

HERE COMES  
TIME WHEN ROUGH  
TREATMENT IS THE  
ONLY

# SLARTY

**TRANSNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES OF THE BRITISH NEWSPAPER STRIP**

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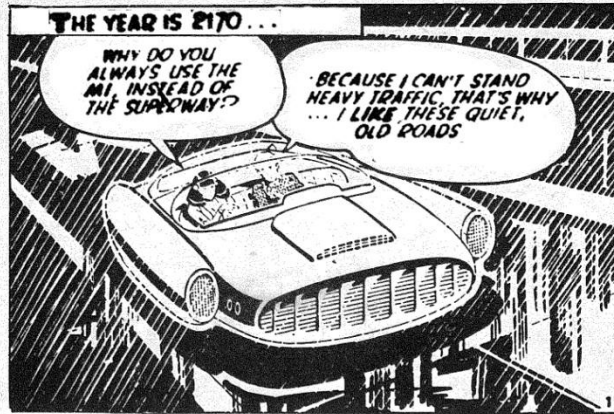
Scarth was an erotic science fiction strip that ran in the British tabloid the Sun from 1969.



Written by Jo Addams and illustrated by Luis Roca, it combined elements of science fiction, eroticism, satire, romance, adventure and mystery.



Although Scarth is a British comic- commissioned by a British editor, and published in a British newspaper, I will be arguing that it should be considered equally in international terms, and particularly as a 'European' comic.



Scarth is set in 2170, and opens with our heroine being run over- and killed- by a car. Luckily the technology of the future allows her to be revived via a partial brain transplant, although she awakes with no memory of her past life.

This was not the first time that British comics had seen this basic premise used for an adventure strip- the Eagle's Mark Question had used the same basic setup twelve years earlier.



In both Mark Question and Scarth, this allows for the creation of a dual narrative; smaller, self-contained adventures take place within a larger mystery story concerning the true origins of our hero/heroine.

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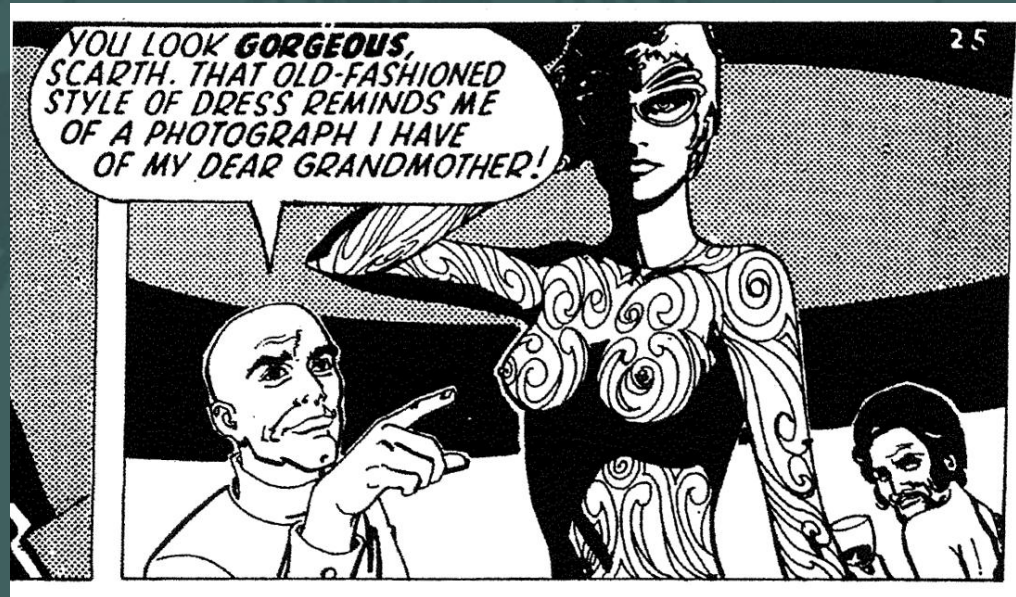
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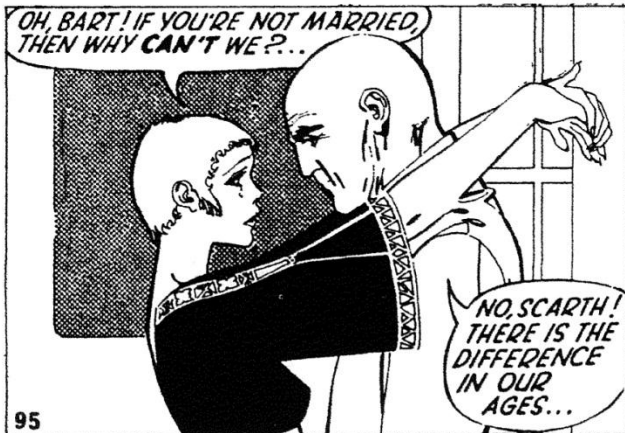




