

ROMANCE NOVELS

Publishers vie for hot market

MONTREAL (CP) — Romance novels have become a sizzling success in the book publishing industry.

Major publishing houses in Canada and the United States, which together have an estimated 22 million readers of romance, have jumped into a rapidly expanding market which was originally dominated by a handful of firms.

Last year, romance fiction — now the fastest-growing segment of North America's gigantic paperback book industry — accounted for 40 per cent of paperback sales. Bidding for these novels can get hot in high-stakes auctions where prices for major "blockbuster" novels can climb into the multimillion-dollar range.

Mainstream romantic novels have become more erotically explicit and the lines of specialized romantic fiction now have sub-lines of novels which contain a bit more "spice" or "steam."

By the end of this year, there may be as many as 17 new lines on the market, with such names as Looking for Mr. Right, from Avon Books; Intimate Moments, from Silhouette; and Ecstasy Supreme, from Dell.

This is up from basically one line, Harlequin Romance, which for the past 30-odd years has spun millions of variations on the chaste heroine-Greek millionaire theme. Earnings for Toronto-based Harlequin Enterprises Ltd., controlled by Torstar, totalled \$265 million in 1980 alone.

Four years ago, Harlequin ruled the world of romance, holding 80 per cent of the market. Four years ago is also when the firm's management made the controversial decision to do its own distributing and dropped its distributor, Pocket Books.

Pocket Books then turned around and launched its own romance line, Silhouette, and effortlessly cornered 30 per cent of the lucrative market, leaving Harlequin with 50 per cent.

Profile of a reader

Researchers for Harlequin have compiled this prototype reader: She's between 25 and 45 years of age, has completed secondary school, works outside the home and is married.

She is not the same woman who watches the afternoon soap operas on television. Nor is she the woman who reads Judith Krantz's "juicy" novels.

The soaps and Judith Krantz books are considered downers, featuring adultery, incest and all sorts of behavior that would not be tolerated on the pristine, fantasy-filled pages of romance fiction.

Romance books are written to fit a formula. The publishing houses even send instructions to new or would-be writers, like this one from Silhouette describing the hero for its Special Edition line:

"The hero, older than the heroine, is a dynamic, virile, supremely masculine man, one any woman could imagine herself falling in love with. Though he is self-confident, he also has a gentler, more vulnerable side, and may even admit to an occasional human weakness. He is never brutal or gratuitously cruel."

From any literary point of view, romance novels are perfectly dreadful. There are often long, tedious tracts on meals, clothes — right down to fabric and manufacturer — and surroundings.

After the author has devoted what seems like three-quarters of the book to saying things like "the extravagant jacquard fourreau was an exciting lure suspended from supple shoulder by thin straps," there isn't much room left for character development.

But with new romance novels selling like hotcakes, the major publishers are rushing to carve out large chunks of the swelling market.

FANFANI PAINTING

Space theme next

ROME (AP) — Italian Premier Amintore Fanfani, a talented amateur painter, viewed the U.S. space shuttle prototype Enterprise last week and promised that his next artwork will have a space theme.

The 75-year-old premier inspected the Enterprise at Ciampino Airport in Rome, minutes after returning from the United States.

Fanfani boarded the specially equipped Boeing 747 that carries the Enterprise, chatted with the crew and was presented with a large photo of the spaceship. It later left Rome for Paris en route back to the U.S.

Fanfani disclosed that U.S. President Ronald Reagan had asked that an Italian astronaut take part in a space shuttle mission.



Roger Mosley sees his character as the one friend Magnum can count on.

You can count on me, — Magnum's sidekick

by JERRY BUCK

LOS ANGELES (AP) — On most television shows the sidekick's main function is to get into trouble so the hero can bail him out. Not so on CBS' Magnum, P.I.

Thomas Magnum, played by Tom Selleck, can manage to get into trouble all by himself, thank you. So, who comes to his aid? Often as not it's his close buddy T.C., played by Roger Mosley.

T.C., Magnum's former Vietnam colleague who owns a helicopter company, has spent many an episode saving Magnum's bacon. Frequently, he has the help of Rick (Larry Manetti) or Higgins (John Hillerman). But none is a pushover and rarely come to his aid without a humorous squabble.

"They're just friends," says Mosley. "Anybody who has friends will understand these characters. They give true meaning to the word friendship. Everyone's got that one person you can ask for a favor. He might fuss about it, but

he's going to do it because he's your friend."

Magnum is the first series for Mosley, who has been in such movies as The New Centurions, The Greatest, Semi-Tough, and Leadbelly, and such TV presentations as Roots: The Next Generations, The Jericho Mile and Attica.

