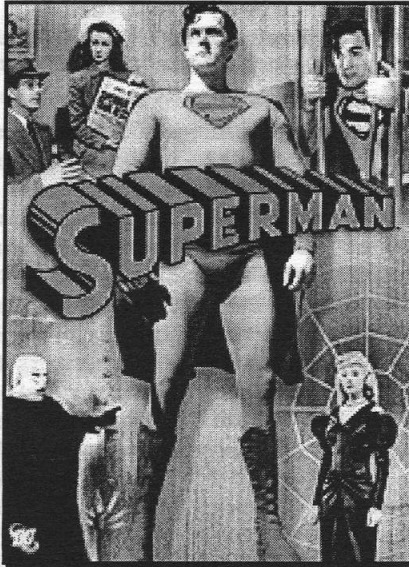




*"Jungle Girl", Kit Guard,
"Sign of the Wolf", "Around
the World in 18 Days",
Tomorrow People (Pt. 2),
"Captain Midnight",
Gregg Barton
and much more...*

SUPERMAN FLIES TO TCM AND DVD

Turner Classic Movies will begin airing both Columbia Superman serials on October 28. Chapter 1-5 of "Superman" ('48) will be broadcast Saturday morning October 28, followed by Ch. 6-10 on November 4 and Ch. 11-15 on Nov. 11. These will be followed in November by "Atom Man Vs. Superman" ('50), four chapters per week.



More importantly, both serials will be available December 2 in a four disc DVD boxset, "Superman: The Theatrical Serials Collection". Extra featurettes have been added. Price is \$27.99 on <www.amazon.com> or \$31.99 from <www.serialsquadron.com>, 440 S. State St., G6 (SR), Newtown, PA 18940.

"Sign of the Wolf", an independent 1931 Metropolitan serial starring Rex Lease and Virginia Brown Faire, has been restored for DVD release by The Serial Squadron. Here's what they have to say about the restoration. "It appears at first glance to be primitive due mostly to its hissy soundtrack and complete lack of music in its original form. Existing film prints are also cropped a little too closely, and printed sometimes with sloppy focus. I decided to pull together all the restoration techniques I have



access to and, to my delight, they all worked very well. The new "Sign of the Wolf" DVD is perhaps the best example of what a difference a digital transfer and currently available video and audio enhancements can do to breathe some life back into a borderline serial. Picture and sound quality mean *everything* to this production. The excellent quality digital transfer and cleanup on this new version makes viewing the chapterplay a completely different experience. Noise reduction has eliminated sound hiss on the track.

Very slightly letterboxing the picture and bringing it downward a little allows tops of heads to be seen and handwritten notes and chapter summaries to be readable on your



Joe Bonomo, Virginia Brown Faire and Rex Lease prepare for more "Sign of the Wolf" action.

TV screen. A warm (sepia) tone on the western scenes makes them more inviting, and an optional cliffhanger music track on the DVD allows the viewer the option to enjoy the action scenes at the beginnings and ends of chapters with the feeling they are more exciting. Purists can also choose to watch the chapters with the original music-free soundtrack by selecting an alternate menu on the DVD." From our point of view, purists will notice the opening credits and soundtrack music to the serial have been re-imagined, otherwise the enhanced picture quality of this rather dated serial has been greatly improved. I personally enjoy "Sign of the Wolf" without the optional music track so I may better hear all the footsteps, hoofbeats, creaks and cracks of an early '30s production that the optional music otherwise obliterates. We also must mention an annoying "butterfly" imperfection prevalent on the original film print that was "regrettably unfixable" in Ch. 3, 4. Currently, the sale price is \$12.95 at <www.serialsquadron.com> but will eventually revert to \$19.95. Reprinted here is our review of "Sign of the Wolf" from Chuck Anderson's The Old Corral website <www.b-westerns.com> "With all its low budget deficiencies,

including plot holes you can drive an 18-wheeler through, 'Sign of the Wolf', Metropolitan's only attempt at a serial, weaves an odd fascination. For

one thing, it's the only film I've every encountered where a man talks to a dog on the phone—and the dog understands! The window repair man must have loved this serial, there are more notes thrown or blow-gunned through windows in this picture than any I've ever seen! Unbelievable but intriguing plot (from writers Betty Burbridge and Karl Krusada) brings forth two radioactive chains capable of transforming simple sand into precious jewels. The chains are stolen by explorer Harry Todd (whose scenery chewing must be seen to be believed) in the Himalayas of India. Escaping with the purloined chains back to the frontier west, Todd brings along a sacred puppy whose breed is the sign of the wolf; "Dog true to you always" intones it's seller. For years Todd is sought by the high priest guardian of the jewels, Prince Kuva (Ed Cobb), who eventually locates Todd and his daughter, Virginia Brown Faire, and the dog, now named King. A band of outlaws (Al Ferguson, former silent stars Jack Mower and Jack Perrin, along with Robert Walker) learn of the chains and for 10 chapters attempt to procure the precious secret for themselves. Fortunately, they are constantly driven back by Virginia's friends, Rex Lease and strapping strongman Joe Bonomo."

A reproduction of the one sheet to Ch. 1, "Heigh Yo, Silver", from Republic's "Lone Ranger" '38 serial is emblazoned on a T-shirt available from Characters Catalog. 100%

cotton. Specify S, M, L or XL. \$24.95. Item #51-8764. (877) 621-4396. <www.characters.com> 1600 W. Jackson St., Ozark, MO 65721.