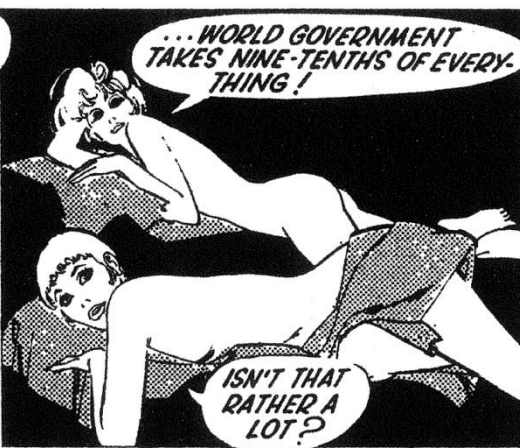


Scarth quickly deviates from the Mark Question template, however, and establishes itself as an romance/adventure strip laced with frequent nudity, gags, and satire.

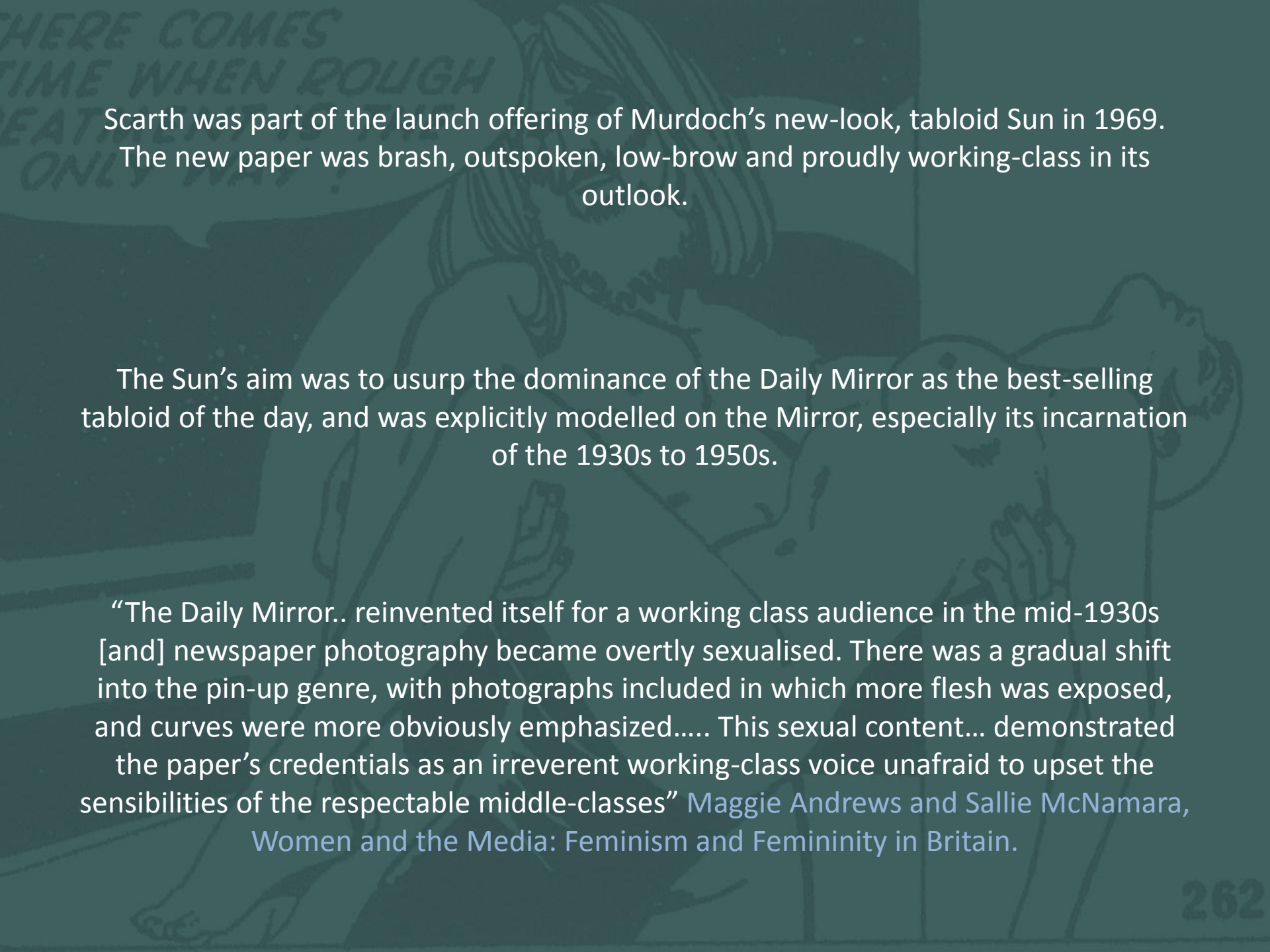




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Scarth was part of the launch offering of Murdoch's new-look, tabloid Sun in 1969. The new paper was brash, outspoken, low-brow and proudly working-class in its outlook.

The Sun's aim was to usurp the dominance of the Daily Mirror as the best-selling tabloid of the day, and was explicitly modelled on the Mirror, especially its incarnation of the 1930s to 1950s.

“The Daily Mirror.. reinvented itself for a working class audience in the mid-1930s [and] newspaper photography became overtly sexualised. There was a gradual shift into the pin-up genre, with photographs included in which more flesh was exposed, and curves were more obviously emphasized..... This sexual content... demonstrated the paper's credentials as an irreverent working-class voice unafraid to upset the sensibilities of the respectable middle-classes” Maggie Andrews and Sallie McNamara, *Women and the Media: Feminism and Femininity in Britain*.



