

As I write this, I'm wearing a pop-art Wonder Woman T-shirt and sitting in a home office overflowing with Wonder Woman figurines and imagery. Compulsive consumerism aside, why do I have all this stuff? Why do I love the Amazing Amazon so much that I've erected a veritable altar to her? As usual, it goes back to my childhood.

In today's context, with women kicking bad-guy butt on video and movie screens all over the world, it's easy to forget how rare such characters were before the 1970s, my formative decade. As a kid, I was an avid reader with a hearty appetite, devouring science fiction, mysteries, ancient mythology from around the globe, and comic books. I was raised by an unapologetically feminist mom, and I loved watching old movies on TV, usually screwball comedies or gangster flicks featuring smart, brassy dames. Toss the build-up to the U.S. bicentennial celebration into the mix, and it's no wonder that in 1975 I was primed and ready to be dazzled by the Wonder Woman TV show.

In retrospect, I can see that much of the fiction I read and watched in my youth was a form of the "universal" heroic/personal journey, the search for self-definition and purpose in a complex, threatening world. But I wasn't consciously thinking any of that when Lynda Carter first flashed onto the small screen in all her star-spangled glory. I was thinking: Wow! There's nothing cooler than a super-strong, statuesque Amazon besting baddies! (And magically changing her outfit just by spinning around! How many kids imitated that move while envisioning their own super-heroic metamorphoses? C'mon, everybody, raise your hands.)

Before Wonder Woman hit the airwaves, the strongest woman I'd ever seen on TV (not counting the aforementioned vintage movies) was Bewitched's Samantha,* who was doomed to a lifetime of domestic strife because her breadwinner hubby didn't think she should "cheat" by using her magical powers—a none-too-subtle dynamic reflecting the rapidly shifting gender relations of that era.

So there I was, a ten-year-old lass who knew Bewitched wasn't the whole picture but didn't know what was missing . . . until Wonder Woman came along, and then Charlie's Angels, Bionic Woman, and Princess Leia. The Angels were a bit too glam—and too beholden to an invisible male benefactor/boss—to fully capture my heart, and so Wonder Woman, Leia, and Jaime Somers became my personal heroic trio.

But Wonder Woman will always hold the top spot. She's got it all: She's smart, tough yet kind-hearted, noble, beautiful, royal yet down-to-earth, mythic, and



Anina Bennett with her Wonder Woman shrine.

Photo by Andy Mangels.

willing to give up a life of privilege and carefree sisterhood to fight evil in man's world. All that, plus a magic lasso that can compel anyone to tell the truth—now there's an accessory most of us would've given just about anything for! Ye gods, how could anyone in my shoes not have been captivated by her?

True, the TV Wonder Woman is relatively heavy on the glitz and light on classic mythology, but she fought for truth and justice, and she came along right when I/we needed her most—just like a true hero.

*Many years later, I would discover earlier TV fare such as *Honey West* (a 1960s' show starring Anne Francis as a private eye) and *The Avengers*, but during the '70s they temporarily faded into obscurity. We didn't have VCRs, cable TV, or the Internet way back then.

Anina Bennett is a comics writer and editor who's done more than 15 years of hard time in publishing, at First Comics, Dark Horse Comics, and the transnational Egmont Publishing. She's best known as the writer/co-creator of the sci-fi comic Heartbreakers, the longtime editor of Nexus, and one of the few editors to have worked with Harlan Ellison and lived to tell the tale. Anina is scripting a new Heartbreakers graphic novel for publication later this year, illustrated by her husband, Paul Guinan (yes, the guy who did the fabulous Wonder Woman vs. Nazis illo in this issue). The first Wonder Woman "stuff" she remembers acquiring was a vintage metal trash can and a cheap vinyl doll in the 1980s. Her fondest wish as a collector is for some generous soul to give her the Ideal Super Queens Wonder Woman figure. Visit Anina and Paul's virtual selves at www.BigRedHair.com.