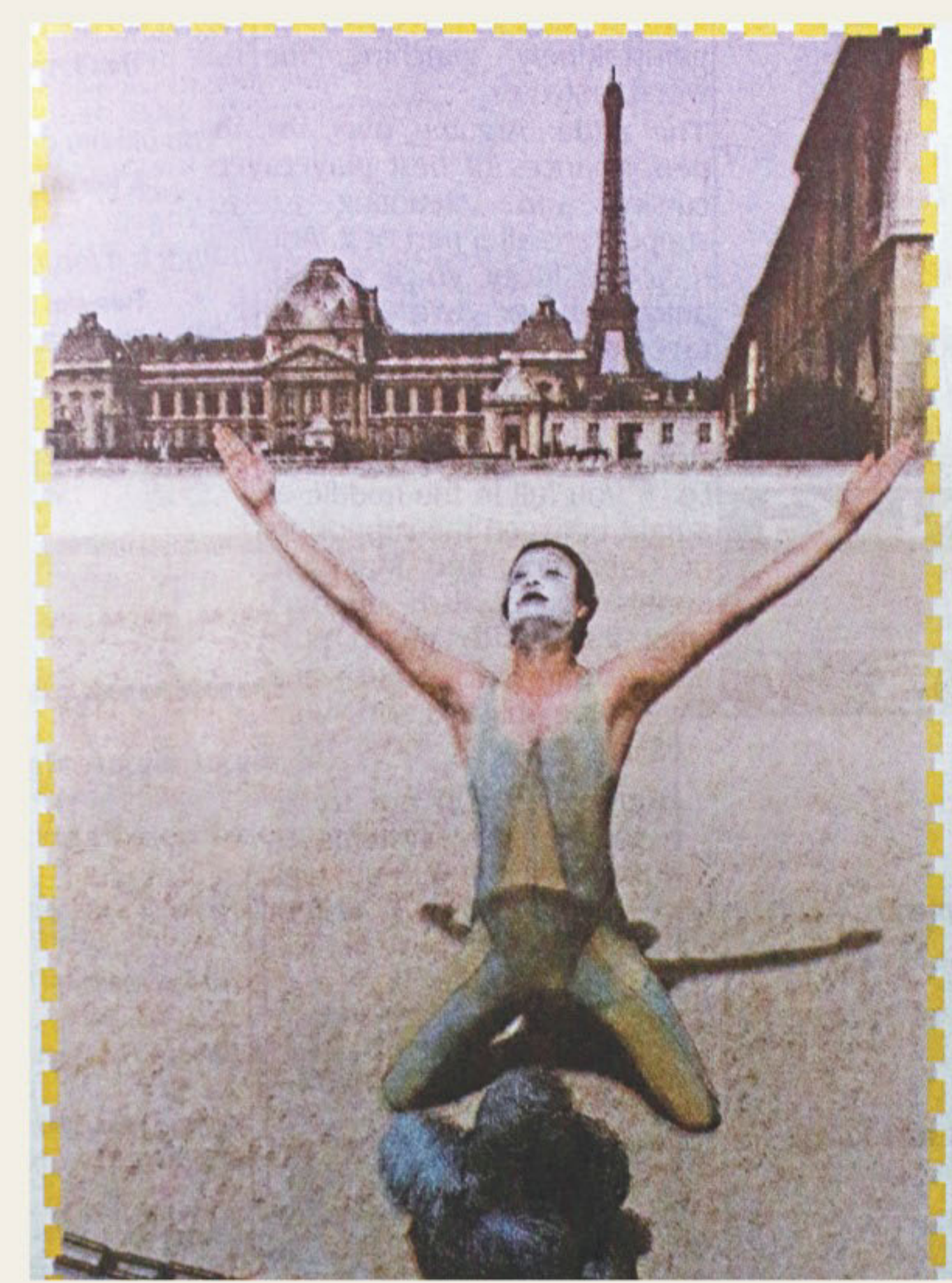
