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Mirro-Gloss

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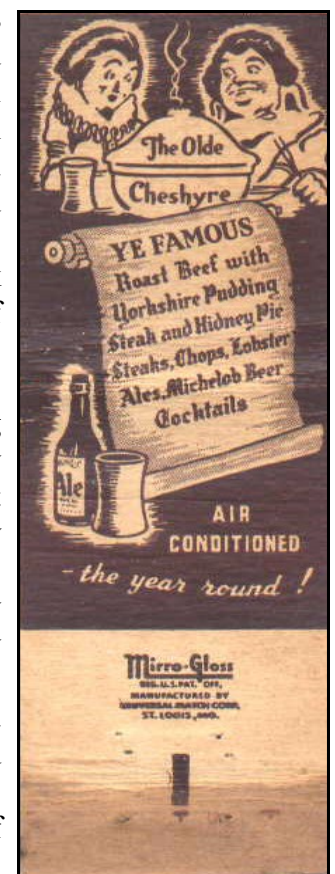
Well, you can't say *this* is a lack-luster category...*luster* is what it's all about! But, what, exactly is it? It's not a well-known category, and most collectors probably couldn't identify it off-hand.



Mirro-Gloss was a Universal Match trademark for its glossy, plastic-coated covers. Other manufacturers had methods of applying a 'sheen' to their covers (Match Corp., for example, glazed their covers for awhile with what appears to be some type of liquid application), but you can't mistake a *Mirro-Gloss*. They're basically laminated with a thin sheet of plastic over the outside of the cover, and, of course, they're all Universal covers! If you look closely, you can usually see the top and bottom edges of the lamination on the cover.

As a collector, I didn't become interested in seeking these covers out until some years ago, when I actually happened to find the trademark, itself, on a cover. That peaked my curiosity, and now *Mirro-Gloss* is one of my collecting categories. That trademark, shown here, on the inside of the cover, is exceedingly rare. Universal hardly ever put them on the covers, and they apparently only used them at all in the early days of production. Out of the 1,329 I currently have, only four bear the trademark, and they're all 20-strike covers...and they're all, I would judge, from the late 1930's.

And speaking of the late 1930's, one of the aspects of



Mirro-Gloss that I find most intriguing...and most ironic...is that, while the name is almost unknown within the hobby, it's actually one of Universal's most enduring cover types, running from the last 1930s all the way up to the demise of Universal, itself, in 1987. That's about half a century! Some of the earlier issues have the Universal "PATENT PENDING" manumark.

Since *Mirro-Gloss* is a style category rather than a subject category (as Airlines would be, for example), you'll find all types of other categories represented with *Mirro-Gloss* covers. They can range from ho-hum Industrial covers to nostalgic Military covers to beautiful Christmas Fancies. In fact, although some might wish to dispute it, I'd make the argument that *Mirro-Gloss* covers *are* Fancies! They represent a group of covers that are basic covers *plus* a laminated covering that makes them very glossy and very eye-catching (at least if seen from the right angle...*Well, come on! You can't have everything!*). So, if you're a collector who's into Fancies, here's a category you may not even have considered.

By the way, sometimes, especially with some of the newer Universal issues, you might have to look closely to distinguish whether that glossy sheen is actually a *Mirro-Gloss* or just an extra-shiny finish. Normally, you shouldn't have that much trouble distinguishing between the two, as the *Mirro-Gloss* covers look as if they're overlaid with glass!

Apparently, and I suppose we would expect this anyway, Universal significantly improved the laminating process over the years, because on quite a few of the older issues the plastic has now either developed bubbles or is peeling away from the cover entirely. And the latter circumstance makes *Mirro-Gloss* the ideal type of cover for housing in plastic sheets. Trying to get one of these 'peeling' covers into the slots on a slotted album page is not only time-consuming and frustrating, but it usually results in the cover becoming even more damaged than when you first started out. You sometimes have a similar problem with the early Universal Metallics. In both cases, the outer layer of the cover has started to peel back, and it's murder trying to get everything in that slot!

Mirro-Gloss covers, judging from my own some 1,300, come in 10s, 20s, 30s, and 40s. Most of the 40-strikes are Royal Flashes, and, in fact, the vast majority of covers in this category are front-strikes. I don't have any boxes or Jewel-sized issues. Here's how they break down: 10s = 4%; **20s = 61%**; 30s = 32%; 40s = 3%.

I don't believe I've ever even heard of another collector seriously collecting *Mirro-Gloss* as a category, so I can't really say whether 1,300 represents a good-sized collection or not, as I have nothing to compare to. I suspect not, though. I've got a pretty good idea that there are many more such covers out there. In fact, a significant number of them are no doubt sitting in my *other* collections, for *Mirro-Gloss* is towards the bottom of my priorities when I have to decide where a conjunctive goes. Thus, if I come across a Dated-Christmas-Foilite-*Mirro-Gloss*, I'd have to find three other dupes before one finally made it's way into my actual *Mirro-Gloss* collection!

So, next time you're sorting through covers, looking for that hoped for treasure, see if you notice any Universal covers that are really glossy. Check and see if they have that tell-tale layer of plastic over the outside. If they do, what then? Put them aside for me! I'll trade you for them! I also have some dupes to trade, by the way, just in case I've convinced you to start your own *Mirro-Gloss* collection.