Comics had been an integral part of the Mirror's 1930s rebirth, and the most successful of their strips had been Norman Pett's Jane. The strip had started in 1932, but famously reached new heights of popularity amongst British servicemen during the 1939-45 war, with the strip featuring a lot of nudity.

Nudity in the strip died out with the coming of peace, and Jane had become more demure, and more clothed, by the end of 1946.

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“Mr Murdoch’s new Sun has done its best to resurrect the Daily Mirror of the 1930s in order to compete with the Daily Mirror of the 1970s. Its formula is a simple one: it is the formula of sex, sport and sensation.” *The Times*, Tuesday 18 November 1969

“[we] devised a strip cartoon called Scarth about a shapely and skimpily dressed space lady who was a sort of female Garth” Larry Lamb in *Sunrise: The remarkable rise and rise of the best-selling Soaraway Sun*

“The Mirror sci-fi strip Garth was ripped off with Scarth, a female version complete with tits.” Chris Horrie and Peter Chippindale in *Stick It Up Your Punter!: The Uncut Story of the Sun Newspaper*.



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Scarth's lineage is therefore in some respects firmly British; the strip is broadly in line with other adventure strips, and the nudity and eroticism seen in it have precedents in British strips of the 1930s and 1940s.

Yet a noticeable international flavour was also evident in Scarth...

