

PHOTOGRAPHS BY PHILIP O. STEARNS



THE WORK OF GLIFF SANDER



22 CAMPAIGNS



SON

BY PHILIP O. STEARNS

Few minaturists have approached their trade with such Rablaisian gusto nor injected into it the diversity of subject matter and originality of presentation as has Cliff Sanderson.

This director and partner of a lithographic plate-making firm has given us enthusiasts many superb products as the result of his spare time efforts. His miniatures, now so much in demand, have only recently come into being, for his interest in the hobby was aroused but a scant seven years ago. A chance visit to the Burlington arcade while in London piqued his curiosity as to the possibilities of miniature figurines; not long afterwards, an associate at work loaned him a copy of Donald Featherstone's book on modelling miniatures and from it he derived all his early techniques.

His earliest moulds were in plaster of Paris. The results from these he exchanged with an ardent modeler friend, George Hanger, for examples of other miniature makers' work. George has always remained a loyal mentor and helpful adviser to Cliff.

The first really finished original military figures that he exhibited at an annual BMSS competition attracted no attention at all and left him with a feeling of frustration and disappointment. It was at this time that he decided that ordinary straightforward military figures, and most especially Second World War Germans were not subject matters to his taste. Although, even at this early stage, he had been commissioned to make such figures for a company involved in the production of commercial figures, he launched into subjects much closer to

his earthy sense of humour. Thus emerged the first examples of the so-called Novelty Girl sets.

These ladies were divested of garments, other than for various bits of military accoutrements of their soldier companions, and ranged throughout many periods of military history. Made for Greenwood and Ball, these enjoyed immediate success and brought commissions for master figurines from clients all over the world. The popularity of the series strengthened Cliff's concept of creating figures in related series which could be assembled into vignettes or large dioramas such as his 17th century tavern scene, the Press Gang scene, and the giant Isandlawana battle diorama created by Norman Abbey. Though conceived as inter-related groupings, each figurine nonetheless stands on its own merit as a beautiful and unique piece of miniature sculpture.

As he progresses forward and develops his techniques and new approaches to his *metier*, one can see the evolution of a philosophy of miniaturism which embodies the day-to-day ordinary facets of a soldier's life, rather than the standard parade ground approach more usually portrayed by fellow producers. The most recent fruition of this attitude is most beautifully exemplified in his latest series, The Pirates of Tortuga, which he produced for Monarch Miniatures. This group has certainly received the highest international recognition for military miniatures by appearing in an editorial spread in *PLAYBOY*. Quite apart from its obvious erotic implications, this series de-



The ferocity and violence of Sanderson's continuing Pirates of Tortuga series, seen in one of his original sketches and in new figures under way for the Monarch Miniatures' series, is contrasted by the delicate grace and warm empathy of his miniatures of mothers and children.



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 monstrates the sculpting and casting genius of the artist through its intricate and complicated one-piece castings of double figures.

But let us examine Cliff Sanderson's background and approach to the creation of his great variety in figure production. Trained as a lithograph plate maker and retoucher, he studied art and later attended night classes in life drawing and painting. Although he decries his lack of proficiency in anatomy this is certainly not apparent in any of his work which, quite to the contrary, reveals a far more advanced knowledge of anatomical detail than the majority of his competitors. His art schooling was the foundation of his technique of creating miniatures; every figure starts as a nude mannequin

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Figures (above and below) painted by Norman Abbey.
Photographs on this page courtesy MILITARY MODELLING.



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which is then dressed with whatever details are required. This method assures that the completed figure will be anatomically correct and that its garments will fit and hang properly no matter what its pose.

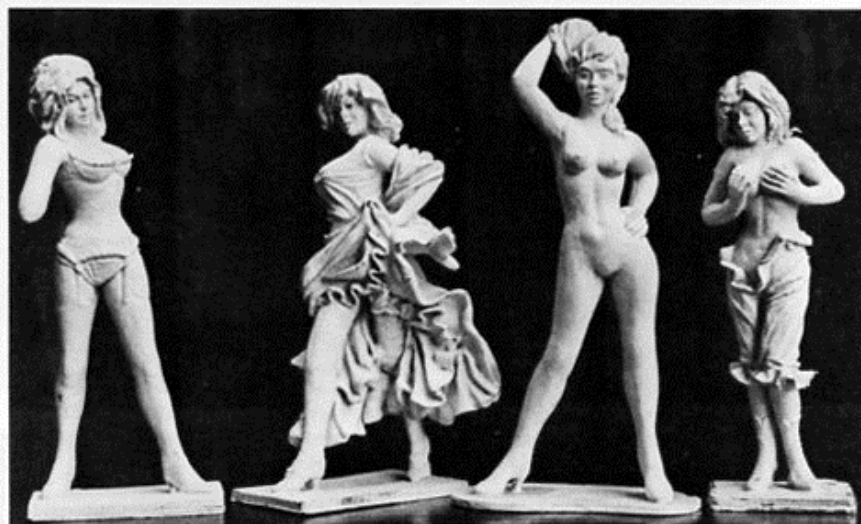
The fact that the initial nude figures exist, as well as their clothed counterparts, is a great boon to the converter who possesses the skill to apply the same basic skills that Sanderson does in the ultimate creation of his own figures. Once the basic figure has been dressed with a variety of materials such as Miliput, resin epoxy, metal or plastic sheet or, for that matter, any convenient material he finds suitable, a primary rubber mould is made in cold cure sylestimer. When a reasonable metal casting from this mould has emerged, it is then finely reworked and engraved and another final master mould is produced for the completed master figure. This master is then despatched to the manufacturer who has commissioned it and production moulds are made. It is always sad to admit that production castings necessarily lose a little of the superb crispness of the masters but this is an inevitable fact and the degree of loss is minimised by the skill of the company producing the commercial castings. In Sanderson's case he has been fortunate, for his clients have done more than reasonable justice to his work.

The origins of a series lie in the fertile imagination of their creator, often inspired by the work of an artist or illustrator whose work touches his fancy. The well-remembered illustrations of Howard Pyle, who filled the classic books of my childhood with his colorful paintings, inspired Sanderson to create the pirate series for Monarch Miniatures, although it must be admitted that Pyle's work never included such erotic violence.

In contrast, the exquisite gentle ladies and children of Sanderson's Victorian figures reveal a great attention to and interest in costume other than military. Here again one finds the marvellous melding of civilian and military subjects which Sanderson's figures provided.

The variety of subjects he has created in his 80mm range has been dictated by his clientele. These include a series of the kings of Sweden for Sebastian Tamm, who will be releasing them in a Limited Edition only. These are portrait figures with superb detailing in period costume, as are the series done for Norman Robinson of Jackboot: figures of a somewhat less prepossessing group of well-known personalities beginning with Hitler and some of his unsavoury cronies. The lovely 80mm ladies in various stages of undress, however, are far more appealing, in my opinion.

Sanderson has introduced to miniature modelling women of all ranks and stations, from serving wenches to elegant ladies, to accompany their military companions and with their introduction he has vastly expanded the range of diorama and vignette possibilities for the modeller. His concepts may not be everyone's cup of tea but there can be no serious collector who does not admire the superb quality of sculpture, the attention to detail, and the incredible character that he creates in his work. ○



Sanderson's versatility, his ease of working on virtually any subject, is obvious in examples of his work ranging from a limited-edition portrait series of the kings of Sweden (top) to his 80mm females produced for Acorn and for Sanderson Miniatures by Greenwood and Ball (center) to his recent figures of Adolf Hitler and two Nazis. He is currently creating an Arabian Nights series, despite an enormously heavy work load of commissions from major manufacturers.