

The Phantom

by Ivan Pedersen aka IpComics

The Phantom strip by Lee Falk has appeared regularly in **Comic Revue** for more than twenty years, and while we have published some stories illustrated by the first Phantom artist, Ray Moore, and by the artist who drew the Phantom for the longest time, Sy Barry, most of the stories we reprint have been by Wilson McCoy. Why Wilson McCoy?

The Phantom strip is one of the oldest comics with a masked hero; started back in 1937 it has still its fans around the world. *The Phantom* has his own comic book in some countries, publishing strip reprints or new licensed stories, more or less true to Falk's way of doing things. In my part of the world, Norway, we find some of the most devoted fans. *The Phantom* has had his own book in Sweden since the early 1950s and in Norway since 1964. It was no wonder, when I started as associate editor of **Comics Revue**, that I wanted to run stories about *The Phantom*. I was soon given a very free hands in picking the stories. As the Phantom has been very little reprinted in USA I saw no problem in using the series more than before.

There is a reason for the use of Wilson McCoy as well. When I bought my first *Phantom* comic in Norway, back in 1967, it was drawn by Wilson McCoy, and that lasted for some time. Later Sy Barry impressed me more as an artist, but when, very much later, I found some Frew (Australis) editions with *The Phantom* by McCoy I discovered a renewed interest in the character. I started to seriously collect the strip, and my interest in the series grew.

Another reason for choosing Wilson McCoy stories for **Comics Revue** is the fact that, even if they have been reprinted a lot in other countries, they are rare in the US, and also the other reprints usually presented the strips with the bottoms or sides of many panels cut off. The reduced strip was introduced during World War II to save paper, and continued to make it possible to print more strips on a page. The Sunday strip size was also often reduced, from a half to third. The reduced daily strip was continued as a standard for many newspapers until some time in the late fifties, and most publishers, world wide, have reprinted reduced strips as the only version commonly available.

As a collector it became important for me that the Falk and McCoy daily strips should be as true to the original as possible. Back in 2010, the February issue of **Comics Revue** published part one of the "The White Monkey", complete and with full strips. The process is not always easy, complete runs of full proofs are impossible to find, so a lot of editing is needed, but in the end it works and I am proud to present the result, as we are the only place in the world these stories can be found complete.

Starting in the December 2011 issue we have presented another important run of *The Phantom* strip by McCoy. It is a fact that many Phantom readers around the world do not know, or even deny, but beginning in February 1949 the strips tried something that is more usual in other strips, a continuing story with a combination of daily and Sunday strips. You know how that is, I am sure. You can read the Sundays or the Dailies and still get a good grip on the story, but to get the full picture you need both. This experiment did not last for long; the May 7 1950 strip was the last in the combined Sunday/daily run, and the experiment has never been repeated.

It is our goal here at **Comics Revue** to reprint all of the Sunday/daily stories, with the Sundays in color, for the first time anywhere in the world.

To make it simple, the reason for using Wilson McCoy stories in **Comics Revue** is the fact that complete runs of these stories, with the full strips, have never been reprinted before. Also, I think these years with Falk and McCoy were some of the most interesting years in the history of *The Phantom*. We saw the legend of *The Phantom* grow, with the introduction of the Jungle Patrol, the

Monkey Mail and the mark of the Phantom, both good and bad, to mention just a few of the innovations that occurred in the years when McCoy drew *The Phantom*. Follow the reprints of Wilson McCoy in **Comics Revue** and you will find out for yourself why we think these strips embody the spirit of *The Phantom*.