

MATCH TIPS for New Collectors

by "Billboard Bill" Thomas

Let's talk about displays. In our hobby, displays attract interest and attention, and sometimes win awards. They also lure new collectors to our hobby. RMS has some rules about displays—they're not as strict as they used to be, but if you want to compete for an RMS award, you must adhere to the rules.

We normally think of a display as an assembly of matchcovers or boxes mounted on a flat board. But displays can be imaginative and consist of covers mounted on a beer keg or a vacuum cleaner—your ingenuity is the only limit, except for decency and good taste. We do not accept or tolerate off-color or vulgar displays which would offend ordinary folks or the kids who come to see them. Displays should, theoretically, be judged purely on the covers in them, but let's face it—artistry and imagination can make a blah batch of covers look appealing, so, as in many things, neatness counts.

Displays are judged in various ways. At RMS there are appointed judges who are supposed to be experienced, impartial, and qualified to rate competing displays. At many local and regional clubs, the general membership votes, and it becomes more of a popularity contest. Awards are presented by RMS, by the host club, by other clubs, and by individuals; some are in memory of departed members. In some cases, such as AMCAL, there is a convention theme with awards presented for displays conforming to that theme. Hence, a single display can win several awards, and sometimes it's advisable to enter one capable of competing in several different categories.

There is no rule about mounting covers on display panels. If you want to glue yours down, that's fine, but realize that you render them much less desirable in future trading if you should later seek to trade them off. RMS and most clubs prefer or require that you cover your display with plastic

or glass, to protect the covers from drooling and sticky fingers seeking to snatch them. Displays are guarded with reasonable care, but there is no legal liability for the integrity of your display.

Peripheral decorative or explanatory matter is now considered acceptable, although it should not overshadow the prime purpose of the display—the covers. Some folks makes up "combo" displays consisting of matchcovers plus related items like postcards or photos. Rarity of covers is meaningful; you don't want to display a set of covers which everyone in the hobby owns, right? I won a blue ribbon at my first RMS convention with a set which no one had ever seen, but I didn't know that. Some display subjects like Apollo covers are viewed with awed admiration by collectors who weren't even around when the Apollos were launched.

The RMS rules for displays are published each January in the Bulletin, but they do not mention the judges or the rules which govern them. The RMS Classification & Research Committee is supposed to oversee the judging and the acceptance of the displays entered. Displays are normally open to the public except during the judging.

Whether you keep a winning display forever or break it down and restore its covers to your albums is purely up to you. Some folks keep a detailed record of every display that has won an award, when and where, while others recycle their covers and use them in different combinations to create new, more currently appealing displays.

Don't be bashful or timid—your name is not known to the viewers, only to the judges and the display committee, so you can win a tableful of trophies and be applauded, or take your displays and go home with no one even aware that you tried hard, but not hard enough.

[Hey, I'm Bill Thomas of 222 S. Ranger Blvd., Winter Park, FL 32792. Phone/fax is 407-657-0222 and I welcome you questions, ideas, or complaints. If you include some nice covers, I'll return some from Florida's Walt Disney World.]