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THE MAGAZINE OF THE MACABRE AND FANTASTIC!

FROM THE PUBLISHERS OF
INFINITY

THE DARK SIDE
The Magazine of the Macabre and Fantastic

Issue 197 £3.99

PETER CUSHING
THE GENTLEMAN OF HORROR

TV TERRORS
THE SCARIEST ANTHOLOGY EVER

BABE FROM BEYOND
BARBARA CRAMPTON'S
HEAD FOR HORROR!

PLUS: DARKFEST 2018, VAL LEWTON'S CARMILLA, HALLOWEEN REVISITED, FABIO FRIZZI - FULCI'S COMPOSER, DRILLER KILLER INTERVIEWED, AND MUCH, MUCH MORE!



Well, you've been to *Infinity* and beyond, and now it's time for you to come on over to *The Dark Side*. No, we don't mean Darth Vader's mob, we are talking about Britain's premier magazine of the macabre and fantastic. *The Dark Side* has been going longer than the Brexit negotiations and has proven a great deal more successful, so if you haven't discovered us yet then you really need to wake up and smell the coffins. Why not start by checking out our latest issue, which is packed full of fascinating features, some by your favourite *Infinity* scribes!

You'll find some great interviews here: with the lovely Barbara Crampton, star of such cult successes as *Re-Animator* and *From Beyond*, with Fabio Frizzi, who composed the music scores for many of Lucio (Zombie Flesh-Eaters) Fulci's biggest hits, and with director Abel Ferrara (*Driller Killer*), who takes time to talk to us about his offbeat approach to filmmaking in a remarkably frank chat about the trials and tribulations of working in and out of the studio system.

If classic horror is your thing you won't want to miss Clive Dawson's absorbing, brilliantly researched piece on how the 1940s Val Lewton adaptation of J. Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* morphed into the 1945 movie, *Isle of the Dead*. You'll also enjoy our piece about the late, great Peter Cushing. This is actually an interview that was conducted way back in 1986 but never published in its entirety so it makes for a fascinating retro read. Our epic 3-part look at the *Halloween* franchise concludes with a look at the new hit movie, and last but not least we have a feature that will really appeal to *Infinity* fans - a lengthy article on anthology TV shows, which covers everything from *Out of this World* and *The Twilight Zone* to *American Horror Story* and *Inside No.9*. With news and reviews and a report on our latest sell-out DarkFest, this issue is sure to go well, so go out and grab one while stocks still last - you won't regret it.

GOOD REASONS TO COME ON OVER TO THE DARK SIDE



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THE DARK SIDE PROUDLY PRESENTS:

BRITISH HORROR FILMS

BEYOND HAMMER & AMICUS

AVAILABLE NOW!

Following on from our hugely popular volumes on Hammer and Amicus Films we are proud to be able to complete a terrifying trilogy with this exhaustively researched and stunningly illustrated book on the many other great British horror movies made by companies such as Tigon and Tyburn, and cult directors like Pete Walker, Terence Fisher, Freddie Francis, Michael Reeves and Norman J. Warren.

Many of genre cinema's most enduring classics were made in Britain, and you are sure to learn something new about these old favourites in a book that tackles the subject in exhaustive detail, right from the silent days through to the modern era of low budget streaming screamers!

Along the way we cover the movies of the great Tod Slaughter, Britain's unsung horror star, and salute Ealing's chilling ghost story compendium, *Dead of Night* (1945). We also look at AIP's adventures in the UK and the controversy surrounding Anglo Amalgamated's so-called 'Sadean Trilogy' of *Horrors of the Black Museum* (1959), *Circus of Horrors* (1960) and *Peeping Tom* (1960).

The rich rural landscapes of 'folk' horror are a big part of this book too, epitomised in the likes of Robin Hardy's pagan masterpiece, *The Wicker Man* (1973), Michael Reeves' unforgettable *Witchfinder General* (1968) and Tigon's unofficial followup, *Blood on Satan's Claw* (1971).

To tell the full story of British Horror Cinema, *Dark Side* editor Allan Bryce has enlisted some of today's most highly respected genre authors - award-winning writers such as Simon Fitzjohn, John Hamilton, Christopher Koetting, John Martin, Denis Meikle, Neil Pettigrew and M.J. Simpson. Each one brings their unique style and knowledge to their specialist subject.

Profusely illustrated throughout, with never-before-published stills, posters, lobby cards and candid photographs, this lavish book is an essential purchase for any fan of British horror films!



This stunning book is available now. It has a limited print run and will only be sold through *The Dark Side* for £20 a copy including p&p. Please be aware that the price per book for foreign orders is £25 to take into account higher shipping rates.

Payment can be made in two ways - via PayPal on our website at: www.thedarksidemagazine.com, or by cheque made out to Ghoulish Publishing, along with the form below, to:
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WELCOME

MARVEL MEMORIES - WHY STAN REALLY WAS THE MAN...

Well it had to happen some day I guess, but the passing of Stan Lee was still a shock to the system. He always looked great for his age and the thought of a new blockbuster Marvel epic without a Stan cameo was, well, unthinkable.

95 was a good innings but it is still a sad day for all comic fans. When I was a kid there were two writers who influenced my somewhat skewed mental development more than any others. One was *The Twilight Zone's* Rod Serling, the other was Stan Lee. They were hugely imaginative and talented individuals who I found that I really connected with. In fact I somehow felt I knew them personally, Rod on screen chatting directly to me through a healthy haze of ciggie smoke, and Stan who created a community around Marvel, pioneering direct lines of communication from fans to creators. I was part of the Marvel family, a 'true believer' and 'keeper of the flame,' and when Stan said "Face front!" I always did.

Mind you, Marvels were a bit hard to come by back in the early-to-mid 1960s when I first started collecting them. W.H. Smith didn't carry US comics, so it was a case of me getting on my bike and cycling everywhere looking for small newsagents whose spinning racks were stacked with American imports. I was joined in this quest by my comics mad school pal Richard Bowden, my best friend, actually, though we once had to be separated by an irate newsagent when coming to blows over who would get their hands on the sole remaining copy of *Avengers* issue 16. "Can't you share it?" he asked. Yeah, like that was going to happen. Can't say it would be half as much fun these days cyber-fighting over something on eBay. And it was the thrill of the chase that made it so much more exciting when we did discover the odd missing treasure from our collections.

We were so obsessed with Marvel superheroes that we used to dress up as them and have battles in the woods and fields near our homes in rural Westcott. Richard Bowden was Iron Man, clad in a cardboard box painted silver and looking like a really crappy robot out



of a 1940s movie serial. My friend Meredith Hutchins was Thor, who wielded the mighty hammer Mjolnir, forged in the heart of a dying star. Well, it was actually his dad's sledgehammer, forged in Sheffield, but it made quite a dent in Iron Man's armour and Richard Bowden ran off crying to tell his mum while I pointed out to Meredith that we were supposed to all be on the same side. He didn't half run off over that rainbow bridge when Richard's mum turned up armed with a rolling pin.

I was, believe it or not, Captain America, and in the absence of a shield I used the family dartboard. Oh what adventures we had, especially when we came up against our most deadly foe, Doctor Doom in the persona of my brother Sandy.

Dressed in a lime green hoodie the master villain was armed with a Sekiden gun filled with lethal dum dum ammunition. As kids of the 60s will know, Sekiden guns fired small pea-sized pellets made of clay, and they were pretty lethal at close range. Sandy had taken it to another level with actual dried peas, and for back-up he carried a spud gun. Even the real Doctor Doom was never such a fearsome menace. Once those King Edwards started flying we all buggered off back to the Avengers clubhouse pronto.

Ah yes, happy days, and we have dear old Stan the Man to thank for them. I enjoy the new Marvel blockbusters, but they bear little relation to the wonderfully written and illustrated Marvel comics of my youth, comics that we used to lay out in the form of a colourful carpet, much to the annoyance of my parents. My favourite covers included the likes of Steve Ditko's *The Final Chapter* issue of *Spider-Man*, which I am glad we managed to get into the magazine this issue in our tribute to the late great Marvel artist. We had already more or less wrapped up this one, with features on Steve Ditko and the history of Marvel Comics when the news of Stan's death came in, so all there was space for was a one page obituary, but we are sure to be returning to the great man time and again in future. Excelsior, dear friends and always face front!

Allan Bryce.



HELP US KEEP UP TO DATE WITH WHAT YOU WANT

We value every single reader and they value us, which is why we are flourishing at a time when print magazines everywhere are having a tough time. We want to encourage you all to send in your views on *Infinity* so we can get a lively letters section going, and if you have news of sci-fi-related conventions, movies, books etc, we will be happy to give you some publicity for them. Most importantly, please tell us what we are doing right and (perish the thought) what we are doing wrong! You can reach us by

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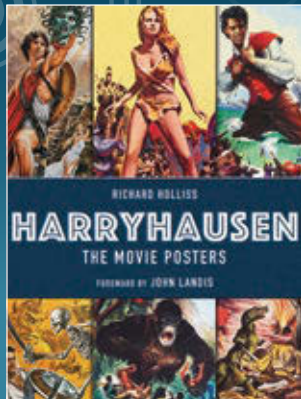
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INFINITY NEWS

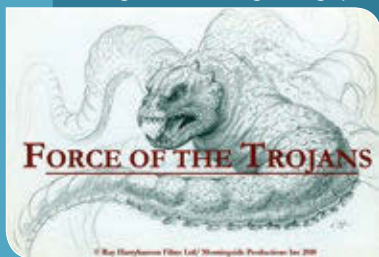
The *Infinity* team bring you news on your favourite TV shows and movie franchises, including a *Star Trek* babe in Bridlington and a new Ray Harryhausen project!



A NEW RAY HARRYHAUSEN MOVIE!

Here's some news that will bring a ray of sunshine into the lives of the many fans of the legendary special effects visionary Ray Harryhausen.

Ray may no longer be with us but his legacy is in great hands with the Ray and Diana Harryhausen Foundation. John Walsh, an award-winning film maker is a trustee of the Foundation and he was in touch to tell us that they have just announced a joint effort with Morningside Productions, the company of late film producer Charles Schneer. The discovery of new materials in the



vast archives of the Ray and Diana Harryhausen Foundation will be the basis of a spectacularly new and original theatrical motion picture in the style of such Harryhausen/Schneer classics such as *Clash of the Titans*, the duo's most significant box office collaboration from 1981.

This project, tentatively entitled *Force of the Trojans*, is based on a screenplay by Beverley Cross, and original production art and sculptures conceived by Ray Harryhausen that are on par with some of his most iconic screen creatures.

Force of the Trojans will embody the spirit of the original Harryhausen films with all the fun, vibrant action, epic scope and dedication to craftsmanship that has made Ray Harryhausen's films timeless.

Unlike other revisits to the fantasy adventure genre, *Force of the Trojans* will bring together stop-motion animation with the photo-real world of CGI, marking the first time that a monster battle will mix both techniques on screen in a major motion picture. In homage to a bygone era, this film will bring both worlds crashing together. For the first time, the film will put on screen sequences that were not possible for Ray due to the limitations of special effects photography at the time.

The Harryhausen Foundation oversees and curates a vast creative archive of 60 years' worth of artefacts in its 50,000-strong collection from the father of animated special effects, making this the most complete and comprehensive fantasy cinema and animation collection anywhere in the world. They are excited and challenged to have unearthed this lost gem and a look forward to creating a film that will delight both the fans of Ray Harryhausen and moviegoers everywhere.

Meanwhile, 2019 sees the publication of John's new book *Harryhausen: The Lost Films*, which is a must for your library. As is the recently published *Harryhausen The Movie Posters*, a sumptuous tome showcasing the posters from all of Ray's movies, from 1949's *Mighty Joe Young*, to *Clash of the Titans* in 1981. It's the first book devoted solely to the promotional art associated with the films themselves. Featuring posters from all over the world, as well as commentary from the Ray & Diana Harryhausen Foundation, this is an essential addition to any fan's library, especially as it is written by my dear friend Richard Holliss, a worthy regular contributor to *Infinity* - check out his super *Land Unknown* feature in this very issue! Both Ray books are from Titan, but they won't clash on your book shelf!

IT'S ABOUT TIME

I don't get asked to do that many straight-to-camera Blu-ray/DVD extras because I am told that I have a better face for radio, but recently I got the fun chance to contribute to an upcoming UK BD release of one of my favourite old sci-fi movies, namely *Somewhere in Time*, the 1980 film adaptation of the 1975 novel *Bid Time Return* by Richard Matheson, who also wrote the screenplay.

Starring Christopher (*Superman*) Reeve, Jane Seymour and Christopher Plummer, and boasting a splendid music score by John Barry utilising the 18th variation of Sergei Rachmaninoff's 'Rhapsody on a Theme of



Paganini', this charming sci-fi romance failed to set the box office alight when first released but has built up a considerable fan base over the years. It has even inspired the International Network of *Somewhere In Time* Enthusiasts (I.N.S.I.T.E.), an official fan club, which was formed in 1990 and continues to meet regularly.

No date has been firmed up for the UK Blu-ray release yet but I'm assuming it will be around March/April time and of course we will reviewing it here - though modesty will forbid me bigging up my own contribution...

FEARSOME FEMALES RULE

Alita: Battle Angel is an upcoming American cyberpunk action film based on Yukito Kishiro's manga *Battle Angel Alita*. Produced by James Cameron and Jon Landau, the film is directed by Robert Rodriguez from a screenplay by Cameron and Laeta Kalogridis. Production and release have been repeatedly delayed due to Cameron's work on *Avatar* and its sequels, but it is now scheduled to be released by 20th Century Fox on February 14, 2019 and will be screened in IMAX cinemas.

The latest trailer shows off the softer side of the anim  hero - before teasing just how dangerous she can be, if necessary. In addition to trailing the romance between Alita (Rosa Salazar) and Hugo (Keanu Johnson), the new spot for the manga adaptation also shows Alita in action against a number of cyborg enemies, including a glimpse at the Motorball sequence the director has described as the central action scene in the movie.

And staying with tough heroines, more than four decades after their creation, the most deadly women in the DC Universe are finally going to have their time in the spotlight, with DC Entertainment announcing a new *Female Furies* comics miniseries for 2019.

The series will centre around the group of warriors created by Jack Kirby for his *Mister Miracle* series in the 1970s (They debuted in 1972's *Mister Miracle No. 6*). Trained by the sadistic Granny Goodness, the Furies are the elite soldiers of Apokolips, the home planet of intergalactic despot Darkseid - but despite their skill, they're rarely sent to the frontlines, which is the starting point for the new series.

"The fact is that the Furies are kept down by the circumstances of where they live and who is in power," series writer Cecil Castellucci reveals. "How do women in that kind of world have an awakening, and ultimately a reckoning, with their lot? And how do they come into their own true power and become a team to make a change for better or worse? What does it mean to have someone's back after years of stabbing people in the back?"

Castellucci, whose previous comics work includes *Shade the Changing Girl* and *Soupy Leaves Home*, will work with *Plastic Man* artist Adriana Melo on the series; *Mister Miracle*'s Eisner Award-winning artist Mitch Gerads will provide covers. *Female Furies* will launch in February 2019.



MONSTER MASH

Godzilla: King of the Monsters is still five months away from its theatrical release, but Warner Bros. and Legendary's budding Monsterverse have already started filming the next one, *Godzilla vs. King Kong*, in the Pacific, mainly Hawaii and Australia. The following plot synopsis for the film was also revealed:

In a time when monsters walk the Earth, humanity's fight for its future sets Godzilla and Kong on a collision course that will see the two most powerful forces of nature on the planet collide in a spectacular battle for the ages. As Monarch embarks on a perilous mission into uncharted terrain and unearths clues to the Titans' origins, a human conspiracy threatens to wipe the creatures, both good and bad, from the face of the earth forever.

Adam Wingard (*Death Note*) sits in the director's

chair, leading an all-star cast that includes Millie Bobby Brown (*Stranger Things*), Rebecca Hall (*Iron Man 3*), Brian Tyree Henry (*Into the Spider-Verse*), Julian Dennison (*Deadpool 2*), Kyle Chandler (*First Man*), Demián Bichir (*The Nun*), Jessica Henwick (*Iron Fist*), Alexander Skarsgård (*The Legend of Tarzan*) and Danai Gurira (*Black Panther*). The Monsterverse iteration of *Godzilla* was first introduced in 2014 by director Gareth Edwards (*Rogue One*). Kong stomped onto the scene in 2017's *Skull Island*, an adventure movie set against the backdrop of the Vietnam War and 1960s - directed by Jordan Vogt-Roberts (*Metal Gear Solid*). Before the giant lizard fights the giant ape, however, he'll slug it out with Mothra, Rodan, and King Ghidorah in *King of the Monsters* on May 31, 2019. The epic battle of *Godzilla vs. King Kong* commences in cinemas on May 22, 2020, and while we are sure it will be fun, we bet the modern poster for this won't be anywhere near as great as the poster for Toho's 1963 version.



ANOTHER TRIP TO THE WELLS

They never learn, do they? The 1960 George Pal/Rod Taylor version of *The Time Machine* was such a wonderful movie that any remake was on a hiding to nothing - as the totally misjudged Guy Pearce remake proved.



Now we have another *Time Machine* heading our way from Warner Bros, Paramount Pictures and Appian Way. All three companies have teamed with *It: Chapter 2* director Andy Muschietti and his producer sister Barbara Muschietti to develop a new version of the famed H.G. Wells tale.

Andy and Barbara Muschietti have written a treatment for the film and Andy will direct and Barbara will produce it with Appian Way's Jennifer Davisson and Leonardo DiCaprio. In the unlikely event you've never read the story or seen any

film versions, the tale revolves around an inventor who hopes to alter the events of the past and travels 800,000 years into the future, where he finds humankind divided into warring races.

Muschietti recently finished *It: Chapter 2* for Warner Bros and he and his sister also have *Attack on Titan* at Warner Bros. and *Robotech* at Sony in development, so they have all the time in the world to get round to this...

WILL WHO BE HELD UP?

Recent reports have suggested that the next series of *Doctor Who* could be delayed until 2020, with a rumoured hold-up in the start of shooting for Jodie Whittaker's second season said to potentially push back the start of the BBC sci-fi series by a number of months.

But is it true? Well, according to a report on RadioTimes.com, a reduced shooting period might not mean a delay even if *Doctor Who* does start filming a little later than it did for series 11.

The story of *Doctor Who* Series 12's possible delay stems from a report suggesting that filming for the new episodes won't kick off until January 2019, later than the current series began shooting (in late October 2017) and suggesting a shorter or shifted production schedule.

"It looks far more likely that the next run will air in winter or spring 2020," a BBC source revealed. "There simply isn't time to finish filming and get all the editing done before next October. It's too tight. We're facing a gap year." However, other sources suggest that production on the new series will



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be underway sooner than the new year, and that no plans have yet been finalised about moving the show's 12 episodes (and thus making 2019 a *Doctor Who* gap year) anyway.

"We go into production next month," a source close to the show said, "but it's much too early to be making scheduling decisions anyway. We hadn't decided when the current series would air when we were filming it - we only decided a few months ago."

Asked in September whether production on series 12 would begin soon, series showrunner Chris Chibnall was non-committal.

"Hopefully, yeah," he said. "It'd be nice, wouldn't it?"

SCI-FI LEGEND COMES TO BRIDLINGTON

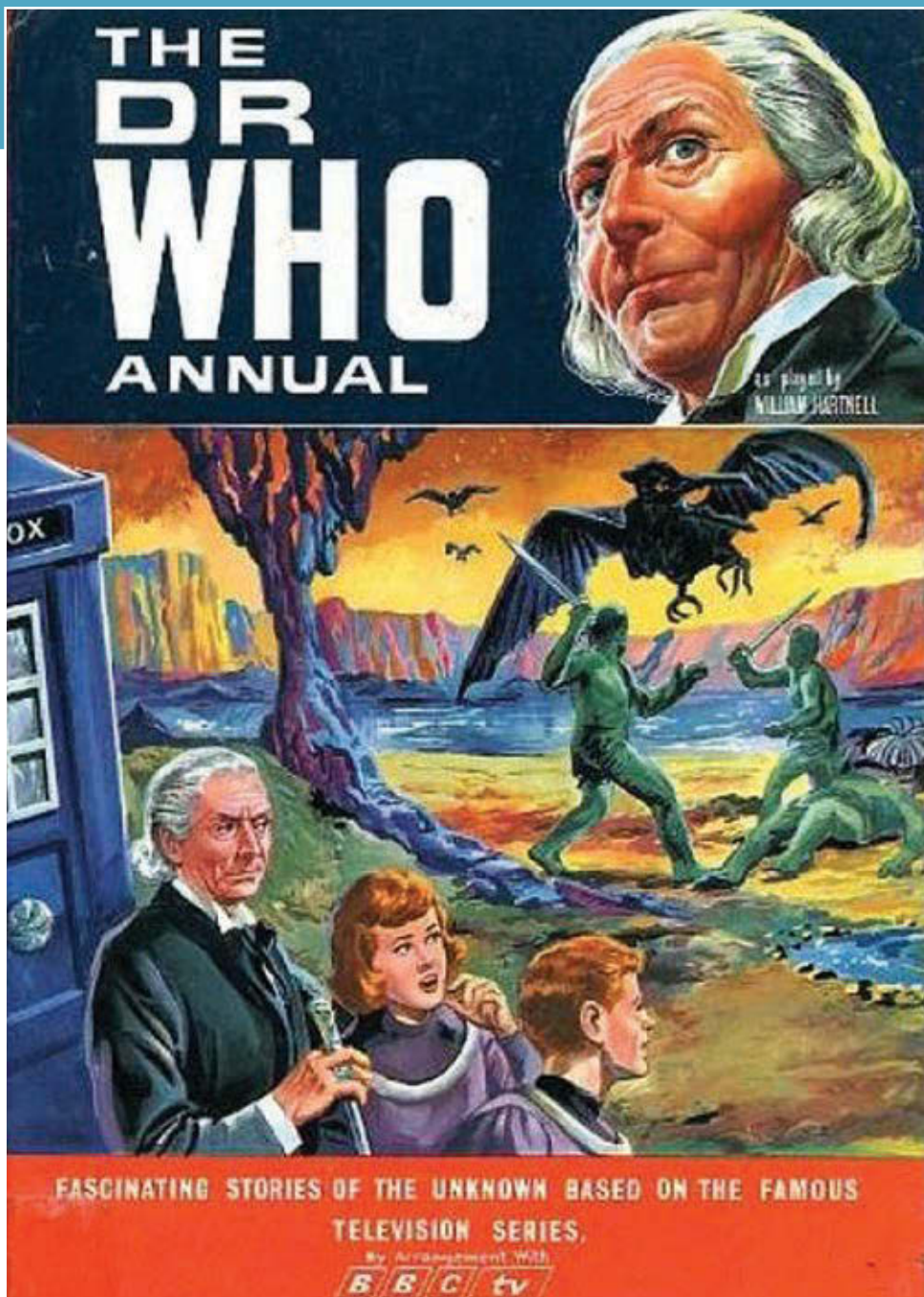
Star Trek legend Marina Sirtis is flying in from America to star in Bridlington's pantomime this Christmas. Known to millions around the globe as Counsellor Deanna Troi from *Star Trek: The Next Generation* television series and films, she is jetting in from LA to play the Fairy in *Jack and the Beanstalk*. Born in London, Marina has also appeared in *Grey's Anatomy*, *Girlfriends* and *Without a Trace* and her film credits include Oscar winning movies *La La Land* and *Crash*.

Andrew Aldis, general manager of Bridlington Spa, said: "I tend to overuse words like 'delighted' and 'a coup' when announcing the names of stars coming to Bridlington Spa but on this occasion I am simply and completely in awe - it's not often that you welcome a person who, among other things, has quite literally crash-landed a spaceship.

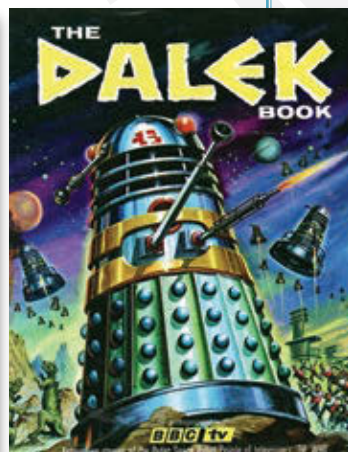
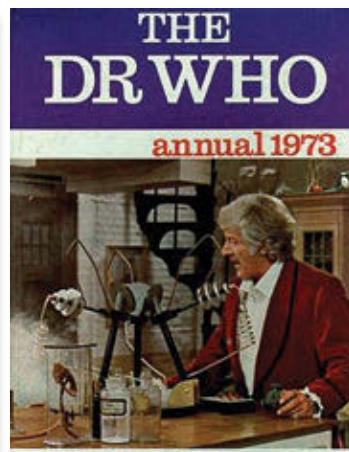
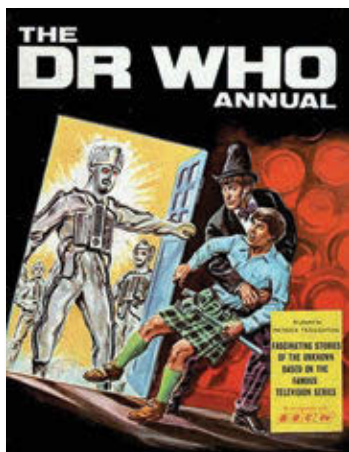
"I can't remember a time when this show didn't feature as one of my family's favourites. My older brother owned every episode on VHS and he guarded them with his life.

"Asking to borrow one required an agreement and commitment on how the tape and case would be handled so as not to damage it."

Jack and the Beanstalk will feature all of the traditional favourite elements of pantomime, with plenty of audience interaction, dazzling scenery and costumes, bucket loads of laughter and, with galactic star Sirtis at the helm, promises to be Bridlington Spa's most magnificent pantomime yet. What's that at the back? Oh yes it will! Book your tickets above.



Will you be finding a comic annual among your Christmas gifts this year? Richard Molesworth looks at how some of our sci-fi and TV favourites have been treated in hardback comic form over the years...



AN AN

For many people of a certain age, Christmas means just one thing. Annuals!

Yes, those perennial

large-format hardback books devoted to subjects far and wide, which start appearing in places like W.H. Smith and Waterstones in late Autumn, tempting young readers with their gaudy covers and garish illustrations. Christmas has traditionally been the time for those pocket-money priced books, so beloved of distant aunts and uncles looking for inexpensive stocking-fillers to buy for their assorted nephews and nieces.

For the young reader, there was always a certain frisson to waking up on Christmas Day, and finding a pile of gift-wrapped annual-sized presents under the tree. Which annuals had you been given? Were they ones about your favourite films or TV programmes? Or had some distant relative made some terrifically unsound presumptions about your core interests...?

It was a Russian Roulette of sorts, with any resultant disappointments tempered by the knowledge that any spare gift money, or those dreaded book tokens, could be soon invested procuring any non-gifted annuals that you actually wanted for a fraction of their cover price in the inevitable post-Christmas bookshop sales.

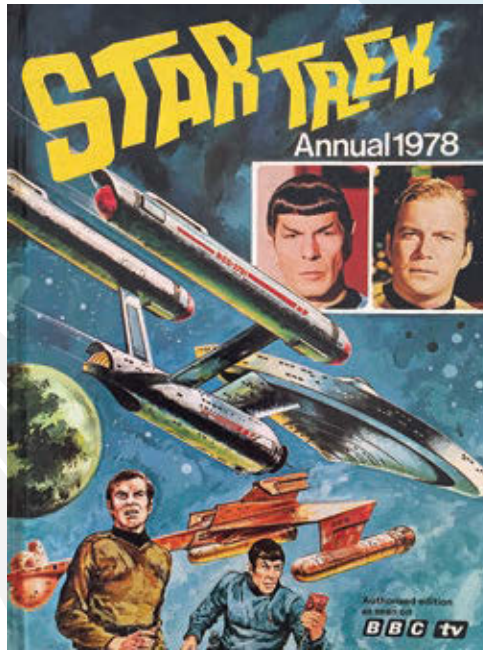
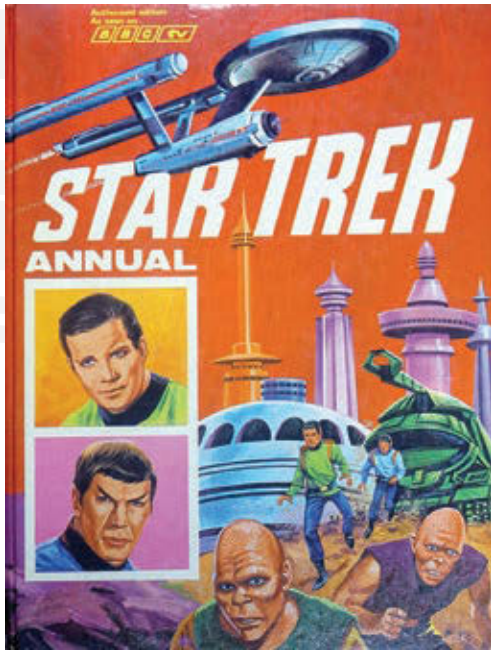
The biggest player in the annual book market for a number of decades was a company called World Distributors. Set up just after the second World War by a trio of brothers, this Manchester-based company specialised in printing and selling annuals exclusively for the children's Christmas market. World Distributors are also generally acknowledged as the publishers who first came up with the tried-and-trusted marketing move of giving their products a 'year' in their title, which was always a year in advance of publication. So all the annuals they published in the Autumn of, say, 1975 generally had the year '1976' in their title. This gave the impression that their products were new, exciting, and generally ahead of their time. It also limited the shop shelf-life of their annuals, but the retail window for

these books was only a few short months anyhow, so there was no real harm done in branding the annuals to specific years.

