

Comic books more than kids' stuff

AUSTIN (AP) — When Joyce Cope traveled to a Dallas convention several months ago looking to add more comic books to her burgeoning collection, she took along about \$100 — and 50 loaves of fresh-baked banana bread.

She used the dough to buy some books and the bread to bribe the taste buds of comic-book illustrators and authors at the convention. In return for a loaf, she had them autograph copies of their books in her collection.

"It works about 99 percent of the time," said the 62-year-old Austin woman, a retired University of Texas systems analyst who has more than 28,000 comic books and uses a computer to catalog them.

Comic books aren't kid stuff anymore, says Larry Lankford. Adults have been caught up in the funnies craze and that means the buying, selling and trading of comics has become much more sophisticated.

"A lot of people still have misconceived notions about comic books," said Lankford, who owns a Dallas-based company called Bulldog Pro-

ductions that sponsors collectors' fairs such as one held over the weekend in Austin.

"They think comic books are only for children," he said. "And they did start that way. But an awful lot of comic books out on the market today are geared specifically toward adults."

Mrs. Cope was one of the 500 people last weekend who attended the Austin Fanfair, which featured comic books by the boxload, board game tournaments and presentations on animated science fiction and fantasy flicks from Japan.

As she thumbed through a stack of comics, the grandmother of two said she began collecting the colorful cartoon magazines as a child but discontinued the hobby after meeting her husband and marrying.

"I didn't look at another comic book again until 1981," she said. "Then I saw 'Superman II' and it all of a sudden brought back all those childhood memories and a flood of nostalgia."

"My children thought it was funny that I liked Superman and they

started bringing me things home from stores, like Superman pens and notebooks," Mrs. Cope said. "I told them they'd better stop or I'd become a collector."

She cut her comic collecting teeth at flea markets by purchasing books that featured the ever-popular Superman and Batman. Then she found herself scouring used book stores. Now she's known for traveling to collectors' conventions all over the state.

"It's an obsession for most people," said Mike Benton, a collector and author of a soon-to-be released book, 'The Comic Book in America: An Illustrated History.'

"It's something that can keep you entertained for the rest of your life because in the comic books industry there is a never-ending wealth of material to collect, to study and to delve into," he said.

While Mrs. Cope concentrates mainly on collecting any post-1980 editions and rarely pays more than a few dollars an issue, Benton says some collectors pay hundreds, even thousands, of dollars for a single

copy. For instance, Detective Comics No. 27, the 1939 comic book in which the character Batman first appeared, sold for 10 cents when it was first published but today is worth about \$25,000, Benton said.

Interest in comic books — which were the subject of a congressional investigation in the 1950s because some parents and teachers blamed them for juvenile delinquency — has been on the upswing since the early 1980s, he said.

Comic books have risen from the ghetto of second-rate literature to become a viable literary alternative," Benton said. "They are very appealing to a generation that grew up in a visually oriented TV society where people are used to getting pictures and words together."

The reasons Mrs. Cope collects comics are more personal than philosophical.

"They actually molded my life as a child," she said. "Comics, at least the ones I used to read, were very patriotic. They stood for truth, justice and the American way."

Gospel artist Staples sings Prince songs on new LP

ASSOCIATED PRESS

The combination of Mavis Staples, of the family gospel group the Staple Singers, and Prince sounds like an unlikely one for collaboration.

But, it happened, and a Mavis Staples album, "Time Waits for No One," is the result.

"Prince grew up on the Staple Singers," Staples says. "His favorite is 'I'll Take You There.'"

The collaboration began when Prince's manager called and said that Prince wanted to write and produce Staples' album on his Paisley Park label. Staples says: "I asked, 'What would Prince be writing for me?' I'd heard the Apollonia and Vanity music. I told him I need substance and can't sing the baby stuff. He let me know he'd be writing adult songs with a contemporary background. I said, 'We can work. Let's get started.'"

"A lot of people thought I wouldn't sing secular songs. He called just when I'm ready to share my love life with the world. I've been heartbroken and I have a story to tell on that side, too."

"I went along in my childhood with the fact I couldn't sing anything but gospel. As I grew older, I came to the conclusion people can be helped in many types of songs."

Staples says that people asked her about dirty lyrics. "They seem to have gotten past me," she says. "Prince slurs his words a lot; you have to read his lyrics to know what he's saying. I heard

songs on the radio I liked, like 'Red Corvette.' 'Purple Rain' sounds like a Sunday school song. My mother's favorite is 'When Doves Cry.' She put Michael Jackson down for Prince when she heard that."

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"I have found Prince to be a very spiritual person. A lot of his songs are uplifting. He has a segment in his show where it's almost gospel."

— Mavis Staples, Gospel singer

About the album, she says, "I call this M and M sound — Minnesota to Memphis."

Prince was too busy to go into the studio with her and suggested that Al Bell produce. Prince wrote songs, and sent lyrics and a tape of himself singing to rhythm. She sang in Memphis, sometimes surrounded by musicians, the way the Staple Singers did after 1968, when they went to

Stax Records. Other times, she sang and sent the tape to Prince, and he played all the instruments around her voice.