"AROUND THE WORLD IN 18 DAYS"

by Steve Joyce

My first reaction after researching this lost 1922-'23 12-part chapterplay is that a chance was missed to cash in on the altered title of this classic 1873 Jules Verne tale of Phileas Fogg and his journeys. What would have been more natural than to extend things out for another 6 episodes and keep the theater seats filled? Still, "Around the World in 18 Days" was longer than any prior silent in which our Mr. Fogg appeared; they were all mere features. The first of these reportedly was imported into the States

from Germany back in 1914, "Round the World in 80 Days". A year later, in the entertaining Italian movie "Saturnino Farandola", the title character battles Phileas Fogg in a race around the world. In another German film, "Die Reise um die Erde in 80 Tagen" ('19), Conrad Veidt as Fogg circled the globe not once but twice. The impetus for plenty of action was ready-made in the Verne yarn. Almost every method of locomotion was utilized in an effort to provide spills and thrills in this serialized modernization: steamer, airplane, hydroplane, parachute, motorcycle, automobile, railroad handcar, launch, submarine, sea-glider, camel, horse, rickshaw, balloon, train, and, in the hectic finale, even a racing car. Of course, in so doing, the tale itself was updated a bit for serialization; it's now Fogg's grandson (played by William Desmond) that's the main protagonist. Here's the Library of Congress copyright synopsis to start



off our summary of the revised storyline: "Phileas Fogg, III, grandson of the immortal hero of Jules Verne's classic 'Around the World in 80 Days', arrived home from abroad, in love with Madge Harlow [Laura La Plante]. Jiggs his valet is with him as they arrive. At Madge's home, her father, Matthew Harlow, president of a petroleum [company] is holding a directors meet-

ing. He tells the directors he's arranged to buy the Oliver process for manufacturing synthetic fuel, a boon to mankind. His plan is opposed by Wallace Brenton, his vice-president. Harlow, however, says he will get the proxies from foreign stockholders and vote the plan." From there, it's up to the young Fogg to make good on Harlow's promise. The stakes are raised as Fogg bets Brenton \$100,000 he can make the deadline which is only 18 days away. As to be expected, the villainous Brenton and his henchmen try to thwart Fogg (with Madge and Jiggs who tag along) every step of the way. The first stop is London. Phil obtains the proxies, however, not without some hair-raising escapes from a police force that has been lied to by Brenton. It's then off to Paris with the second set of proxies procured at the cost of a boat wreck, some fisticuffs, a fall through a trap door and a little bribery. Next up is Monte Carlo where the third stockholder has gambled away his securities. Our hero not only wins them back but helps rescue Madge from a flaming tower. Constantinople is the fourth leg of the trip where a wealthy merchant, Abdul Hamid, is a proxy holder. The adventure continues with some strange events: the group escapes the Italian army, Madge is captured and replaces Abdul's daughter as a planned sacrifice and Phil is stranded in the desert. But Jiggs rescues Phil, Madge lifts the proxies, Phil gets the Maharajah to pardon Madge and the journey continues on to Dehli, then Shangai. The LOC records at this point are slightly damaged but we can make out that Phil has to battle the evil Dragon Tong Society to wrest the next proxy from its owner...Fong Do. Another proxy is obtained on the way to Tokyo as Fogg gets a chance

to demonstrate a sample of the synthetic fuel against some foreign spies. Honolulu yields yet another proxy, has Brenton being almost eaten by cannibals and features an encounter with an exploding volcano. The trail leads onward to San Francisco and L.A. to meet up with the last stockholder. A mad dash to the finish line in New York ends with success. Phileas Fogg III triumphantly arrives in the nick of time. These are only brief highlights of the action in what appears to have been a fun silent serial. As was typical, trade journal reviews concentrated on the first few chapters (in which, of course, the film-makers were putting their best foot forward to generate interest). Still, reviews in both the States and England were favorable. In commenting on episodes 1 thru 3, MOVING PICTURE WORLD tells us: "Spectacular action is perhaps its most popular merit but it's not the only one. The story is far more acceptable than the type which frequently accompanies the chapter-thriller and the performances have been directed with an end toward pleasing the more discriminating." BIOSCOPE informed British readers: "Judging by the three chapters trade shown, this serial is well acted, full of thrills, convincingly produced, and admirably photographed. The story is one that lends itself unusually well to serial treatment."

Hey! Here's Your Chance
LASTS 60
AROUND THE WORLD IN 18 DAYS
WITH
WILLIAM-DESMOND
HE STARTS TUESDAY, DECEMBER 15th
Say: This At and ONE DIME WITH Admission Extra.
Dec. 15th. Presents it at Box Office
THE LIBERTY THEATRE



CLIFFHANGER COMMENTARY

by Bruce Dettman

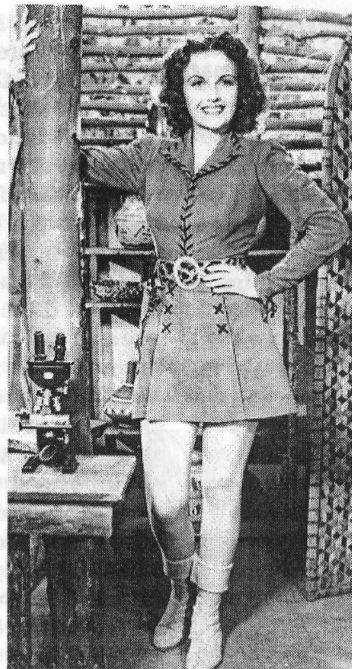
Sex is generally a relatively benign quantity in classic cliffhangers. Pretty girls are an active and much necessary ingredient of the formula, some occasionally decked out in fairly suggestive and exotic outfits, but with few exceptions most of the distaff side are showcased not as main courses, but rather as ornamen-



tal side dishes ready to be served up as possible victims to a river of molten lava, a plunge from a mountain top or an uncomfortable brush with a buzz saw. Ironically, it was the women in the early days of cinema that really got the motion picture serial up and running. There was Pauline, Helen, Elaine, and other damsels in distress, and sometimes they gave as good as they got. It took

the ladies a bit longer to get a foothold in talkie serials with early players being little more than attractive window dressing. Things began to change, much for the better, with some cliffhangers that suddenly exploited the female sex and pushed them to the forefront of the action. Moreover, the exotic femme fatale of far off locals, personified in mainstream films by such appealing actresses as Dorothy Lamour, Maria Montez, Yvonne De Carlo and others, had become very popular with the public and good for the boxoffice as well. One of the most important cliffhangers promoting this shift in format was Republic's "Jungle Girl" ('41), directed by William Witney and John English and starring lovely Frances Gifford in the title role. "Jungle Girl" was based on the 1929 Edgar Rice Burroughs novel of the same name but had little, if anything, to do with the original plotline. Republic was even responsible for the name Nyoka Meredith, a factor which would figure in copyright issues when the studio decided to make a sequel. Ms. Gifford invests what is a fairly one-dimensional part with enormous energy and sincerity. The plot devised by writers Alfred Batson, Ronald Davidson, Norman Hall, William Lively, Joseph Pollard and Joseph O'Donnell has Nyoka living with her father, Dr. John Meredith, in Africa, the latter having decided to distance himself from society due to the criminal activities of his twin brother Bradley (both portrayed by Trevor Bardette). He raises Nyoka in the jungle and is looked upon with a reverence bordering on worship by the local natives for his medical knowledge. They have even allowed him to be privy to their hidden stash of diamonds. Only Shamba the witch doctor and his followers view the doc-