MINING TV GOLD

World Distributors quickly got into the game of obtaining licences for popular television programmes, in order to publish annuals based on those programmes. Containing both text and comic strips stories, alongside standard page-fillers such as quizzes and crosswords, early examples of their output were annuals based on *The Outer Limits*,

NUAL OBSESSION

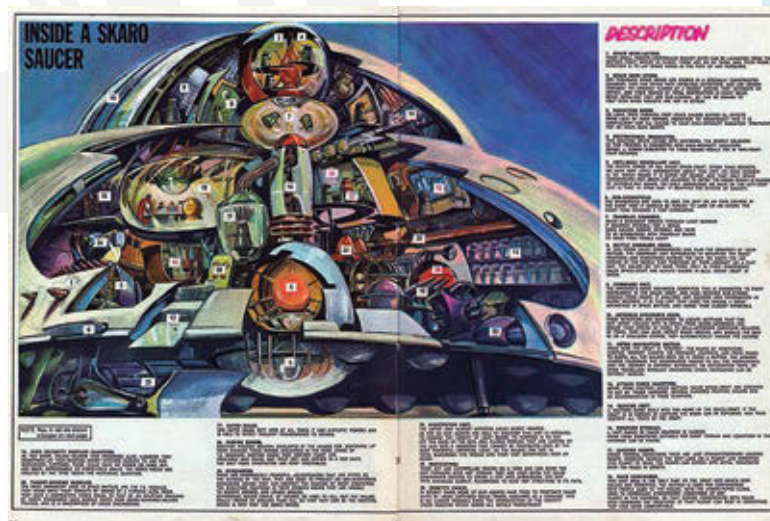
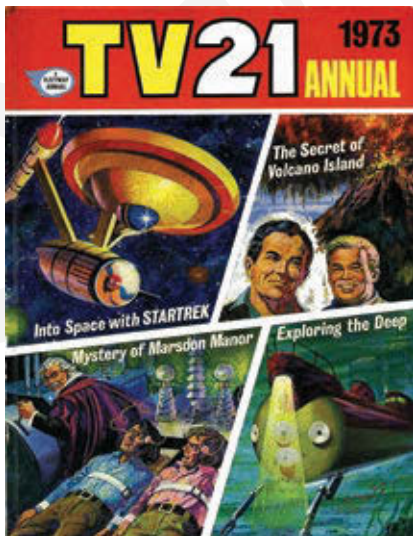


The standard of the contents of the annuals varied greatly over the years, ranging from the rather good and faithful renditions of the series in the latter Jon Pertwee era, to the slightly bonkers stories and bizarre artwork of the mid Tom Baker era, which seemed to bear no resemblance at all to the programme they were meant to be based upon.

Also, for the four years between 1976 and 1979, the company released standalone *Dalek* annuals to complement their *Doctor Who* ones, mixing original art and stories with reprints of the TV21 *Dalek* comic strips of the 1960s. *Doctor Who*'s only 20th century TV spin-off, *K9 and Company*, was also complemented with a World Distributors *K9 Annual* in 1983.

Doctor Who wasn't the only long-running science fiction series to benefit from having an annual franchise with World Distributors. In 1969, the company released their first *Star Trek Annual*, to accompany the US series' first

UK appearance on BBC1 earlier that same year. World Distributors' *Star Trek* annuals appeared in bookshops every year until 1980 (thanks to the longevity of the series on British television due to multiple repeat screenings), and mainly comprised of reprints of US Gold Key *Star Trek* comic books strips, which were essentially 'new' material for most British readers.



The Twilight Zone, *The Man from Uncle* and *Danger Man*, which were all published in the mid-1960s. In 1965, the company negotiated a deal with the BBC to allow it to produce *The Dr Who Annual*, featuring William Hartnell's Doctor, which became a big money-spinner that year. However, when they followed this up with a second annual (again featuring Hartnell's Doctor) the following year, they found that sales were not so healthy, mainly due to the fact that the Doctor was now being played on TV by Patrick Troughton.

However, this sales blip was short-lived, and World Distributors would go on to release a *Dr Who Annual* for every year up until 1986, only missing out releasing one once, in 1972 (for no readily apparent reason). And it wasn't until the 1980 annual that they seemed to realise the name of the series was *Doctor Who*, and not *Dr Who*, as they'd always called it up to that point!

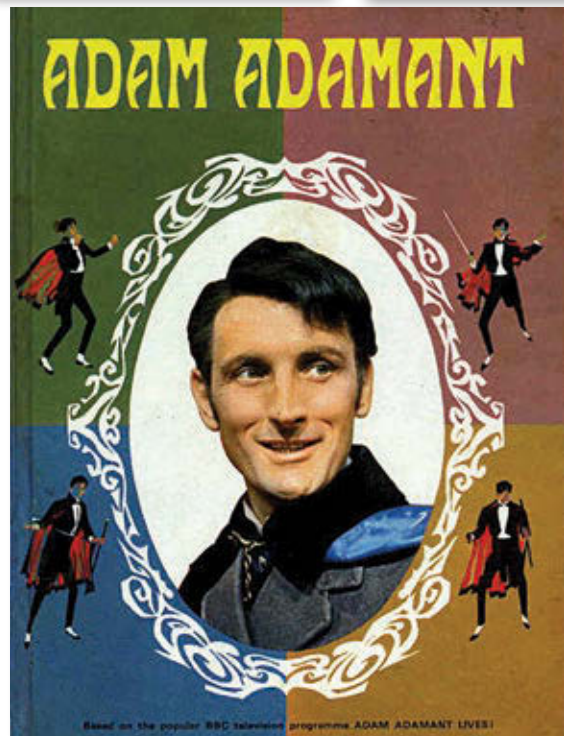
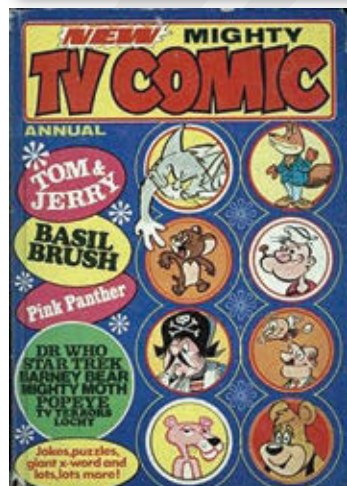
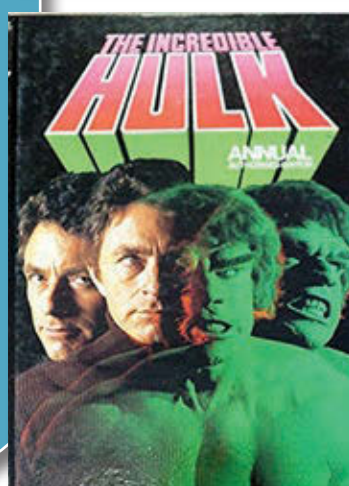
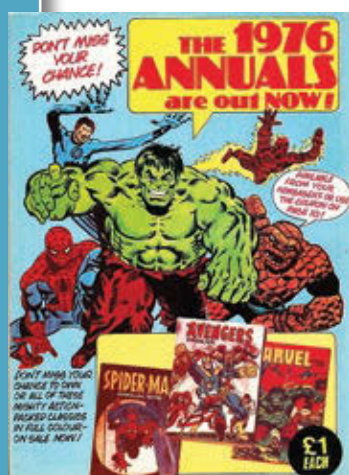


Left: The *Space 1999* annuals proved a longer lasting success than the Gerry Anderson TV show that they were based on...

Doctor Who and *Star Trek* were World Distributors' main annual television tie-in properties, but as the 1960s gave way to the 1970s other television programmes caught the eye of the company's licensing division.

Irwin Allen's *Land of the Giants* US TV series spawned a brace of annuals in 1970 and 1971. Then, just a few years later, Gerry Anderson's *Space: 1999* series launched on ITV in late 1975, and World Distributors produced a tie-in annual ready to hit the bookshops that same Christmas.

Although the series only lasted for two seasons on TV, the World Distributors *Space: 1999* annuals proved to be something of a more tenacious beast, and were a regular part of the company's release schedule for the rest of the decade. Five *Space: 1999* annuals were



MARVEL DEAL

US comic books in general found a niche audience thanks to the UK annual market. During the mid-1970s, World Distributors did a deal with Marvel Comics to release reprinted comic strips of some of their more popular super heroes in annual form, with titles devoted to such characters as *The Avengers*, *Captain Britain*, *The Fantastic Four*, and *Spider-Man* popping up every so often. *The Incredible Hulk* was one comic book character who benefitted from also having his own US TV series in the late 1970s. *The Incredible Hulk* annuals had first popped up in shops several years prior to the TV series launching, but the 1980 and 1981 annuals had the benefit of using images from the TV series on their front covers.

Unsurprisingly, given their ties to the BBC and Terry Nation, World Distributors snapped up the rights to issue annuals based on the series *Blake's 7*, the first of which appeared in late 1978 (dated 1979). Further *Blake's 7* annuals were released in 1979 (dated 1980) and 1980 (dated 1981), all following the template set by the *Dr Who* and *Daleks* annuals of the time. 1981 also saw World Distributors issue their one-and-only *Sapphire and Steel Annual*, based on the popular ITV fantasy series starring Joanna Lumley and David McCallum.

Of course, World Distributors weren't the only publishers in the annual market - there were a number of competitors. Souvenir Press were based in London, and began publishing books in 1951. In 1964 they bagged the rights to release *Dalek Annual*-type books a year

before World Distributors snapped up the rights to *Doctor Who* itself. Their three annual offerings - *The Dalek Book* (1964), *The Dalek World* (1965) and *The Dalek Outer Space Book* (1966) - were all ostensibly written by Dalek creator Terry Nation (although David Whitaker wrote the lion's share of the first two publications, whilst Brad Ashton carried out writing duties on the final book), and proved to be extremely popular whilst 'Dalekmania' was still a big mid-1960s toyshop trend.

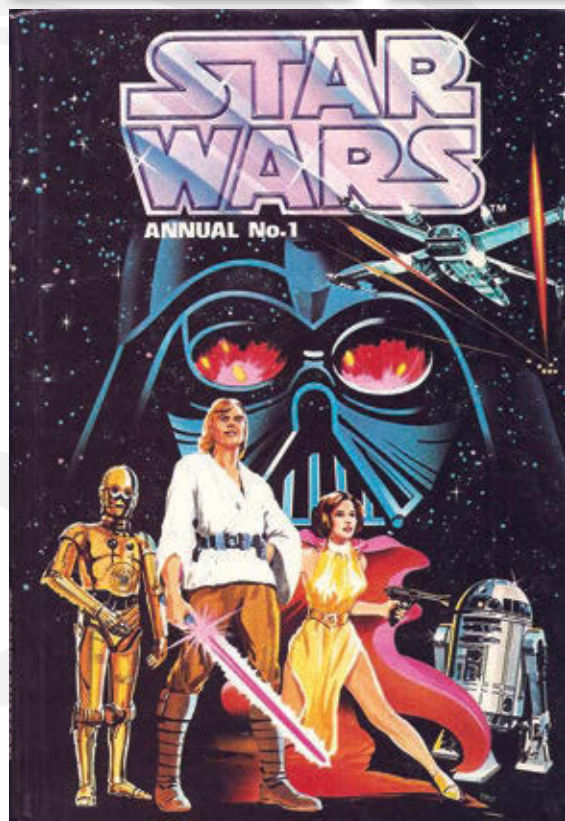
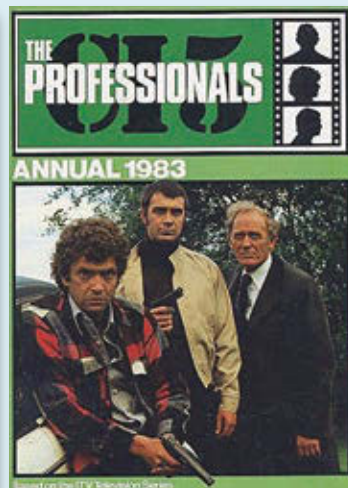
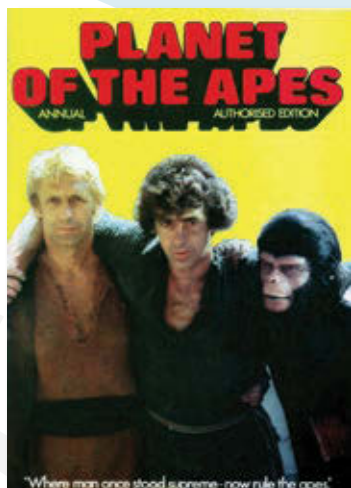
Souvenir Press also acquired the rights to the TV series *The Avengers* through their Atlas publishing imprint, and released three tie-in annuals chronicling the exploits of John Steed and co. in 1967, 1968 and 1969.

BBC Books belatedly got in on the annual act, too, releasing an *Adam Adamant Lives! Annual* in 1968. Polystyle Publications, who published *TV Comic*, plus the short-lived *TV Action* comic, regularly released annual versions of their weekly comic titles in the 1960s and 1970s, containing myriad strips and stories from a whole host of TV series. However, amongst all their assorted *TV Comic* and *TV Action* annuals, they also released a standalone annual in 1971 to tie-in with Gerry Anderson's live-action science fiction series, *UFO*.

A RICH SOURCE

Gerry Anderson's various puppet TV series' had been a rich source of annuals in the previous decade. The publishing company Collins released *Supercar* annuals in 1962, 1963 and 1964. Then another company, City Magazines, stepped in to claim the

Above
Old smoothie Gerald Harper as Adam Adamant, an adventurer born in 1867 and revived from hibernation in 1966... published in total, the last one appearing in 1978 (dated 1979). The contents of the first four annuals were all written by *Look-in* magazine stalwart Angus P. Allen, with artwork supplied by his *Look-in* colleagues John Burns and Martin Asbury. The final annual, however, reprinted strips from the *US Space: 1999* comic book series published by Charlton Comics.



Gerry Anderson franchises. City Magazines were the publisher of the much-loved *TV21 Annual* (based on the weekly comic of the same name) every year between 1965 and 1972. They were also responsible for *Fireball XL5* annuals in 1963, 1964, 1965 and 1966, *Stingray* annuals in 1965 and 1966, *Thunderbirds* annuals in 1966, 1967 and 1968, *Lady Penelope* annuals in 1966, 1967 and 1968, *Captain Scarlet* annuals in 1967, 1968 and 1969, and *Joe 90* annuals in 1968 and 1969 (with no less than two separate *Joe 90* annuals in 1969!).

City Magazines then combined their various Gerry Anderson franchises, and released a single *Thunderbirds/Captain Scarlett and the Mysterons Annual* in 1970. This was followed up by a lone *Thunderbirds Annual* in 1971, before the Gerry Anderson rights shifted to Polystyle Publications, who released the *Thunderbirds Annual* in 1972.

Brown Watson was a small children's publisher, set up by siblings Peter and Brian Babini, which started printing children's annuals in the early 1970s. Some of their best-known and highly-lauded books were a trio of *Planet of the Apes* annuals published

This page:
More great Christmas comic memories, including the very first *Star Wars* annual published in the UK in 1978

in 1975, 1976 and 1977. Almost uniquely amongst the plethora of merchandise around the *Apes* franchise of the time, these annuals were exclusively based on the characters and situations from the short-lived 20th Century Fox *Planet of the Apes* TV series from 1974. These annuals were all illustrated by John Bolton, and his artwork was of a noticeably higher standard than most other similar publications of the time.

Brown Watson were also the publishers of genre TV tie-in annuals for *The New Avengers* in 1977 and 1978, *The Bionic Woman* in 1978 and 1979, *The Gemini Man* in 1978, and *Logan's Run* in 1979.

Brown Watson also published the very first *Star Wars Annual No 1* in the UK in 1978. Reprinting Marvel's comic strip adaptation of the film that would later be called *Star Wars: Episode IV - A New Hope*, the annual was, unsurprisingly, a massive seller. However in 1979, the Babini brothers abruptly left Brown Watson to set up their own annual publishing company, Grandreams, and took with them a swathe of the annual licences that Brown Watson had previously held. Grandreams then published a *Star Wars Annual* the following year, which mainly comprised reprints of Marvel's original ongoing comic strips featuring the film's characters in new post-*Star Wars* adventures.

In 1980, Grandreams released the first *The Empire Strikes Back Annual*, which again reprinted Marvel's comic strip adaptation of the second instalment of the *Star Wars* saga. Grandreams then went all-in the following year, and produced both a *Star Wars Annual* and a *The Empire Strikes Back Annual* (both reprinting post-*Empire* Marvel comic strips), but then elected not to publish anything at all *Star Wars*-related in 1982.

1983 saw a *The Return of the Jedi Annual* released by Grandreams, followed by a second *Jedi* annual the following year, again reprinting Marvel comic strips. Grandreams also bagged the rights to the US TV series *Battlestar Galactica*, and issued annuals in 1979 and 1980 (the latter titled *Mission Galactica*, after the theatrical release of the same name which comprised of two cobbled-together TV episodes).

Stafford Pemberton Publishing was another company that competed in the TV tie-in annual market in the 1970s. One of their early successes was getting the rights to *The Six Million Dollar Man*, enabling them to release annuals based on the series in 1977, 1978, 1979 and 1980. However,

not every new TV series was a potential money-earning franchise, as Stafford Pemberton found out in 1978, when they banked on the success of the TV series *Star Maidens* with a tie-in annual. The company also published *Starsky and Hutch* annuals in 1978 and 1979, *Charlie's Angels* annuals every year between 1978 and 1981, a single *The Tomorrow People Annual* in 1979, and *Buck Rogers in the 25th Century* annuals every year between 1981 and 1984.

ODD PUBLISHING STRATEGIES

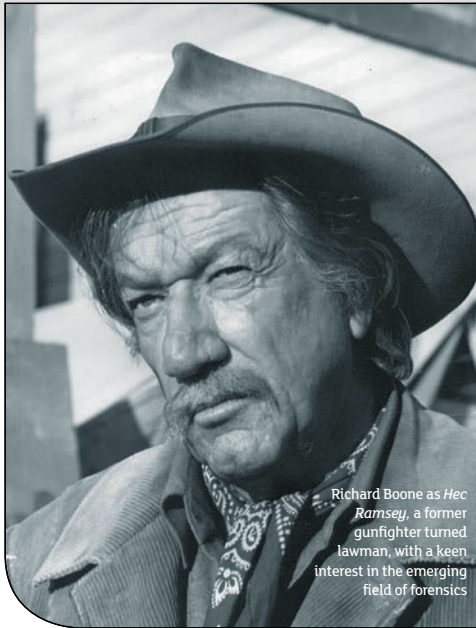
One TV franchise that, unusually, bounced around publishing houses was *The Professionals*, as different companies acquired, and then lost, the rights to print annuals based on the series. Brown Watson were the first in, with their 1979 annual, only for Grandreams to (rather predictably) take over the title for the 1980 and 1981 annuals. Stafford Pemberton then grabbed the title, releasing the 1982, 1983 and 1984 annuals, before a fourth company, Purnell, published the last *The Professionals Annual* in 1985.

Another example of odd publishing strategies were the initial *Star Trek* film annuals. After World Distributors' rights to publish *Star Trek* TV series annuals lapsed in 1980, Grandreams took over the franchise and issued the *Star Trek: The Motion Picture Annual* in 1981, only for Stafford Pemberton to release the *Star Trek: The Wrath of Khan Annual* in 1983. World Distributors then got the annual rights to *Star Trek* back in time to release a rather substandard annual based on the original TV series in 1986, before the title disappeared for good.

Although petering out in the 1990s onwards, mainly due to the dearth of good science fiction films and television programmes to hone in on, the UK children's annual market is still fairly strong in today's retail marketplace. Perennial favourites such as *Star Wars* and *Doctor Who* annuals still appear anew most years, but in general the film and television tie-in market has noticeably shrunk in size in comparison to annuals based around sports teams, pop groups and faddy games such as Roblox. And titles like *The Beano Annual* and *The Dandy Annual* still keep the spirit of the good ol' days alive in high street bookshops. But for many, the joy of rediscovering long-forgotten childhood memories in second-hand shops and online stores such as eBay, make the bygone world of collecting old annuals still a favourite pastime.

MESSAGES FROM BEYOND

We love Close Encounters with our readers so drop us a letter at 29 Cheyham Way, South Cheam, Surrey SM2 7HX or an e-mail at editor@thedarksidemagazine.com and you have a good chance of seeing your own name in print



Richard Boone as Hec Ramsey, a former gunfighter turned lawman, with a keen interest in the emerging field of forensics

Hi Allan,

Delighted to get the latest issue of *Infinity*. I am the tender age of 55, so I'm old enough to have bought the first issues of *Starlog* and *Starburst*, then *Cult TV*, *Timescreen*, *Action TV*, and so on. I'm delighted that you are covering spy and cop shows rather than just focussing on SF. The *Sandbaggers* article was great! I bought the box set a couple of months ago, and at first I thought I'd wasted my money: video interiors, grainy film exteriors, obvious studio sets, long theatrical speeches, no action! But after a couple of episodes I loved it. Once you get over the production values there are great stories. I'm a fan of ITC and Gerry Anderson, and US TV, so my preference is for filmed rather than taped shows, but we live and learn.

How about a feature on *Bodyguards* (Sean Pertwee/Louise Lombard) rather than the BBC's over hyped series of a similar name?

I enjoyed your article on *Target*. Strange that has this never been repeated or put on DVD? (I'd love to get this on DVD, as my girlfriend Frances loves Patrick Mower, so we could watch this together).

But then TV's a funny thing, *Columbo* gets repeated over and over, but what happened to the other "mystery movies" like *McMillan and Wife*, *Banacek*, or my favourite, *Hec Ramsey*?

Thanks for publishing a great magazine. If this gets published on the letters page, can I ask, if you love *Infinity*, please subscribe direct, rather than just buying in your newsagent, that way more of the money goes direct to the publishers. Looking forward to the next issue!

Paul Wakeman (and Frances McIlwham) by email.

Thanks for the plug, Paul. We do indeed get more money from subs, though not a lot. Luckily *Infinity* is doing hugely well in shop sales right now and our subs list is growing nicely too, so the future is looking bright. We may have to wear shades.

Dear Allan,

Hello all you lovely people at *Infinity*. Picked up issue 13 today and looking forward to getting stuck into it. The thing I love most about both *Infinity* and *The Dark Side* is the sense of community and dare I say, friendship. I read with great pleasure the letter from Colin Oaten in response to my ramblings in issue 11. Many thanks for the info on "The Vigilant" Mr Oaten, I will be looking out for this. I have had the pleasure of meeting Simon Furman and Geoff Senior at London film and comic convention and they are both lovely gents. I still have most of my UK *Transformers* comics that they worked on. It is likely that Mr Oaten knows this but they have produced an online comic strip - "To the Death" - that is worth checking out and features some artwork that could be straight from *Dragon's Claws*. I believe they are in the process of producing a print version of it for release in the near future as well. Definitely keep up with the comics coverage. Thanks for another great issue. Trying to make *Infinity* and *Dark Side* last the 6 weeks between issues is not easy though!

All the very best.

Andy Stanton, by email

We have plenty of comics coverage this issue Andy. My main problem as editor is actually finding enough space for the sheer number of great features we have in the pipeline, so a monthly edition would be a sensible option if I could keep up with such a thing at my time of life. I might have to give up my allotment.

Greetings Allan.

Just finished reading the article on Annette Andre in *Infinity* 13. Great stuff. I saw her on telly last week in a show with Herbert Lom (*Human Jungle*). Anyway, the article mentioned actor Ian Ogilvy and this triggered a memory. I know you and your fellow writers are expert on all things horror, so I wonder if you can identify this film/show for me...

I'm sure Ian was the main character in it, but IMBD shows nothing. The story was about a family on holiday in England. I seem to remember them driving about in a Range Rover. They turn off to go to a village for a quick visit but somehow get trapped there back in the 16th century (or thereabouts).

I always thought it was a *Hammer House of Horror*, but it's not an episode of that either. I know I didn't imagine it, but I'm seriously doubting my increasingly befuddled memory. Any ideas? Thanks again for *Infinity*.

John Cavanagh, by email.

I'll have to ask Ian about this when he attends our 2018 DarkFest, John. Doesn't ring a bell with me but sounds a bit like the Stuart Whitman episode of *The Monster Club* (1980). Maybe an *Infinity* reader can help out?

Dear Infinity,

Hi, all the way from Australia. Today you made my day. I totally by accident discovered your great mag at my local newsagent. It's like somebody

just raided my brain and reproduced all my cherished childhood memories.

I grew up in the UK in 1960s and your mag has taken me back to those days of *Doctor Who* (still a fan) *Lost in Space*, *Star Trek* and Gerry Anderson and all those brilliant ITC shows...*Department S*, *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)*, *The Persuaders*, to name a few. I've only just finished reading Issue 12. I just digitally downloaded a couple of back issues thanks to Pocket Mags.

I'm sure you know this as it was mentioned in your letters page, but your mag is reminiscent of (but better than) a criminally short lived publication called *Cult TV*. I wish you every success and longevity. I NEVER send fanboy emails/letters but you guys made my day.

Alun Sims, by email.

Thanks for your kind comments Alun, we have quite a number of subscribers down under now so you are not alone. Expect plenty more ITC coverage and stuff that will give readers of a certain age a cosy glow!

Hello Allan,

Just a Quick thank you for another out-of-this-world *Infinity* issue. *The Tomorrow People*, *Forbidden Planet*, *Wonder Woman*, where else could we find such goodies contained in one single magazine? Like a lot of us, I was saddened by the news of the recent passing of *Land of the Giants* star Deanna Lund. As Valerie Scott, Deanna embodied a strong female role so rare at the time for sixties TV. Her standout episodes for me were 'Collector's Item,' 'The Bounty Hunter,' and 'The Unsuspected.' I could go on.

Infinity's tribute to Deanna left me teary-eyed. I loved The Harry Harris story, though it's typical Deanna. I actually got to meet Deanna Lund at a UK convention several years ago, a lady whose passion for her fans and the TV series she starred in held no bounds. She always signed her photos to her fans with giant hugs. I think we should all give a giant hug to Deanna. Thanks for the memories.