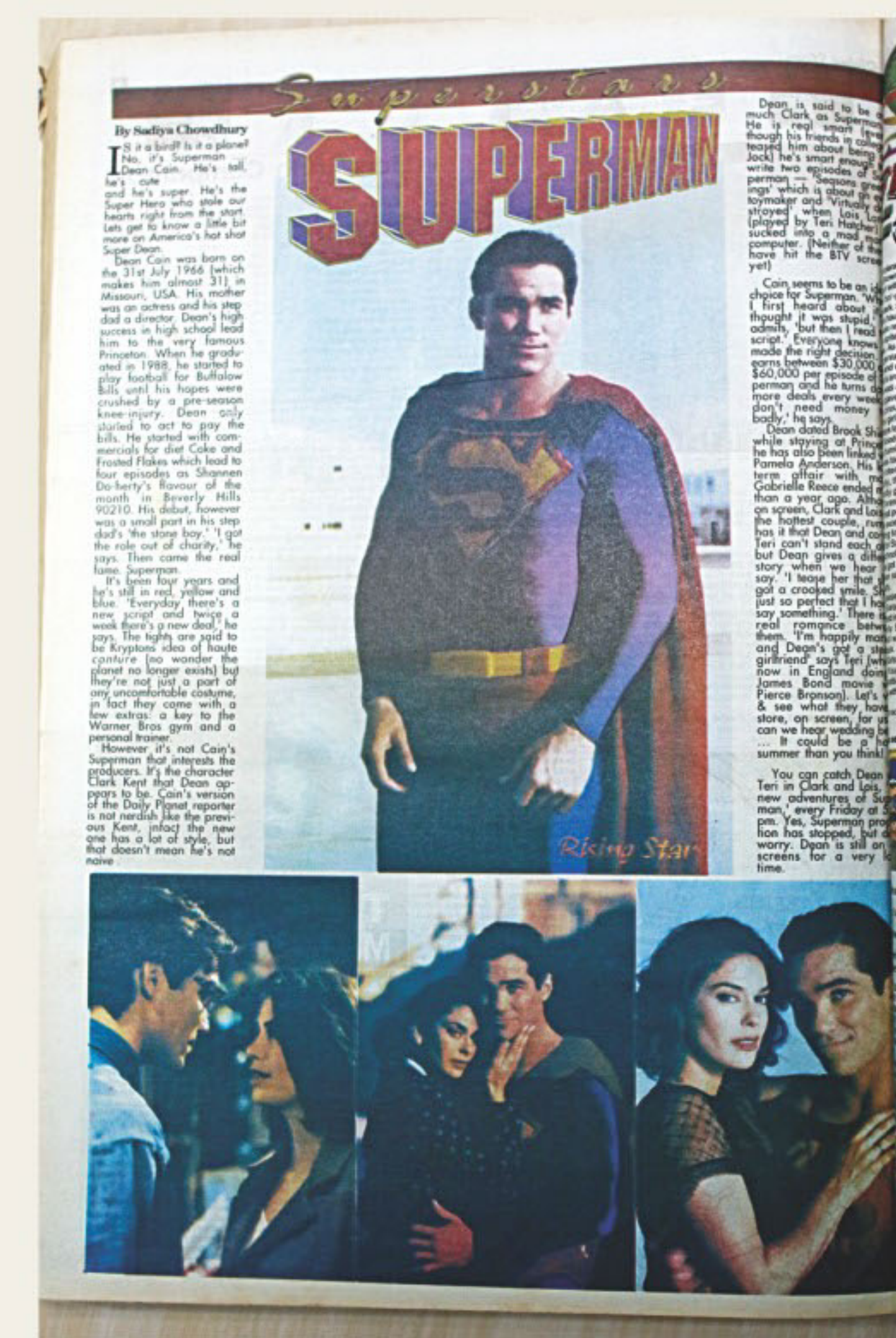