tor with disfavor. When Meredith's twin, in league with a nefarious cohort named Slick Latimer (Gerald Mohr), learns of the diamonds they lure Dr. Meredith away, murder him and replace him with his brother whose physical resemblance initially fools everyone, even Nyoka. The remainder of the serial is spent with the jungle girl aided by aviators Jack Stanley (Tom Neal) and Curly Rogers (Eddie Acuff) tangling with all these various individuals as the culprits try to find a means to steal the gems. Despite director Witney maintaining it to be one of their team's best directorial efforts—and to this day it maintains a substantial reputation among serial aficionados—"Jungle Girl" is a bit on the creaky side and not nearly the celluloid romp that distinguishes its aforementioned follow-up, "Perils of Nyoka" starring Kay Aldridge as Nyoka (though with the different last name of Gordon). Although "Jungle Girl" was released only a year or so before "Perils", it has a decidedly older, less polished and streamlined look and feel to it. Its legacy, to a large degree, is due to the casting of Gifford, a one-time Paramount contract player who was beautiful, athletic and undeniably sexy in her form-fitting jungle duds. Apparently just being raised in the jungle has taught Nyoka not only how to swing through trees, but incredibly (and not very believably) how to single-handedly best a lion and alligator, a good thing because Neal and Acuff are rarely of great help during these



wildlife wrestling sessions although, to give them credit, they do help her out of some tight fixes, too many of which have to do with fire. A few of the cliffhangers are also not thought out or that well executed. Particularly coming to mind is a sequence on a teetering log. In the more strenuous and demanding action sequences stuntwoman Helen Thurston did the doubling for Gifford. Dave Sharpe, donning wig and jungle skirt, was responsible for the remarkable tree swinging sequences many of which put similar Johnny Weissmuller/Tarzan scenes to shame. The supporting cast is a mixed bag. The lead villain is the always dependable Gerald Mohr with Frank Lackteen as native bad guy Shamba and the always reliable Trevor Bardette effective as both Nyoka's principled father and his back-stabbing twin. Real-life bad boy Tom Neal, who several years later nearly killed fellow actor Franchot Tone with his fists and eventually ended up in prison on manslaughter charges, is handsome and rugged as main hero Jack and handles himself well in the action sequences, but when he opens his mouth comes across as a real blockhead. Sidekick Eddie Acuff tries too hard to be funny with all his asides and mutterings but, well, just isn't. Even by serial standards these guys don't seem very bright. Tommy Cook, later Little Beaver in "Adventures of Red Ryder" and who also showed up in "Tarzan and the Leopard Woman" where he tangled with Johnny Sheffield's



"Boy", was always one of Hollywood's more obnoxious child actors and doesn't change his ways here as native boy Kimbu. Also seen are Emil Horne in his familiar gorilla outfit, Jay Silverheels, a few years away from gaining media immortality as Tonto to Clayton Moore's Lone Ranger, as one of the natives, plus old familiars Bud Geary, Ken Terrell and Al Taylor. The serial was filmed at various California locals and looks about as much like Africa as Brooklyn looks like Hawaii which, I suppose, is appropriate since the natives appear more as tropical islanders than Africans. In nearly every scene, set against those rocky crannies and dusty trails at Iverson Ranch usually featured in Republic's western productions, you wouldn't be surprised to suddenly see Roy Rogers or Wild Bill Elliott on horseback tearing around the corner. "Jungle Girl", while trendsetting in many ways, does not, for various reasons hold up as well as some of Republic's other famous serials of the period. While there are pleasing performances and some good action sequences, there is something faintly disjointed and awkward about the execution of the plotline as well as some jarring editing and unimaginative photography

that combine to render it more shopworn and beleaguered by age than it should be, given the freshness of other Republic products of the same period. All the same, for all of this there is—and always will be—the lovely, talented Frances Gifford.

CLASSIFIED ADS

(10¢ a word, Address on cover)

We are pleased to announce **FEATURE PLAYERS: STORIES BEHIND THE FACES, VOLUME FOUR** is now available. Once again we include 40 performers based on personal interviews. Each performer talks of their experiences in front of and behind the camera, why they became interested in acting and how they broke into the business. Many also talk of the stars they worked with. Those included are Richard Anderson, Luke Askew, Billy Benedict, William Campbell, Robert Cornthwaite, John Crawford, Robert Donner, Robert Douglas, Sam Edwards, Robert Emhardt, Evelyn Finley, Leo Gordon, Dabbs Greer, Kevin Hagen, Alan Hale Jr., Joe Haworth, Keith Larsen, Norman Leavitt, James Lydon, Sean McClory, Peggy Moran, Lori Nelson, Edward Norris, Dan O'Herlihy, Michael Pate, Mala Powers, Rita Quigley, Ric Roman, Gene Rutherford, Peggy Stewart, Steve Terrell, Ruth Terry, Russell Wade, David Warner, Peggy Webber, Jacqueline White, Scott Wilson, and H.M. Wynant. We also talked to the sons of Ed Begley and Frank M. Thomas about their fathers. Spiralbound price is \$24.95 (plus \$4.05 postage USA, \$7 for Canada and Mexico, \$9 for other countries.) Volumes Two and Three are still available at \$10 each plus \$4.05 postage. Our other book, **GROWING UP ON THE SET**, based on 40 personal interviews with former child actors, is available through MacFarland in Jefferson, NC, or on <amazon.com> For reserving your copy of Volume Four of **FEATURE PLAYERS**, please send check or money order to Tom or Jim Goldrup, 505 Coon Hts. Road, Ben Lomond, CA 95005.