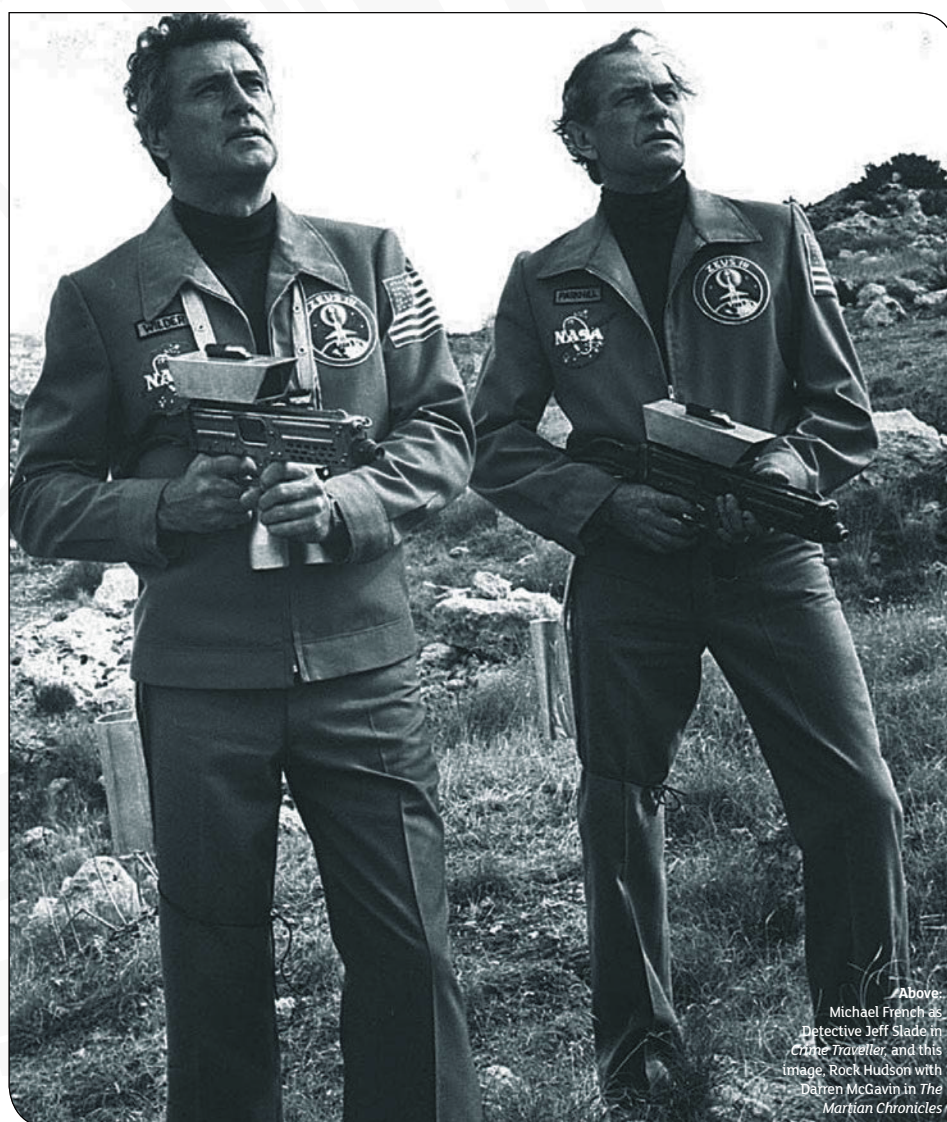
Paul Chiesa, by email.

Great sentiments, Paul. Deanna was such a lovely lady and such a big part of our early sci-fi memories. At least you got to meet her, and you must be grateful for that.

Dear Allan,

Congratulations on your fine magazine. I only picked it up by chance at issue seven but managed to track down all the back issues (I'm not one for digital, so had to pay a little extra for a copy of issue 2 from the USA - worth every penny). Every issue seems to touch base with articles, memories and items that resonate back to my childhood of the sixties and early seventies. My current wife really doesn't understand the beauty of being transported back to those more innocent and imaginative days...

Anyhow, reading your mag got me thinking back and so I thought (as my missus wouldn't listen) I'd have a ramble about those TV shows that seemed to disappear as soon as they started



Above: Michael French as Detective Jeff Slade in *Crime Traveller*, and this image, Rock Hudson with Darren McGavin in *The Martian Chronicles*

and some that don't seem to be as well or fondly remembered. In the sixties, a kid's programme called *The Queen Street Gang*, a sort of 'Famous Five' which had as I remember a little bit of a sci-fi/spy orientation but I can't seem to find anything further about it other than the year (1968) and the pretty groovy theme tune. Has anybody else got any info or even heard of it? *Timeslip* (1970), a very smart time travel show, also disappeared

just as it was getting into gear and *Ace of Wands* was also very underrated. *The Changes*, a quite brilliant series aimed at older kids also felt like a TV landmark at the time (1975).

Getting into my mid-teens in 1977, *Alternative 3* took the UK by storm with what was quite probably the greatest TV hoax ever. For those that don't know, ask your parents, or maybe even ask your grandparents!

I had the wonderfully good fortune to meet and chat with Shane Rimmer last year and he discussed his role as washed-up NASA astronaut 'Bob Grodin'. He said the whole idea and execution was an 'absolute hoot', and the reaction of the viewers jamming ITV switchboards was unbelievable. Maybe time for an appraisal in your magazine, or better still a Shane Rimmer tribute. It actually made headline news on TV, radio and the newspapers, and several lessons in school the next day were taken up discussing it.

In 1980 there was a genuine anticipation when Ray Bradbury's *Martian Chronicles* was finally brought to the small screen in the form of a mini-series, but it got a bit of a panning and even Bradbury himself suggested it was 'boring'. I just got hold of this on Blu-ray and if I can stay awake long enough I intend binge watching in one sitting for a re-evaluation.

Also can anyone enlighten me as to what happened to *Crime Traveller*? Looking back at my old DVDs I think some of the stories were a maybe bit contrived and little twee but there was a good chemistry between the leads and I found the whole thing very entertaining. It was just hitting its stride when after just eight episodes it seemed to disappear into its own loop of infinity.

Finally, a little story about my early childhood spent sitting in the cab of my dad's lorry as he drove the length and breadth of the country delivering steel. There were regular trips to Stirling Road in Slough to all of the Gerry Anderson AP Studios where those fantastic Supermarionation shows were produced. I used to sit outside while my dad went to the very door where legends were being filmed. But being so small I was told never to leave the cab. I would look and wonder and hope that I would get to see something, but all I ever saw was a skip full of rubbish, no smashed up *Fireball XL5*s or discarded *Troy Tempest*s. For years as a kid I dreamed of getting inside those studios. Then over forty years later in March 2016 those old dreams finally came true, to an extent, when I had the opportunity to visit the *Thunderbirds* studio at the same location, just as the place was being cleared up following filming of the three new episodes to mark the it's fiftieth anniversary.

The production staff and crew were genuinely interested to hear my story, and their enthusiasm for their project really was overwhelming considering none of them were even born when the originals were made. When the project was finally completed and released it didn't disappoint, a truly remarkable achievement and fitting tribute to the original Century 21 Studios. Keep up the excellent work

Rik Anstee, by email

I am actually a massive fan of *Crime Traveller*, Rik, so expect a feature in that in the future (or the past). I always felt it was a great shame that they stopped it so quickly - it remains one of my favourite time travel shows, up there with *The Flipside of Dominick Hide*. As for *Alternative 3*, a feature on that would be fascinating. It was produced like a documentary and meant to be shown an episode of the series *Science Report*, so many people still believe *Alternative 3* was based on a true story. The fact it has never been repeated on British TV has given ammunition to conspiracy theorists who believe *Alternative 3* was meant to blow the whistle on an actual government project and alien threat. The film was originally intended to be broadcast on April Fools' Day 1977 as a hoax, but it was delayed until June by industrial action.

Monsters from the dawn of time are discovered in the frozen wastes of Antarctica. Richard Holliss braves sub-zero temperatures to bring you the classic 1957 dinosaur-fest, *The Land Unknown...*




"A PARADISE OF HIDDEN TERRORS!"



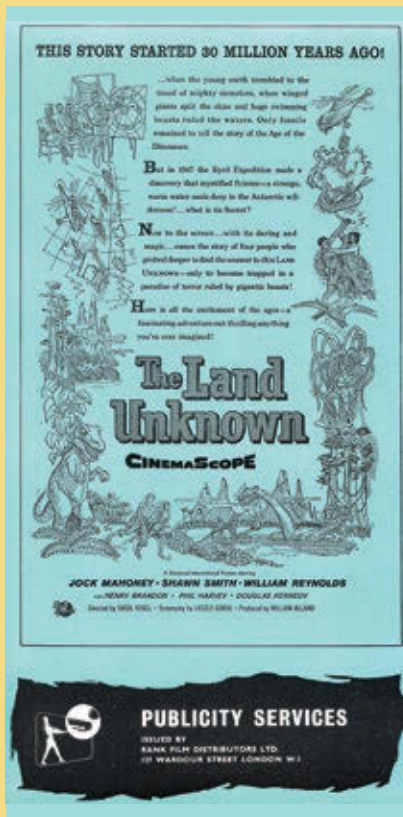
ir Arthur Conan Doyle's 'scientific romance' *The Lost World* (1912), about a volcanic plateau (inhabited by living, breathing dinosaurs) buried deep in the heart of the Amazon rainforest certainly seemed credible to the public at the turn of the 20th Century. With large parts of the world still unexplored it was easy to believe that such a place could exist. Very little had changed to alter this view when, twenty years later, cinemagoers lapped up the concept of a giant gorilla called *King Kong*, and other life forms thought to have been extinct for millions of years, living on an uncharted island off the coast of Sumatra.

But by the late 1940s global exploration of some of the most inhospitable places on Earth had made the chances of finding some mysterious plateau or uncharted island (where monsters still roamed) highly unlikely. When it came to discovering new frontiers, all that remained were the vast frozen wastes of Antarctica and very few individuals were willing to risk their lives on such a venture.

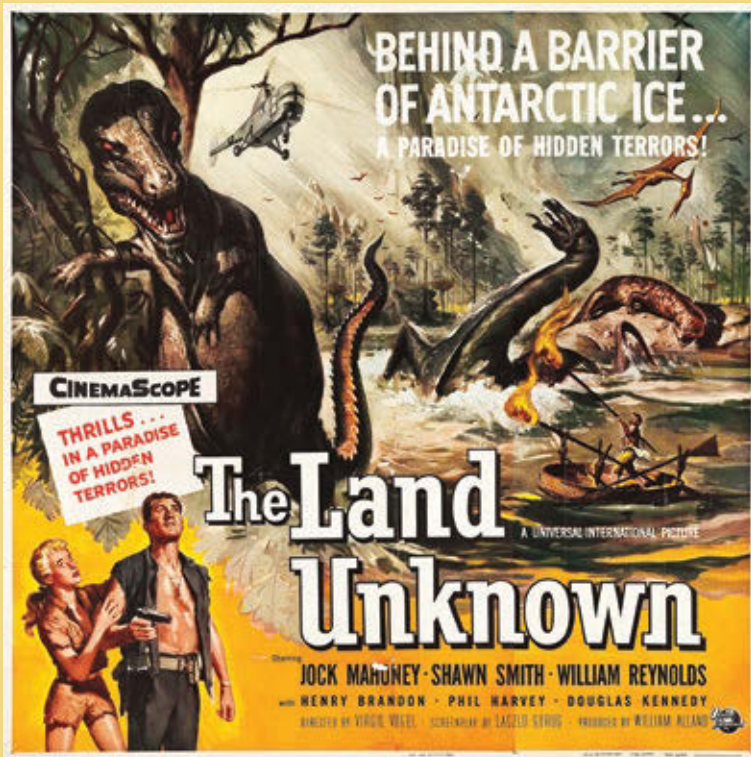
This all changed in 1947, when American aviator, Rear Admiral Richard E. Byrd led an armada of naval vessels on an expedition to the South Pole in order to unravel some of its mysteries. Mapping an area over half the size of the United States, Byrd discovered ten new mountain ranges and, more surprisingly, a lake in the middle of the continent with a temperature of over 26 degrees Celsius.

This startling discovery of a tropical oasis deep in the heart of the polar ice cap fascinated Hollywood producer William Alland. Responsible for some of the most fondly remembered science fiction films of the 1950s, including *It Came From Outer Space*, *The Creature From the Black Lagoon*, *This Island Earth*, and *The Deadly Mantis*, 





Top: A Tyrannosaurus rex faces off with a helicopter and (above) an Elasmosaurus (it's a genus of plesiosaur in case you're asking) emerges from the water
Above: UK campaign book cover



Alland began working on a fictitious idea that the anomalous temperature might be proof of a 'lost world'; a hidden valley inhabited by the kinds of creatures that were usually found on unscalable jungle plateaus or mist-shrouded islands.

Deciding to use the Byrd's findings as the factual starting point to a story, which he called *The Land Unknown*, he assigned veteran film editor turned director, Virgil Vogel (*Citizen Kane*) to study all the documentation surrounding the 1947 expedition. Vogel spent over three weeks viewing footage taken during the trip, including the 1948 Academy Award-winning documentary *The Secret Land*.

In a later interview, Alland explained the reasoning behind his idea; "We used every scientific fact to keep our film authentic. One scientific assumption was that areas of Antarctica are now in a state paralleling that of the Mesozoic Era." (The Mesozoic era lasted 180 million years and covered the entire lifespan of the dinosaurs). Alland hired Charles Palmer to flesh out the idea and Laszlo Gorog (*The Mole People*) was then given the task of adapting Palmer's outline into a screenplay.

In Gorog's script, Hal Roberts is a naval officer sent to investigate an inexplicably warm lake discovered by the Byrd expedition in an uncharted region of Antarctica. Accompanying him is pilot Lt. Jack Carmen, mechanic Steve Miller, and reporter Margaret Hathaway.

When a storm forces their helicopter into a bank of dense cloud it collides with a Pterodactyl and has to

make an emergency landing in a deep valley some 1,000 metres below sea level. When a Tyrannosaurus rex attacks their campsite, they manage to fend off the beast with the copter's rotating blades.

Several days later they meet up with Dr. Charles Hunter (Henry Brandon) whose plane crash-landed ten years earlier. Hunter's isolation has driven him insane and he only agrees to help them repair the helicopter if they leave him Hathaway as a companion. Naturally Roberts refuses and finally wins over the crazed Hunter by saving him from the jaws of a giant Elasmosaurus.

CUTTING COSTS

Universal were very impressed with Gorog's screenplay and announced the movie as a big budget Technicolor, widescreen production along the lines of Walt Disney's *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*. Jack Arnold (*It Came From Outer Space*) was brought into direct the film, while Hollywood gossip columns were full of stories about the studio casting top-drawer talent such as Cary Grant and Veronica Lake to play the leads.

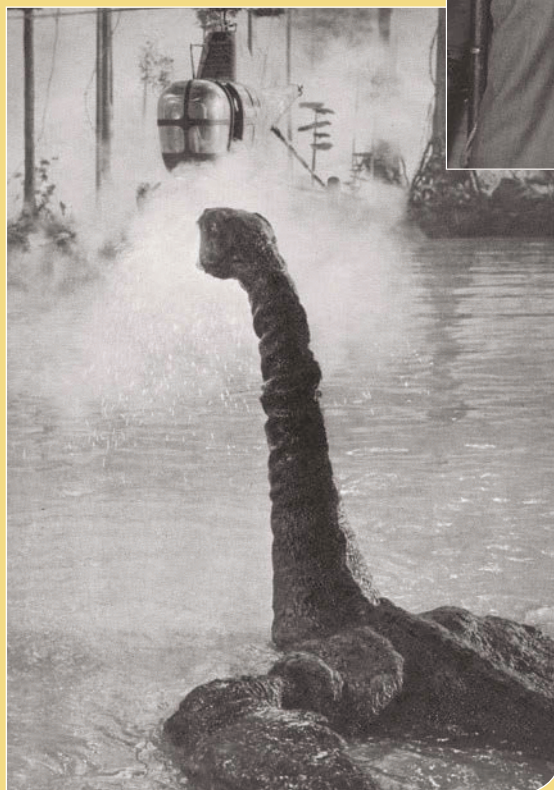
But while *The Land Unknown* was in pre-production, Universal's Technicolor science fiction



Limiting the audience's field of vision added to the suspense, particularly in the scene when Hathaway unwittingly backs into the clutches of a giant man-eating plant, a huge Triffid-like beast that sexily wraps its sinewy tendrils around every contour of the actresses' figure-hugging safari suit.

adventure *This Island Earth* (1955) flopped at the box office (see *Infinity* #14). The studio executives decided to slash the budget for *The Land Unknown*, which resulted in Jack Arnold walking off the picture, the loss of Technicolor and the casting of B-movie actors to replace the promised big star names. Fortunately, Virgil Vogel, who was then hired to replace Arnold as director, persuaded Universal to fork out for CinemaScope, "It needed something to sell it," he later admitted.

Cinematographer Ellis W. Carter (*The Incredible Shrinking Man*) was given the task of combining the Fox widescreen system



with black and white photography, while music supervisor Joseph Gershenson (*Touch of Evil*) was assigned the job of compiling the soundtrack score from a variety of stock music cues.

Universal cast ex-stuntman Jock Mahoney (*Tarzan Goes to India*) as the lead. Square-jawed, muscle-bound Mahoney was perfect in the role of naval officer Hal Roberts and was even able to save the studio money by performing most of his own stunts. Television actors William Reynolds (*Cult of the Cobra*), Phil Harvey (*The Monolith Monsters*) and Shirley Patterson (under the screen name Shawn Smith) were cast as Robert's second-in-command Lt. Jack Carmen, mechanic Steve Miller and glamorous reporter Margaret Hathaway respectively. Reynolds and Harvey give solid support and even betray some vulnerability over the predicament that the characters find themselves in, while Patterson is suitably inquisitive and provides attractive and shapely female fodder to be chased by



dinosaurs, bitten by man-eating plants and desired by mad scientists!


And speaking of mad scientists, Henry Brandon (*Captain Sindbad*) plays protagonist Dr. Charles Hunter who spends most of the movie lusting after Hathaway (he has been marooned for ten years) or scaring the dinosaurs away by 'blowing' on his giant horn!!

IT'S A JUNGLE IN THERE...

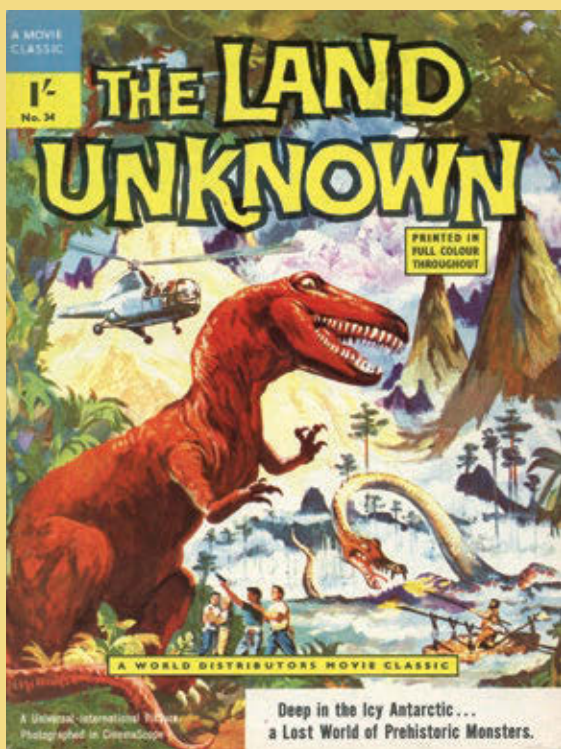
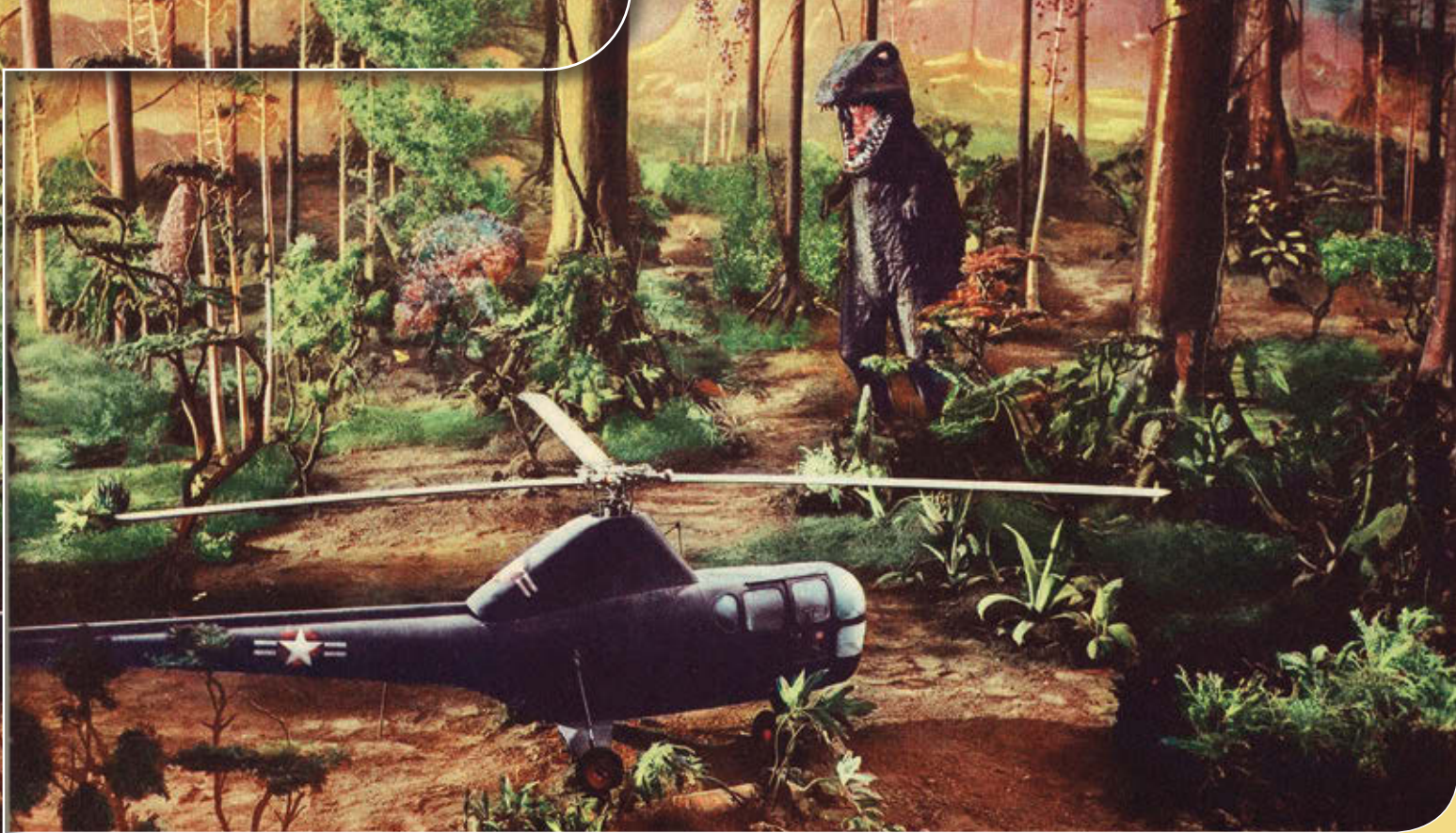
With a 90-day schedule, Universal had originally planned to shoot the entire film at its off-studio back-lot called Falls Lake, a boulder-strewn location surrounded by woodland and towering cliffs. However budget restrictions confined the production to interior sets constructed one of the studio's largest sound stages.

Alexander Golitzen (*Colossus: The Forbin Project*), and his assistant Richard R. Riedel (*Son of Frankenstein*) hung a 91x22 metre diorama of mountainous jungle scenery and towering trees along the back of the sound stage. In front of the cyclorama Golitzen and Riedel planted an entire jungle. To make the foliage look more prehistoric, rows of tropical plants were suspended upside down to expose their roots.

The fog-shrouded jungle was created with baby bottle warmers containing dry ice strategically placed under several trees and bushes, while effects technicians were employed to pump out more smoke with fog guns. Limiting the audience's field of vision added to the suspense, particularly in the scene when Hathaway unwittingly backs into the clutches of a giant man-eating plant, a huge Triffid-like beast that sexily wraps its sinewy tendrils around every contour of the actresses' figure-hugging safari suit.

These eerie looking sets were even more impressive in CinemaScope, especially the first view of the prehistoric landscape on the morning after the fog has lifted. Veteran special effects ace Clifford Stine (*King Kong*) combines a travelling matte of the humans and their helicopter, 

Clockwise from top left: Filming the *Elasmosaurus*, Child actor Tim Hovey is shown the T-rex suit, another helicopter and dinosaur encounter, and Shirley Patterson falls into the clutches of a man-eating plant...



Top:
A lobby card image of the movie - what a shame it wasn't actually filmed in colour!

Above:
A Dell comic book of the film, released in September 1957

overshadowed by a fantastic landscape of giant trees and towering volcanic peaks. An extra dimension is added to the shot when a giant Pterodactyl swoops across the screen.

Before *The Land Unknown*, there had only been a handful of feature length movies with prehistoric animals. The 1925 silent version of *The Lost World*, and the 1933 *King Kong* were among the first. 1940 saw Hal Roach's caveman adventure *One Million BC* (stock footage from which seemed to crop up in every B-movie dinosaur film made between 1945 and 1955). Other prehistoric adventures included *Unknown Island* (1948), *Two Lost Worlds* (1951), *Lost Continent* (1951), *The Beast From 20,000 Fathoms* (1953) and *King Dinosaur* (1955).



The anatomy of the creatures, particularly in these earlier films, was heavily influenced by the scientific restorations of leading paleoartists such as Charles R. Knight. Knight's work had inspired filmmakers from Willis O'Brien (*King Kong*), and Ray Harryhausen (*One Million Years BC*) to the Disney artists who worked on 'The Rite of Spring' sequence in *Fantasia* (1940).

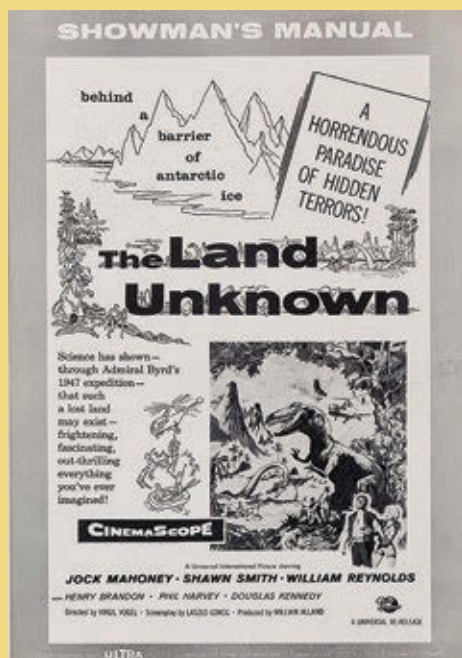
For *The Land Unknown*, however, Alland and Golitzen turned to Rudolph F. Zallinger's Pulitzer Prize-winning mural of prehistoric animals, which *LIFE* magazine published in its September 7th 1953 issue as part of a series, called *The World We Live In*. Special effects technician Fred Knoth (*One Million BC*) carefully studied Zallinger's artwork to create the look of the film's Tyrannosaurus rex. Ironically, Knight's painting of the T-rex, not Zallinger's provided the inspiration for the official comic book tie-in, as well as some of the American and the British poster art.

PREHISTORIC EFFECTS

Before he quit the production, director Jack Arnold had conceived the idea of using large mechanical models to represent both the meat-eating Tyrannosaurus rex and the marine reptile Elasmosaurus. Animal trainer Jimmy Dannaldson was also brought on board to supervise a battle between two of the film's other primordial stars using live monitor lizards.

Knoth's Tyrannosaurus rex was a four-metre-long hydraulically operated suit. A stunt man wore the lower half of the torso, while cables connected to a control console off-camera operated the head and jaws. Unfortunately, the bulkiness of the suit turns the T-rex into a slow and clumsy creation. But the scenes of its encounter with the helicopter are surprisingly convincing given the obvious limitations of the suit.

The second monster was purely mechanical. The Elasmosaurus was four and a half metres



long and pulled through the water on a set of guide rails which ran the entire length of a 90-metre tank. Manipulated by a number of off-camera puppeteers, the monster could raise its body eight feet into the air thanks to a complex network of hydraulic tubing. This elaborate mechanism was also used to operate the creature's neck, jaws and fins.

The Elasmosaurus is certainly more believable than the T-rex and looks suitably menacingly when it looms into view in some of the rear projection sequences. Other scenes combining split-screen travelling mattes of the river, the monster and the actors are also very effective.

The climax of the film features a battle between the Elasmosaurus and the helicopter (a highly detailed four-metre long fully working miniature). This same model is also used in the first half of the film for the aerial scenes featuring stock footage from the Byrd expedition.

The Land Unknown opened nationwide in the United States in October 1957. According to Universal, the movie 'electrified the opening day audiences with its fantastic tale of awesome prehistoric monsters existing in the 20th century.' The publicity department also praised the 'magnificent running battle' between the helicopter and an enraged Elasmosaurus calling it, 'one of the most spectacular action sequences ever put on film and a distinct tribute to the movie magicians whose towering prehistoric monsters have been manufactured to move with a fantastic realism which makes them completely lifelike and believable.' (The 'lifelike' head of the T-rex was later recycled as Spot, the fire-breathing pet of *The Munsters*).