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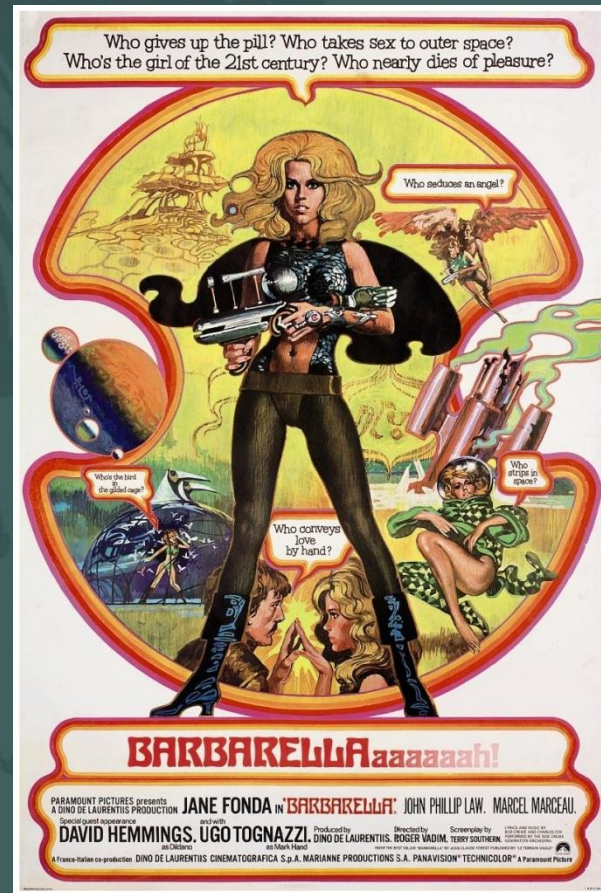
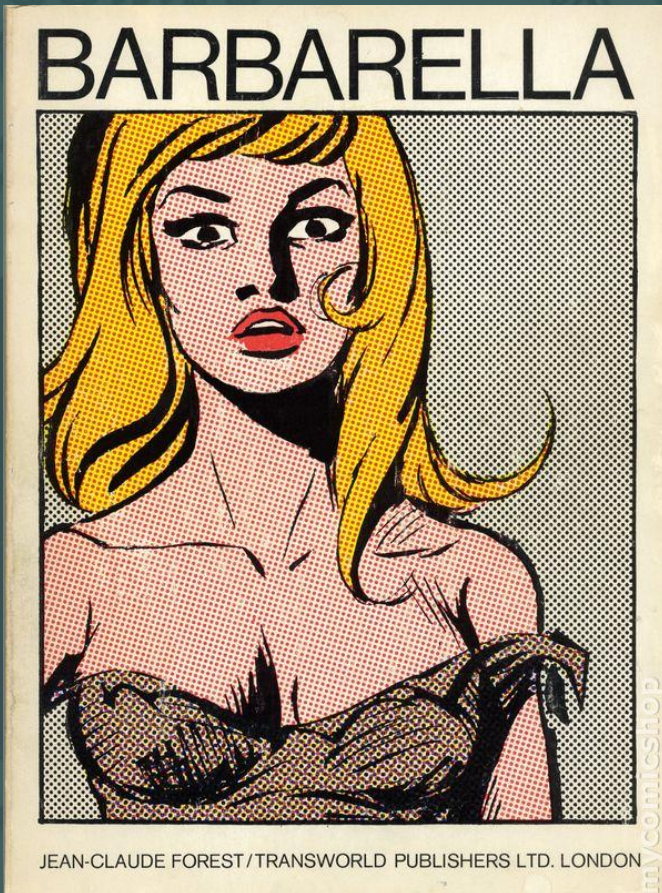
Scarth's creative team was international; Addams was British, and Roca Spanish.

Roca was represented by Josep Toutain's Selecciones Ilustradas, which operated out of his home town of Barcelona. Like many of the SI artists, Roca had worked extensively for the British weekly market, particularly in Romance comics, during the 1960s.