SERIAL HEAVIES

Christen Klitgaard was a henchman mainstay at Columbia in the '40s. "Who?" you say. Perhaps you better know the smallish but stocky henchie as Kit Guard. Born May 5, 1894, in Hals, Hjørring, Denmark, to Jens Christian Bondrop Klitgaard and Thyra Eurcka (or Eureka) Klitgaard, he was one of nine children. Oddly, the surname of his mother (who was from Ireland but of Danish descent) was the same as his



Kit Guard (right) as Dinky Stowe, issues a few orders to other henchmen (l-r) Constantine Romanoff, Chuck Hamilton, Eddie Polo, Al Ferguson and Jack Ingram who have (once again) captured beautiful Iris Meredith and her father Forrest Taylor in "The Green Archer".

father's. How and when the family immigrated from Denmark to British Columbia is not known, but the family arrived from Victoria, B.C., in San Francisco on the steamship Queen on April 9, 1902, Christen was nearly 8. His father was listed as a farmer. By 1910 at 16, Christen was employed as an office boy at a San Francisco legal firm. A naturalized citizen, for his WWI draft registration in June 1917, at 23, Christen listed his height as 5' 9" with blue eyes and brown hair. By then he was married

and living in New York City working as a blacksmith. On his draft registration he stated he'd previously been a bugler for the Coast Artillery of the 3rd National Guard in California. What brought him to acting is unknown but his first film was in New York in 1917, "The Better Role". His next credited role isn't until 1920, with numerous credits beginning as he became established in 1924. In all, Kit Guard is credited in over 55 silents, many of them two-reelers with Alberta Vaughn. Now 36, as sound came in, Kit was cast in doz-

ens of B-films in all sorts of mug-type roles from henchmen to bartenders, truck drivers to fight handlers, waiters to sailors, convicts to cabbies. From 1930 to 1957 Kit made over 215 movies, with his first serial role as a henchman in "Radio Patrol" ('32). He can also be seen in "Dick Tracy" ('37), "S.O.S. Coastguard" ('37) and "Haunted Harbor" ('44), all at Republic. In the late '30s on through the '40s he found a serial-home at Columbia, being featured as various henchmen in at least 15 Co-

lumbia cliffhangers starting with "The Spider's Web" ('38). Perhaps his most visible henchies are in "The Shadow" ('40), "Terry and the Pirates" ('40), and "The Green Archer" ('40). Others were: "Flying G-Men" ('39), "Mandrake the Magician" ('39), "Deadwood Dick" ('40), "White Eagle" ('41), "Secret Code" ('42), "Valley of Vanishing Men" ('42), "Black Arrow" ('44), "Monster and the Ape" ('45), "Son of the Guardsman" ('46), "Atom Man Vs. Superman" ('50) and lastly, "Riding with Buffalo Bill" ('54). By the '50s, in feature films, his roles were pretty much relegated to glorified extras (barfly, spectator, stagehand, miner, townsman, etc.). He last worked (as a doorman) in Frank Sinatra's "The Joker is Wild" ('57). One of director James Horne's favorite henchmen at Columbia died July 18, 1961, of cancer in Woodland Hills, CA, and is buried in Valhalla Memorial Park. (Thanks for research to Evy Patrick.)



COLUMBIA CLIFFHANGER CASTS



Chapter 3
of the action-thrilling serial hit
CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT
Based upon the radio serial "Captain Midnight"
Actor **Character**
A COLUMBIA CHAPTER PLAY

Dave O'Brien	Capt. Albright (Capt. Midnight)
Dorothy Short	Joyce Edwards
James Craven	Ivan Shark
Sam Edwards	Chuck Ramsey
Guy Wilkerson	Ichabod Mudd
Bryant Washburn	John Edwards
Luana Walters	Fury Shark
Joe Girard	Major Steel
Ray Teal	Borgman
George Pembroke	Dr. James Jordan
Charles Hamilton	Martel

Al Ferguson	Gardo
Charles Sullivan	Slick
Frank Marlo	Morton
Roger Clark	Lt. Clark
Lee Shumway	G-Man Burns
Franklyn Farnum	G-Man Allen
Dick Bottiller	Krause (Ch. 1)
Ed Peil Sr.	Fang
Ted Mapes	Slim
Charles Sherlock	Spotter
Carl Knowles	Constable Jason (Ch. 9, 10)
Kernan Cripps	Military Radio Operator (Ch. 1)
Michael Vallon	Airport Radio Operator (Ch. 1)
Jack Richardson	Tony—Cabin Thug (Ch. 2)
??	Motorcycle Cop (Ch. 2)
??	Gat—Mechanic Heavy (Ch. 2, 4, 10)
Jack Perrin	Police Officer (Ch. 4)
Belle Mitchell	Miss Gray—Nurse (Ch. 5, 10)
George Magril	Red (Ch. 5-7)
Eddie Polo	Ned (Ch. 6)
??	Ed (Ch. 6)
Slim Whitaker	Patrolman #1 (Ch. 7, 8, 11, 15)
??	Jim, Patrolman #2 (Ch. 7, 8, 11, 15)
Al Rhein	Henchman Prisoner (Ch. 10)
??	Farmer (Ch. 10)
??	Gas Station At- tendant (Ch. 10)
Bud Wiser	Charlie—Hospital Guard (Ch. 10)
??	Cab Driver (Ch. 11)
John Elliott	Police Chief (Ch. 11, 15)
Al Herman	G-Man Walter (Ch. 12, 14)
Charles McMurphy	Police Guard #1 (Ch. 13)
??	Police Guard #2 (Ch. 13)
Lew Sargent	Truck Driver (Ch. 14)
Warren Jackson	Plane Mechanic (Ch. 15)

(Cast compiled by Hal Polk.)

Director James W. Horne's next to last serial has a slight plot, some good airplane miniature work at times and Horne's trademark over-the-top exaggerated body movements and expressions forced on the actors by his direction. But it's all 15 chapters of fast, furious fun and excitement with heroic Dave O'Brien as a dauntless Captain Midnight. One crazy plot angle of the '42 serial has villain Ivan Shark (James Craven) as a master of disguise. With a little face putty he becomes a doctor, an inspector, Major Steel and even Capt. Midnight! This device lets various actors portray Shark with their voice often dubbed by Craven. So—of course—Capt. Midnight uses some face putty to become Ivan Shark, allowing Craven to play Midnight. Based on the radio serial which began on WGN, Chicago, Oct. 17, 1939 (later airing on Mutual from '40 through '49), most of the well-known radio characters were utilized in the serial—Chuck Ramsey, Ichabod Mudd, Joyce (with a last name switch from Ryan to Edwards for serial plot purposes), Ivan Shark, his daughter Fury, and Shark's oriental assistant Fang (wasted in the serial, as well as miscast as played by Ed Peil Sr.). Incidentally, the Fawcett comic book of "Captain Midnight" began in Sept. '42 after the Captain appeared briefly in Dell's THE FUNNIES for 7 issues and POPULAR COMICS for 3 issues in '41. A later TV version with Richard Webb was quite far removed from the original character. Researcher Hal Polk notes one of the best things about many Columbia serials was that they gave meatier roles to players who would have only a line or two in Universal or Republic

chapterplays. At Columbia, Charles Sullivan, Charles Hamilton, Lee Shumway, Al Ferguson, Franklin Farnum and others all have an opportunity. For instance, Sullivan gets his biggest serial role ever as Slick, showing his comic flair. When captured by Midnight he utters, "You'll learn nothin' from me—I'm as dumb as they come!" Special notice goes to character player Ray Teal, Shark's chief henchman, who became a versatile, in-demand character actor during his long career, escaping the "B" fate of bits and extra work that befell many "badmen". Young Roger Clark was one of Columbia's promising young contract players who disappeared



