

U Know, *Uniglo!*

There are a number of different Fancies—Cameos, Filigree, Foilite, and the like—and Uniglos are one of them, but the latter always *feel* different. That special finish gives the covers that soft, oily feeling, and, although they're not measurably thicker or heavier than normal covers (at least, say, pre-90's covers), they *feel* thicker and heavier. *Nice!*

Uniglo was a Universal Match Corp. trademark for its covers having a deep, oily texture. They really don't glow, but they definitely have a distinctive sheen 'subsurface' sheen. They were first introduced in 1972 and continued right up to the end of Universal in 1987, so there are both front-strike and reverse-strike issues, but the latter are the much more numerous.

Universal had come up with other types of covers with a special finish—Satin and Mirro-Gloss, for example—but what I always liked about Uniglo is that the finish doesn't inadvertently come off with age. With Satins for example, the individual threads can come loose, and you end up with a really ratty-looking cover. And, with many of the Mirror-Gloss issues the plastic covering either starts peeling off at the corners or it bubbles. Either way, the result is another mess. None of those problems occur with Uniglo covers.

They appear in all four sizes—10s, 20s, 30s, 40s—with 30s being the most commonly seen size, but 20s are numerous, as well. Forty-strikes come in next, as far as frequency is concerned, with 10s bringing up the rear, but 10s aren't usually more frequent than the other sizes anyway. And, as with all the Fancy issues, except Matchoramas and Filigrees, there are lots of issues with additional fancy additions, on top of the hallmark Uniglo finish. Thus, you'll often find Uniglo/Foilites, Uniglo/Embossed, Uniglo/Cameos, and the like.

There's no denying that they were popular with advertisers as well as collectors. There were 10,780 listed as of December 2004. I'm not certain if anyone's continued the listing since then.

In 1985, Universal, which must have already seen the writing on the wall by then, came out with *Uniglo II*, a cheaper version of the original Uniglo, apparently as a cost-cutting measure. These later covers are still noticeable as Uniglos, but not so thick, and the sheen is not so deep. They're something of a 'half-way' version of the original type. Not nearly as nice to my way of thinking, and I've always felt that they were distinctly thinner. Not many were issued, as Universal went belly up a short time later. Both types of Uniglos are collected as a single category.

It's a shame that Uniglos aren't still appreciated. Even the plainer ones are beautiful...But, their popularity, along with all the Fancies, virtually disappeared when Universal stopped producing them. It's odd—when an artist dies, his works increase in value because there won't be any new works in the offering, but the same doesn't hold true with matchcovers. Once that type ceases, collector interest pretty much dwindles in kind.

Hasn't stopped *me* and at least a few others from collecting them, though. If they were attractive covers before, they're still attractive covers now. I have 7,025 at the moment, and Dorothy Fry, OH, had at least 10,360 as of October 2005.

Since it's the surface texture that gives Uniglos their distinctive appearance, I haven't run any exemplary pictures here. Pictures simply don't show that characteristic.