

The Origin of Flats

[Ed. Note: I have always avoided listing flats in the various lists I maintain, reasoning that they were not real covers since they had never seen circulation. I recently contacted Wayne Eadie for validation or clarification of this, as Wayne is probably “the closest collector to the match industry”, and his answer below seems to settle the question once and for all.]

“I have never seen a flat that was not also a real cover as well, and have many in both form. Why would a match company take the time and effort to make up cover art for a cover that they will not actually produce? Much easier to just take good examples out of their production runs which don't require making up a phony name or getting approvals. They come from overrun sheets that are pulled and cut before matches are inserted.

I have always kept flats as real covers, but will substitute an original for a flat if I get one. I prefer one that has actually been in circulation. I have stacks of sales flats provided by the match companies and have even chased down one I saw in the catalogue from a restaurant in this area. Match companies also glued them onto the pages of their catalogues for many years. While still plentiful in Europe and Asia, match cover flats are all but gone in the U.S., replaced by catalogue pictures. I don't even get flats of my orders any more, after years of their supplying them with final billings.

Hope this helps and always happy to provide a match company perspective. Since 1972, I have sold for Superior, Lion, Atlantis, Atlas and now D D Bean. I have toured Universal's creative department in St. Louis, Lion's production plant in Chicago and D.D. Bean's in Jaffrey, NH. I have lined up speakers at RMS Conventions from Diamond, Columbia and Bean and speak regularly to the people at Atlas where my orders come from (soon to move from Texas to NH with the purchase of Atlas by Bean). I also know the Bean family, who will this year own the last match production facility in the U.S., down from over 100 at one point in time. I might be the closest collector to the match industry, or what is left of it.”