

Matchorama Serial Numbers

“Matchorama” was Universal’s trademark for its color photo covers; they ran from 1955-1987, and proved to be very popular indeed, both with collectors and customers!

I’ve been a dedicated *Matchorama* collector for years. While I think the Grant-Mann color photo covers are actually a higher quality, there’s no denying that *Matchoramas* were high quality, beautiful covers, and that’s what attracted me to them.

I’ve always been curious about the ‘serial’ numbers that Universal assigned to many of the covers, such as B-45178. What does the "B" stands for? Are the numbers (i.e. 45178) just sequential numbers, or do they actually stand for something? They don’t look like they can be dates, and I’ve been unable to figure out the system. So, I contacted Tom Valachovic, FL, who’s been collecting these covers for over 40 years and maintains both a numerical and alphabetical listing of *Matchoramas*. Here’s his response:

“Re Universal using numbers on early issues, the numbers appear to be part of in-house cataloging-numbering system. Some sets are consecutive. Today, all would be computerized. I believe they started with 1000 and continued as they received orders. The only reason I say this is that the 30-size and 40-size covers are intermixed. The numerical list goes from 1000 to 1612, then lists a few 1900’s. From 2000 on, the collectors continued the list. Another mystery would be how come some numbers never turned up an advertiser. In all my years, I have never found one to replace ‘empty’.

Universal may have stopped numbering them to avoid being badgered by collectors. Or, maybe because people placed orders and then cancelled or went out of business.

Evelyn Hovious published the *Matchorama* listing for 20+ years, through 7,800 or so. Since then I have tried to maintain it. My latest number listed is 8,800. When Evelyn did the list, she would only list a cover if she actually had one. I don’t believe in this way of listing. I believe a color copy (photo/scan) is sufficient. Most list makers make lists of *all* known covers.

I’ve always considered Ramas to be one of the nicest categories. I’m surprised there isn’t more interest.” [You and me, both!..But, since the 1980s industry catastrophe, collector interest in all of the Fancies has radically declined Ed]

Mel Garrett’s, KS, collection of *Matchoramas* numbered 9,568 as of 6/93.

