

TARZAN

FROM BURROUGHS TO DISNEY

By Brian Walker

Tarzan, the legendary, loinclothed ape-man created by Edgar Rice Burroughs, has captivated the world's imagination for most of the 20th century. He leaped off the written page to star in virtually every form of visual media, including movies, comic strips, television programs and comic books. This summer, Walt Disney Pictures' feature-length animated Tarzan film will introduce a new generation to Burroughs's timeless tale.

Edgar Rice Burroughs, who is sometimes called "The Grandfather of Science Fiction," published 77 novels and short stories between 1912 and 1965. There have been over 60 film adaptations of his literary works. Burroughs, who lived until 1950, became a wealthy man and lived on a spectacular ranch in California. His 26 Tarzan novels have been read by hundreds of millions of people and have been translated into over 40 different languages.

Tarzan's creator wrote the original story on odds and ends of paper and the backs of envelopes in 1911 and sold the 95,000-word saga to All Story magazine for \$700, where it appeared in 1912. His first book, *Tarzan of the Apes*, was published by A.C. McClurg & Company in 1914, insuring his success as a writer.

In addition to the pulp magazine stories, Tarzan tales have been published in numerous hardcover and paperback editions, and his continuing adventures have appeared in countless comic strip reprint collections, Big Little Books, comic books, magazines, fanzines and foreign publications.

Many notable artists have painted covers for Tarzan pulp magazines, books and paperbacks over the years. J. Allen St. John illustrated many of Burroughs' early books and two of his sons, John Coleman Burroughs and Studley Burroughs, also had notable careers as cover artists. Renowned fantasy artist Frank Frazetta painted his first Tarzan cover for an Ace paperback edition in 1962 and Neal Adams rendered the ape-man on canvas for Ballantine paperback books in the 1970s and 80s.

The first live-action movie starring Tarzan debuted in 1918. Since that time, more than 40 films have been produced. Although Johnny Weissmuller was the most famous screen Tarzan, over a dozen different actors have played the jungle king, including Elmo Lincoln, Buster Crabbe, Herman Brix, Lex Barker, Gordon Scott and Christopher Lambert.

The Tarzan newspaper feature, which debuted in 1929, ushered in the golden age of adventure comics. Harold Foster, Burne Hogarth, Rex Maxon, Reuben Morreire, Dan Barry, Russ Manning, John Celardo, Bob Lubbers and Gray Morrow all took turns illustrating the Tarzan comic strip.

During the Depression, when Tarzan was appearing simultaneously in comics, movies and radio, Edgar Rice Burroughs became actively involved in licensing his hero to a variety of manufacturers. Tarzan's image has been used to sell products ranging from toys, dolls and games to tobacco, ice cream and candy.

Although reprint collections of newspaper strips were published as early as 1929, the first original comic book adaptation of Tarzan didn't appear until 1947. In subsequent years, a number of comic book publishers, including Dell, Gold Key, Charlton, DC, Marvel, Malibu and Dark Horse have put out Tarzan titles. Among the many artists who have illustrated Tarzan in comic book form are Jesse Marsh, Russ Manning, Joe Kubert, Gil Kane, Neal Adams and Tom Yeates. Disney Publishing and Dark Horse have recently published new storybooks and graphic novels based on the Disney movie.

Tarzan was first adapted to animation by the Filmation Studio for two Saturday morning cartoon series, which ran on CBS from 1976 to 1981. The new Disney film is the first time the jungle hero has starred in an animated feature.

The International Museum of Cartoon Art is honoring this great legacy with *Tarzan: From Burroughs to Disney*. The artwork and artifacts on display trace the evolution of the character, from Burroughs' handwritten manuscript to the computer-generated jungle environments of the Disney film. The exhibition is designed to provide an educational journey, as well as an entertaining swing, through the history of modern literature and popular culture. It also serves as a tribute to the genius of Edgar Rice Burroughs and the many artists who have brought Tarzan to life on paper, canvas and film.