The studio also downplayed the film's low-budget status by claiming that it took the producers, "three years and an estimated \$60,000 worth of experimentation just to create the dinosaurs and to make them operate with 'complete lifelike fluidity.'"

Universal's subsidiary UI (Universal International) even considered taking out a patent on the monsters, refusing to reveal the method of their operation, other than to state that they "involve a consolidation of chemistry, electronics, hydraulics and human assistance."

'X' CERTIFICATE THRILLS

Though the movie was press screened in Britain as early as November 1957, it had to wait until August 1958 for a theatrical release through the



This image: The incredible dinosaur artwork of Rudolph F. Zallinger originally inspired the look of the creatures in *The Land Unknown*



Rank Organisation's independent cinema chain as the supporting feature to *Curucu Beast of the Amazon* (1956). The overly protective British Board of Film Censors not only cut the film, they had the audacity to give it an X certificate - a rating that restricted it to over 16s only and made a mockery of the DELL comic book tie-in, which was aimed at children and republished in the UK by World Distributors. The X certificate didn't stop Universal and the Rank Organisation pulling out all the stops to promote the film, however, with an extensive campaign aimed specifically at cinema staff.

"You can build a chamber of horrors quite inexpensively in your (cinema) foyer by constructing a walk-through tunnel out of wood, hard-board and drapes," said the campaign book. "The dimly lit interior can feature such shock items as cobwebs suspended from the roof to trail across the face; rocks, trees and foliage; lighting effects; and water dripping slowly onto dry ice (approach your ice cream department about this).

"This will provide a steamy atmosphere and weird background noises of hissing and dripping. Place a mirror in the darkest corner so that the 'guest' will see something indefinable moving towards them, but won't recognise him or herself until the last minute, and don't forget to include rubber lizards and spiders, along with skulls, bones and shrunken heads."

These 'wire, tape and rubber band' methods of exploitation must have made a difference, as industry bible *Kinematograph Weekly* reported that *The Land Unknown/Curucu Beast of the Amazon* double-bill was a tremendous box-office success for the independent exhibitor. The magazine's reviewer Josh Billings was less enthusiastic in his review however, "The picture covers 'lost world' territory, but brontosaurus' have stalked the screen so often that they've ceased

to chill the spine. In spite of its X certificate, it's incredibly juvenile."

Variety, on the other hand, called Vogel's direction 'authoritative' and the art direction 'atmospheric'. "The film is expertly turned out," said its critic, "the use of special effects giving the narrative a tremendous boost."

The premise of films like *The Land Unknown* continued to be popular with both filmmakers and audiences over the next twenty years. Owing a great debt to authors such as Conan Doyle and Edgar Rice Burroughs, dinosaur-infested 'lost worlds' have cropped up in movies such as *The Valley of Gwangi* (1969) and *The Land That Time Forgot* (1974).

Producer Irwin Allen (*The Towering Inferno*) even went one stage further by 'borrowing' the premise of *The Land Unknown* for his *Voyage To The Bottom of The Sea* television series. In an episode entitled *Turn Back the Clock* (1964) the crew of the Seaview stumble across a prehistoric oasis in the Arctic Circle. Allan even used stock footage from his own 1960 film version of *The Lost World* as padding.

While its certainly no epic *The Land Unknown* is highly entertaining, with a believable cast and, given its shoestring budget, some amazing production values. The CinemaScope photography by Ellis W. Carter is outstanding and the elaborate jungle sets by Alexander Golitzen are certainly impressive. Throughout the 1960s it made regular UK appearances at special Sunday screenings (usually accompanied by *The Deadly Mantis*), which probably explained why it was never shown on British television. Now considered a 1950s classic, it's interesting to speculate just how much more successful it might have been if Universal had committed to their original plan for a Technicolor, big star name blockbuster.

MODEL BEHAVIOUR



Clockwise from above: A domesticated alien creature, a *War of the Worlds* Martian and a *War of the Worlds* streetscape

Barlow's Guide to Extra-terrestrials

was first published in 1979, providing illustrated coverage of the eponymous thingies from science fiction literature and has been a source of inspiration for a number of models since.

Clays of various sorts are used by model makers enjoying differing levels of skill, from the keen beginner to the experienced and, indeed, professional sculptor.

Some examples of the latter can be found within the garage kit community and here some explanation might be in order. Type 'Garage Kits' into Google and you'll find people offering kits for building your own vehicular storage. In the context of model making we are, however, more interested in stuff that's made within garages than the structures themselves.

The term itself probably originated in the US of A, but the following is worldwide and very strong here in Blighty, with one of the more established bases of operations in my home county of Cheshire. It's perhaps important to emphasise that the term isn't an automatic euphemism for amateurism, as the quality of the sculptures and resulting moulds and castings is often outstanding, although I exclude my stuff from that accolade.

To underline that point I was persuaded to have resin replicas of some tongue-in-cheek monster heads that I'd sculpted made as 'they would sell like hot cakes'. They haven't, at least not yet.

The short-run nature of many of the garage kits means that the subject matter can be very varied indeed although I should qualify that by saying that some of the production is on an almost industrial scale, be it ever a small industry.

I had the pleasure of being invited, a couple of years ago, to give a talk at

Is there life on Mars? And why would there be life on a chocolate bar anyway? *Sci-fi & Fantasy Modeller's* Andy Pearson has a close encounter with alien model kits...



press when it comes to extra-terrestrial encounters. His seminal work, *The War of the Worlds* was, many believe, intended as a commentary on natural selection and the joys of colonialism as experienced by the colonised, but the story has featured as a straight drama ever since in film, on television and, famously, on the radio when another Welles traumatised sections of the American public with his broadcast.

Models of the infamous Martian tripods are relatively easy to find, usually based on movie iterations although some take their inspiration from the Jeff Wayne concept album. One of the latter was made by my friend and sometime colleague Barry Ford as the prototype for a production kit but we still await the commercial release of this truly outstanding model.

An unusual Martian tripod model came to my attention some years

ago and this design was taken directly from the original book illustrations of which Mr. Wells thought so highly. This was a delightful little kit in white metal and I chose to drop it into a small diorama made from the card model buildings so beloved of railway modellers. My intention was to represent the tripod in a suburban street setting of the period and, whilst the buildings are probably more 1930s vintage, the conceit seemed to work to some extent.

A MARS A DAY...

I suppose that Herbert George Wells must shoulder some of the blame for the supposed residents of the red planet getting such bad

Representations of the Martians themselves are far less common, although Mr Wells furnished descriptions. Faced with this gap in the market I made a small model of my own using a polymer clay marketed as Super Sculpey. The fine but firm texture of



this product allows for a great deal of detail to be incorporated and it bakes in a domestic oven to a hard, durable finish ready for painting or throwing in the dustbin according to taste. This model has subsequently been displayed at relevant get-togethers on several occasions and I can say without fear of contradiction that demand for the thing has, as with my merry monster heads, been underwhelming.

MY FAVOURITE MARTIANS

To say that everyone has his or her own favourite Martian is probably pushing actuality to its limits but it does provide what is known in the trade as a Radio 2 link to a popular TV show from the 1960s. This starred Bill Bixby (later the Hulk's alter-ego) and Ray Walston as his favourite Martian, Uncle Martin. See what they did there?

A kit was issued in 1:18 scale by Pegasus Hobbies and featured a particularly good likeness of the actor along with his spacecraft. The latter was designed for the series as a full-sized prop by art director James Hulsey and built by a team at Desilu Studio headed by Joe Lombardi. Truth to tell I've no recollection of seeing the ship on screen at the time, although I did see some of the series. Having said that, the design does have a place in both my heart and my bank account as I was paid to build models of both ship and passenger.

I began this piece with a reference to the *Barlow's Guide* that has provided inspiration for a number of models since. The book provides illustrations for many of the aliens found in sci-fi literature and I've tending to use these as a setting-off point rather than following the designs and descriptions slavishly. One exception was a being who featured in Larry Niven's *'Ringworld'* novels. I think it was the originality of the concept that appealed, rather than any personal affinity to its discoverer's name, for the creature in question is a Pierson's Puppeteer. The origin of the name will be clear to anyone who's seen a kid's show featuring glove puppets although the heads here are not what they seem.

Each neck ends in a mouth surrounded by small protrusions and this acts as a manipulation appendage as well as doing more conventional mouth stuff. The Puppeteer's brain is well protected within



its body as, whilst being able to deliver a devastating blow with its rear leg, the alien's main line of defence is to curl into a ball protected by all three legs. In fact, the survival of this very successful and technically advanced race seems, according to the novels, to depend on abject cowardice and extreme xenophobia.

A number of my models have been experiments in texture whilst at the same time trying to produce things that are obviously not of Earthly origin. Success in this field has been mixed but I've enjoyed the process and there's something rather therapeutic about pushing clay around... and it does make a change from the basket-weaving. I did take one stab at a domesticated alien model

recently although, on reflection, this set-up may also owe something to H. P. Lovecraft's fearsome shoggoths and one probably wouldn't want to be sat astride one of those shouting 'Giddyup!' Anyway nurse says it's time for my afternoon nap but, if you have, thanks for staying the course. 🐉

Clockwise from top left: The popular little green man image, My Favourite Martian Pierson's puppeteer and friend, an alien hybrid, and alien concepts 1 and 2

WORSE THINGS HAPPEN AT SEA

Looking back on his past interviews and research on *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea*, Mark Phillips reveals how everything from naughty dogs to Jayne Mansfield caused big waves aboard the Seaview...

PART ONE



When an actress from TV's *Peyton Place* brought her dog to the filming of *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea*, the cast and crew enjoyed

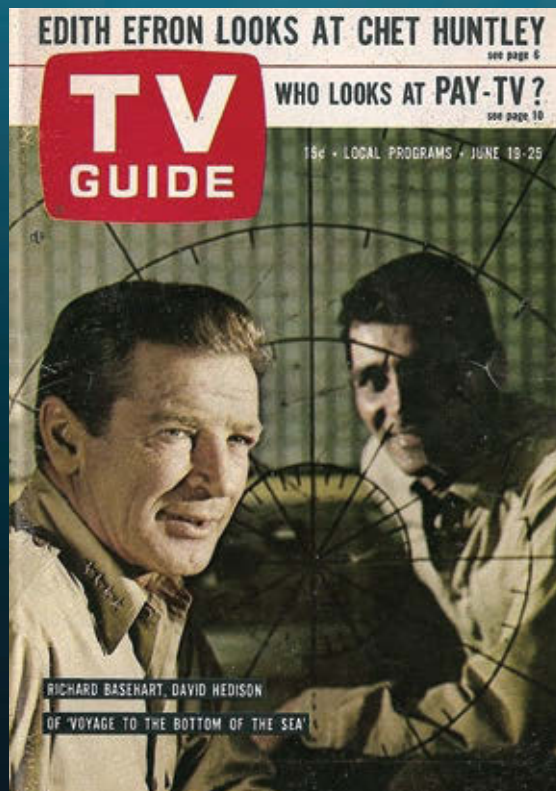
watching the excited Bassett Hound run around the submarine set. But joy turned to horror when the dog suddenly squatted and delivered an unceremonious crap on the middle of the Seaview's floor. "Richard Basehart stood there for a moment, looking at what the dog had done, and then sadly turned away," recalls *Voyage* extra Ray Didsbury. "The rest of us didn't know whether to laugh or cry."

But worse things had happened. As the submarine-adventure show's pilot was being filmed in November 1963, actor Mark Slade, who played crewman Malone, heard a report that President John F. Kennedy had been assassinated. He ran back to the set and told an older crewman. "That's not funny!" snapped the disbelieving veteran worker, but minutes later, confirmation of the tragedy came over the radio. Everyone was heartbroken. "The reaction on the Seaview was the same as it was across the country," said Slade.

Based on Irwin Allen's 1961 motion picture, which starred Walter Pidgeon and Joan Fontaine, *Voyage* ran from 1964-1968 and was one of TV's most expensive hours. But the stigma of the pilot, even though it had sold the series, had done damage.

Irwin Allen wanted top writers for the show and promoted it as a cross between *Playhouse 90* (the acclaimed anthology drama) and "a wet cloak and dagger show." But when Hollywood writers screened the pilot, they were appalled to see a Saturday morning kids serial, full of noisy action and grim stereotypes as the submarine Seaview raced to the North Pole to stop a predicted earthquake. The pyrotechnics left little room for drama.

"I would never watch a show like *Voyage*," said Lou Morheim, a former *Outer Limits*

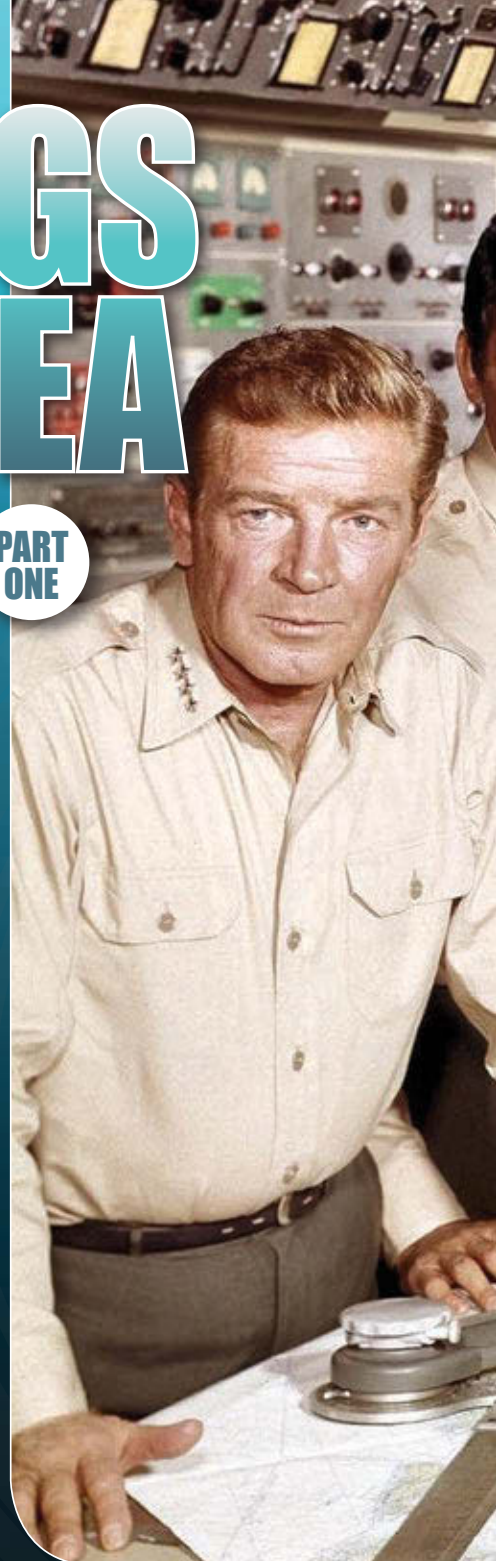


Above and right:

At first, David Hedison turned down the role of Lee Crane, until he learned that Richard Basehart was signed to play Admiral Nelson. James Doohan was offered the part of Chief Sharkey, but turned it down in favour of the role of Chief Engineer Montgomery Scott of the Starship Enterprise...

writer who turned down the show. Other respected writers, like Sy Salkowitz, Mark Rodgers, Jerry Sohl and best friend of the late James Dean, William Bast, came up with story treatments but did not write scripts.

"It was dumb from what I saw of it," said Harlan Ellison of the pilot. Yet Ellison dashed off to develop two stories, "*Operation Deep Six*" (never filmed) and "*Price of Doom*." Having left *Burke's Law* after an argument with star Gene Barry, Ellison was initially excited about working for the high-budget adventure show. "Irwin Allen liked me and wanted me to be one of his regular writers," shuddered Ellison to writer Marc Wielage years later. But weeks before *Voyage* premiered on September 14, 1964, columnist Dick Kleiner received a surreptitious note from an insider saying *Voyage* was a real dog. "It sinks?" Kleiner commented.



Irwin Allen used many of the sets and underwater footage in his pilot from his *Voyage* motion picture. "Otherwise the series would have been impossible to make on a TV budget," he admitted. "I thought, 'Here was a popular movie thousands paid to see – so why not make it into a weekly series?'"

James Cornell, a top advertising executive who predicted what new TV shows would live and die, said *Voyage* would be a catastrophic disaster. After viewing the pilot, he calculated *Voyage* would finish the year at a dismal 79th place out of 100 shows. Instead, it became one of ABC's big hits.

Chastened, Cornell later explained, "I based my prediction on that first episode, which made me think it was going to be kids stuff. The pilot was full of such corny dialogue that it posed a potential flaw to any adult viewers." But as Cornell watched



VOYAGE TO THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA



Left:
A poster for
Irwin Allen's
1961 movie, with
Walter Pidgeon as
Admiral Harriman
Nelson and
Robert Sterling
as Captain Lee
Crane, both
seen above with
Peter Lorre as
Commander
Lucius Emery

subsequent episodes, he was impressed by how it had improved. "They got rid of the Saturday morning stuff in their succeeding programmes and now it has a lot of adults watching it." He praised *Voyage* for being "amazingly strong" in the ratings, where it was averaging 24th place in the ratings.

"A million mothers will not thank the ABC network for *Voyage*," said *The Chicago Tribune*, "but their kids will love it. It has more action than Jules Verne, *The Whirlybirds* and *Flash Gordon* put together." Cecil Smith of *The Los Angeles Times* noted, "That was not an H-bomb going off at the end of *Voyage*, it was the kitchen sink being thrown into the script." Smith would later categorise *Voyage* as one of the worst new shows of the season, an infamous honour that included *Gomer Pyle*, *Peyton Place* and *Man from UNCLE*.

TAKING THE MONEY

Most media observers agreed that Richard Basehart, film star of *La Strada*, *Brothers Karamazov* and *Moby Dick* was a big asset. Basehart was led to believe that *Voyage* would be a dramatic series about a submarine visiting various ports of call. But when Irwin Allen excitedly acted out an upcoming story about a two-headed monster grabbing the Seaview, Basehart began to laugh. He stopped laughing when he realised Allen was serious.

"But they offered me a deal that was too good to resist," the actor told columnist Hedda Hopper and after having experienced several unhappy movie roles, he took the money to do weekly TV.

To promote *Voyage*, Basehart and co-star David Hedison appeared with Bing Crosby and Tony Franciosa on the TV special *The*

Wide World of Entertainment and the four of them danced around the stage and sang a song, 'Play a Simple Melody.' "Good grief, what are we witnessing here?" a horrified critic for *The Vancouver Sun* gasped.

Indeed, many critics were not singing and dancing. "ABC has sunk to new depths with this disaster," sniped the *Los Angeles Times*' Don Page. "It ranks among such dramatic achievements as The Test Pattern. Richard Basehart, a fine actor, and David Hedison, must be secretly cringing at every cliché." *The New York Times* liked the cast and production values but noted, "This series has a great deal of dramatic potential but Irwin Allen will have to cut back on its melodramatic corn."

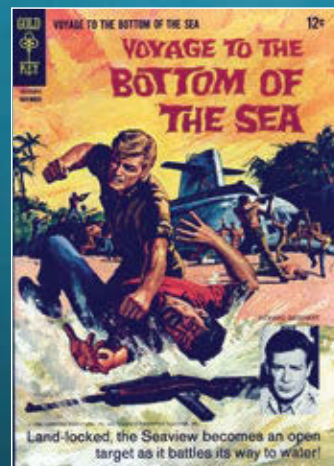
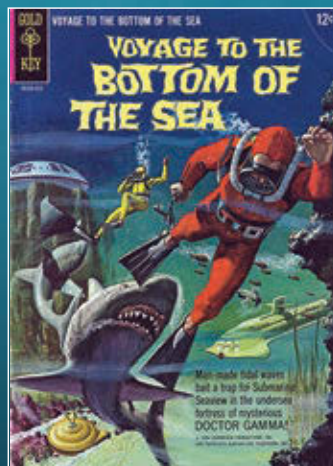
The Telegraph Herald couldn't make sense of it all. "It is supposed to be a thriller but *Captain Kangaroo* is much more hair-raising." But Bob Shiels of the *Calgary Herald* said, "If you deplore violence, *Voyage* may have you writing letters of protest but few TV shows have ever gotten off to such a rousing start," citing the helicopter attacks, burning cars, explosions and earthquakes. "The series comes equipped with big-name guests stars, expensive production facilities and imaginative photography."

The Ottawa Citizen was also impressed, stating that no other TV pilot had been so packed with tidal waves, machine guns, torpedoes, land mines, depth charges, drone planes, a giant squid, an angry swordfish and shark, "plus the unneighbourly antics of sinister shaven-head leaders who ended up being miffed by Basehart's triumph." The newspaper's intellectual appraisal of *Voyage*? "Boom! Bang! Crash!"

A writer for *The Milwaukee Journal* was invited by Navy officers and crew for a unique screening of the pilot film aboard their submarine, the USS Cobia. Their consensus was that *Voyage* was "fantastic and incredible... with superb and spectacular photography."

AN INCREDIBLE HUMAN BEING

David Hedison, who had starred in *The Fly* (1958), decided to become an actor after seeing Tyrone Power's film *Blood and Sand* four times. He had turned down the 1961 *Voyage* movie role as Captain Crane and only reluctantly accepted the TV role when his friend Roger Moore told him it was a good idea. He was also intrigued that Basehart had been hired as the Admiral.



Top, left to right: Crane prepares to investigate 'The Secret of the Loch,' Robert Duvall as Zar, a powerful humanoid creature, in 'The Invaders'. Checking out an undersea UFO in 'The Sky is Falling,' Nelson is held captive in 'Time Lock,' a sea plankton turns monstrously large and aggressive in Harlan Ellison's 'The Price of Doom' and David Hedison is cast adrift with Diane Webber in 'The Mermaid' - we'd love to get her shellphone number!

Their relationship formed during the filming of the first regular episode, "Village of Guilt." Exasperated by Irwin Allen's bombastic directing, Basehart angrily left the set. Hedison tried chasing after Basehart and accidentally broke a pane of fire-exit glass, deeply cutting his arm. When Basehart returned to the set, he saw medics bandaging up Hedison's bleeding arm and he felt responsible. "I could see the hurt and pain in Richard's eyes," said Hedison.

"Working with Richard was a joy," Hedison told this author in 1996. "What a gentleman. What an incredible human being. And my God, what an actor! I learned a lot from him."

"It's a challenge to play against our leading lady, the Seaview," Basehart said in 1964. "It's more of a competitor than any child or dog." He was particularly worried about the flashing lights of the giant computer behind him. "They are real attention-getters. The key is to get viewers to watch the people."

"A big criticism of the pilot was that these were plastic characters," said Del Monroe, who played Kowalski. "Unfortunately, that was true. Irwin wanted action, not relationships. We were always trying to make the show believable."

Critics continued to be divided over Voyage's merits. Syndicated writer Charles Witbeck said Basehart helped the show a great deal but "the real stars are the special effects and prop men." He was concerned by the monsters, noting "Price of Doom's" hungry seaweed "will make kids imagine their bedtime blankets are turning into monsters. But the show is produced with great care and effort."

Julia Inman of *The Indianapolis Star* said Voyage fell somewhere between *The Perils of Pauline* and *The Outer Limits*. A writer for *The Wisconsin Journal* praised Voyage as being, "one of the greatest panoramas of quality entertainment ever made in television history."

MAKING THE GRADE

Generally, any show ranking in the top 40 ratings (out of 90 shows) was considered a success. Voyage often made the grade. "Turn Back the Clock," with dinosaur footage from Allen's *The Lost World*, ranked 9th for that week. The thoughtfully written extra-terrestrial drama "The Sky is Falling" was 15th, "The Last Battle" (modern day Nazis kidnap Nelson) was 39th while the excellent South American adventure "Mist of Silence" fell to 47th place.

Allen promised well-known guest stars would appear on Voyage and indeed, such recognisable names as Edgar Bergen, Michael Ansara, Leslie Nielsen, Linda Cristal, Yvonne Craig, Nick Adams, George Sanders, Eddie Albert, Henry Silva, Viveca Lindfors and Edward Asner were hired.

Some guest stars had their own peculiar challenges. John Anderson, who played the scientist who creates a giant amoeba in "Cradle of the Deep," was hammering nails atop his house when approached to do the episode. "I read the script and all this poor scientist did was blab about his blob and uncovering the mysteries of life," said Anderson. "It was a terrible script and I wondered why I had even accepted it."

The veteran actor was then introduced to the monster of the week, a grotesque protoplasm. "It was sitting on the floor, a plastic bag with red ink inside it. But instead of thinking, 'Damn, what a sorry piece of shit you are! Do I really have to act with this dumb piece of crap?,' I took it seriously. I said, 'Okay, this is my co-star, and this is a low budget show, and damn, that's the best blob they could come up with, so let's do it!'"

Soon he realised his old friend Basehart was having his own problems. "Poor Dick, who had suffered through 25 segments of Voyage already, was clearly fed up with the series. He was making inside jokes and poking fun at the script. I was shocked that he was engaging in such childish and

destructive behaviour."

During lunch, Anderson confronted the star. "I told him that as a guest star, I was going through hell trying to make this thinly drawn character come to life. I considered him one of the greatest living talents as an actor, but his silly behaviour of snickering at the script was doing nothing to help me. He quietly apologised and agreed it had to stop. There was no more bullshit."

Some of the show's unsung heroes were the stuntmen. Most of Paul's Stader's work on Voyage was underwater, directing and participating in submerged mayhem. "You have to pantomime," he joked about signalling instructions to his fellow undersea divers. The veteran stuntman had doubled for John Wayne and Johnny Weissmuller and worked in movies like *Mighty Joe Young* and *House of Wax*.

He occasionally appeared on Voyage as an actor, appearing as lanky crewman Smitty in "The Mermaid" and as Than Wygenn's bodyguard in "No Way Out." In real life, Stader was a hero. In the summer of 1954, newspapers carried the story of how Stader and his two friends struggled for survival in the California waters of Catalina after their boat sank. The three men tried to swim to





“Irwin complained that Seaview crewmen were dying and then coming back in later episodes,” says Ray Didsbury, the show’s dialogue coach and bit player. This even happened to Didsbury, who was killed off in *“The Buccaneer,”* but returned as a recurring crewman named Ray.

shore but could make no headway in the choppy water. With one man injured, it was decided by all that the 43 year-old Stader had the best chance to making the perilous 10 mile swim to shore. As his two friends, one of them a fellow movie stuntman, bobbed on cushions Stader had tied together, Paul headed off alone and made a gruelling 21 hour swim through hordes of stinging jellyfish and powerful currents, the same black waters that would later claim actress Natalie Wood’s life. Fighting leg cramps, a swollen tongue and becoming violently sick, he finally staggered to a rocky shore at night and before collapsing, gasped to a passer-by, “My buddies are still out there...please, help them!”

The Coast Guard launched an immediate air and sea search, but could only find floating cushions and bits of debris. Volunteers combed all the coastal beaches but Stader’s two friends were never seen again, lost in the deep Catalina waters. Luckily, sharks had left Stader alone and the U. S. Coast Guard said his swim was nothing short of miraculous. Now, as Stader directed his 30 man *Voyage* underwater crew, one had to wonder what was going through his mind as he worked in the very same waters that had claimed the lives of his friends.

George Robotham, another talented diver, says, “Paul and I had a very life-threatening encounter while filming *‘The Amphibians.’* We played Seaview divers snared by a net but we really got entangled and sank to the bottom of the ocean. As our air ran out and after trying



unsuccessfully to free ourselves, we just looked at each other with a resigned look of, ‘Well, where do we go from here?’ Luckily, special effects man Glen Galvin managed to haul us to the surface just in time!”

A COMPLICATED PROCESS

Voyage pre-dated *Star Trek’s* Dead Red-Shirt syndrome, where Seaview’s minor crew-members often met horrific fates. Crewman Rogers (Bill Kinney) is shot down by Werner Klemperer’s army in *“Blizzard Makers”* and crewman Foster (Michael MacDonald) succumbs to a feverish death caused by Robert Duvall, one of *“The Invaders.”* Guest star George Lindsey, better known as Goober on *The Andy Griffith Show*, recalled watching stuntman Frank Graham play a drowning crewman in *“Submarine Sunk Here”* so believably that Lindsey thought Graham was really dying. “I dove into the water to help him and everyone got pissed, yelling at me for ruining a great scene,” he recalled. “I felt terrible – and I ended up standing on the sidelines, cold, shivering and miserable as they re-shot the scene!”