She didn't turn any songs down, but says she would have if they hadn't suited her.

The two songs on the album not written by Prince are "The Old Songs" and "20th Century Express," by Homer Banks and Lester Snell. Staples says, "'20th Century Express' is our message song, about crack houses, babies having babies and the world moving too fast." It's the first single.

Six months after Prince's manager phoned, Prince attended a Staple Singers concert in Los Angeles and visited her dressing room.

"He blushed and smiled; I couldn't get him to talk," she says. "He gave me one- and two-word answers. After that, I started writing him letters and letting him into my life, hopefully to make it easier for him to talk to me."

In July 1988, Prince invited her to Paris for the start of his Lovesexy tour. After five days, he invited her to go with the tour to London, where she sang five times in nine days. "That's when he really started talking to me. I couldn't stop him from talking. He'd phone every night."

One day, they recorded a gospel song Prince had written for his next album. Staples says he explained its strong language, "It'll make people listen." She agrees.

'Roseanne' husband enjoys sitcom success

LOS ANGELES (AP) — John Goodman only shrugs when asked about his character on "Roseanne" and the huge success of the sitcom.

"I never analyze it," he says. "If it ain't broke, don't fix it."

He also keeps himself aloof from the controversy that surrounds his co-star, Roseanne Barr, both professionally and personally.

"It's none of my business," he says. "I don't get involved."

Barr has been involved in various creative disputes on the show that caused the departures of Matt Williams, the executive producer, creator and head writer, and Ellen Falcon, the director.

Barr also recently was accused of offering a man \$50 man to beat up a photographer she said annoyed her.

In its first year, "Roseanne" was second in the ratings behind NBC's "The Cosby Show." During the summer reruns it's been in a race with NBC's "Cheers" for the top spot.

Barr plays a blue-collar mom who works in a plastics factory by day and comes home at night to three rambunctious kids and a husband who's usually out of work. It was the first acting experience for Barr, a stand-up comic.

Goodman plays Dan Connor, Roseanne's husband, a contractor who declares himself "the king of dry wall," but whose most endearing

quality is that he's a romantic and a dreamer.

Goodman says going back for the second season of "Roseanne" was like going back to the second year of high school.

"It wasn't as dreadful as all the images I'd conjured up during the summer," he says. "I did two movies during the summer, so going back to 'Roseanne' was like going back to something you do every day. Like going back to your real job."

Goodman says the show got off to a rocky start when they began a year ago.

"I'd never done a sitcom before," he says. "I was extremely insecure and nervous. But as we went along we found our sea legs. Roseanne was more nervous than she should have been about her acting. I always thought she worried too much about it."

"We have good chemistry together. She's so much fun to work with. We're like naughty school kids. We're always messing around. It keeps the day short, and it helps connect us."

Goodman, who prefers living in New York and hanging out in New Orleans, is buying a house in Los Angeles now that "Roseanne" is a solid hit.

He had been living in a small

apartment, but now he needs more room.

"I'm getting married in the fall and now will be a good time to buy a house," he says. "I'm marrying a girl from Bogalusa, La., named Anna Hartzog. I met her in New Orleans when I was doing 'Everybody's All-American.' Then I went down for Mardi Gras and we started dating pretty seriously."

Goodman has lived here off and on while working in such movies as "Punchline," "Raising Arizona" and "Burglar." He still keeps an apartment in New York, where he got his start as an actor on the stage.

Goodman was working in a Los Angeles stage production of "Antony and Cleopatra" when he was asked if he was interested in doing a television series.

"I said it'd be nice to settle down for a while," he says. "I didn't hear from them for a while, I'd never seen Roseanne's comedy act, but I had seen her on commercials and stuff. I knew who she was."

He grew up in St. Louis and began acting at Southwest Missouri State University when failure to take a SAT test made him ineligible for football.

After graduation, he settled in New York with a \$1,000 loan from

his brother and soon began to land stage roles.

"I was working mostly on the road," he says. "It wasn't until I started doing commercials that I could afford to stay in New York. I lived there for 13 years. I sure miss it, but it makes me crazy sometimes when I'm there. I only left because the work's out here."

He had been doing television, but he'd never been a regular in a series. His first film work was a movie for Home Box Office, "Mystery of Moro Castle." He was a guest on such shows as "The Equalizer," "Moonlighting" and "The Paper Chase" and had roles in the miniseries "Chiefs" and "Murder Ordained," along with several TV movies.

This past summer he co-starred with Bette Midler in "Stella" and Richard Dreyfuss in "Always." He also did one day's work on "Sea of Love," starring Al Pacino.

"I'm in my 'best friend' phase right now," says Goodman. "I was Dennis Quaid's best friend in 'Everybody's All-American.' Al Pacino's best friend and police partner in 'Sea of Love.' Richard Dreyfuss' best friend in 'Always.' I'm doing Alan Hale and Ward Bond. Dreyfuss is doing the Spencer Tracy role from 'A Guy Named Joe.'"

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