Mosley is adamant in his belief that Magnum, P.I. is not a one-man show.

"This is the show for Tom that works," he says. "It's the steak with the trimmings. Tom's the main course, but we helped make it work. I got into an argument with one of the producers who said all the show needed was Tom. I said I didn't agree with that and I wouldn't work under those conditions. I have to feel that I'm necessary to the show."

Mosley says he is grateful that Selleck has never tried to claim all the credit for the show's success. "We give Tom all the support we can."

Mosley, who has five children, devotes much

of his time to working with young people.

"I like working with kids. It keeps your mind alert. It's a place where you can make a contribution. If you surround yourself with adults they tend to have opinions founded on many years of bad information. It's wonderful to see kids' minds at work, see them grasp new ideas."

Now that Magnum has been on the air three years, many of the individual characteristics of the cast members have been worked into the stories.

briefs

Ballet troupe warned

WINNIPEG (CP) — The Royal Winnipeg Ballet's move to expand its repertoire to include full-length classical pieces has raised concern among officials of the Canada Council.

Council director Timothy Porteous said last week the troupe may be over-extending itself by taking on such expensive projects as the full-length ballets Giselle and Romeo and Juliet.

"We're not telling them don't do it," Porteous said, adding council officials are concerned the council may not be able to increase grants to the 25-member company.

Porteous said arts groups are able to expand because of public demand and support from the private sector, but the growth sometimes is only short-lived.

"When these people get into trouble, there's a sense we get into trouble too — they're our clients."

However, Lynne Axworthy, president of the ballet's board of directors, scoffed at the suggestion of possible financial difficulties.

"We have a very enviable record in this country and we are not developing beyond our capacity," said Axworthy.

Bette's advice

LOS ANGELES (CP) — Actress Bette Davis, winner of the 1983 Charles Chaplin award for lifetime achievement in films from the University of California at Los Angeles, offered some advice to budding actors: Don't talk about it, do it.

The 75-year-old star told students: "You certainly don't go around to people asking, 'Should I be an actor?' You just have to become one."

ALBERTA NATIVE

Actress' risque ad censored at home

EDMONTON (CP) — Sherry Miller is like the prophets who aren't recognized in their own land; she is the actress who is censored in her own province.

Miller, the singer-dancer brought to national prominence by a Spumante Bambino commercial four years ago, was considered too risqué in her own province.

The 30-second television advertisement features the Ponoka native in an elegant white gown man-handling her tuxedo-clad prince as she asks this "Valentino" to find her "the vino."

Wines sales went up but the Alberta censor board shook its head.

"Alberta said 'she can sing or she can wear the dress, but she can't do both,'" says Miller, 27.

Alberta residents were the only Canadian viewers to see an edited version of the commercial, shot from the neck up. The rest of the country enjoyed the full impact.

Appearing with Happy Days' actor Donny Most in the Stage West production I Love My Wife, Miller has been "sort of hibernating" at her parents' home in St. Albert, Alta.

"Strangely enough it's been chaotic" but nothing near the chaos and surprise that surrounded the Bambino venture, she says.

"It was a total shock to me. I was terribly nervous, sure it was awful. The director was saying 'you realize that when this commercial breaks, things will happen for you' and I was thinking 'I'll bet he says that to everybody.'"

Miller, married to former figure-skater Val Bezic, plans to take her chances in New York. After years of dinner theatre and some 30 commercials, she

"dropped everything six months ago and that's it, I'm going off to study."

The result was a six-week intensive period of "11 classes a week and living, breathing acting."

"I could just stay in Toronto and get involved — just not right now. I'd rather take my chances (in New York)."

Miller says her deci-

sion to try the United States was necessary in manipulating the course of her career.

"I've made a good living for the past five years... but before deciding on New York, I'd never made a decision on my career. It was just 'sure I'll do this or that' but if you want to be working at 65 you've got to start deciding."

TESTING MACHINES

Quirk plays havoc

BOSTON (AP) — More than 1,000 auto emission testing machines across the state were fooled into thinking it was Christmas — or Valentine's Day — in June.

When the calendar turned a new page last Wednesday to June, a quirk in the programming of the new machines made them shut down, refusing to recognize the month, said Phillip Giamita, spokesman for Hamilton Test Systems.

So 50 out-of-state technicians joined the 20 already in the state in a 36-hour crash effort to re-program the machines for the two months they do recognize, December and February, he said.

By 8:30 p.m. Thursday, 1,107 of the estimated 1,180 machines had undergone the five-minute procedure and were working again, Giamita said.

A lasting solution — exchanging some computer "chips" — is expected to be accomplished by July 1.

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