Also like many SI artists, Roca took the opportunity to create more adult content when the opportunity arose. Enric Badia Romero was to follow Roca into adult newspaper strips, whilst others- such as Jose 'Pepe' Gonzalez- established themselves in America's Warren (home of, amongst others, Vampirella).

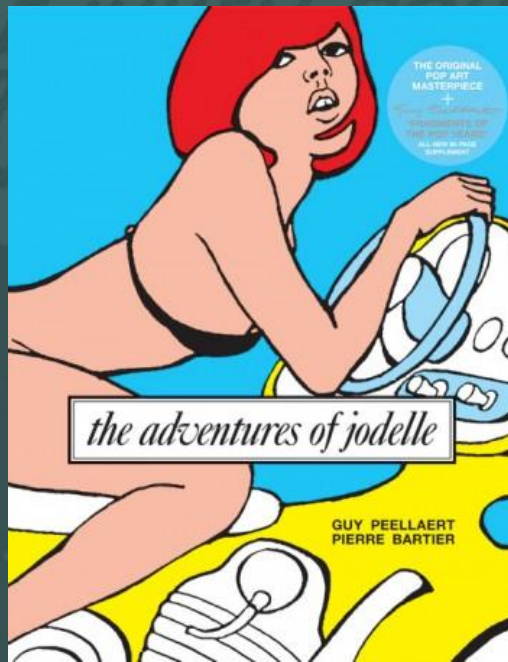
Other transnational agencies also existed, such as Bardon- so named because of it's two homes, Barcelona and London.





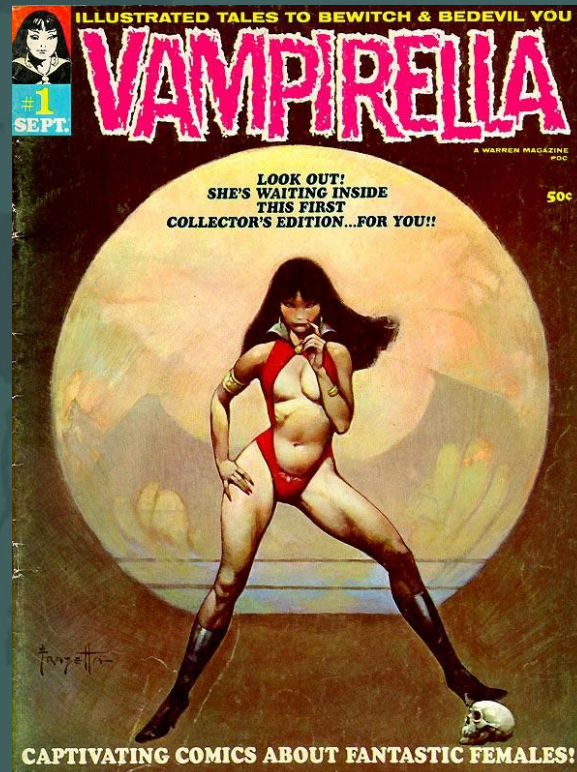
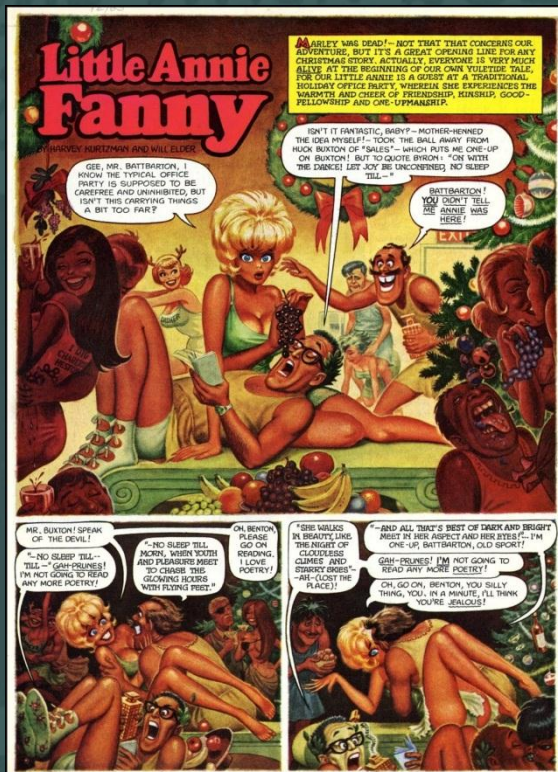
Developments in European comics were clearly an influence on Scarth. Notably Jean-Claude Forest's Barbarella, which had first appeared in V Magazine in France in 1962, and as a hardback collected volume in 1964.