Dying on *Voyage* was a complicated process. “Irwin complained that Seaview crewmen were dying and then coming back in later episodes,” says Ray Didsbury, the show’s dialogue coach and bit player. This even happened to Didsbury, who was killed off in *“The Buccaneer,”* but returned as a recurring crewman named Ray. “So Irwin declared that if you were killed off, you had to take a big pay-off and leave the show. Or you could stay alive for the series’ duration but at less pay. It didn’t take a genius to figure out which was the better deal.”

Nevertheless, at the end of year three, even crewman Ray was strangled to death by an amphibian that hatches from a giant egg. “Gosh, I don’t remember that scene at all,” he said. However, Didsbury returned as a background crewman for year four, but was never again referred to as crewman Ray.

Joey Tata says, “My demise in *‘Mist of Silence’* was so disturbing that it was almost cut out by the censors.” He played Farrell, the crewman dragged from a South American prison cell and shot. “Director Leonard Horn whispered to me to fight the soldiers for real, and man, I really screamed and hollered. When it was over, there was dead silence. Everyone was in complete shock. Del Monroe came up to me, visibly shaken and said, ‘Holy shit, Joey – I got a terrible feeling watching that.’ But they kept it in and I turned

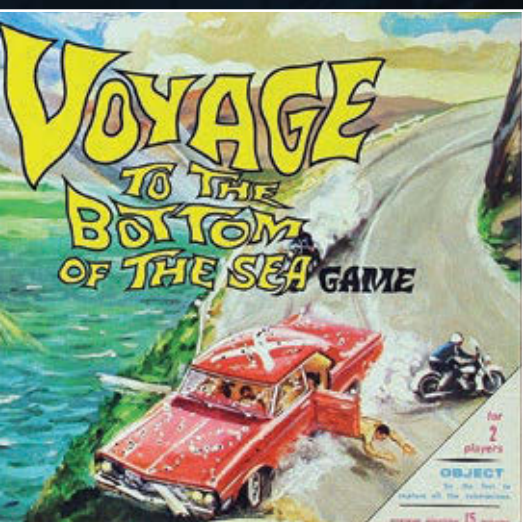


out to be one of their best episodes.”

Del Monroe recalled, “Those early episodes were rough. It was really upsetting to see your fellow actors, your buddies, being taken away and killed off each week. I remember another show where I was trying to hold onto to Freddy Stromsoe’s arm as he was being eaten by plankton (in *“Price of Doom”*) and he was screaming like crazy. That shook us up and we had to do the scene again, to make it less disturbing. My former landlord told me he couldn’t watch *Voyage* because it was too scary.”

Some of Monroe’s shipmates included actors Christopher Connelly, Nigel McKeand (as sonarman Kelly Williams), Mark Slade and Paul Carr. “Irwin hired a group of actors to play Seaview crewmen and put us into different episodes, to see who had the best chemistry. Paul Trinka (Patterson) and I worked especially well together and Irwin decided to emphasize our roles. Paul was a sincere, warm, caring human being and we became good friends.”

But the series centred on Admiral Nelson and Captain Crane. “Richard and I are not interested in playing wooden warriors,” Hedison would say. “Our characters don’t glory in danger. If the situation is dangerous, we’re afraid.” Basehart agreed. “We make moments of decision tense and meaningful,” he said. “The TV action series has been terribly abused at times, with wildly illogical stories, cheap production and bored or





Clockwise from above right: David Hedison and *Voyage* ladies - with Karen Steele in 'Leviathan,' with diving champion Zale Perry in 'The Amphibians,' and with Barbara Bouchet in 'The Left-Handed Man'

incompetent actors. Well, in this series, we do care." He knew shows like *Man from UNCLE* had the light touch but he preferred *Voyage's* "authentic danger. We're not aiming for amused smiles from our audience."

Basehart felt the show had a good moral base. "Analyze most of our stories and you'll see someone is in trouble," he told columnist Edgar Benton. "The men of Seaview do not look the other way. Despite the danger, they help out. In these times, I think that's an important statement to make."

THE HOKIEST STUFF IN THE WORLD

The first year had a lot of variety to its stories, including espionage, natural disasters, the search for missing submarines and an acclaimed fail safe story called "Doomsday" which brought the world to the edge of nuclear war. "Both Richard and David wanted to meet me after they read my script," said writer William Read Woodfield. "They said, 'This is the best script we've ever had. Please stay and write more.'"

And of course, there were monsters which included amphibians, dinosaurs, a whale, giant squid, manta ray, robot, a giant jellyfish, a sea monster and the expanding plankton in "The Price of Doom." Director James Goldstone

recalled the leafy carnivorous creature in the latter episode was operated by a team of stuntmen and "on set, it looked like the hokiest stuff in the world. Even teenage girls who visited the set giggled at the monster. The key to making the plankton work was to limit the time you saw it on screen and play more to the people, who were terrified of this stuff. I thought it turned out very well."

But Garth Benton, who played the young medic who treats an injured Jill Ireland, says, "I can't agree with Mr. Goldstone. When I saw that show in 1964, I thought it looked horribly fake. Special effects have taken a huge leap since the days of *Voyage*."

Bit players in the first year included the back of James Brolin's head (as the ill-fated crewman Spencer) in "Saboteur," Werner Klemperer as the evil voice who brainwashes Crane in the same episode and pre-*Munsters* beauty Pat Priest as a newlywed devoured by plankton in "Price of Doom." Ronald Long was brought in to voice evil submarine Captain Weimer in "Secret of the Loch" and the brother of *Mod Squad's* Peggy Lipton, Robert, had a brief role as a radioman in "The Creature." Stuntman Chuck Courtney, the panicked crewman in "Sky is Falling" later had the lead role in *Billy the Kid vs Dracula* (1966). Even Irwin Allen provided his voice as the newscaster in "Village of Guilt."

Paul Zastupnevich, Irwin Allen's costume designer since 1959's *The Big Circus*, made cameo appearances in Allen's films as a "good luck charm" and that tradition continued in many early *Voyage* episodes. He was, among many others, the frightened skipper of the boat destroyed by the Loch Ness monster in "Secret of the Loch," a janitor in "City Beneath the Sea" and brave cousin Azziz in "The Magnus Beam."

Robert Dowdell played Chip Morton, the sub's executive officer, and Henry Kulky appeared as Chief Curly Jones for most of year one. Arch Whiting (who played radioman Sparks) often picked up Kulky from his hotel in Santa Monica and drove him to the studio. "Henry had been a professional wrestler before he got into acting and he was a fun, friendly guy but also seemed very sad," recalls actor Mark Slade.

Kulky's credits ranged from A-list pictures like Judy Garland's *A Star is Born* to the lowbrow *Abbott and Costello Meet the Keystone Cops*, as well as regular roles on TVs *Life of Riley* and *Hennessy*. His untimely death in February 1965, as *Voyage*



approached the end of its first season, shocked everyone. After finishing "Cradle of the Deep" the actor died of a heart attack.

There had been troubling signs on set, as costumer Paul Zastupnevich recalled Kulky was not feeling well and after shooting completed that day, Kulky's legs were so swollen (a sign of congestive heart failure) Zastupnevich had to cut Kulky's pants just to get them off. Kulky went to his favourite tavern that night and was leafing through his new script for the episode "The Exile" when the Grim Reaper struck. "We were talking about old times in a booth at the rear of the club," said the tavern's manager. "Hank suddenly stood up, coughed a couple of times and collapsed." He was rushed to hospital but pronounced DOA.

BIKER BASEHART

As *Voyage* wrapped up its first year, Richard Basehart decided to take a test ride on stuntman Bud Ekin's motorcycle. An inexperienced motorbike rider, he nevertheless got on and took off at a high speed. As he sped helplessly through the 20th Century Fox alley, Arch Whiting recalls a cry of terror from Basehart of, "Oh Shit!" Ray Didsbury recalls coming out of the commissary and seeing Basehart speed past him. "He saw me and yelled Raaaaaaay" and then the motorbike screamed around the corner."

Luckily, Steve McQueen, who was on a break from filming *The Sand Pebbles*, saw Basehart whiz by him and immediately



realised what was happening. The actor leaped on his bike and chased after the Admiral. Yelling instruction to Basehart, McQueen got him to slow down and minutes later, both actors drove back to the studio, side by side, big grins on their faces. "My God, Irwin Allen was upset," recalls Didsbury. "Irwin had a real thing about protecting his stars and here was Basehart, almost crashing a motorbike."

Allen told newspapers that when Basehart tried to ride a motorbike again and began wobbling unsteadily around the lot, Allen yelled at him to stop. "Admirals like Basehart are too valuable to lose," Allen said and promised the actor he would write him into a shark fight if he needed to work off his exuberance, but no more bike riding!

Voyage also achieved notoriety with a *MAD* magazine spoof of the giant jellyfish episode "*Mutiny*." David Hedison later sent a photo to the magazine, of him writing the words "*MAD*" on the glass map in the control room with a crazed expression.

Many of *Voyage*'s guest stars impressed Ray Didsbury. "Carroll O'Connor was not only a great actor but he kept us enthralled with his show business stories. Susan Flannery was a great kid, with a wonderful sense of humour. We all liked her and hoped she would become a regular. Nancy Kovack was a knockout, so beautiful and statuesque. June Lockhart was just plain funny, witty and professional." His least favourite guest star? "Jill Ireland. She was quite difficult. She was not easy to work with and had trouble remembering her lines." He says Irwin Allen's favourite lady guest was Sheila Matthews, the wife of a scientist in "*The Blizzard Makers*." "She really caught his fancy and ended up doing a lot of his TV shows and movies like *The Poseidon Adventure*. They later married (in 1975)."

Trade papers announced in early 1965 that there would be a motion picture version of *Voyage* with the TV cast, but this didn't happen. Director Richard Fleischer wanted Hedison for the role of the Proteus captain in *Fantastic Voyage* but that fell through, as did two planned movies with Basehart and Hedison, one called *The Day Custer Fell*. The other was a gold-rush adventure that, according to Hedison, would be "a sort of *Treasure of the Sierra Madre*."

Hedison received more fan mail than any other actor at 20th Century Fox and he answered many letters. As for Basehart, personal replies from the actor were rare. A young fan named Keri in Oregon told this author how she sent off a letter to Basehart, excitedly asking for photos and telling him she had joined his fan club. She received her autographed pictures but on one photo was a cryptically typed message from the Admiral: "I have NEVER given permission to anyone to organise a club for me. Therefore, I have no club."

BECOMING MORE HUMAN

Easily renewed for a second year, *Voyage* was now in colour with a redesigned interior and exterior for Seaview. There were also cast and format changes, including a flying sub that launched from the Seaview. As Irwin Allen told *Daily Variety*, "I consider *Voyage* to be an entirely new show this year. And Richard and David will unbend and become more humanised."

Hedison initially fought against the idea of a flying sub. "I thought it was a stupid idea" he



said but later changed his mind. Basehart liked the idea right away. "It will get us to shore a lot quicker – anything to get us away from Seaview!" he joked and noted the US Navy had a real flying sub in development.

The new season kicked off with "*Jonah and the Whale*," where Crane leads a diving party into the stomach of giant whale to rescue Admiral Nelson and a Russian scientist (Gia Scala) who are trapped in a bathysphere. "*Voyage* looks stronger than ever," said *Daily Variety*. "It is a suspenseful tension-filled story. The special effects recreate the interior of the whale strikingly and realistically."

The Los Angeles Times later announced that Ina Balin had signed for five episodes, to reprise her role as Litchka, the spy Admiral Nelson made love to in "*Time Bomb*." Basehart looked forward to her returning. "Ina is very good in the kissing department," he said, but a continuing role for her didn't work out. Barbara Bouchet, seen in "*The Left Handed Man*," was also announced as a semi-regular but that too didn't happen. However, Susan Flannery, who had played three different characters previously on *Voyage*, was asked to play a type of James Bond girl to supply Crane with romantic interest.

Susan Flannery said years later: "I was offered a co-starring role on *Voyage* but I turned it down because I didn't want to act with monsters. Richard and David were wonderful to work with but that big ship and the monsters were the real stars."

She retained her friendship with Irwin Allen and was grateful for the "big break" he gave her in his *Towering Inferno* (1974), as Lorrie, the secretary who makes a burning plunge from a skyscraper. The actress, later a daytime Emmy winner for her starring role in *Days of Our Lives*, also co-starred on *Dallas*, opposite a different monster, the villainous JR Ewing (Larry Hagman).

Hedison and Basehart pressured Allen to add more women to the show but it didn't work. "They tried adding more women in the second year and the ratings went way down," said Hedison, "and whenever they put in a monster, the ratings went way up. So what do I know? If I were a producer, I couldn't make a TV show last more than 14 weeks."

Jayne Mansfield, the 1950s sex symbol, wrote Hedison a letter, saying *Voyage* was one of her favourite shows and asked

if she could be a guest star. But even Jayne and Hedison couldn't get Irwin Allen to change his mind about hiring more females. "We can't accommodate any more women or else we will lose our audience!" Allen complained. "We plan bigger and better monsters. Our audience enjoys being frightened."

Demographic research showed that too many teenagers considered *Voyage* square and old-fashioned, hence the addition of Stu Riley, the young gung-ho sailor played by Allan Hunt (Walter Koenig, Chekov from *Star Trek*, had also read for the role). Hunt, who admitted he had never seen *Voyage*'s first season, described his role as "a guy who loves excitement and danger and has a great capacity for enjoying life. He's a lot like me!"

The other addition was Chief Francis Sharkey, a role James Doohan (Scotty of *Star Trek*) had turned down. Allen had seen actor Terry Becker in a segment of the 1962 WWII series *Gallant Men* and realised he would make the perfect Chief. "The most important thing Sharkey brought to *Voyage* was a sense of humour," says Becker.

But sometimes the colour episodes exasperated the actors. During the third season, visitors to the set pressed Becker on why he was doing *Voyage* and the actor kept saying, "Money."

"Exactly when and where did I ever say that?" demanded Becker to this author in 1994, in his gruff Chief Sharkey voice. When told it was during the filming of "*The Mermaid*" as he was preparing to fight a green sea monster, the actor's defensiveness evaporates. "Please understand, I wasn't disparaging the show," he explained. "To me, money meant security. I grew up in a tenement where there were times we had no food. I was probably a little embarrassed having all these people watch us and we're facing another monster. That wasn't the show we wanted to do but Irwin found it cheaper to bring a monster aboard Seaview rather than take us out on location and do real stories."

Becker, having studied acting with New York greats like Lee Strasberg and Stella Adler, took *Voyage* seriously. "Forget the monsters – we really cared about the relationships. When I was hired, Irwin told me the Chief would have on-shore adventures and romance with women. I even wore a toupee with hopes of scoring with the ladies. But those ideas got cut out. We ended up making love to giant lizards." 🦎

Stay tuned for part two next issue, as Seaview faces everything from wax men to deadly dolls and studio executives!



FAREWELL TO STAN THE MAN

Allan Bryce pays tribute to a comics legend...

The word legend is bandied about a little too frequently these days, in many cases to describe folk not even a legend in their own lunchtime. But nobody could argue that Stan Lee, who has died aged 95, was not a bona fide legend, a familiar, jovial man who created so any of the iconic characters we have all grown up with.

Stan was of course the incredibly prolific and talented writer, editor and publisher responsible for creating or co-creating such iconic characters as *Spider-Man*, the *X-Men*, *Thor*, *Iron Man*, *Black Panther*, the *Fantastic Four*, the *Incredible Hulk*, *Daredevil* and *Ant-Man*. Some obituaries have also mentioned he came up with *Captain America*, but as true Marvel fans know, Cap was created by cartoonists Joe Simon and 'Jolly' Jack Kirby.

Born Stanley Martin Lieber on Dec. 28, 1922, Stan had a poor upbringing in Washington Heights, where his father, a Romanian immigrant, was a dress-cutter. The big turning point in his life came in 1939, when he got a job as a gofer for \$8 a week at Marvel's predecessor Timely Comics. Two years later, for Kirby and Joe Simon's *Captain America* No. 3, he wrote a two-page story entitled "The Traitor's Revenge!" using the pen name Stan Lee.

Aged just 19, Stan was named interim editor by publisher Martin Goodman when the previous editor quit. Then in 1942, he enlisted in the Army and served in the Signal Corps, where he wrote manuals and training films. After the war, he returned to the publisher and served as the editor during what would become a turbulent time for the comics industry.

In 1954, the publication of psychologist Frederic Wertham's book *Seduction of the Innocent* had spurred calls for the government to regulate violence, sex, drug use, questioning of public authority figures, etc., in the comics as a way to curtail "juvenile delinquency." Wary publishers headed that off by forming the Comics Code Authority, a self-censoring body that managed to take the heat off but ended up making comics more juvenile and inoffensive.

As the 1960s dawned, superheroes were back in vogue with the success of DC Comics' Justice League, so Lee and Kirby put their heads together and launched their own superhero team, the *Fantastic Four* for the newly renamed Marvel Comics. That launched in November 1961 and was soon followed by *The Incredible Hulk*, *Spider-Man*, *Doctor Strange*, *Daredevil* and *X-Men*. *The Avengers* launched as its own title in September 1963.

Marvel and Lee soon revitalised the comics business with a series of flawed, more human superheroes who lived in the real world and struggled with everyday challenges, whether it was paying the rent or wondering about their purposes in life.

Some readers, myself included, think that the mid-to-late-60s was Marvel's Golden Age. The stories and artwork were unsurpassed. Stan's way of doing things at Marvel was to brainstorm a story with an artist, then write a synopsis. After the artist drew the story panels, he filled in the word balloons and captions. The process became known as "The Marvel Method."

Prior to Marvel's rise, most comic artists and writers remained anonymous to the general public, but Stan broke down the barriers in that respect, ensuring that readers were as familiar with his 'bullpen' of writers and artists as they were the characters themselves.

In fact it took less than a year from the creation of the *Fantastic Four* for Marvel creators to show up in the pages of the comics themselves; Lee and Jack Kirby were terrorised in *Fantastic Four* No. 10 when Doctor Doom showed up in their offices, demanding that they call Mr. Fantastic and help set up a trap for the heroes.



Then in 1964's *Marvel Tales Annual No. 1* readers were treated to "An actual unretouched photo of virtually every member of our Merry Marvel Bullpen!" *Spider-Man* and *Doctor Strange* co-creator Steve Ditko was notably missing, Stan explaining that he and a few others were "out of town when these pix were taken — so we'll try to print their pans later on. (A sneaky way to coax you to read all our future issues!)"

In 1972, Stan was named publisher and relinquished the Marvel editorial reins to spend all his time promoting the company. In 1980 he moved to Los Angeles to set up an animation studio. Marvel characters appeared on TV only in these early days, with an animated *Spider-Man* show (come on, you know the theme song). That ran from 1967 to 1970, while Bill Bixby played Dr. David Banner and his not so jolly green pal in the 1977-82 CBS drama *The Incredible Hulk*.

Lee launched the internet-based Stan Lee Media in 1998, and the superhero creation, production and marketing studio went public a year later. The time wasn't right though, and the venture failed.

It was the emergence of the "Marvel Universe" in the movies, especially with the *X-Men* franchise and the Sam Raimi-directed *Spider-Man* (2002), that truly made the brand ubiquitous. In 2009, the Walt Disney Company purchased Marvel Entertainment - the licensing arm of the comic-book brand - for \$4 billion.

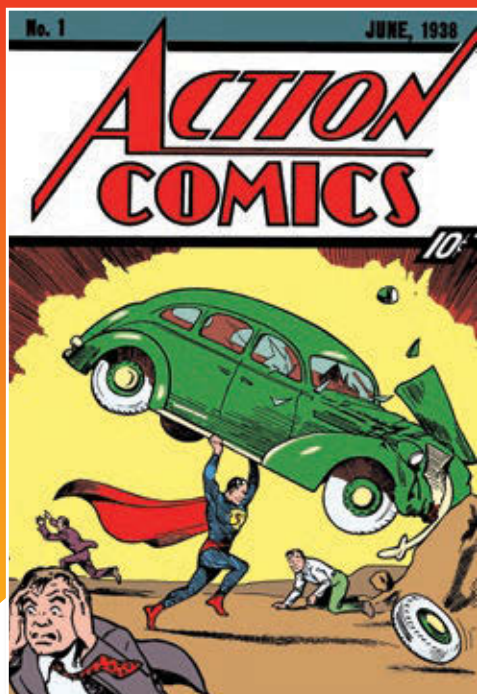
Lee maintained that he saw little of that wealth, however, because the rights of his creations remained with Marvel.

In his latter years Stan loved to appear in cameos in the Marvel movies, shown avoiding falling concrete, watering his lawn, delivering the mail, gatecrashing a wedding, playing a security guard, etc.

One such cameo seems particularly prescient in the light of Stan's passing. In *Spider-Man 3* (2007), he chats with Tobey Maguire's Peter Parker as they stop on a Times Square street to read news that the web-slinger will soon receive the key to the city. "You know," he says, "I guess one person can make a difference... 'nuff said."

'Nuff said indeed. 🕷️





— THE STORY OF — COMICS

Marvel or DC? Or both? Today, they're interchangeable, but once they were two very different companies. Jon Abbott offers a brief refresher course on how the '60s super-hero boom all started...

Superman came first, closely followed by *Batman*. First came *Detective Comics*, then *Action Comics* with Superman in no. 1, then *Detective Comics* with *Batman* from issue no. 27. Those books were soon to be accompanied by separate titles for *Superman* and *Batman*. Already, comics history was getting complicated and nerdy.

Ironically, given the trouble that was to come, the comics line was created to give the company a more respectable veneer. Both DC, as National Periodical Publications, and what would eventually be known as Marvel, under a variety of paper companies, were published by newsstand publishers who primarily dealt in pulps and porn, or what were pragmatically referred to by the trade as 'men's magazines'. They didn't have a prestigious title between them. Comics weren't exactly respectable as such, but they were innocent to the point of blissful naïveté. And when war broke out, they were on our side, read by our boys.

Yes, read by our kids and the troops, fighting evil and waving the flag (and occasionally even wearing it), no-one could complain about comic books. Or so DC bosses Stanley Donenfield and Jack Liebowitz hoped. In actuality, once the war was over, and busybodies had time to waste again, comics were almost immediately attacked for corrupting the young, and this culminated in the formation of the self-policing Comics Code Authority in 1954,

a seriously establishment operation (no showing the kids any corrupt politicians, crooked cops, or rapists and wife-beaters, all conveniently banned alongside the vampires and werewolves).

It clamped down on the gangsters and sadism that had begun to creep in, and dictated on what was to be regarded as permissible content, not the least of it mysteriously targeting the horror and crime content of the sleazy EC Comics, later revered by comic fans for their artwork, but packed to the brim with the sort of gruesome horror and gore that wouldn't be seen in mainstream American cinema until the late '70s. Clean-cut super-heroes were on the slide, and comics had, in truth, turned a bit nasty.

E.C. were not the only victims, just the most prominent. Reed Tucker, in his book *Slugfest*, the latest in the steady flow of books detailing the history of comics, gives the figures in all their stark reality - 24 out of 29 comic book publishers out of business within two years, 630 different titles down to 250. While it worked out rather well for the big boys of DC and Dell (the funny animal guys), it was tough for all the writers and artists put on the breadline. It might also be argued that it weeded out a lot of the crap.

While these attacks on comics were certainly politically or professionally motivated to advance the careers of lazy opportunists pursuing easy targets in the blame game, they were obviously not entirely

groundless. The companies that produced the comics were in the business of commercialism and sensationalism, and old habits died hard. They knew no other way to sell product than with colourful and lurid 'come-on' covers, and their brazen populist approach has many admirers, including myself.

But amongst the men who chuckled knowingly at the *New Yorker*, or the women who placed *Ladies Home Journal* carefully next to the flower vase in their impeccably kept showcase homes, the likes of *Crime Does Not Pay* and *Vault of Horror*, or even *Superman* and *Tom and Jerry*, were publications to be despised, hidden or binned. Read guiltily or not at all, the pulps, comic books, satire, porn and sweat mags published by Bill Gaines at E.C., Donenfield and Liebowitz at National, or Marvel's Martin Goodman at "Atlas" and its other numerous flimsy identities, certainly had few defenders.

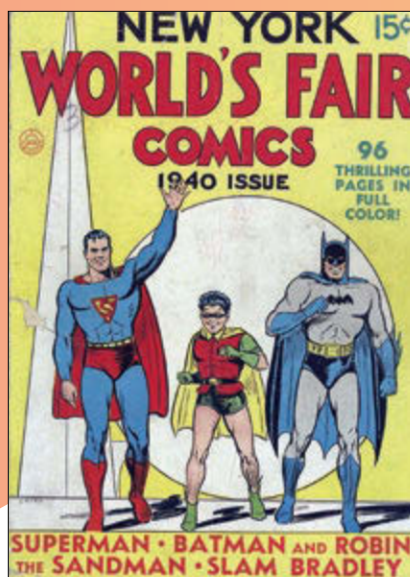
EARLY MARVELS

The first Marvel Comic had been a title, not a company, and was issued by Goodman under his Timely banner in 1939. It featured the Human Torch (not the one in *Fantastic Four*), and was swiftly followed by numerous other super-hero creations, including Bill Everett's aquatic *Sub-Mariner* and Joe Simon and Jack Kirby's incredibly popular wartime hero *Captain America* (a couple of years later, Kirby departed for the first of his two better-paid but ill-fated tenures at DC).

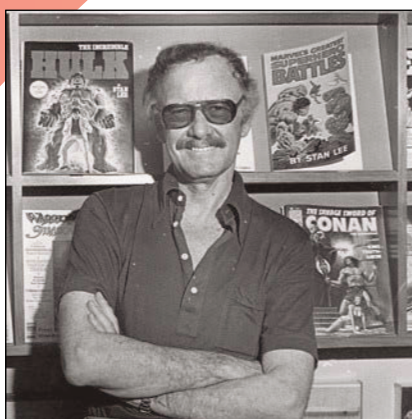
Martin Goodman's comics - war, westerns,

Above: The origin tales of Superman and Batman - if you have these in your collection then you're minted! E.C. Comics like *The Vault of Horror* fell foul of the Comics Code Authority in the 1950s





Right: The late, great Stanley Lieberman, aka Stan Lee. On his own and through his work with frequent artist-writer collaborators Jack Kirby, Steve Ditko and others, Lee catapulted Marvel from a tiny venture into the world's No. 1 publisher of comic books and, later, a multimedia giant...



romance, mostly uninspired super-heroes, and a smattering of watered down horror - were the perfect place to put his cousin Stanley Lieber, who had come out of the army looking for a job. Already writing while he was in the forces, Stanley wrote his comics under a pen name so that his real name wouldn't be tarnished when he published his Great American Novel.

A decade or so later, he had instigated one of the biggest forces in popular culture in history, embracing toys, TV, movies, and all areas of publishing and merchandising, and changed his name legally to Stan Lee. He was a gregarious self-publicist who revelled in his fame, and a nice guy who deserved it.

On one occasion, in the wake of the Code layoffs, his furious boss found a cupboard full of substandard inventory Stan had commissioned to keep his buddies working. He just hadn't had the pages to actually publish them!

His work expressed noble and sensible sentiments without ever descending to preaching or social engineering, and when he was invited, in the 1970s, to put out an anti-drugs message in his *Spider-Man* comic, he bluffed his way through his ignorance of the drugs culture (while essentially as non-judgemental as ever he naturally wanted nothing to do with it), and defied the Comics

Code Authority to do it, forcing reform on numerous unnecessary restrictions.

The top men at DC were less charming. It's sad to become aware in adulthood that the comics that gave us such stoic, upright, cheerful role models as Superman, Batman, and Wonder Woman were the product of a bunch of bullies and charlatans, but Mort Weisinger, Bob Kane, and Charles Moulton, while hardly Capones, Mansons or Hitlers, were not particularly nice people, and some of the others working alongside them were at the very least surly and scary.

They did, however, know their business, and got the comics out there on the stands and into people's homes, which was more than some of the nicer guys who toiled under their iron fists, mean mouths and laser-beam eyes could manage.

They did not suffer fools gladly, and there were a lot of young fools trying to get into comics by the late '60s, and who - by the 1970s - had got in. Weirdly, those cosy, comforting DC Comics were never better than when they were produced by tough, all-business bastards. But it's disappointing that such wonderful art and memories were created in an atmosphere of drudgery and tyranny by sweet guys anxious for payday and rarely given their due, either in respect, recognition, or remuneration at the time.

Retrospectively, fans tracked down the identities of the writers and artists who eventually received credit at least, in the 1970s. So may the gods bless Curt Swan and his colleagues who did the real work.