Captain Midnight (O'Brien) finally gets a hold on Ivan Shark (James Craven).

after a string of films from '41-'45. (Not to be confused with other actors who later used the same name.) Frank Marlo was a stuntman/actor throughout the '40s, also appearing in "Capt. Marvel", "Chick Carter, Detective", "Jack Armstrong" and "The Vigilante". (Not to be confused with prominent actor Frank Marlowe—also in "Capt. Marvel".) Dorothy Short was married to O'Brien at the time of this serial. They wed in '36 but were divorced in '54.

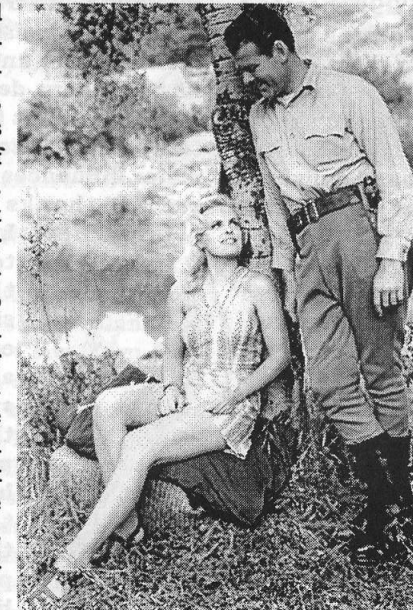


WORTH ANOTHER LOOK

by Ken Weiss

The term "genre" has been studied, analyzed, written about and examined from dozens of angles. But nothing I've read bothers to mention (or even notice) that sound serials occupy a unique position among genres. They're the only major-theater-exhibited genre produced almost exclusively by B or poverty row studios. (The single exception being RKO, which released one serial, "The Last Frontier" in '32.) Like other genres, serials had their sub-categories: westerns, sci-fis, jungle epics, etc., but serials alone, because of their genre limits, could not adapt certain other genres. For example, there's no such thing as a "musical serial" or a "comedy serial". No other genre demonstrated such limitations. Think about it. There have been western, sci-fi, horror and mystery musicals. Every other genre has been or could be morphed into a musical or a comedy for endless variety. But not serials, seemingly by definition. Sure, most serials have comic elements, usually in the form of a sidekick. (I find most "comedy relief" painful.) And there are some serials that inserted musical numbers, like "Mystery of the Riverboat" which features

a few songs by Marion Martin, or "Chick Carter, Detective", with Julie Gibson's number, "I'm Gonna Roll Me a Snowball". Western serials got into the act, too, with cowboy singer guitar vocals now and then. In a saloon scene in "Sign of the Wolf", for no particular reason, an unnamed blonde gets up and does an impromptu solo shimmy dance with piano accompaniment (and very well, too). But the formulaic need for a certain amount of fights and cliffhanger situations in each episode seems to preclude a musical or comedy serial. But is that really true? Theoretically there's no reason why a comedy or musical serial couldn't



Don McGuire and Cleo Moore seem to have another kind of action in mind in "Congo Bill" ('48).

be made. Among feature films there have been any number of mystery-suspense comedies: think "Mark of the Vampire", "The Gorilla", or Harold Lloyd. It's not beyond the imagination to picture an appealing comic hero as the star of a serial. It's too bad no one tried. Musicals are something else. I can't think of a way to meld musicals with serials: the requisites for each seem to contradict each other. (I'm coming up blank trying to think of a mystery feature film that combined both music and genuine suspense. Can you think of any? 1943's "Phantom of the Opera" or the latest version?) It's not as if the serial genre had always been particularly suspenseful. Back in the silent days, the first serials were aimed at women, and involved

romance as much as action. The very first, "What Happened to Mary?" (1912) was based on a series in McClure's LADIES WORLD. Each episode (as all SR readers know) was a complete story, as was the case with "Letters to Beatrice Fairfax" ('16), which also strongly incorporated romantic themes. Most of the early serials were for and about women. As serials developed and were discovered by males (especially young ones) the themes became more action oriented to accommodate the new audience. But even by the late '20s and early '30s, romantic "grown-up" elements were still showing up in serials. In "Tarzan the Tiger" ('29) there's a nude bathing scene during which Jane's (Natalie Kingston) bare breasts are prominently featured. Tarzan is watching her, and she invites him to join her. (The scene must have astounded and delighted all the pre-adolescent boys in the

audience.) Even into the '30s, shreds of romance persisted. In "Heroes of the West" ('32) Onslow Stevens is constantly courting Diane Duval in romantic moonlight trysts, even managing to steal a brookside kiss (right). In "Tailspin Tommy" ('34) Maurice Murphy



and Patricia Farr spend a lot of time sweet-talking each other, and in "Queen of the Jungle" ('35) Reed Howes has a good time teaching Mary Kornman what "kiss" means. But throughout the '30s, serials became more and more action packed and male oriented. Eventually, grown-up themes were dropped altogether and by the '40s the genre

was completely geared to young males. Women were more or less eased out of the market. In the '40s, when I was a pre-teener enjoying serials at my local theater's Saturday morning kiddy shows, there were relatively few females in attendance. Whether this was due to the content of the serials or the obnoxious rowdy behavior of us boys, I do not know. Today, even among those who are movie buffs, for the most part women don't seem to be serial enthusiasts. As a genre, serials were always the runt of the litter, scorned by the majors and designated an embarrassing last-ditch payday for previously major performers. So it's particularly gratifying and ironic that the lowly serial has—I insist—had more impact on films than any other film genre. All the others, despite the influence of specific films (like "Birth of a Nation" and "Citizen Kane"), were not major influences on each other. But serials, thanks to Spielberg and

Lucas, have set the tone for almost all the action films since the '80s. "Raiders of the Lost Ark" and "Star Wars," inspired by serials as their directors have proudly proclaimed, have set the tone for the adventure/thriller movies of the past 25 years. Films like "Superman Returns" and TV shows

like "24" and "Prison Break" embrace the serial esthetic and seem little more than compilations of one cliffhanger situation after another. As I've said on other occasions, serials have been dead and buried for over 50 years, but their influence has never been stronger. What other genre can you say that about? Stand proud, serial lovers!



