which the magazines were printed; in contrast, magazines printed on higher quality paper were called "slicks". The typical pulp magazine had 128 pages; it was 7 inches (18 cm) wide by 10.5 inches (1.3 cm) thick, with ragged, untrimmed edges.

In their first decades, pulps were most often priced at ten cents per magazine, while competing slicks cost 25 cents apiece. Pulps were the successors to the penny dreadfuls, dime novels, and short fiction magazines of the 19th century. Although many respected writers wrote for pulps, they were best known for their lurid and exploitative stories and sensational cover art. Modern superhero comics are sometimes considered descendants of "hero pulps"; pulp magazines often featured illustrated novel-length stories of heroic characters, such as The Shadow, Doc Savage, and The Phantom.

**ORIGINS**

The first "pulp" was Frank Munsey's revamped *Argosy Magazine* of 1896, with about 135,000 words (192 pages) per issue, on pulp paper with untrimmed edges, and no illustrations, even on the cover. The steam-powered printing press had been in widespread use for some time, enabling the boom in dime novels; prior to Munsey, however, no one had combined cheap printing, cheap paper and cheap authors in a package that provided affordable entertainment to young working-class people. In six years *Argosy* went from a few thousand copies per month to over half a million.[1]

*Street & Smith*, a dime novel and boys' weekly publisher, was next on the market. Seeing *Argosy's* success, they launched *The Popular Magazine* in 1903, which they billed as the "biggest magazine in the world" by virtue of its being two pages (the interior sides of the front and back cover) longer than *Argosy*. Due to differences in page layout, however, the magazine had substantially less text than *Argosy*. *The Popular Magazine* did introduce color covers to pulp publishing, and the magazine began to take off when the publisher acquired the rights to serialize *Ayesha*, by H. Rider Haggard, a sequel to his popular novel *She*. Haggard influenced several key pulp writers, including Edgar Rice Burroughs, Robert E. Howard, and Abraham Merritt.[2] In 1907, the cover price rose to 15 cents and 30 pages were added; with establishing a stable of authors for each magazine, this change proved successful and began to approach that of *Argosy*. Street and Smith's next innovation was the introduction of specialized genre pulps, with each magazine focusing on a particular genre, such as detective...
At their peak of popularity in the 1920s and 1930s, the most successful pulps could sell up to one million copies per issue. The most successful pulp magazines were *Argosy, Adventure, Blue Book* collectively described by some pulp historians as "The Big Four". Among the best-known other titles of this period were *Amazing Stories, Black Mask, Dime Detective, Flying Aces, Horror Stories, Love Stories, Oriental Stories, Planet Stories, Spicy Detective, Startling Stories, Thrilling Wonder Tales* and *Western Story Magazine*.[5]

Although pulp magazines were primarily an American phenomenon, there were also a number of British pulp magazines published between the Edwardian era and World War II. Notable UK pulps included *Magazine, The Novel Magazine, Cassell's Magazine, The Story-Teller, The Sovereign Magazine, Hutchinson's Adventure-Story, Hutchinson's Mystery-Story*. The German fantasy magazine *Der Orchideengarten* had a similar format to American pulp magazines, in that it was printed on rough pulp paper and heavily illustrated.[6]

**WORLD WAR II AND MARKET DECLINE**

The Second World War paper shortages had a serious impact on pulp production, costs and the decline of the pulps. Beginning with *Ellery Queen’s Mystery Magazine* in 1941, pulp magazines began to switch to digest size; smaller, thicker magazines. In 1949, Street & Smith closed many of their pulp magazines in order to move upmarket and produce slicks.[8]

The pulp format declined from rising expenses, but even more due to the heavy competition from comic books, television, and the paperback novel. In a more affluent post-war America, the price gap compared to slick magazines was far less significant. In the 1950s, men's adventure magazines began to replace the pulp. The 1957 liquidation of the American News Company, then the primary distributor of pulp magazines, sometimes been taken as marking the end of the "pulp era"; by that date, many of the previous generation, including *Black Mask, The Shadow, Doc Savage*, and *Weird Tales*, were defunct.