ABBOTT ORIGIN STORY

In the summer of 1956, just as I was busy being born, two things happened that would directly influence the entire course of my own life and all my interests. Elvis Presley appeared on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, and Martin Goodman's distribution company failed. These two completely unrelated events kickstarted the vast majority of the popular culture we know today.

Unable to distribute his mountain of copycat comic books, and refusing an offer from DC to sell them Captain America, Sub-Mariner, and the Torch, Goodman instead accepted a humiliating and punishingly one-sided deal from DC's distributors to handle just eight Goodman comic book titles a month.

Cleverly, Goodman turned this into sixteen bi-monthly titles, and in 1963 the allowance was upped to fourteen, but for the next twelve years, during the height of Marvel's artistic ascendancy under Stan Lee and his extraordinary army of illustrators, he had to cancel a title to release a new one, and this



inadvertently forced Marvel to favour quality over quantity. The moment the deal was renegotiated and they could release as many titles as it wanted, Marvel flooded the market and went into artistic decline. But by then, they had become a commercial force to be reckoned with.

But why did DC distribute their competition at all, you ask? Neither of these deals had been entered into by DC's distribution arm out of altruism. Both were commercial strategies to head off accusations of monopoly.

DC thought Marvel were a joke, a fly-by-night fad, a flash in the pan, a fluke. Marvel thought DC Comics were a joke, a conservative collection of clichés, a dinosaur doing an out-of-date dad dance. There was no way for anyone at DC to have known back then that this punishing deal, and their vindictive blackballing of Kirby in the mid-'50s (who went to Marvel to draw monster comics, and so was there to launch the Marvel universe with Lee), would create their most powerful commercial competitor and superior.

TALES TO ASTONISH

Also in 1956, DC's *Showcase*, a sales train wreck (apparently no-one wanted to read about Fireman Farrell), had finally paid off with issue four when Julius Schwartz suggested reviving and revamping the *Flash*, a wartime super-hero whose title had been cancelled in 1949. It was a massive success, partly because of a classy major re-design, and was swiftly followed by revivals of *Green Lantern*, *The Atom*, and *Hawkman*, all given similar stylistic overhauls in costume and origin. But it was putting them all together in a successful super-hero team book, *Justice League of America*, that inadvertently provoked the birth of Marvel Comics as we know them today. Assigned to create a super-hero team in 1961 for what would become Marvel, Lee came up with *The Fantastic Four* (I'll be covering the *F.F.* in a separate feature quite soon), a groundbreak-



ing phenomenon that revitalised Lee and Kirby's flagging interest in comics.

During the 1960s, Marvel and DC were competitors, but also two very different companies. While Marvel broke down boundaries and courted the college crowd, DC were conservative and traditional in their outlook. Dominating DC was Mort Weisinger's mini-empire of the Superman Family of comics, *Superman*, *Superboy*, *Action* with Superman and Supergirl, *Adventure*, with Superboy and the Legion of Super-Heroes, *World's Finest*, with Superman and Batman, and bizarrely, titles for supporting characters Lois Lane and Jimmy Olsen.

Dominating Marvel were *Fantastic Four* and *The Amazing Spider-Man* (*Incredible Hulk*, later hugely successful, an early cancellation). With Marvel dependent on DC for their limited distribution deal, the only way Marvel could premiere new characters was to give them strips in their former pulp sci-fi monster books, and thus Thor featured in *Journey Into Mystery*, Iron Man and Captain America's solo adventures could be found in *Tales*

of *Suspense*, Human Torch, Nick Fury, and Doctor Strange made incongruous bedfellows in *Strange Tales*, and Ant-Man, Giant-Man, Sub-Mariner and Hulk ran amok in *Tales to Astonish*. Curiously, the comparatively less successful *Daredevil*, *Avengers* and *X-Men* enjoyed their own titles. From this mish-mash of disparate styles and titles came everything we know today.

Lee was putting out as many books as he could, devising as many characters as he could, finding as much work as possible for all the talents and no-talents who had been laid off in the 1950s slump as he could, and giving large credits on the first page, for the first time, to the artists who were realising his ideas. He revelled in his fame and good fortune.

His reward for giving these workhorses a livelihood and recognition for their efforts and abilities during and long after their tenure at Marvel was to be constantly nibbled at by envious know-nothings in comic book fandom who spent the next fifty years trying to airbrush him from the creative process everywhere from fanzines to conventions to Amazon review pages.

Lee's greatest collaborator, the creative, inventive, imaginative and superlative number one Marvel artist Jack Kirby, who went on to prove he was nothing without him by churning out plot-free rubbish from the mid-'70s on, was one of the worst offenders, goaded on by fanboy revisionists to make ridiculous claims that it was all him, everything, he did it all. Saddened and baffled, Lee responded with caution, dignity, and grace to this avalanche of absurdity, never failing to compliment and acknowledge the King's genuine massive contribution, and give Kirby credit for his part in the creation of the Marvel universe - as indeed he had at the time, all throughout their decade-long partnership, when between them they created some of the greatest comic books in the history of the medium.

Next issue: When Marvel came to Britain...

This page: More classic Marvel adventures and *All Star Comics*, an American comic book series from All-American Publications, one of three companies that merged with National Periodical Publications to form the modern-day DC Comics

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DOCTOR WHO - SERIES 11 BBC.

It was a long time coming, but Jodie Whittaker's thirteenth Doctor finally fell to Earth in October, ten months after she slipped out of her exploding TARDIS last Christmas.

And what a landing. She's arrived in a new world, hitting the ground running (via a train carriage) for perhaps the most striking change of pace *Doctor Who* has seen since 1970's *Spearhead From Space*.

The Woman Who Fell To Earth

★★★★★

This could be a pilot in its own right. After years of old monsters and increasingly self-referential plots, new showrunner Chris Chibnall's new order strips the new Doctor of all the familiar armoury. No TARDIS, no UNIT, no safety net, no waffly explanation of the events leading up.

Just imagine if Steven Moffat had written this one "Actually I found myself on a vast ship with time running at two different speeds where a new-old species of one of my oldest deadliest foes were evolving in the hold. There was also two different versions of my best frenemy who likes to be known as the Mas-.....er Mis-....er...both of them. Then my companion was horrifically cyber-converted then there was a war and I started regenerating and paused it whilst I had an adventure with my first incarnation at the South Pole and there was also a glass lady and...."

There's a decided lack of domestics as the Doctor's flung into a highly localised alien incursion in of all places, Sheffield. The new friends she meets by chance Ryan (Tosin

Review Ratings

★★★★★ = Excellent
★★★★ = Good
★★★ = Average
★★ = Below Average
★ = Abysmal

Cole - awkward, vulnerable, clumsy through dyspraxia), Police Officer Yaz (Mandip Gill - ambitious, feisty, wasted on minor parking disputes), and Graham (Bradley Walsh - older, parentally blokey, and a cancer survivor) become her support network in her showdown with alien trophy hunter T'zim-Sha (Or "Tim Shaw?", as he will now forever be known).

The stakes are lower than normal - no end of the world threats, no apocalyptic subjugation of humanity. Just a nasty hunter who does icky things to people's skulls so he can collect their teeth and wear them like a piercing. Tim Shaw's brutal MO is the darkest thing on offer here, but to be fair the story is only really a device to bring the new cast together.

This is all new territory for *Doctor Who*. Whittaker is a one woman charm offensive, clever, daffy and upbeat where her more recent predecessors could be morose, godlike figures. There's no agonised quests for identity or all-purpose sonics. The new Doctor is all about improvisation and refreshingly doesn't always have the answers. This is evident even as she struggles through the customary regenerative wobble and finally gets her "I am the Doctor" moment, before picking her admittedly quite bonkers new outfit out in a charity shop. The new status

Allan Bryce, Martin Ruddock, Roger Crow and Steve Green take a look at some of the latest sci-fi and fantasy movie and home video releases...

quo of the show is that it's about families - and friends. This is how Chibnall sells the stories he's telling. There's real emotional heft in how we're introduced to Grace (Sharon D. Clarke) - Ryan's Nan, and Graham's wife - only to lose her so quickly, and her sacrifice towards the end of the episode helps bring the new TARDIS crew (especially the bereaved Ryan and Graham) together.

The Ghost Monument

★★★

Picks up with the Doctor's attempt to recover her missing TARDIS. Plonked onto the deathtrap planet Desolation, the Doctor and her new friends find themselves at the end of a perilous 'capture the flag' competition, set by an aloof, robed Art Malik. It's not even slightly a surprise to learn that the titular 'Ghost Monument' that marks the finish line is actually the TARDIS, but hey ho. There's plenty of console game-style traps and puzzles to navigate during the new team's alien planet induction - but really it's pure Terry Nation, referencing 1964's *The Keys of Marinus*. There's also some spooky foreshadowing of where the series may go from here, with mention of a 'Timeless child'. Watch this space. It's a slighter episode, but it does do that air-punch moment where the Doctor enters her newly-re-

furbished (and pleasingly weird) new TARDIS. The stunning South African locations (and this series really does look stunning) give real scale to the production. Let's also hear it for the new title sequence, a superb, kaleidoscopic Rorschach blot update of the 1970-73 Pertwee titles.

Rosa

★★★★★

Malorie Blackman's powerful *Rosa* is the pick of the bunch so far. Depositing the TARDIS crew in Montgomery, Alabama in 1955 - it deals with a time-travelling racist's attempt to prevent the Civil Rights movement by making sure seamstress Rosa Parks never gets out of place in *Back To The Future*, before revealing to the Doctor's black and Pakistani companions the full brutality of segregation and the ugly underbelly of the racist South.

This is a brave modern take on the 'historical' *Doctor Who* of the 60s, showing the TARDIS crew a romanticised Cadillacs and diners version of 1955 that wouldn't be out of place in *Back To The Future*, before revealing to the Doctor's black and Pakistani companions the full brutality of segregation and the ugly underbelly of the racist South.

It's done with a light touch, and preaches nothing except humanity and decency - but it's one of the most powerful, heartwarming episodes of the modern series to date. This



is time travel as tourism, not sci-fi trope – but the changes in history that futuristic EDL thug Krasko is trying to make are chilling. Putting the horrified, upset Graham at the heart of the incident where Rosa refuses to give up her seat was reminiscent of Captain Kirk's position of having to watch Edith Keeler die in the classic *Trek* episode *City At The Edge Of Forever* to put history back on track.

Arachnids in the UK

★★★★★

Arachnids in the UK is great earthbound fun, rebooting the Pertwee era (specifically 1973's *The Green Death*) to great effect, with toxic landfill waste causing domestic spiders to grow to huge size. There are some decent scares for arachnophobes (if you're worried about spiders and plugholes, other *Doctor Who* episodes are available) and some decent gags. We also get a possible recurring villain in the shape of Chris Noth's thinly-veiled Trumpian Businessman Robertson. Noth's good fun in this, but he's definitely the broadest villain *Doctor Who*'s seen in an age. The only thing to mark it down is the questionable resolution, where the Doctor speaks emphatically about the sanctity of life, then contrives to draw the giant spiders to Robertson's panic room, where they will presumably die out. However, on the plus side there's also the most stunning 'TARDIS in flight' shot ever – fully selling the ship's flight through eternity in spectacular fashion.

The Tsuranga Conundrum

★★★★

The Tsuranga Conundrum, in fairness – didn't turn out to be much of a conundrum. This time,

it's the Gremlin from evergreen *Twilight Zone* episode *Terror at 30,000 Feet* that's homaged, with the cutesy but ravenous 'Pting' in the role of the ship-wrecking gremlin aboard a space hospital. There's some nice ideas about anti-matter and male biology of the future in this one, and it's nice to see a likeable Doctor that's muddling through and doesn't have all the answers after years of oncoming storms and lonely gods. Has the lighter tone of the new series perhaps gone a little too far the other way? It's possible, but we're only halfway in to Series 11, and Jodie has no doubt got some surprises up her sleeve.

The episode does score highly on design, featuring gleaming, futuristic corridors of the like we haven't seen in *Who* for years, but it doesn't quite coalesce as an episode.

It's the TARDIS team that save this one, frankly – brought to life by Chibnall's deft character work and the chemistry of the cast. Thoroughly agreeable and refreshingly down-to-earth, we gradually learn a little more about them, with Walsh as Graham casually walking away with every episode through sheer charisma.

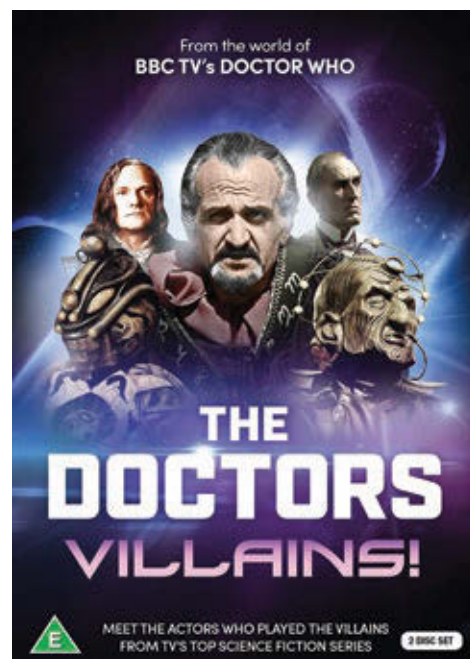
Cole's Ryan's combination of blokey handiness and vulnerability has been steadily built up over the series to date, and the fond but awkward family unit he has with Graham is new for *Doctor Who*. If anything, it's the treatment of poor Yaz that lets the side down. Likeable as Mandip Gill is, her character keeps getting crowded out and pushed into the background – especially during *The Ghost Monument*. We've met her family already. It just feels like we don't really know her yet. The only real character notes Yaz has had so far are her desire for 'more' and her developing girl crush on the

Doctor. Maybe these will build to something soon, but it feels a little like the Doctor's change of gender has given the male companions the emotional material to deal with, while the better-adjusted Yaz comes off like one of the UNIT boys of the 70s, driving, problem-solving and booting aliens.

On the other hand it could also be a valid comment on how men can fuss and faff and women just tend to get on with it. Whatever it is, I hope Yaz gets more to do soon and Chibnall gets to prove critics of a crowded TARDIS wrong.

So, series 11 of *Doctor Who* so far then. Baggage-free, lighter, and with oddly more in common with the show of the mid-60s. No doubt there's more surprises to come, but it's refreshing to drop in on the Doctor and friends once a week and not know what's going to happen next. Just like back in the day.

Martin Ruddock

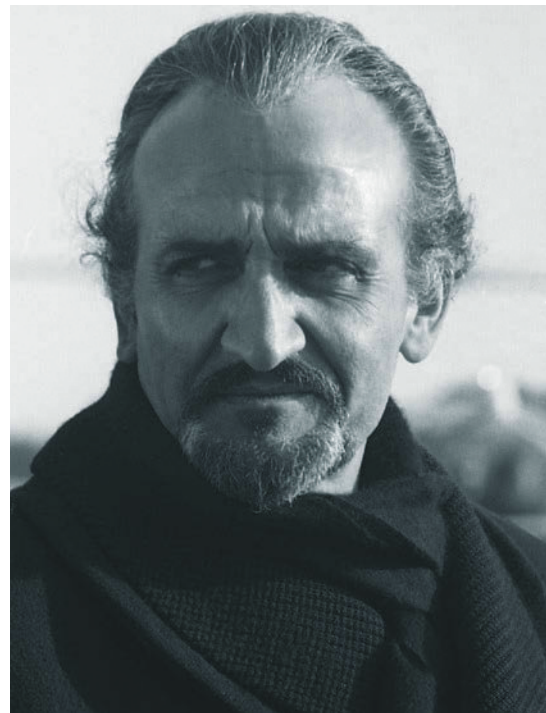


THE DOCTORS – VILLAINS! (2018) DVD.

Out now. Koch Media. Cert: E.

★★★★★

Hot on the cloven heels of the Myth Makers compilation *Monsters!*, producer Keith Barnfather and his team turn their attention to the Doctor's





arch-nemeses.

Sadly, of course, the best-loved of those actors, Roger Delgado, was tragically taken from us 45 years ago in a car crash whilst filming in Turkey, but this two-disc set includes a tribute to him from many of his former colleagues (a number of whom have sadly also now left this plane).

The remaining five places in this nefarious *Who's Who?* are taken up by David Gooderson (Davros in *Destiny of the Daleks*; interviewed this year by Robert Dick), Bernard Archard (Marcus Scarman in *Pyramids of Mars*; interviewed at a 2006 convention), Julian Glover (Scaroth in *City of Death*; ditto); Ian Collier (Omega in *Arc of Infinity*; filmed at home that same year) and Peter Miles (Nyder in *Genesis of the Daleks*; likewise). In a misguided attempt to give the older material a sense of continuity, questions from regular interviewer Nicholas Briggs were inserted into the footage; the result is both clumsy and jarring.

Whilst Glover provides the most entertaining segment, arguably the best line comes courtesy of Collier, confiding how his 1988 HIV diagnosis made it difficult to get regular work: "If it wasn't for Big Finish, my career would have been finished!" Another reason, whilst the broadcast series suffers the attentions of the vacuous Chris Chibnall, to be grateful at least one company still knows how to make an authentic *Doctor Who* adventure. SG



SKYSCRAPER (2018) Blu-ray.
Out Now. Universal. Cert 12.

★ ★ ★

The rules of gravity go out of the window hand in hand with plot sense in this silly but fun Dwayne Johnson blockbuster, pre-sold to audiences with images of the charismatic leading man dangling one-handed from a high building while a deadly blaze burns all around him. At least audiences were pre-warned that this wasn't going to be a hard-hitting documentary on fire safety. Put simply, *Skyscraper* is *Die Hard* crossed with *The Towering Inferno*, and while it is not as good as either it is an entertaining popcorn flick with great special effects and some fairly tense moments along the way to its predictably happy ending.

The film kicks off with a flashback to 10 years ago when we see Johnson's Will Sawyer, a highly trained Marine and FBI agent, misjudging a hostage situation and losing half a leg in an explosion that kills many of his team.

In the present day, Will serves as a security consultant. He is in Hong Kong with his wife, Sarah (Neve Campbell) and their twins (McKenna Grace and Noah Cottrell) to check out the safety of an impressively futuristic Hong Kong high-rise called The Pearl. The tallest structure in the world, it's three times the size of the Empire State Building, with an eighth-wonder-of-the-world sphere perched

on top. This self-contained CGI city is the brainchild of billionaire Zhao Long Ji (Chin Han), and though nobody's actually living there yet, Will's family have moved in while he does his safety checks. After being given a tour of the place and being shown the incredible sphere which can be made invisible so it looks like anyone inside is standing in mid air, Will goes off with a tablet that controls the building's security measures.

The tablet gets pinched though, by a gang of international criminals who frankly don't give tuppence about health and safety regulations. Led by the menacing Kores Botha (Roland Moller), they break in and set the place on fire from the 96th floor up. The reason for this, a ruse to get their hands on a flash drive, is patently ridiculous, a MacGuffin that even Hitchcock would turn his nose up at. But it can quickly be forgotten about as the action set-pieces mount up.

Caught outside the building while his wife and kids are fleeing the fire inside, our hero must first find a way to join them above the fire line. Glancing up at a nearby crane he has a light bulb moment like some hero of a platforming video game. What if I could get up on that crane and swing it into the building and then climb or jump over? Yeah, we'd have thought exactly the same. If we were Lara Croft. Having said that, the crane climb and leap is undeniably thrilling and so is the ridiculous scene where Will must climb round the outside of the building using duct tape to stick himself to the windows like Spider-Man. That duct tape comes in handy for patching up wounds too.

As for the villains, well they are straight from central casting and not of the calibre of Jeremy Irons or Alan Rickman. Speaking threateningly with dramatic, evil pauses, they enjoy shooting people without warning, even their own men when they get lippy, which does seem a bit daft unless they really have to reduce their gang's wage bill.

This is a PG-13 affair so most of the mayhem is kept offscreen, the camera cutting away from a massacre of *Skyscraper* employees. Nevertheless it still has a lot of mass shootings for a family movie and there's something a little unhealthy about the way it presents its evil protagonists (particularly one female baddie) taking almost orgiastic pleasure in the slaughter.

Still, Johnson is a likeable lead and he's well matched with *Scream*'s Neve Campbell, who gets more to do than most action movie wives,

even saving the day at the end in a most unlikely fashion. The ending is fun too, a *Lady from Shanghai* house-of-mirrors style shootout, but with a high-tech digital upgrade. "This is stupid" says the hero at one point, and whilst it's impossible to disagree with him, it's also fair to say this towering slice of action movie silliness delivers everything that the poster promised. Picture and sound on the disc are stunning as one might expect.

Extras: A good audio commentary from director Rawson Marshall Thurber. Deleted and extended scenes and some talking head features that only amount to about fifteen minutes when you add them all together. *Dwayne Johnson: Embodying A Hero, Inspiration, Opposing Forces, Friends No More, Kids In Action* and *Pineapple Pitch*.

Allan Bryce.

Solis (2018)

Starring Steven Ogg, Alice Roberts

Out: December 10

★★★★★

Drifting towards the sun in a malfunctioning shuttle craft, things are looking bleak for US astronaut Troy Holloway. He's accompanied by a deceased crew-mate and due to another personal loss, he's losing the will to live.

Troy is a broken man, on a collision course with destiny. But there's a glimmer of hope at the other end of his intercom thanks to the voice of Commander Roberts, somewhere across space.

Can her rescue team intercept him in time, or will Troy meet a fiery doom?

That's the premise behind writer/director Carl Strathie's lean debut feature *Solis*, a 90-plus minute one-man show which gives Steven Ogg the chance to shine brighter than the fiery orb at the heart of the drama.

A few years ago I visited the set on day one of the shoot in East Yorkshire, so was like a kid on Christmas morning to see *The Walking Dead* and *Westworld* star 'floating' in zero G. No wires, but plenty of suspense, mainly for me. I was desperate to see how *Solis* would play out.

Fast forward to the summer of 2018, and watching the finished thing in a hotel overlooking Carnaby Street is another pleasure. The fact I'm sat next to production designer Tony (Moon) Noble, who gives the movie a feel of beloved old school sci-fi classics *Silent Running* and *Alien*, is a bonus.

As nuts-and-bolts survival thrillers go, *Solis* ticks all the boxes: a fractured hero with a troubled past in need of physical and emotional rescue; the voice in the darkness battling with her own loss, and determined to save the hero.

Inevitably there are shadows of other genre offerings *Apollo 13*, *Gravity*, *Sunshine* and *The Martian*, but *Solis* is very much its own vehicle, traversing similar paths, but shining in its own right.

Made on a shoestring budget but punching above its weight, the third act left me with my heart in my mouth. Every crack of glass in the lifepod window acts like a ticking time bomb before the finale.

Ogg is a terrific leading man, as he proved with *Grand Theft Auto V*, the mo-capped performance which made Strathie realise he was perfect for his movie. Alice Lowe's Roberts is hugely affecting; an intergalactic Samaritan who should touch a chord with many.

Kudos to composer David Stone Hamilton, whose orchestral score elevates the movie far higher than the budget might allow. Viridian FX also do a terrific job with their mix of model work and minimal CG. Some pod shots are a tad *Blake's Seven* (good not



great) but those final stunning scenes more than make up for it.

With Strathie putting the finishing touches to eighties-set sci-fi saga *Dark Encounter*, I'm now desperate to see how that more ambitious offering (also featuring Ms Lowe) plays out.

For now, it's a delight to see the finished *Solis*, rather than the sketches and behind-the-scenes snapshots that I've been teased with for months. No spoilers, but there's more to explore in this universe once the closing credits roll.

I'm hoping the movie generates enough financial thrust to launch a sequel. It deserves one.

Roger Crow.

THE SWARM (1978) Blu-ray

Out Now. Warner Archive Collection

★★★

Big shot Hollywood producer Irwin Allen was known as "The Master of Disaster" back in the 70s because of his successful run of blockbuster disaster movies. A who's who of Tinsel Town lined up to take the heat in *The Towering Inferno* and go plug in *The Poseidon Adventure*, but his most disastrous movie



of all was the \$20 million bee picture *The Swarm*. You could say that patrons who paid good bees and honey to see this really got stung. But strangely

enough I really enjoyed catching up with it again on this new Warner Archive (Region Free) Blu-ray.

Normal everyday bees just collect pollen from the flowers and help make honey to sell in shops. African killer bees, on the other hand, have a rather more sinister agenda, the clue being in their name.

Having made enough mischief on the Dark Continent, this mutant strain of super-intelligent and frankly quite anti-social insects head for Texas on a mission to destroy Houston's missile silos and nuclear power stations. Boy do they have a problem this time.

As usual Irwin recruited a lot of big stars, most of them down on their luck, to fill the minor roles. We're talking about the likes of Fred MacMurray, Olivia De Havilland, Ben Johnson, Lee Grant, José Ferrer and Henry Fonda.

The one big name still with a career to worry about was Michael Caine, who apparently used his inflated fee to buy a house. He is spectacularly miscast as a "brilliant entomologist" named Brad who munches on sunflower seeds and walks around like he has a broomstick lodged where the sun doesn't shine. He also gets to say the film's most quoted line: "Will history blame me or the bees?"

Not bad Michael, but it doesn't have quite the same ring to it as, "Bees! Thaaaaasands of them!" Makes a nice change from Zulus though.

Caine's character is the first to recognise the imminent threat and puts it into words as eloquently as we expect of him:

"We've been fighting a losing battle against the insects for fifteen years. But I never thought I'd see the final face-off in my lifetime. And I never dreamed that it'd turn out to be the bees. They've always been our friends!"

See, you learned something there – an entomologist is someone who fights insects.

The early part of the movie finds Caine in conflict with no-nonsense military man Richard Widmark as they try to thrash out a way to stop the bee invasion. Caine asks him: "Are you endowing these bees with human motives? Like saving their fellow bees from captivity, or seeking revenge on Mankind?"

Widmark replies: "I always credit my enemy, no matter what he may be, with equal intelligence." Judging by Widmark's performance we think that's probably a fair thing to do.



Meanwhile, the sky is filled with what looks like badly back-projected coffee grounds as the bees make, er, a beeline for brightly coloured objects on the ground – those gaudy 70s fashions can be lethal. The scenes where the little buzzers attack people are seemingly accomplished by firing little black balls of fluff at the actors with an air cannon while they run around in a blind panic, realising their careers will be over when this film hits the screen. Despite the film's huge budget it has the look of a Roger Corman cheapie, with poor model work depicting helicopters and trains exploding.

The film itself is the only convincing train wreck here and its failure affected poor old Irwin so much that he warned people never to mention it in his presence again – and walked out of an interview when one journalist did. Strangely enough though, *The Swarm* still generates a bit of a buzz among bad movie buffs, and it has at least one classy thing about it, a rousing Jerry Goldsmith score which at one point cheekily borrows from Rimsky-Korsakov's "Flight of the Bumblebee." It also uses b-e-e as its primary musical notes...

The original theatrical version of *The Swarm* clocked in at 116 minutes, but using the maxim that you can never get enough of a bad thing it was expanded to 156 minutes for later laserdisc and DVD releases. This Blu-ray was made from a new HD master and has such a strong picture quality that you can clearly see the difference between location and studio shots, and the artifice of the optical effects is plainly on display too. The surround sound mix is frankly disappointing for a big budget disaster epic, though Jerry Goldsmith's score has much more presence and some of the buzzy bees effects are fun. Arthur Askey sings the chart-topping song over the end credits. Er, sorry, that was just wish fulfilment on my part.

Extras: As with most of these Warner Archive releases, this is a bare bones affair with just a trailer and *Inside The Swarm*, a twenty minute featurette which talks about the very real threat of African killer bees, and how hard the little buggers are to wrangle. Caine, Fonda, and Ross make the odd comment but they don't wax lyrical.

Allan Bee-ryce.