The collected volume was republished in Britain in 1967, and the movie, starring Jane Fonda, arrived the following year.



Adult comics, and particularly those with an erotic flavour had subsequently begun to appear across several Western European countries, including Guy Peellaert and Pierre Bartier's Jodelle and Jean Rollin and Nicholas Devil's Saga de Xam. In France this process was aided by the efforts of publisher Eric Losfeld, whilst in Italy a similar process was spearheaded by Renzo Barbieri, who published titles such as De Sade.

Comics magazines aimed at mature audiences also began to appear, such as Linus in Italy and Charlie in France.



America was also part of this process. Examples include Harvey Kurtzman and Will Elder's Little Annie Fanny (1962), Michael O'Donoghue and Frank Springer's The Adventures of Phoebe Zet-Geist (1965) and Forrest J Ackerman and Trina Robbin's Vampirella (1969).



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Claims have often been made that mainstream British comics remained entirely insulated from the transnational development of adult British comics through the 1960s and 1970s, and continued to produce only juvenile fare (Barker, Sabin, Chapman).

Scarth's existence indicates that this view is incorrect.

In Scarth's wake, a huge resurgence in British comics erotica took place in newspaper strips. Examples include Bonnie (The Sun, 1971) Amanda (The Sun, 1976) George and Lynne (The Sun, 1976)

**HORATIO** By David Judd and Peter Haswell

BERYL, I'M IN THE GRIPS OF A WILD, BURNING...  
 ...ALL CONSUMING PASSION FOR HORATIO...  
 ...A HUNGRY YEARNING TO BE HIS, COMPLETELY, RECKLESSLY THROWING CONVENTION TO THE WINDS...  
 REALLY? I THOUGHT YOU FANCIED HIM!

**SCARTH—A.D. 2171** By Luis Roca and Jo Addams

WE'VE ABOUT 50 SECONDS TO GET TO THE GROUND FLOOR BEFORE THE POWER IS CUT OFF!  
 IF WE DON'T MAKE IT, WE'RE DEAD DUCKS!  
 THERE GOES THE POWER!  
 AND THERE'S THE WINDOW!

**BONNIE** By Frank Langford and Les Lillier

WHAT'S THIS?  
 IT'S A DRESS.  
 WELL, I'LL SAY ONE THING FOR IT, IT WILL NEVER WEAR OUT!  
 THERE IS SUCH A THING AS METAL FATIGUE, YOU KNOW!  
 THAT WOULD DEPEND ON WHAT YOU DID IN IT...

SUN MON NOV 15 1971

**GEORGE AND LYNNE** By MICHAEL KELLY

THE FISHING'S OBVIOUSLY BETTER IN SOME PLACES THAN OTHERS.  
 I WOULDN'T SAY THAT...  
 BUT THE BEST PLACE TO FISH IS OPPOSITE NUMBER TWENTY ONE.

**WACK** By HUGH MORREN

YER BOSSIVE OL' MAS DONE NOWT BUT FOLLER AN' WATCH US ALL HOLIDAY - AT LEAST WE'LL BE AWAY FROM 'ER IN THE POOL  
 YER MIGHT!