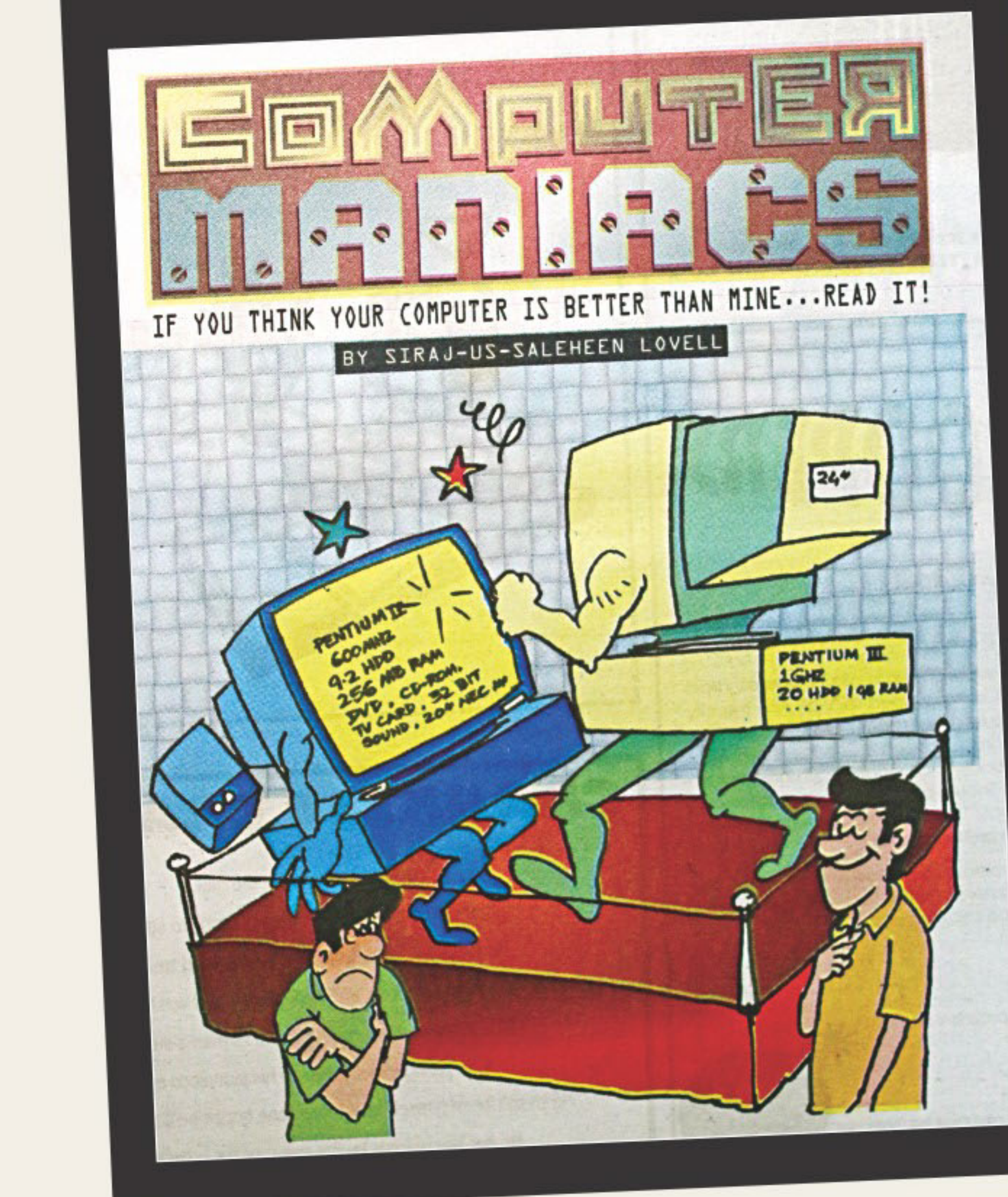