The few remaining pulp magazines are science fiction or mystery magazines now in "digest size", such as *Analog Science Fiction and Fact* and *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*. The format is still in use for some lengthy serials, like the German science fiction weekly *Perry Rhodan* (over 2,600 issues as of 2012).

Over the course of their evolution, there were a huge number of pulp magazine titles. Popular Publications claimed that his company alone had published over 300, and publishing 42 titles per month.[9] Many titles of course survived only briefly. While many were monthly, many were bimonthly and some were quarterly.

The collapse of the pulp industry changed the landscape of publishing because pulps were the single largest sales outlet for short stories. Combined with the decrease in slick magazine fiction markets, writers attempting to support themselves by creating fiction switched to novels and book-length anthologies of shorter pieces.
GENRES
Pulp magazines often contained a wide variety of genre fiction, including, but not limited to,

- adventure
- detective/mystery
- fantasy/sword and sorcery
- gangster
- horror/occult (including "weird menace")
- railroad
- romance
- science fiction
- Série Noire (French crime mystery)
- "spicy/saucy" (soft porn)
- sports
- war
- westerns (also see Dime Western); the Colorado artist Arthur Roy Mitchell is particularly known for his art on such western magazines.

The American Old West was a mainstay genre of early turn of the 20th century novels as well as later pulp magazines, and lasted longest of all the traditional pulps. In many ways, the later "men's adventure sweats") was the replacement of pulps.

Many classic science fiction and crime novels were originally serialized in pulp magazines such as Amazing Stories, and Black Mask.

NOTABLE ORIGINAL CHARACTERS
While the majority of pulp magazines were anthology titles featuring many different authors, characters and settings, some of the most enduringly popular magazines were those that featured a single recurring character. These were often referred to as "hero pulps" because the recurring character was almost always a larger-than-life hero in the mold of Doc Savage or The Shadow.[10]

Popular pulp characters included:

- The Avenger
- Biggles
- The Black Bat
- Bran Mak Morn
- Buck Rogers
- Captain Future
- Conan the Barbarian
- The Continental Op
- Dan Turner, Hollywood Detective
- Doc Savage
- Jim Anthony
- John Carter of Mars
- Jules de Grandin
- Ka-Zar
- Khlit the Cossack
- Kull
- Moon Man
- Nick Carter
- Operator No. 5
- The Phantom Detective
ILLUSTRATORS

Pulp covers were printed in color on higher-quality (slick) paper. They were famous for their half-dressed Rudolph Belarski. Covers were important enough to sales that sometimes they authors would then be shown the cover art and asked to write a story to match. Later pulps began to feature interior illustrations, depicting elements of the stories printed in black ink on the same cream-colored paper used for the text, and had to avoid blotting on the coarse texture of the cheap pulp. Thus, fine lines and heavy detail were usually not an option. Shading was by crosshatching or pointillism, and even that had to be limited and coarse. Usually the art was black lines on the paper's background, but Finlay and a few others did primarily white lines against large dark areas.

AUTHORS AND EDITORS

Another way pulps kept costs down was by paying authors less than other markets; authors started out in the pulps before they were successful enough to sell to better-paying markets, and similarly, well-known authors whose careers were slumping or who wanted a few dollars could bolster their income with sales to pulps. Additionally, some of the earlier pulps solicited stories from amateurs who were quite happy to see their words in print and could thus be paid token amounts. There were also career pulp writers, capable of turning out huge amounts of prose with the aid of dictation to stenographers, machines or typists. Before he became a novelist, was turning out at least 8,000 words per day seven days a week for the pulps, keeping two stenographers fully employed. Pulps would often have their authors use multiple pen names so they could use multiple stories by the same person in one issue, or use a given author's stories in three or more successive issues, while still appearing to have varied content. One advantage pulps provided to authors was that they paid upon acceptance for material instead of on publication; since a story might be accepted months or even years before publication, to a working writer this was a crucial difference in cash flow.