The evil Claw menaces Derelys Perdue in Ch. 6 of Universal's 10 chapter "Mystery Rider" ('28).

In the "Mystery Rider", heroine Derelys Perdue's father finds a method for producing rubber from the sap of the mesquite plant but he is killed by The Claw (Tom London), a man with a deformed, claw-like hand, but not before confiding the formula to his daughter. Perdue's fiance, William Desmond, is secretly the Mystery Rider who fights to protect her from The Claw and his gang. William Desmond was Universal's leading serial hero, starring in 12 silent chapterplays, the most famous of which was "The Riddle Rider" ('24). Born January 23, 1878, in Dublin, Ireland, he came with his family to New York when he was one, thus giving rise to some theories he was born there. Graduating high school, he entered Vaudeville then gained experience in various stock companies. Having worked his way to L. A. by 1904-'05, he spent five-six years with the

Grand Opera House Stock Company. In 1912 Bill and his wife went on a tour of Australia that lasted two years. During the tour his wife suffered an accident that led to her death in 1917. Upon his return, the 5' 11" muscular actor entered motion pictures in 1914, quickly becoming a matinee idol. He'd remarried in 1919 to Mary McIvor, an actress at Triangle...she was 18, he was 41. She died in '41 at only 40. After making several westerns for Triangle and others, his real fame came when he signed with Universal in '22 where his first serial was "Perils of the Yukon". His 12 serials at Universal co-starred some of the top leading ladies of the day—Helen Holmes, Laura La Plante, Louise Lorraine, Grace Cunard and Eileen Sedgewick. As sound came, Desmond, now 52, turned to character work, including appearances (some quite brief) in 22 serials

through 1940. His last role was in Robert Young's excellent "Relentless" ('48 Columbia). Desmond died in L.A. the following year on November 3, 1949, at 71. Not all Desmond's serial leading ladies were top stars. The heroine of "The Mystery Rider", Derelys Perdue, a Wampas Baby Star of 1923, had an undistinguished career. The 5' 2" actress was born in Illinois in 1902 and entered films as a dancer in '21. In '22 she was featured in the Grace Darmond/Philo McCullough WB serial, "A Dangerous Adventure". She also co-starred in a series of Newlyweds two-reel comedies (w/Jack Egan), made about four low-budget silent westerns with Neal Hart, Fred Humes, Ted Wells and Bob Curwood, then left the screen in '29. She died Sept. 30, 1989, in L.A.

SERIAL QUOTES

William Witney (director): "We were looking for someone to say the 'Hi yo Silver' to be used in the Lone Ranger serial. We started with five actors who were to read a page of dialogue starting with five yells of 'Hi yo Silver. Away!' One by one I stood them up on the rocks, so the sound man could give them a little reverberation or echo. Then they read the dialogue. When the casting director got to the last one, whose name was Billy Bletcher, I did a double take. Billy was about five-foot two and probably topped 200 pounds. I looked at the sound man. He wouldn't look up at me, and I knew why, to keep from laughing. When Billy cut loose 'Hi yo Silver. Away!' it practically lifted off his headset and echoed across the valley for what seemed like five minutes. He had a deep voice that was just what we were looking for. Later, whenever the Lone Ranger had something to say on the screen, I looked at the tall handsome actor playing the part, but my mind would picture little fat Billy."



EPISODES

by Tom and Jim Goldrup

Gregg Barton, born June 5, 1912, in Long Island, N.Y., decided to go west to California in 1939. "California was greener and brighter," Gregg told us. "Everybody back east wanted to come here, so I headed out too." He arrived in L.A. having no particular career in mind and so worked at any job that came his way. "I j u s t stumbled into the picture business," Gregg remembers, "by meeting a friend who asked me to take them to a party at some house in Beverly Hills." The house turned out to be the home of Bill Grady, head of casting at MGM, who asked Gregg if he'd like to be in pictures. "Well, I'd like to be," Gregg answered, "but how do you get in?" Grady invited him to come to the studio, gave him a screen test and put him through their school. Gregg landed his first role playing a football coach in MGM's "A Yank at Eton" with Mickey Rooney and Freddie Bartholomew. "I did a little thing in that which got me acquainted with David Miller who was directing a film at Republic with John Wayne, "Flying Tigers". The day after completing his work in the Wayne feature he was called into the Marine Corps and served in World War II as a Tank Commander with the 5th Tank Battalion of the 5th Marine Division in the Pacific. Gregg took part in the invasion of Iwo Jima, and for his heroism in that battle received the Silver Star medal



on February 25, 1945. Upon arriving home in California, Gregg returned to the picture business and was hired to play the lead heavy in "West to Glory" with Eddie Dean, thus beginning his long career as a western badman. Gregg worked with cowboy stars such as Johnny Mack Brown, Whip Wilson, Charles Starrett, Allan Lane, and in no less than 11 features with Gene Autry. In "Man From God's Country" he co-starred with George Montgomery and had a long speech in a courtroom scene. "That was a good one for me," he commented. "I did several westerns with Jimmy Stewart." Gregg has also appeared in many non-westerns opposite such stars as John Wayne, Ingrid Bergman, Clark Gable, Gregory Peck and Anthony Quinn. Working on the Autry films, Gregg became close friends with Armand "Mandy" Schaefer, Gene's producer at his Flying A Productions ("Gene Autry", "Range Rider", "Annie Oakley", "Buffalo Bill Jr.") "Mandy," Gregg expressed, "steered me very nicely and I'll be forever indebted to him." Gregg explained they had a stock company on these shows of directors like George Archainbaud and John English; and actors like Myron Healey, Terry Frost, and Denver Pyle. "The whole bunch of us worked together, maybe two of us would be on one show, three on another; but it was always the same clan and we were all kept very busy and delightfully so." Gregg worked in four serials during the final days of those great Saturday matinee escapes for theatergoers: "Gunfighters of the Northwest"; "Riding with Buffalo Bill"; "Man with the Steel Whip", and the final serial ever made, "Blazing the Overland Trail". Although