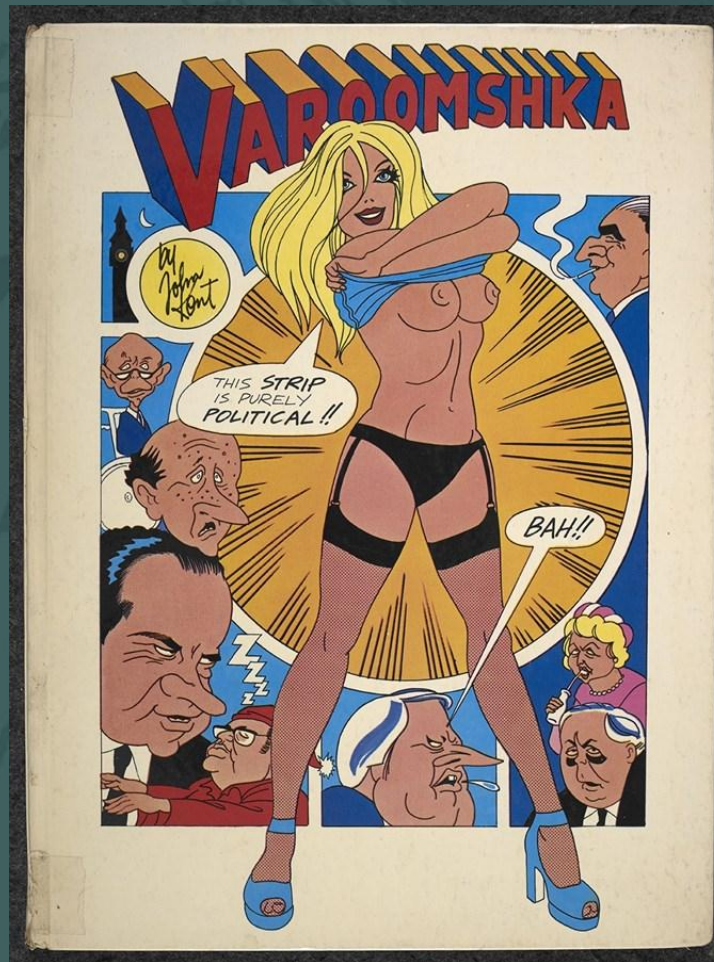
**AMANDA** By FREDERIC MULLALLY and JOHN RICHARDSON

AS THE TERRIBLE CURRENT THUNDERS AROUND THE OLD WRECK...  
 THIS ANCIENT HULK IS COMING APART AT THE SEAM...  
 ...WE'VE GOT TO DITCH ALL EXCESS WEIGHT...  
 ...AND CLIMB OUT...  
 I HOPE I CAN HOLD ON!



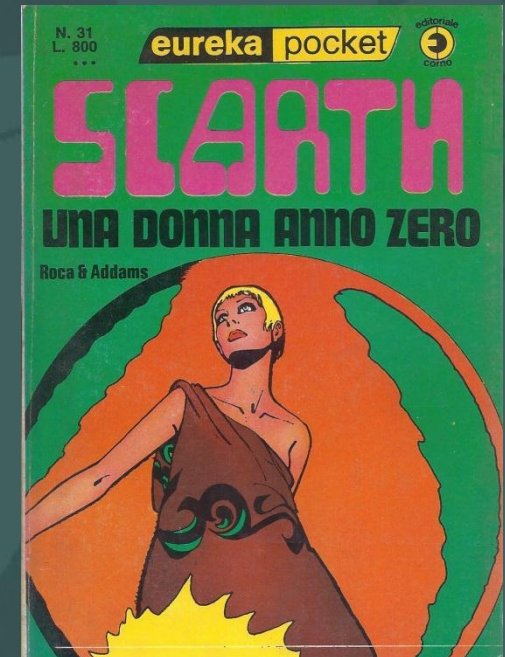
Danielle premiered in the London Evening News in 1973, and Axa in the Sun in 1978. In the early 1970's erotic content was ramped up in existing newspaper adventure strips as well, including the Mirror's Garth, the Express's Jeff Hawke and the Evening Standard's Modesty Blaise.

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Even the Guardian got in on the act, with John Kent's political satire Varoomshka (1969).