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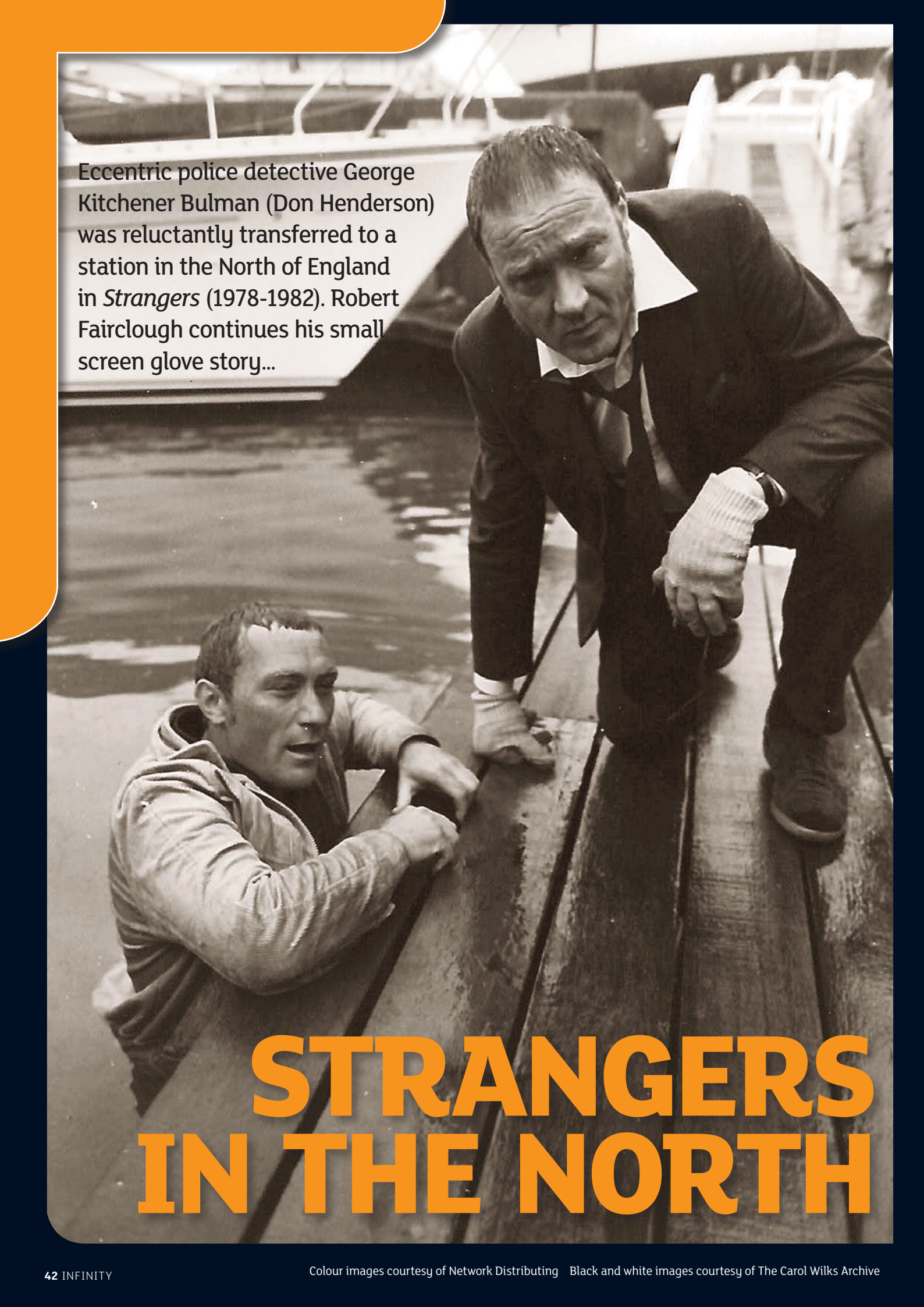
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Eccentric police detective George Kitchener Bulman (Don Henderson) was reluctantly transferred to a station in the North of England in *Strangers* (1978-1982). Robert Fairclough continues his small screen glove story...

STRANGERS IN THE NORTH

B

etween 1978 and 1982, George Bulman's undercover police team explored a unique combination of social drama and action series surrealism.

"If you lot up here are into some *Starsky and Hutch* fantasy, I could get very sour," Detective Sergeant George Bulman (Don Henderson, 1931-1997) grumbled about his allocation of an MG sports car in 'The Paradise Set', the first episode of *Strangers*, transmitted on ITV on Monday 5 June 1978, at 9pm. Moments later, Bulman had taken the wheel of the MG for exactly the sort of car chase that had proved so popular with viewers of *Starsky and Hutch*. That was the appeal of *Strangers* in a nutshell: subverting contemporary crime series conventions while celebrating them at the same time.

Strangers' creator Murray Smith (1940-2003) had written the episode 'Faces' (1975) for *The Sweeney*, a notable departure for the tough crime series, as the Flying Squad were involved with a terrorist cell infiltrated by an ex-Special Branch officer. In 1977, for *The XYY Man* TV series (1976-77), Smith adapted *The Miniatures Frame* (1972), Kenneth Royce's third novel featuring William 'Spider' Scott. Running to two series, *The XYY Man* starred Stephen Yardley as a cat burglar used and abused by British intelligence (see last issue).

Smith's script brought to the fore the characters of the eccentric, permanently gloved Bulman and his "oppo," *Knave*-reading Detective Constable Derek Willis (Dennis Blanch). Positive feedback to the duo across the course of *The XYY Man* convinced Granada Television, based in Manchester, that a spin-off series was possible.

Added to the regular line up was Northern Irish Police Constable Linda Doran (Frances Tomelty), together with John Ronane as Detective Sergeant David Singer, the liaison between Manchester C.I.D. and the three 'strangers'. A subtle, underrated actor, Ronane delivered a stand-out guest performance as an ageing criminal in *The Sweeney* episode 'Trust Red' (1978).

"John was an extremely fine performer," says Carol Wilks, the director of 'The Paradise Set', today. "A sweetheart too, and a terrible giggler, with a taste for telling the most unutterably daft, corny gags. He also had a very infectious laugh, which would reduce the world around him to tears of hysteria."

Wilks defined the singular tone of *Strangers* in an opening story about a former light entertainment double act turned-villains, who owned a disreputable drinking club. "Don always maintained that the best scripts were written in the pub," she remembers. "There is a sense in which he was absolutely right. I remember him saying, 'Look, guv, there are crap scripts and we can put a gloss on them, but it's still tarted up crap.' Many rewrites were sorted out over lunch breaks." Frances recalls Wilks as a positive force on the series, both professionally and socially: "She drank with us a lot and later married Dennis Blanch."

THREE STRANGERS

Bulman, Willis and Linda are, initially, a dysfunctional trio: the Metropolitan Police "couldn't get rid of [Bulman] fast enough" on attachment to Manchester, possibly because of him and Willis being witnesses to the execution of the international terrorist, 'The Fox', by a British secret service agent at the end of *The XYY Man*. Bulman's record isn't spotless, as D.I. Eric Rainbow (David Hargreaves) reveals: "Harassment, insubordination, intrusion into grief, false arrest [and] cooking evidence."

Like Bulman, Willis was transferred to the undercover unit C23; an ex-soldier, he only joined the police because he couldn't find another decent job. Linda's marriage lasted three years, after which she left the Royal Ulster Constabulary in Belfast for England. Four months into working with Bulman and Willis she's taking Valium, as she sees them as "scavengers, sweeping up the messes of a society that's always been pretty rotten and always will be."

In an era just before high powered TV police career women – *The Gentle Touch* (1980-84) and *Juliet Bravo* (1980-85) – at 29 Frances was fortunate to be offered in Linda Doran a part that was one of television's first feminists. Even though Frances had the opportunity, rare for an actress at that time, to play dramatic, humorous and action scenes – injuring a knee in the major fight sequence in 'The Wheeler Dealers' – her primary consideration was rather more practical: "I had a small child at the time so mostly needed the money!"

An appealing aspect of *Strangers*' first series is that stories focused on different members of the ensemble – Willis ('*Accidental Death*'), Bulman alone ('*Briscoe*'), Linda and Willis together ('*Right and Wrong*') and, in a



Opposite:

Don Henderson as Det. Chief Inspector George Bulman with Dennis Blanch as Det. Sgt. Derek Willis in 'A Much Underestimated Man'

This image:

Don Henderson with his real-life wife Shirley Stelfox, who appeared in three episodes of *Strangers*

variation on the format, Bulman with Sergeant Briscoe (Michael Byrne, in the domestic comedy '*Paying Guests*').

In the second series, script-edited by Murray Smith, individual stories for the regular characters were dropped, a major factor in influencing Frances' decision to leave. "I felt Linda simply became a chauffeur for the male characters," she admits, a function she performed in her last episode, '*Call of the Wild*'. Blanch, on the other hand, welcomed the change: "I wasn't disappointed at all when they dropped 'our' episodes. It was too busy for that."

Another aspect of *Strangers* that was phased out, as the series moved from the uneasy production mix of videotaped interiors and location filming purely on to film, was its mature seam of social drama, a hallmark of Granada Television. C.P. Taylor's first series script '*Right and Wrong*' examines Roy Stevens (David Daker), a city councillor pushing for educational reform, who might have taken bribes. Linda can't help admiring Stevens' social principles, and even though he's proved guilty, she finishes the episode admitting she sometimes hates her job. (Behind the scenes, Frances was delighted to be acting opposite Anne Reid as Audrey, Stevens' wife. "She made me laugh too much," she reveals with a smile. "She was very naughty!")

Equally, *Coronation Street* veteran Leslie Duxbury's script '*Briscoe*' is a gripping study of a uniformed police sergeant suspected of corruption. As P.C. 181, Bulman is posted to Briscoe's station to investigate him. The sergeant's angry defence of certain privileges in a thankless, stressful job is one of the series' highlights: "We stop it all falling apart! We're the putty... the mastic, the mortar. It's not *Daktari* out there because of us – without us it'd be a right bleeding jungle, so yes, I think I am entitled to a few perks. Definitely!"

ONE OF THE LADS

In Brian Finch's '*Clever Dick*', the third episode of Series Two, off screen Linda was promoted to sergeant and transferred to the anti-terrorist unit in the Metropolitan Police. In the following story '*Friends in High Places*', in which Smith revived his favoured combination of policing and espionage, 24 year-old Fiona Mollison made her debut as the very English D.C. Vanessa Bennett. "It was Bill Gilmour [the director of '*Friends in High Places*'] who cast me," she says. "He was wonderful, a sweet and funny chap, and it



Clockwise from above: Dennis Blanch and Don Henderson - don't dare call these cops pigs! Some athletic fighting from 'The Paradise Club' and some rather effeminate running from 'The Wheeler Dealers...'

was so great to be a regular in a series so early in my career." Fiona would stay with *Strangers* until the series ended, in October 1982.

"The ensemble was absolutely brilliant," she enthuses. "Don, especially, just became such a friend, but Dennis, John and Mark McManus [introduced in 'Retribution', Series Three's opening episode] all did, actually. I have to say, though, they were a heavy drinking cast," Fiona laughs. "I tried to keep up with them to start with in The Stables bar at Granada, but found that impossible!

"It was a dry company: in the studios there was no drinking. The Stables was across the road and belonged to Granada, which is where everybody went after finishing... The lads enjoyed my middle class accent, but liked it because I was still able to be very rude; my character was 'one of the lads', and I enjoyed being one of the lads in real life.

"One of the things I do remember very well is that Vanessa was designated as a fast driver. The reason for that was because the lads were all banned from driving! That worked very well in terms of the scripts and the reality of the situation.

"I think *Strangers* was very much of its period," Fiona considers. "It's very odd, now,

that actresses are going on and on and on about the lack of decent female roles, but at that time there was a range of writing and characters that women could get their teeth into. There was a certain misogyny about the male characters, but the women could hold their own, and that's how I felt – myself – in life. When we look back and talk to our kids about that time, I didn't feel discriminated against. We were able to tell people to 'F– off', we joked and flirted, we were OK with it, so I think the writing obviously reflected that period."

'*Marriages, Deaths and Births*', the last episode of Series Two, concluded Bulman, Willis and Vanessa's time in Manchester in a dramatic fashion. During an arrest, Bulman was shot through the shoulder by the psychopath Nick Carnos (a young Ben Cross) and held hostage. The kidnap initiated a county-wide police manhunt, as well as bringing the C23 team's feud with D.I. Rainbow to a head. From being a critic of Bulman's team in Series Two's opener '*The Wheeler Dealers*', Singer moves to fully supporting his Met colleagues, angrily confronting Rainbow over how he orchestrated a whispering campaign



against them. The episode was a sign of things to come in being shot nearly all on film – only a few scenes were recorded in the electronic studio – and introducing the first of several recurring characters, in this case Glasgow gangster Willie Mauchlin (James Copeland, 1918-2002).

FROM VIDEOTAPE TO FILM

The move to an all-film production with Carol Wilks' '*Retribution*' was welcomed by the regular cast. "Making *Strangers* all on film was much better for us, as we could get the continuity right," reasons Blanch. "Swapping between a video recording studio and location filming was a pain; we would have to remember what we were wearing, and so forth. I can't remember what episode it was, but I walked out of one studio scene wearing a tie and when it cut to film, the tie was gone! Cock ups like that happened when you mixed tape and film."

As a new decade began in 1980, *Strangers* had a third title sequence. In a move away from the scene montages of Series One and Two, the new opening titles showed a black cat padding along at night and a slowly triggering mouse trap, intercut with a close up of Bulman. Stylish and unusual – like the new theme music – the sequence was representative of the move to a slicker, totally





Clockwise from this image: Tooled up in 'You Can't Win Them All' Frances Tomelty with Dennis Blanch and Don Henderson in 'The Wheeler Dealers,' and Rachel Davies' Sgt Jill Tender is in a spot of bother in 'The Tender Trap'



film-based production. "The transition to film was quite a coup for the time," Wilks says. "Most things were still studio made at that time – because it was cheaper – and film drama at Granada was the property of the posh, straight stuff."

Having already directed the first episode 'The Paradise Set' and overseen the first all-film episode 'The Wheeler Dealers', Wilks returned to cast Detective Chief Superintendent Jack Lambie, the quartet's new London boss in D23, the Inter-City Squad at Scotland Yard, as well as orchestrate location filming in the capital.

"I recommended Mark McManus [1935-1994] because I'd worked with him on the factory drama *Bull Week* [1980] and knew he'd fit right in... We shot some car dialogue scenes with Don and Dennis then got in the stunt drivers, Frank Henson and his mate. We did this spectacular chase down Whitehall then, just after we stopped, a purple-faced policeman rushed up shouting, 'What the f— do you think you're doing?!'

"The location manager hadn't cleared it, so the drivers quickly melted away into the crowd, which was fair enough; their driving licences were their living, after all. We disappeared quietly and quickly back up to Manchester, where I had a half-heartedly reproving finger wagged at me by the Granada management. Privately, I think they thought it was all rather funny."

A STRANGER LAND

With Murray Smith now installed as principal writer, he was able to give free reign to his

imagination. Over three series, Smith created a stylised 'Stranger-land' of literature and philosophy, The *Sweeney*-style action, cockney rhyming slang, John le Carré-style espionage, fry ups, bizarre visuals, police politicking and a soundtrack that ranged from Mozart to the Cockney Rejects. In the middle of it all was Bulman, with his array of well-remembered props now complete – gloves, half-moon glasses, Vicks inhaler and Key Markets plastic carrier bag (where Henderson kept his scripts).

Despite the heightened feel of the production, characters and relationships remained

strong. Over the epic two part story 'Armed and Dangerous' and 'A Racing Certainty', D.I. Tom Casey (Bruce Bould) is murdered; Bulman vows to bring down the killers, while Singer is transferred from Manchester and promoted to head up Casey's team. Vanessa's flirtation with Tom means a temporary halt to her on-off-on affair with Willis, while intrigue remains over why Bulman's promotion to Chief Inspector has been delayed.

Another innovation of Series Three was the casting of the British film veteran Thorley Walters (1913-1991) as Bill "Clarence" Dugdale, D23's regular contact with "the Department" – a branch of the security services that haunted Bulman's career – in 'You Can't Win Them All'.

Series Four's main innovation was a story based around Jack Lambie. In 'The Loneliness of the Long Distance Copper', the dour Scotsman is shown to be paying a high price for his ascent up the Scotland Yard career ladder, as his wife Claire (Patricia Maynard) feels shut out of the exclusively male police club. Lambie's domestic life is complicated further by the escape from prison of 'Loco' Parmini (Trevor Thomas), a violent criminal who blames Lambie for the death of his younger brother and takes Claire prisoner.

The episode concludes with one of the series' most impressive fight sequences, as Lambie goes hand to hand against Parmini. The typical *Strangers* oddness of the intervention of an Indian shopkeeper with a family sized can of cooking oil resolves the situation in Lambie's favour, but there is a bittersweet ending – Claire leaves him. "Oh,

George," he sighs at the end. "Some days you need a sense of humour, pal."

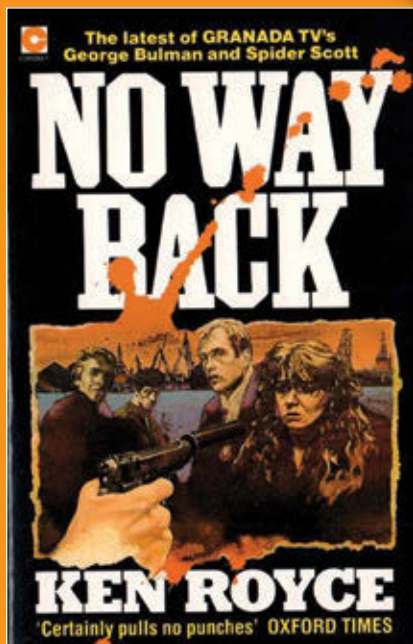
Only two other writers worked on *Strangers* during its all-film era, Edward Boyd (1916-1989) and Bruce Crowther. The former created and wrote the short-lived fantasy thriller drama *The Corridor People* (1966) for *Strangers* producer Richard Everitt, as well as scripting the last story of *The XYY Man*. In the first of his two scripts for Series Four set in Scotland, 'A Dear Green Place', Boyd made Willie Mauchlin central to a compelling story of internal police politics and a female killer-for-hire; in 'The Flowers of Edinburgh', he crafted an absorbing tale of political blackmail and sexually ambivalent villains.

Crowther's pair of scripts for Series Five helped to consolidate *Strangers*' last year as the strongest of the three film seasons. 'The Tender Trap' has Simon Williams playing very different aristocratic twins, Sirs Richard and Lawrence Barkham, as well as a stand-out guest appearance by Rachel Davies as Sergeant Jill Tender; Bulman completely underestimates her and she solves the case.

'A Free Weekend in the Country' is Crowther's comical take on an anti-terrorist conference that D23 attend, which features the telling irony of a murder committed in a country house hotel full of police officers. It's a particularly strong episode for Vanessa, as she fends off the attentions of the sexist D.C.I. Lennard (Kenneth Cranham).

'The Flowers of Edinburgh' features the last appearance of John Ronane as Inspector Singer, in an office-bound role that contributes little to the narrative. It was a disappointing end for a character and actor who had been such an integral part of the initial *Strangers* line-up. "I don't really know why John left," says Wilks. "It could have been that there were simply too many coppers. Then there was the financial side too."

The last episode of the fifth series, 'With These Gloves You Can Pass Through Mirrors', ends with an action sequence, set in an old gasworks, that features automatic weapons, a rocket launcher, and Bulman and Russian police inspector Pushkin (George Pravda, 1918-1985) in a motorbike and sidecar, both dressed like Biggles, wielding gas grenades and a shotgun. These scenes, sound-tracked by 'Ride of the Valkyries' from Richard Wagner's 1876 opera *Götterdämmerung*, look to all intents and purposes like a surreal send up of equivalent action in *The Sweeney*. Which, no doubt, was at least partly the point. 🐉



BULMAN AND SCOTT

Every series of *Strangers* ended with the acknowledgement 'Bulman and Willis are based on characters created by Kenneth Royce.' Following the success of the TV series, Royce remodelled his original Alf Bulman character, first seen in his 1970 novel *The XYY Man*, to reflect Don Henderson's interpretation in three new novels ("the Alf was never used").

In *The Crypto Man* (1984), George Bulman is a Detective Superintendent, "free of the formalities of Special Branch and clear of the bureaucracy of the Metropolitan Police," a position roughly equivalent to that of his TV iteration's status with D23. Royce also revived his cat burglar William 'Spider' Scott, partnering him with Bulman in stories that drew on *The XYY Man* series' combination of police procedural and spy thriller. Now running a successful travel agency, Scott was able to break and enter into places outside Bulman's jurisdiction.

In 1985's *The Mosley Receipt*, Scott and Bulman investigate the suspicious death of Chief Superintendent Tom Moody, an ally of Spider in Royce's novel *The Miniatures Frame* (1972). During the investigation, an undercover Scott is broken out of Albany prison on the Isle of Wight by the Arab terrorist Hashimi Ross, who became the central figure in *No Way Back* (1986), the final novel in the trilogy. Ross goes on a vendetta against the killers of his girlfriend Sophie, who sheltered Spider when he was on the run.

The 1987 paperback edition of *No Way Back* was subtitled 'A George Bulman Adventure' and reinforced the character's connection with television by using an illustration of Stephen Yardley as Scott on the cover, as well as the tag line, 'The latest of Granada TV's George Bulman and Spider Scott'. The cover of *The Mosley Receipt* paperback had used similar tie-in branding.

After later writing two more Bulman novels that featured the detective solo – *The Judas Trail* and *Shadows* (both 1996) – Royce died in 1997, the same year as Don Henderson.



This image:
A roguish retainer
gets the drop on
our two heroes...

As entertainingly baroque as this all is, it's a long way from the political and social drama of the first series' *'Duty Roster'*, *'Accidental Death'*, *'Briscoe'* and *'Right and Wrong'*, which were all marbled with distinctive Mancunian humour. Artistically, that was a shame: what *Strangers* gained in a flasher in a medieval helmet and a lurex cloak, teenage highwaymen, a transvestite New Romantic executioner, a 'Chantilly Lace'-quoting hit man and a Marxist funfair, the series lost when the writers turned their attention away from the state of the nation.

In an unexpected twist at the end of Series Five, Bulman resigns from the force to re-establish a relationship with Lambie's estranged wife. A quietly moving, if rather abrupt, final scene, in which Bulman leaves his gloves behind in the pub, was marred slightly by *Strangers*' reactionary attitude to the gay community, as Lambie half-jokingly asks Bulman if he's resigning because he's "a poof". On 20 October 1982, it appeared that viewers had seen the last of the idiosyncratic Inter-City Squad and George Bulman.

A MUCH UNDERESTIMATED MAN

Appraising the series overall, Fiona considers, "I'd never thought of it until recently, but *Strangers* does have something of *The Avengers* about it. It was one of the earliest comedy dramas, which are such a delight for actors to play. Obviously we had every heavy in the business come in to the show – which was great – but, like the regulars, they were all able to play a wider range." Blanch agrees: "Yes, I think it's fair to compare *Strangers* with *The Avengers*. Only we weren't as pretty as Jo Lumley."

Strangers didn't take itself seriously, either in the way it was made or, often, in the tone of its stories. At a time when the macho action men of *The Sweeney*, *Target* and *The Professionals* dominated British TV crime, Bulman, Willis, Singer and co. quietly sent up the genre, while simultaneously moving it forward with ground-breaking roles for women and ethnic characters. Unlike its contemporaries, *Strangers* was never repeated in prime time, although afternoon re-screenings did take place in the mid 1980s on regional ITV

networks such as Granada, ATV and STV.

Wilks believes that the show owes its success to the generosity and talent of the actor who, over time, became its focus: "I remember we were on the Manchester container dock location for *'The Wheeler Dealers'*, which we were trying to work while the dockers were getting on with their normal stuff – loading huge containers, swinging around on cranes. It was probably potentially quite dangerous, and maybe we had overstepped the mark of where we could go. It was enough, anyway, to rile their foreman, a large, quite tough-looking Mancunian piece of work.

"He charged up to Don, quite irate, and demanded to speak to whoever was in charge so he could rip a piece out of HIM. Don pointed at me, talking to a cameraman, blissfully unaware of the brewing storm and said, 'There she is, mate. That's our guvnor. That little lady over there. I'd go easy if I were you – she swears like a trooper and terrifies us.' (All this with, of course, an entirely straight face, taking great delight in the man's gobsmacked expression.)

He dined out on that with glee, retelling the tale endlessly, in that wonderful, honeyed gravel of a voice, practically choking with laughter. It synched perfectly with Don's bemused and slightly surreal view of the world."

Frances remembers how Henderson's loyalty as a friend extended way beyond her relatively short time as one of the *Strangers*: "He cared about all of us and every Christmas sent early daffodils from Jersey. When he died, his wife, the actress Shirley Stelfox, sadly also now no longer with us, continued the lovely tradition."

After co-starring in 48 episodes of *The XYY Man* and *Strangers* across seven years, Blanch considered 1982 was an appropriate time to hang up his handcuffs. "We'd had a good run. My

memories of playing D.S. Willis are hazy now. I just remember myself and Don had a whale of a time, apart from when we had to learn our lines!" 🐋

Special thanks to Dennis Blanch, Fiona Mollison, Frances Tomelty, Carol Wilks and Garron Martin.

Next issue: *Bulman*

Strangers - The Complete Series is available from Network Distributing





THE AMAZING STEVE DITKO

As the co-creator of the characters *Spider-Man* and *Doctor Strange*, Steve Ditko could rightly claim to have been a principle creative force behind the Marvel Universe movies that have dominated at the cinema box office in recent years. But, he probably didn't watch any of the films featuring those characters and would likely have been unimpressed if he had. We'll never know for certain.

Steve Ditko was, among many other things, the comics world's version of J. D. Salinger, eschewing interviews or media attention of any kind. Ditko was his own man. The work spoke for itself.

The first comic story by Steve Ditko I ever read was also the first Marvel comic of any kind that I read. It was 'When Falls the Meteor!' which had originally appeared in *Amazing Spider-Man* 36 (May 1966) but I found it in the British reprint title *Spider-Man Comics Weekly* 30 (8 September 1973). Thanks Mum for that random purchase – I don't think you knew what you would be starting.

That particular *Spider-Man* story is considered a minor one in Ditko's run on the title but I loved it all the same. There was an everyman quality to *Spider-Man* as drawn by Ditko and scripted by Stan Lee. Yes, the



Ian Millsted pays tribute to the legendary American comics artist and writer who co-created the Marvel Comics superheroes *Spider-Man* and *Doctor Strange* with Stan Lee...

action was dynamic and fantastical but the life of Peter Parker was grounded and the support cast, all too often missing in British comics of the era, were great fun.

Over the years I looked out for Ditko comics wherever I could find them. Much of his Marvel work was reprinted in the U.K. including a run of his five-page self-





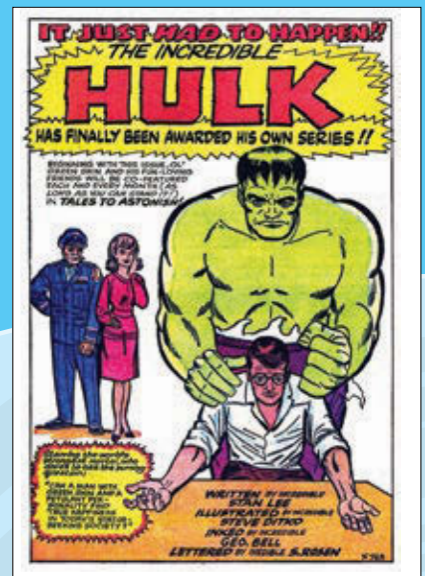
Above:
A Steve Ditko
comic created by
his fans.
DC were probably
not amused...

contained science fiction stories that appeared in the back of *Star Wars Weekly* and, later, *Doctor Who Weekly*. You could always spot them without having to look at the credits. Ditko's artwork was very distinctive; full of weird angles, close-ups on eyeballs and mysterious figures. Whether the setting was urban New York or some magical realm it was always, somehow, Ditkoland. Later on, I discovered Ditko's work for other companies and even the creator owned stories he produced for small presses and even fanzines.

Steve Ditko had a childhood that coincided exactly with the Wall Street Crash, the Great Depression and World War Two. It would be a surprise if those events did not affect his later creative work. He was one of the first comics artists to have been a fan of comics first. His mother made him a Batman costume which he played in with other kids in his hometown of Johnstown, Pennsylvania. After Army service in the immediate post-war years, during which he was stationed in Germany, Ditko moved to New York where he trained to become a comic artist with former *Batman* artist, Jerry Robinson, as his tutor. Ditko, already blessed with natural talent, learned the craft.

Ditko became a professional artist in 1953 and, one period of extended illness apart, worked regularly and successfully for decades after. One of his steadiest sources of work was Charlton Comics for whom he produced many short horror, mystery and crime comics. The scripts were written by others but Ditko put his own stamp on the work from his earliest days. He also started drawing similar stories for Atlas (later to become Marvel) on such titles as *Tales to Astonish*, *Strange Tales*, *Tales of Suspense* and *Amazing Adult Fantasy*.