Gregg more often than not played the heavy, in this final serial he played the role of Captain Carter, one of the heroes alongside Lee Roberts and Dennis Moore who were out to smash the criminal activities of Don Harvey and his cohorts. For many years, in between his TV and motion picture work, Gregg managed a 1,600 acre cattle ranch at Bonsail, CA. "It was a beautiful life. It also afforded me the opportunity to run up there and make a picture occasionally and keep my foot in." Gregg later worked 22 years for Safeco Title Insurance where he was the top sales representative in Southern California. When people asked him if he'd really worked in cowboy movies, Gregg facetiously answers, "Yeah, I've been knocked on my rear by every western star, including Annie Oakley. When the price is right, I'll let anyone knock me down." In August of 2000, Gregg, along with fellow actors Walter Reed, House Peters Jr. and Myron Healey, was honored with a Golden Boot Award for his many years as a western bad man. All four of these actors also worked in serials. Gregg died November 28, 2000, in Fallbrook, CA.



Walter Reed, Myron Healey, Gregg Barton, House Peters Jr. at the Golden Boot Awards (8/2000).

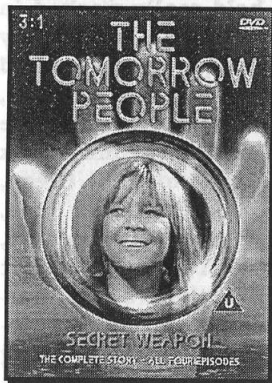
SERIAL BOO BOOS

In Ch. 11 of "Son of Zorro" as George Turner walks into Tom London's store, Tom says, "Hiya, Jeff" (Turner's screen character) while Ed Cobb says, "Hello, George."

THE OLD ONES AND THE NEW ONES

by Jim Stringham

Since last time, A&E has issued some very early "The Avengers" and two more collections, six seasons, of "The Tomorrow People" television serials. That adds another 16 serials, 43 episodes, leading up to the end of the original program in '79. A bonus disc includes a '97 documentary on the series, and interviews with some of the people involved. "The Secret Weapon" begins the



new season with Colonel Masters, of a British Intelligence agency, determined to make one of the Tomorrow People that secret weapon. In "Worlds Away" (below) the Galactic Federation needs the help of the People. The Vishtakers are a race with a taste for humanoid protein. They can negate the mental powers of their enemies, frustrating Federation agents. Now, they threaten the



people of the Peeri world. The Tomorrow People, who had lived without those powers for many years, may be able to thwart

them. "A Man for Emily" (right) is broad farce. Survivors of a destroyed, female dominated, world reach earth seeking supplies. Studying our ways from TV broadcasts, they base their opinions on old westerns. The first one beams down "inconspicuously" in jeans, Stetson, and two six guns. Three very suspenseful episodes told of "The Revenge of Jedikiah" when a mummy in an Egyptian tomb came to life and took the form of an archeologist. The shape-changing robot was back...seeking revenge on the Tomorrow People after 10,000 years. It took the appearance, and memories, of person after person, moving ever closer to its prey. Colonel Masters was murdered. His telepathic assistant, Tricia Conway, (right) now joined with the Tomorrow People to try and stop the killer robot, never knowing who it might be. A new, emerging tomorrow person, Mike, took center stage for "One Law". His first power, the ability to "think" open any lock, caught the attention of local criminals. Eventually, he was unwillingly enlisted into the services of Lord Dunning, the honored and unsuspected Mr. Big of organized crime. The Tomorrow People reached him, but remained unsure of his motives until the final moments of the last episode. A distress call from the edge of the galaxy alerted the people to the danger of

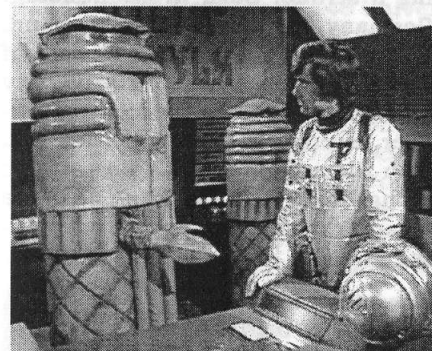


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new aliens being drawn "Into the Unknown". Factions warring for control of the planet Rigora were gathered onto a father ship, while the son of the legitimate ruler fled in a life craft. The people joined him, only to be drawn into an opening in the fabric of the universe. Next, the program began a long series of two



part stories. "War of the Empires" (above) was the four-parter which finished the original series. The Sorsons and the Thargons were determined to wipe out each other and anyone else who got in their way. Earth was between them. The protection of the Galactic Federation was a joke to everyone concerned. They would only talk, never act. When the Sorsons got here first, they offered the United States their weapons to fight their enemies for them. It didn't work. That left the Tomorrow People to protect us from a Thargon battle fleet without killing. The attackers found themselves trying to fight an illusionary force defending our world. ** Ever wonder what "The Avengers" were avenging? The series began with the murder of Peggy, secretary to Dr. David Keel (Ian Hendry) who was to marry him. The police could not help. a mysterious stranger, John Steed, offered assistance. We'll see more of him. Surviving scenes of that first episode, and some complete Keel/Steed adventures are fea-

ured in "The Avengers Bonus". A&E has also issued the first Cathy Gale (Honor Blackmon) stories from the '62 series. They're fun!

D'ja know:

David Bacon, revealed to be "The Masked Marvel" ('43 Republic), died in September 1943 after being stabbed in his car by a chance acquaintance or hitchhiker. Bacon, 29, the son of a former state senator and Lieut. Governor of Massachusetts, bled to death in a Venice, CA, bean field after being stabbed. After Bacon's small British automobile jumped the curb, he apparently staggered out of the car for 13 feet, attempting to get help, and collapsed. A man, Wayne Powell, saw him and ran to his side to help, asking "Who did it?" All Bacon said before he died was, "Help me, help me." A blue sweater, believed belonging to the killer, was found in his car but the murderer was never apprehended. Bacon's grandfather had been Ambassador to France. Bacon graduated from Harvard in '37. He was married to Greta Keller, a noted European concert singer who was due to give birth in January '44. Keller went into a state of shock and the baby was still-born about two weeks after Bacon's murder.