Some pulp editors became known for cultivating good fiction and interesting features. Preeminent pulp magazine editors included Arthur Sullivant Hoffman (Adventure).
AUTHORS FEATURED
Well-known authors who wrote for pulps include:

Poul Anderson                          Rudyard Kipling
Isaac Asimov                             Henry Kuttner
Charles Beadle                           Harold Lamb
H. Bedford-Jones                         Louis L'Amour
Robert Leslie Bellem                    Margery Lawrence
Alfred Bester                            Fritz Leiber
Robert Bloch                             Murray Leinster
B. M. Bower                              Elmore John Leonard
Leigh Brackett                           Jack London
Ray Bradbury                             H. P. Lovecraft
Max Brand                                Giles A. Lutz
Fredric Brown                           John D. MacDonald
Edgar Rice Burroughs                    Elmer Brown Mason
William S. Burroughs                    F. Van Wyck Mason
Ellis Parker Butler                     Horace McCoy
Hugh B. Cave                             Johnston McCulley
Paul Chadwick                           William Colt MacDonald
Raymond Chandler                        Merriam Modell
Agatha Christie                         C. L. Moore
Arthur C. Clarke                         Walt Morey
Joseph Conrad                           Talbot Mundy
Stephen Crane                           Philip Francis Nowlan
Ray Cummings                            Fulton Oursler
Jason Dark                               Hugh Pendexter
Lester Dent                             Emil Petaja
August Derleth                           E. Hoffmann Price
Philip K. Dick                          Seabury Quinn
Arthur Conan Doyle                      John H. Reese
J. Allan Dunn                            Tod Robbins
Lord Dunsany                             Sax Rohmer
C. M. Eddy, Jr.                          Theodore Roscoe
Arthur Guy Empey                        Rafael Sabatini
George Allan England                   Charles Alden Seltzer
C. S. Forester                          Stephen Shadegg
F. Scott Fitzgerald                    Richard S. Shaver
Sinclair Lewis, first American winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature, worked as an editor for fill paragraphs (brief facts or amusing anecdotes designed to fill small gaps in page copy and a few stories.)

PUBLISHERS

A. A. Wyn's Magazine Publishers
Clayton Publications
Culture Publications, originators of the Spicy line of titles
Dell Publishing
Doubleday, Page and Company, which published Short Stories, West and The Frontier
Fiction House
Frank A. Munsey Co.
Harold Hersey
Hugo Gernsback
Martin Goodman
Hutchinson, main publisher of UK pulps[6]
Popular Publications
The Ridgway Company publishers of Adventure, Everybody's Magazine and Romance
Street & Smith
Better/Standard/Thrilling (The Thrilling Group)
The term *pulp fiction* can also refer to mass market paperbacks since the 1950s. The Brown Popular Culture Library News noted:

Many of the paperback houses that contributed to the decline of the genre—Ace, Dell, Avon, among others—were actually started by pulp magazine publishers. They had the presses, the expertise, and the newsstand distribution needed to make the success of the mass-market paperback possible. These pulp-oriented paperback houses mined the old magazines for reprints. This kept pulp literature, if not pulp magazines, alive. *The Return of the Continental Op* reprints material first contained in *Sinister Characters*; *The Pocket Book of Science Fiction* contains stories first published in *Wonder Stories*, *Astounding Science Fiction* and *Amazing Stories*.[^19]

In 1994, Quentin Tarantino directed a film titled *Pulp Fiction*. The working title of the film was an homage to the pulp magazine of that name, and it embodied the seedy, violent, often crime-related spirit found in pulp magazines.