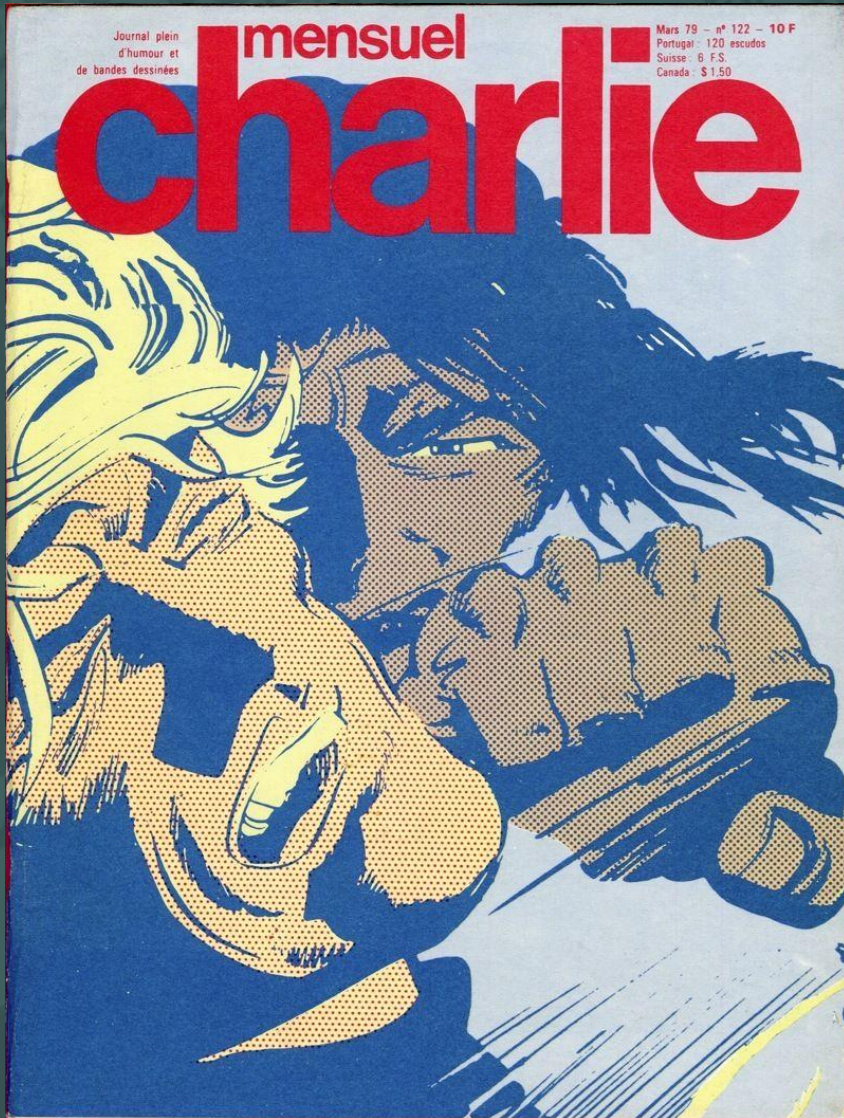
Although the British weeklies market was unable to take part in this adult comics boom, the newspaper strips were closely aligned with their European counterparts, and enjoyed huge success across Europe.







The Daily Express's Jeff Hawke as part of the line-up in Spanish anthology magazine Blue Jeans, 1977. London Evening New's Danielle reprinted as an Italian pocket digest, 1975. An edition of Italian comics digest Menelik from 1973, with four British strips reprinted- The Evening Standard's Modesty Blaise, The Express's James Bond, and the Mirror's Garth and Romeo Brown.



The Daily Mirror's Garth and The Sun's Axa appearing in France's Charlie Mensuel, 1979 and 1980.



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Scarth, and a number of other British strips of the period, therefore indicate that, whilst the weeklies market remained juvenile, British comics as a whole did not.

Newspaper strips in particular were actively engaged in the shift towards adult-oriented material, and were created with both domestic readers and international audiences in mind.