

Easy Ways To Avoid Damaging Covers: III

I can say from years of experience that just about every full-book cover that has been sent to me in a regular envelope arrives *ruined*! Even if the sender took the trouble to have the letter carefully hand-cancelled at the post office in order to avoid having the envelope run through various postal machinery, that full-book still arrives at its destination with at least some of the matchheads crushed and the impression of the matchheads pressed into the cover. It's *ruined*! [*not to mention that such mailings are illegal*] If you're going to send full-books through the mail, send them fully protected in some sort of hard box container. Otherwise, the recipient receives covers that he or she cannot use, and, thus, you have defeated your own purposes.

The overall environment in which your covers are stored is also very important in determining whether or not your covers are going to survive in the long run. The two most critical factors here are light and moisture. If you're like me, you can't handle all aspects of your collecting at the same time, so covers frequently sit here and there in your working area, sometimes for months, gathering dust while awaiting your eventual attention. That's OK, but if those covers have been sitting by a window, especially one that gets direct sunlight, you're not going to be coming back to the same covers! They're going to be faded. Thus, for example, window sills are not good places to have covers sitting in.

Moisture, however, is by far the larger problem. So far, we've been talking about random covers here and there being damaged in a variety of ways, but moisture can ruin entire collections! Water and covers do not mix well! God forbid that your home should ever be flooded (and there's not much you can do about it if it does happen), but, if you live in an area that can flood, you can still take some simple precautions to safeguard your collections. For example, in most cases of flooding, whether it be from a broken water pipe or torrential rains, the flooded home gets a few inches of water to a few feet of water—it normally doesn't get *covered* by water. So, with regards to flooding, basements would probably not be good storage areas for your covers. And, for the same reason, it wouldn't be a good idea to store your covers at ground level, either. Put them up on shelves...ideally, your hobby area is the attic!...but, not all of us have usable attics.

Although devastating, flooding is a rarity. But, you're not safe yet! Moisture is devious—*very* devious. Instead of sweeping away your albums with onrushing waves, moisture can do almost as much damage s-l-o-w-l-y...i-n-s-i-d-i-o-u-s-l-y...q-u-i-e-t-l-y. The fiend here is humidity. If you live in a normally humid climate, you'll need to take some extra precautionary steps. Humidity, over a period of time, takes the "stiffness" out of covers (they go "limp," as it were), causes strikers to deteriorate and become "crumbly," and your covers take on a distinctive "musty" odor. So, in such areas, collectors will basically want to keep their collections indoors—as opposed to, say, the garage. If you live in a non-humid climate, such as I do here in Northern California, you don't have to worry. In fact, I've had most of my albums in the garage for years, with the garage door open a good part of just about every day [*even though I tell the wife and kids NOT TO LEAVE IT OPEN!*], and have never had any moisture-related problems.....although...

Come to think of it, there *are* other garage-related problems. There was the time I had a rat gnaw his way through one of my albums [*I know it was a male rat because he chose one of my Girlie albums!*]. Then, there are all the little critters that find their way into the garage cabinets—spiders, silverfish, etc., but, while unsightly, they don't seem to do any damage. I'm careful not to leave any albums out on the garage counters unattended, because the cat invariably walks over them with muddy paws!

All in all, here, just keep in mind that a little farsightedness goes a long way in protecting your covers.