Evolution of a Youth Publication

THE RISE OF RISING STARS

On a sunny March morning in 1992, the citizens of Bangladesh would lay their eyes on the very first issue of *Rising Stars*, the soon-to-be sensation, and the first youth publication of its kind. This occasion would become momentous in many ways as *Rising Stars* would go on to become as much a part of the mainstream youth culture in Bangladesh as blue jeans. Apart from the nature of the supplement, *Rising Stars* was also a pioneer in a different way; it was the first tabloid magazine of its kind for *The Daily Star* and would help pave the way for all the other tabloids that you know and love so much. It was also the first magazine that was done digitally, with computers replacing the previous way of cutting and pasting layout designs.



OSAMA RAHMAN

The first issues of *Rising Stars*, with Raffat Binte Rashid as editor of the publication for 10 of its formative years, took a laborious effort to produce. Firstly, the text and images had to be traced on paper and then manually cut. The ever-present Abedur bhai would edit pictures using their positives in a black room while individual dummy layouts had to be handmade every week. Its relevance to the story is that it was this very team of *Rising Stars* that would lead the way to digitisation, becoming the first publication of *The Daily Star* to be digitally produced. Sharier Khan and Toufik Elahi led the efforts behind this pivotal undertaking with Romel Mostafa offering his contributions as well.

The recruitment process back then would attract the best young writers from the country, with notable schools such as St. Joseph, Green Herald, Sunbeams, Aga Khan and numerous others heavily represented by applicants. The magazine, first raised by Sona Bari, did not instantly endear itself

to the readers. But as the weeks passed and the content developed in time, it became the first English youth magazine to amass an actual following. Sona Bari steered the *Rising Star* ship for the first eight months before Raffat Binte Rashid took over, building on past record and nurturing brand new ones.

As the reputation of the youth publication grew, *Rising Stars* began attracting some of the brightest young minds in the country. Among them, Sabrina F. Ahmad, Ehsanur Raza Ronny and Mannan Mashnur Zarif became the rising stars of *Rising Stars* and they would go on to help create the most original and timeless contents. The *Rising Stars* team was always given a lot more leeway than others, in terms of their themes and writing styles. Driven by an energetic and youthful exuberance and sprinkled with a dash of carefree attitude, *Rising Stars* soon became bolder and better. The attention to highly vetted, original content had managed to reflect the pulse of a nation restless to progress towards a brighter future. The magazine

grew with the readers themselves, starting off with cartoons, drawings and jokes to having more opinion pieces and creating content, propelling *Rising Stars* towards nurturing a cult following of sorts.

In fact, the very first issue in the tabloid format of *Rising Stars* on May 8, 1997, came out as an amalgamation of two previous supplements, *Kid Stars* and *Teens and Tweens*. The first few issues could best be described as being cluttered. The whole layout though reflected a young mind – always curious, restless and jumping from one topic to another. Sure, in hindsight the content may seem juvenile and the jokes lame, but it was what was demanded by people at that time. Kind of like *Pulp Fiction*, unless you were there you would be forgiven for missing the joke. Soon though the *Rising Stars* cult grew and being one of the only platforms of the time which the youth could truly call their own, *Rising Stars* soon started catering to an audience with perhaps the most diverse range of interests.

Rising Stars soon transformed from an entertain-

ing read to a morally-conscious one where sudden epiphanies were punctuated by laughs and giggles. Columns like Cool Adda, Tete-e-tete, inimitable reviews, the exploits of Babu and numerous cover stories became a part of Thursday mornings. If any Thursday saw *Rising Stars* unavailable due to public holidays, a collective groan could almost be felt going through the city. In 2012, Ehsanur Raza Ronny, who had been one of the first 'Rising Stars', was promoted to In-charge of the supplement. The magazine maintained its progression, with the supplement considered the bona fide and undisputed voice of the youth, exemplified by the highly popular Vox Pop column. The letters continued to pour in and the advent of social media shot the magazine to interact with a target audience of age 12-20 for whom *Rising Stars* became the best outlet. It became the voice of the youth, the ones who couldn't vote but were more abreast than were given credit for. Their voices rang through and even those beyond *Rising Stars* regular demographic took notice. The rest, as they say, is history.