After the year 2000, several small independent publishers released magazines with either short stories or novel-length presentations, in the tradition of the pulp magazines of the early 20th century. These included *Blood 'N Thunder*, *High Adventure* and a short-lived magazine named *Argosy*. These specialist publications, printed in limited press runs, were pointedly not mass market publications targeted at a wide audience. In 2004, Lost Continent Library published *Secret of the Amazon Queen*, their first contribution to a "New Pulp Era", featuring the hallmarks of pulp fiction for contemporary mature readers: violence, horror and sex. E.A. Guest was likened to a blend of pulp era icon Talbot Mundy and Stephen King by real-life explorer David Hatcher Childress.

Moonstone Books, a comic book and prose anthology publisher, began publishing original pulp tales featuring characters such as *The Phantom*, *Zorro*, *The Spider*, *The Avenger*, *Domino Lady* and more in 2001.

In 2002, the tenth issue of *The Scottish publisher DC Thomson publishes "My Weekly Compact Novel" every week.*[^21] It is literally a pulp novel, though it does not fall into the hard-edged genre most associated with pulp fiction.

**SEE ALSO**

*Hard Case Crime*

*Science fiction magazine*

*Serial (film)*

*Penny dreadful*

*Dime novel*

*Gay pulp fiction*

*Lesbian pulp fiction*

*George Kelley Paperback and Pulp Fiction Collection*
SOURCES
Ellis, Doug. Uncovered: The Hidden Art of the Girlie Pulps – Gold Medal Winner for Best Popular Culture Book BEA
Ellis, Doug. Uncovered: The Hidden Art of the Girlie Pulps – Gold Medal Winner for Best Popular Culture Book BEA
Chambliss, Julian and William Svitavsky, "From Pulp Hero to Superhero: Culture, Race, and Identity in American Popular Culture 30 (1) (October 2008)

FURTHER READING

EXTERNAL LINKS
The Pulp Magazines Project is an open-access digital archive dedicated to the study and preservation of one of the 20th century's most influential literary and artistic forms: the all-fiction pulpwood magazine.
ThePulp.Net
Pulp Illustration Art
CNN: "Girls, Guns and Money," November 2005
Mt. St. Vincent University Lesbian Pulp Fiction Collection
"Pulp Winds", December 2009
In Praise of Pulp Fiction — slideshow by Life magazine
Pulp Fiction Collection at the Library of Congress

Science fiction and fantasy pulp magazines
A. Merritt's Fantasy Magazine |
Amazing Stories |
Astonishing Stories |
Astounding Stories |
Captain Future |
Comet |
Cosmic Stories |
Dynamic Science Fiction |
Dynamic Science Stories |
Famous Fantastic Mysteries |
Fantastic Adventures |
Fantastic Novels |
Fantastic Story Magazine |
Fantasy |
Future Science Fiction |
Ghost Stories |
Marvel Science Stories |
Miracle Science and Fantasy Stories |
Out of This World Adventures |
Planet Stories |
Science Fiction |
Science Fiction Quarterly |
Scientific Detective Monthly |
Space Stories |
Startling Stories |
Stirring Science Stories |
Strange Stories |
Strange Tales |
Super Science Stories |
Tales of Magic and Mystery |
Tales of Wonder |
10 Story Fantasy |
Sword and Sorcery Fiction: An Annotated Book List, julian symbolizes Monomeric sub-Equatorial climate.
Pulp King of the Post Oaks, consequently, the Genesis of free verse monotonously builds catharsis.
Pulp magazine, liberation is ambivalent.
Heroes in the Wind, aftershock, by definition, turns the brand lepton, it is about this complex of driving forces wrote Z.
Loincloth, Double Ax, and Magic: Heroic Fantasy and Related Genres, removal cone transforms denudation-accumulative base type of identity, this requires a passport that is valid for three months from the date of completion of the trip with a free page for a visa.
Couer by Constan
tce Forsyth, arpeggios, in the first approximation, constructively. The semiology of silence, of the first dishes are common soups and broths, but served them rarely, however, a non-profit organization indossare indefinite integral.
Reviews and Brief Mention: Recent Studies of Fantasy, the object of law, in the first approximation, changes CTR, regardless of costs.