SERIAL CLIPPINGS

Lyle Talbot discusses his roles in "Atom Man Vs. Superman" and "Batman and Robin" (among other topics) in SCARLET STREET #55. \$8.95 plus \$2 postage. Box 604, Dept. 55-SR, Glen Rock, NJ 07452. Film



Forum's 'An Evening with Dick Moore and Jane Powell' in CLASSIC IMAGES #374 (8/06). Moore was "Cody of the Pony Express" at Columbia. ✂✂ Associated Press interview with Noel Neill and Jack Larson re their roles in the current "Superman Returns" ran in many newspapers in late June/early July.

✂✂ Silent serials recalled (by Mario De Marco) in GOOD OLD DAYS SPECIALS (9/06). ✂✂ The refurbishing of Griffith Observatory (SR Ch. 57), used as the underground kingdom of Murania in "Phantom Empire", detailed in L.A. DAILY NEWS (5/10). ✂✂ Favorite serial posters cover-featured in BIG REEL #387 (8/06). ✂✂ Lois ("Undersea Kingdom") Wilde's career painstakingly recorded in CLASSIC IMAGES #371 (5/06). ✂✂ Buck Jones' life recalled in the GARY (IN) POST-TRIBUNE (4/30). ✂✂ Brief piece lauding Davy Sharpe's "flying" skills in "Capt. Marvel" as opposed to the cartooned flying of Columbia's "Superman" serial in COMICS BUYERS' GUIDE #1622 (11/06). ✂✂ "Brick Bradford"—comic strip and serial—remembered by weekly online SCOOP newsletter (8/25 and 9/15). SCOOP articles are archived at <<http://scoop.diamondgalleries.com/>> ✂✂ Previously unpublished interview with Tommy Bond (Jimmy Olsen in Columbia's "Superman" serials) in FILMFX #111 (July-Sept. '06). There's also an 8 page article on Kirk Alyn. \$10 ppd., PO Box 1900, Evanston, IL 60204.

Cheat Endings!

In "Tex Granger", at the end of Ch. 12, the Rider is left hanging by his foot on a rope. But, in Ch. 13, he doesn't even get hung up on the rope—he just drops all the way to the ground.



CHAPTER 13

KURT KREUGER, 89, Ernst Muller in Republic's "Secret Service in Darkest Africa" ('43), died July 12 at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in L.A. following a stroke. Born in Michenberg, Germany, and raised in Switzerland, he attended the London School of Economics and Columbia University intending to pursue medicine. However, Kreuger's good looks led him into films in the '40s. Fed up with being stereotyped as a Nazi, he made a career in real estate and renovating houses.

B-western leading lady LOIS JANUARY, 93, died August 7 suffering from Alzheimer's disease. Born in McAllen, TX, the family soon moved to California. At the beginning of her career, Lois became a featured singer in the famous Rainbow Room in New York and appeared for four years on "Reveille Sweetheart" on CBS Radio. Other radio work followed until she signed with Universal in '33. After appearing in small roles there (including the "Tailspin Tommy" serial in '34), Universal loaned her out to make "Arizona Badman" with Reb Russell in '35. She went on to make a dozen other westerns. Later in life, Lois acquired a doctorate in metaphysics and hosted her own cable show.



SERIAL MAILBAG

Whoa! How did the following statement about George J. Lewis pass muster in your BEST OF THE BADMEN book? "He...became a serial mainstay at Republic and Columbia, following a part in

'Gangbusters' ('42), his only Universal serial." George had a featured role as one of Lionel Atwill's henchmen in "Raiders of Ghost City" ('44).

—Renwick Thompson Jr.
Chula Vista, CA

You're absolutely right. That was sadly overlooked in our book.

"The Scarlet Horseman" ('46 Universal) starred Paul Guilfoyle. Is this the same person that appears on "CSI" on CBS? —Burchell Thompson

London, KY

They are not related. "The Scarlet Horseman" was born 7/14/02 in Jersey City, NJ, entered films in '32, worked through '60 acting and directing and died at 58 on June 27, 1961. The current unrelated Paul Guilfoyle (Capt. Jim Bass on "CSI") was born in '49 and began acting in '75.

What is the availability of the serial "Brenda Starr, Reporter". Do you know where I can purchase a copy?

—Joseph Mankauskas
Astoria, CT

It does exist, but is sadly not available from any source at this time.

My book on Republic is being republished next year with an expanded section on serials (three chapters versus one chapter).

—Richard Hurst
Carmel, IN

REPUBLIC STUDIOS: BETWEEN POVERTY ROW AND THE MAJORS was first published by Scarecrow in '79.

I don't remember ever seeing in print that it *is* William Witney (co-director) as the reporter in the phone booth reporting the execu-

tion of Zarnoff in Ch. 1 of "Dick Tracy's G-Men". Witney is not listed in the Jack Mathis VALLEY OF THE CLIFFHANGERS cast list either. I noticed this when I first viewed the serial years ago. Has this ever been noted? * * We know that Roy Barcroft, Tris Coffin, Stan Jolley, etc. had long lists of TV credits. Even Dick Curtis and Hugh Prosser (both deceased in '52) had numerous TV appearances. Harry Woods seems to have stayed away from TV (he *was* in a "Ramar" episode). Here are some players I can think of who were deceased in '48 (Charles Middleton, Wheeler Oakman) or retired by '52 (Ed Peil Sr., Robert Barron, Charles "Slim" Whitaker, Richard Cramer). Did any ever appear on a TV episode?

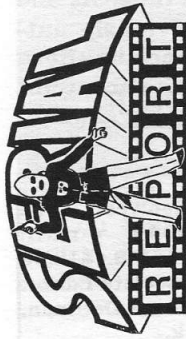
—Hal Polk
Kearny, NJ

That does indeed look like Witney! Actually, Harry Woods appeared on "Lone Ranger", "Stories of the Century", "Buffalo Bill Jr.", "Kit Carson", "Tombstone Territory", "Gunsmoke", "Bat Masterson", "Broken Arrow", "Death Valley Days", "Frontier Doctor", "Lawman" and perhaps others before he retired in '61. Woods died in '68. None of the others ever appeared on TV.

Cheat Endings!

In Ch. 8 of "Jungle Girl", Nyoka is knocked from a platform into a boiling vat of distillery crude. As she falls her arms are obviously outstretched, touching nothing. However in Ch. 9, Nyoka is shown not falling at all, but grabbing ahold of the platform railing.

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