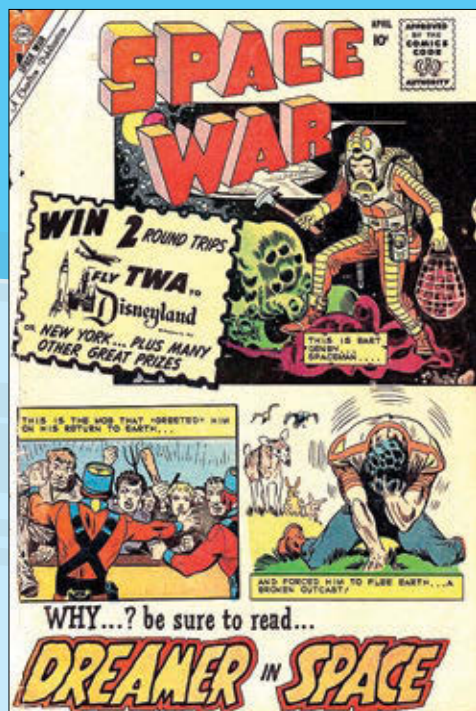
It was at Marvel Comics in the early 1960s that Ditko joined with Stan Lee and Jack Kirby to build the foundation blocks of the Marvel Universe which has become world-conquer-



ing at the movies in recent years.

Stan Lee devised a system where he would develop a plot, sometimes in discussion with the artist, and let the artist go off and draw the stories. Lee would then add the script elements once the art was complete. On the

one hand this meant the artist was doing more work, as they had to work out how to tell the story to a larger degree than if they were following a full script. On the other hand it gave them more creative freedom. Some artists struggled with this method but both



Ditko and Kirby excelled.

Although he worked on early *Hulk* and *Iron Man* stories it is the two creations of *Spider-Man* and *Doctor Strange* which are Ditko's most significant legacies with the company. Stan Lee came up with the name and wrote the snappy dialogue but Ditko contributed the visual look of the series including key villains, Doctor Octopus, Green Goblin, The Lizard etc, and notable supporting characters like J. Jonah Jameson, all of whom continue to this day.

For *Doctor Strange*, Ditko was responsible for the Dali-esque mystical realms in which the main protagonist increasingly ventured. If you thought the special effects in the Benedict Cumberbatch movie were cool, go back and have a look at what Ditko was doing in the comic in the 60s!

AN ARTIST AND PHILOSOPHER

There are differing accounts of how and why Ditko split from Marvel Comics in 1966. Most agree that he and Stan Lee were barely talking to each other in the last few months. Whatever the truth, Ditko walked away from what was, and would remain, the biggest commercial success of his career.

He was in demand though. He was already working regularly for Charlton Comics and was soon hired by Warren Magazines to draw stories for their horror anthologies *Creepy* and *Eerie*. With excellent scripts by Archie Goodwin these stories represented another artistic peak by Ditko.

Publishers were keen to showcase new Ditko creations in the hope that the success of *Spider-Man* could be replicated. For Charlton Comics, Ditko created *The Question* while *The Creeper* and *The Hawk and the Dove* emerged from DC Comics. All of these have continued in fits and starts to the present day but none have been major hits. Ditko only produced a handful of issues of each title.

Steve Ditko held philosophical views that put him at odds with many in the world of American comics. It is widely recognised



that he was a supporter of the Objectivist Philosophy of Ayn Rand, although I suspect that Ditko's discovery of the works and ideas of Rand merely reinforced views he already held. These views increasingly filtered into his work.

In 1967 he created *Mr A*, a mystery crime fighter who saw everything in black and white terms. Even in his work with others Ditko expressed these views. When writer Denny O'Neil wrote a script for Ditko to draw in which he referred to a character as an 'ex-criminal', Ditko returned the script with a note saying there is no such thing as an ex-criminal – once someone has committed a crime they are a criminal for life. Ditko's view of the world was an uncompromising one.

Although he avoided interviews Ditko could be generous to fans in other ways. He contributed art to a number of fanzines free of charge, although he got grumpy when fans used art he had given them without asking permission first. It was not unknown for him to write personal replies to fan letters that reached him. He also attended the first ever

comic book convention in New York in 1964 but never went to anything like it again.

Ditko can be heard speaking on the video (yes, video – no DVD release as yet) *Masters of Comic Book Art* from 1987 in which Harlan Ellison interviewed various comic creators. Ditko, of course, declined to be interviewed or seen on camera but did allow a recording of a monologue by him about his *Mr A* character.

In the last quarter of the twentieth century Ditko found his work less appreciated by the mass of comic fans although there remained a hard core who would seek out his work. He created an interesting series for DC, *Shade the Changing Man*, which failed to achieve popular success and was cancelled after a short run. He returned to Marvel (but never to *Spider-Man* or *Doctor Strange*) where the editor in chief, Jim Shooter, was keen to have Ditko work for them. He followed Jack Kirby as the artist on *Machine Man* and enjoyed a long run on the popular *Rom* comic. He also created yet more new characters such as *Static* and *Missing Man* (for Eclipse Comics and Pacific Comics respectively).

As Shooter moved on to other companies he continued to hire Ditko at *Valiant* and then *Defiant*. At the latter a new series, *Dark Dominion*, was given to Ditko to draw but the man who had been the original artist on *Doctor Strange* was now unwilling to work on a series with supernatural underpinnings as they went against his Randian Atheist views.

Ditko continued to draw comics into the 21st century but these were increasingly small press releases bought by his fans. In recent years Robin Snyder published many of these using crowd funding support. Many are interesting but Ditko's art became increasingly minimalist and certainly less commercial.

Steve Ditko died in late June 2018 at the age of 90. I don't agree with many of his philosophical or political views but I admire not only his artwork but the way in which he sought to be his own man. I doubt if we'll see another quite like him.

Left:
Mr. A was a comic book hero created by Steve Ditko. Unlike most of his work, the character remained Ditko's property

Today's kids have never known the pleasure of the dry rub-down transfer technique known as Letraset. Richard Molewsorth feels sorry for them...

TRANSFER FEVER: THE SUPER ACTION HEROES OF LETRASET!

No child of the 70s could forget the nostalgic joys of Letraset, but for you youngsters out there, we are talking of sheets of film that would be rubbed with the end of a pencil to give way to beautifully formed letters and images, as long as you had a

steady hand and the patience of a saint.

Letraset began trading in London in 1959, primarily providing typefaces on dry-transfer sheets, which could then be used to add text to commercial artwork - a product that it had uniquely developed. Various fonts were produced on thin film, which were then loosely secured to clear, rigid, plastic sheets, which had an adhesive backing protected by a thin layer of tissue. When the tissue was removed, and pressure was applied (usually via a pen or pencil) to the sheet's topside, the film image was transferred onto whatever was underneath the original sheet. This lettering transfer system became instantly popular in

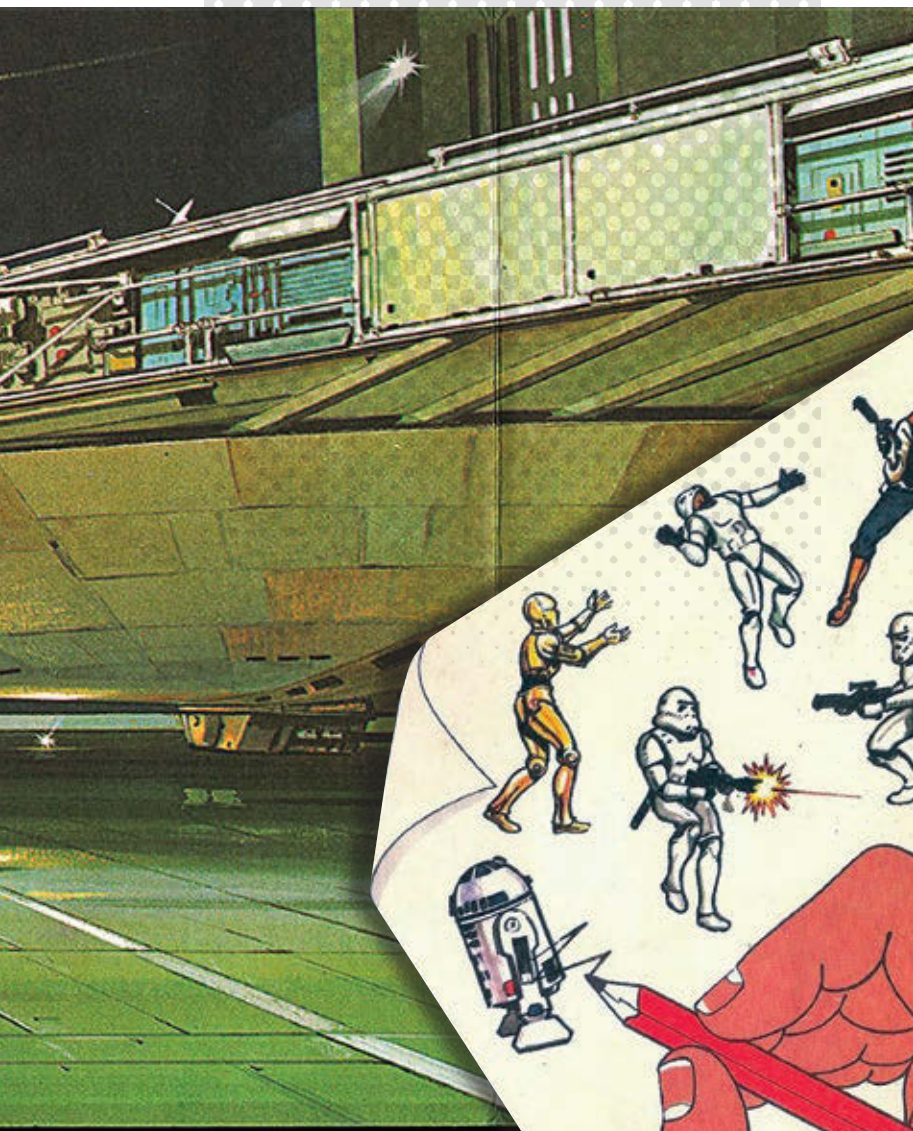
making quick, camera-ready, artwork for adverts, magazines, posters, and the printed media in general.

Looking for opportunities to diversify, Letraset began using their dry transfer system to make children's activity games. These usually comprised of some sort of an art background, with a selection of additional images supplied on a sheet of transfers, which could then be added to the main image one-at-a-time as the user saw fit. The initial release of these activity sets was marketed under the loose banner of Action Transfers, a brand which was the brainchild of the then-artist-in-chief, Peter Archer.

In the early days of Letraset, the company used a Kippax Silkscreen printer, which rather limited their output to basic monochrome images. The early Letraset releases were all very generic, with subjects such as fairy tales, pirates, lunar bases, and the wild west chosen as the focus of the transfer sets.

In 1966, Letraset joined forces with the games company Waddingtons, to produce a series of 'Instant Picture' books, based on





Disney's Donald Duck and Winnie the Pooh, alongside Gerry's Anderson's *Thunderbirds*. A few years later, Anderson's *Joe 90* TV series also received the same 'Instant Picture' book treatment (with transfer art by Brian Lewis).

At around this time, the company also invested in a new Svecia Semimatic printing press, which allowed a few 4-spot colour transfer sets to be made. An early set of *Batman* colour dioramas, with colour transfers, was released using this process, which were also promoted on packs of *Shredded Wheat* breakfast cereal at the time.

BURSTING INTO COLOUR

Letraset made a big investment in 1968, building a new printing factory in Ashford in Kent. The factory was built around a Rotary Gravure printing press, which allowed full process colour to be used for the first time on its products. Production of new transfer



packs for children then began in earnest.

Alongside dioramas based on *Tarzan*, *Dumbo* and *The Jungle Book*, 1968 saw the release of a full colour transfer diorama based on the Gerry Anderson TV series *Captain Scarlet*. A new generic range of

Action Transfers was also released around this time, depicting scenes from World Wars, outer space, pirates, Vikings and underwater cities. And also, lots of footballers...

LETRASET GOES SUPER

The early 1970s saw Letraset acquire licenses to produce transfer sets based on such children's classic television shows as *The Magic Roundabout*, *Camberwick Green* and *The Herbs*. In 1973, it outsourced much of its artwork to the David Clark Design Group in Bournemouth, and so individual artist credits are not well documented after this point in time.

In 1974, the company released the first set of *Super Action Heroes!* transfer sets, which featured large-format A4-ish sized wrap-around dioramas. Alongside *Tarzan*, *Kung Fu*, *Batman* and *Superman*, Letraset produced *Star Trek - Voyage to the Lost Planet* under licence from Paramount. It depicted Captain Kirk and crew fighting various green beasts and winged creatures, with hardly a token red-shirted crew-member to call upon...

The *Super Action Heroes!* range proved to be extremely popular, and more titles were added in 1975/6, which included *Space: 1999 - Battle on Planet Insectus*, *Space: 1999 - Terror of Planet Cyborg*, *The Sweeney - Hijack!* and *Doctor Who - Dalek Invasion of Earth* (all selling for around 55p each). That *The Sweeney* was considered a suitable subject for a children's range of action transfers is extremely questionable. What's more, the

actual diorama image (used as a background to the transfers) is just downright bizarre, depicting a finely-crafted heist on a butchers van, with various ne'er-do-wells making off with hams and slabs of bacon!

This page: Some glorious Letraset memories that will surely rub *Star Wars* and superhero fans up the right way...





Top:
Doctor
Who - Dalek
Invasion of
Earth, with
plenty of
flying saucer
action, and
below a 1977
Letraset
panorama
entitled *Star
Wars - Last
Battle*

Perhaps it's a literal adaptation of the quote, 'We're The Sweeney, son, and we haven't had any dinner...?'

Meanwhile, the *Doctor Who* offering sees a fleet of Dalek flying saucers attacking Buckingham Palace, no less. The Queen's London residence is robustly defended by a battalion of soldiers and armoured tanks, all battling around the TARDIS, in scenes that the BBC could only imagine producing on their shoestring budgets...

Footballers and pop stars made up various other Letraset sets of the mid-1970s, while generic space battles and wild west scenarios also padded out the company's

product ranges. But invariably, its best-selling items were proving to be those based around films or TV shows, which invariably had a ready-made audience base.

A third set of *Super Action Heroes!* transfer sets was released in 1977. This time, titles included *Wonder Woman Vs Killer Kreatures*, *Batman: Gold Diggers of Gotham*, *Superman Vs Brainiac &*





Left: Every sci-fi-obsessed kid of the early 80s had their own *Star Wars* stationery kit, just the ticket for jotting down Jedi mind tricks and writing nasty letters to Darth Vader



Above right: *Star Trek - Voyage to the Lost Planet* depicted Captain Kirk and crew fighting various green beasts and winged creatures, while *The Empire Strikes Back* (left) saw Letraset issuing a small range of transfers given away with tubs of Kraft Dairylea



the *Reptilians*, and *The New Avengers Vs the Cybernauts*. The latter set featured an attack on a picturesque stately home by the sinister robotic Cybernauts, while Steed, Gambit and (a particularly athletic) Purdey leap into action to defend it, aided by bazooka-wielding policemen.

FEELING THE FORCE

1977 also saw Letraset acquire a licence to release merchandise based on the film *Star Wars*, which was released in the UK very late that year. One of its first tie-in products was a set of four transfer sheets which were given away with the Shreddies breakfast cereal, which also printed four artwork dioramas on the back of their packets on which the transfers could be mounted. It then released a set of three large-format diorama transfer sets, depicting scenes from the film's beginning, middle and end: *Battle at Mos*

Eisley, *Escape from the Death Star* and *Rebel Air Attack*. The landscape artwork that was used in these three releases form an iconic backdrop to the childhood of many a young *Star Wars* fan, and are instantly recognisable to those of a certain age.

Letraset were completely taken by surprise at the success of its *Star Wars* range, which sold in phenomenal quantities, and quickly became the company's best-selling product by a huge margin. Letraset's UK printing operation could barely cope with demand, and so it purchased an Italian printing company, Linea Sodecor, to share production. This Italian company had an Offset Litho press, which was a much cheaper printing process than its Gravure presses in Ashford.

Letraset switched the production of most of its Action Transfer business to the Italian printing company, which then began reprinting its three

Star Wars transfer sets in huge volumes, using the cheaper Litho process. Later in 1977, it released a series of 10 smaller *Star Wars* transfer sets, which also quickly flew off the shelves. These were titled *Kidnap of Princess Leia*, *Sale on Tatooine*, *Action at Mos Eisley*, *Escape from Stormtroopers*, *Flight to Alderaan*, *Inside the Death Star*, *Prison Break Out*, *Death Star Escape*, *Rebel Air Base* and *Last Battle*.

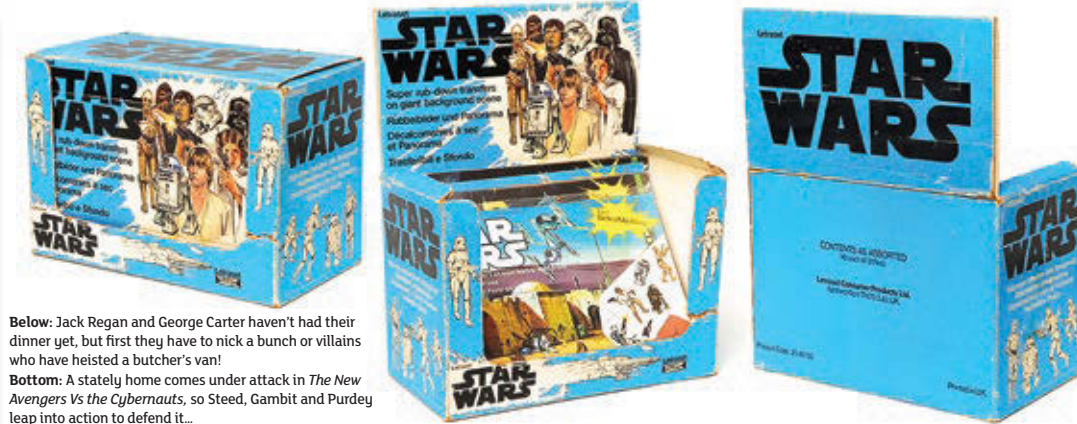
Artwork credits are virtually non-existent for Letraset's various products, and so it is almost impossible to give credit where it is due for their vast range of items over the years. However, the standard and quality of its output was always generally very high, with lots of attention to detail apparent in its various licensed products. So it's always a bit of a surprise when a small bit of incorrect detail creeps into their products, such as the number of panels on a Police Box door in the *Doctor Who* set, or the slightly oval Tie Fighters shooting through the skies in the first large *Star Wars* set. And artistic licence sometimes had to come to the fore in their products - none more so than the depiction of the internal configuration of the Millennium Falcon in one of the small *Star Wars* transfer sets, which didn't particularly tally with what was seen on-screen.

The popularity of *Star Wars* gave Letraset a huge sales opportunity, which it wasted no time in capitalising upon with its merchandise licence. The company quickly branched out into making a sleek and simplistic *Star Wars* stationery range, which effortlessly managed to stand out on the otherwise drab shelves of newsagents or Post Offices. The range contained a *Star Wars Space Writing Set* (which contained a writing pad and 12 envelopes), *Chewbacca's Space Notes*



Below: Jack Regan and George Carter haven't had their dinner yet, but first they have to nick a bunch of villains who have heisted a butcher's van!

Bottom: A stately home comes under attack in *The New Avengers Vs the Cybernauts*, so Steed, Gambit and Purdee leap into action to defend it...



Pocket Book, R2-D2's Memory Bank Notebook, C-3PO's Exercise Book, Princess Leia's Rebel Jotter, a Storm Trooper Manual Notebook, and - best of all - a huge *Star Wars Scrap Book*, which could be used to house stuff such as newspaper clippings and Topps bubblegum cards.

TRANSFERRED OUT

More transfer sets arrived in 1978, based on DC and Marvel comic book characters such as *Wonder Woman*, *Superman*, *Batman*, *The Fantastic Four*, *Thor*, *Spider-Man*, and *The Incredible Hulk*. The following year, hoping that the success of its *Star Wars* merchandise could be replicated with similar film and television licences, Letraset produced transfer diorama sets based on *Battlestar Galactica*, *The Black Hole* and *Battle of the Planets*, but the sales figures, whilst good, weren't in the *Star Wars* league.

1979 ended with the company producing a small range of *Doctor Who*-themed transfers in

collaboration with Marvel UK, who gave away the sets as free gifts in the first four issues of its *Doctor Who Weekly* title.

Letraset purchased a company called Thomas Salter for £1 million in late 1978, and over the next few years it began increasingly to push its Action Transfers products through this subsidiary company. This internal restructuring probably explains why Letraset all-but missed the boat when *The Empire Strikes Back* was released in cinemas in 1980, with Letraset's only tie-in to the film being a small range of transfers given away with tubs of Kraft Dairylea.

TV shows *Airwolf*, *Street Hawk* and *Dempsey & Makepeace*. However, the artwork on these later sets - both of the character transfer sheets and the diorama backdrops - was very basic indeed, and lacked the attention to details and visual dynamism of the Letraset transfer sets of the 1970s.

These Rainbow Toys packs proved to be the last transfer sets made by the company that had once been called Letraset. Action Transfers were no more. A whole generation of children had to grow up without knowing the joy of pressing down hard on a plastic sheet with a pen...

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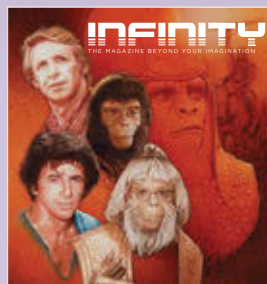
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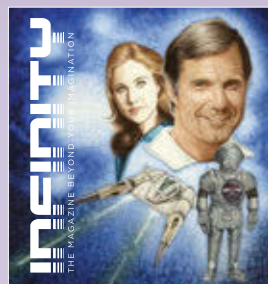
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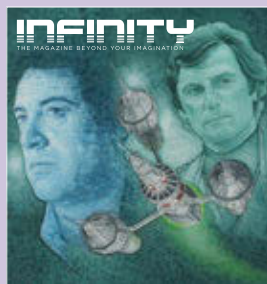
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This image:
The exotic Syrie
Van Epp goes for a
drive and finds a
missing colonel in
'Victim as Red'

'WEIRD. Definitely weird. Bizarre.

Definitely, purposely and purposefully bizarre,' wrote *Daily Mirror* critic Kenneth Eastaugh in his column on Friday 26 August 1966, as he prepared to enthuse about Granada's new drama series *The Corridor People* which had made its London debut the previous evening. Certainly he enjoyed it... but as the other dailies published, it would seem that he was in the minority...

VICTIM OF THEIR OWN EXCESS

A series full of 60s sizzle, *The Corridor People* was not a success when first aired, but it has a cult following today, as Andrew Pixley reports...



hile the slick and stylish filmed thriller series financed by ATV and blessed with worldwide distribution via ITC are a cherished and admired element of the 1960s for their memorable, enjoyable transatlantic capers captured with charm on celluloid at ABPC and MGM in Borehamwood or down at Pinewood or Shepperton, up in the north west there were some equally notable genre entries from Granada. Emanating 'from the North' – the branding for Granada's

Manchester studios – came a selection of innovative, challenging, off-beat thriller entries across the decade including *The Odd Man*, its spin-off *It's Dark Outside* and its spin-off's spin-off *Mr. Rose*, plus *The Man in Room 17* and its sequel *The Fellows* (*Late of Room 17*) and – most memorably of all – the four encounters with *The Corridor People*. 'Granada[s] series are dotted with the oddest people you'll find anywhere this side of a BBC *Wednesday Play*,' commented the *World Press News & Advertisers' Review* (8 July 1966), 'Sometime a scriptwriter will die of shock when Granada accept a drama from him with ordinary normal people behaving in a way interesting enough to make them viewable.'

The Corridor People cannot be summed up in a few media-friendly clichés. 'Quirky' is often euphemistically applied, but that's like describing World War II as 'a bit of a tiff'. It's the kind of thing the adjective 'startling' was invented for – extreme in almost every aspect as it confounded audience expectations and challenged their sensibilities.

Yes, there is a national security representative, but it's not just a security series. Yes, there's a villainess, but it's more than a crime series. Yes, there is a private eye who adores Humphrey Bogart, but Sam Spade never handled any cases like this...

The three characters pursue the same victim in parallel, their paths intersect as they co-operate in different combinations and permutations, and then diverge again to reassemble in a different configuration the following week around a new victim. Because there's always a victim...

The short-lived series is the sort of thing that one can imagine being inspired after a night at the theatre enjoying a performance of *Waiting for Godot*, and then speculating: 'I wonder if Samuel Beckett might be free to knock us off a quick thriller series?' *The Corridor People* could have been the genre-defying result. Probably the most satisfactory appellation would be absurdist noir.

The Corridor People was often compared to Granada's earlier series, *The Odd Man*, which had also been created by the Ayrshire writer and former-actor Edward Boyd. With a background in Glasgow's Unity Theatre, his television break came in 1954 with the thriller serial *Crime On Our Hands* derived from an outline by comedy writers Len Fincham and Laurie Wyman on BBC TV. This was followed by numerous radio serials including – for the Scottish Home Service – 1957's *The Runnable Stag* starring Teddy Johnson as jazz impresario Steven Gardiner (based on an RAF officer Boyd met) who needs to clear his name in a murder investigation. *The Runnable Stag* formed the basis for the first year of Granada's *The Odd Man* from October 1960, with Geoffrey Toone as Gardiner. With a stylish jazz trumpet theme, the rehearsals for this experimental serial were undertaken by only supplying the final script in advance to one cast member: the murderer.

Following the Equity strike in 1962, a new run of *The Odd Man* – this time self-contained thrillers – was Granada's first major production from May, now with Edwin Richfield as Gardiner and Sarah Lawson as his wife Judy in a disintegrating relationship. By the end of the run, Judy had been shot and killed... but this didn't stop Sarah Lawson returning for two further runs in 1963, now playing Judy's double Anne Braithwaite in more off-beat investigations as other writers joined Boyd to script the show.

Meanwhile, Boyd's talents were harnessed as an adaptor of the works of H.H. Munro in Granada's acclaimed anthology *Saki* and by the start of 1964 the police characters from *The Odd Man* had been spun-off into the unsettling territory of *It's Dark Outside*. Boyd's next venture was to be *The Corridor People* on which he worked with producer Richard Everitt.

Richard Everitt had joined Granada as a floor manager in 1960, quickly graduating to directing on shows like *Coronation Street* and *The Odd Man* – where he worked with Boyd – and then producing series such as *Friday Night*, *The Villains* and *The Man in Room 17*. Debuting in 1965, *The Man in Room 17* was another innovative show, an espionage/crime investigation series where each episode was made by two crews – one writing and directing scenes with the regular characters who never left Room 17, and another creating the narrative of events in the world outside.

Recalling his work with Eddie Boyd on *The Corridor People* in *Granada Television: The First Generation* (Manchester University Press: 2003), Richard Everitt wrote: 'He was a brilliant writer but very reluctant to

actually put words to paper. I had to resort to locking him in my attic at home with promises to feed him every ten pages.'

CUTTING-EDGE CHARACTERS

A key figure in Eddie Boyd's scripts was a striking adventuress. 'I am Persian,' purrs Syrie Van Epp, revealing that she inherited her surname from her late Dutch-American husband. With a dubious international reputation and motivated by financial gain through manipulation of others, Syrie will isolate key players from her competitors and look for an exploitable weakness – drink, women, homosexuality (still a crime in 1966), or something else. She admits openly to being racially prejudiced.

With an outrageous and extensive wardrobe – silk dress and dark hood for graveyards, a black dress with white collar and cuffs parodying nurse's tunic for prisons, white Persian coat and turban, dark negligée, black trouser suit with white ruffles, gauzes dressed with peacock motifs, and driving garb more suited for a nunnery – Syrie usually jangles with excessive jewellery. Her home at 17 Downing Court was built in the eighteenth century by a man whose wife was mad; it houses prison cells, plus a lounge of stuffed birds where sofas fold into a yin and yang bed for lovers. Alternatively she schemes from the top of a theatre bedecked with tinsel curtains, carnival heads and distorting mirrors, and drives around in a vintage Rolls-Royce.

Operating through henchmen such as the pin-striped Weedy and the bullying, diminutive Nonesuch, Syrie also employs a blackmailing maid with a Mary Quant fixation. Married 'every now and then' but 'on a sabbatical year', Syrie ('the most promiscuous woman in Europe') will happily engage in apparently casual sex with anyone who has style, living up to the Persian family motto: 'Business with Pleasure'. 'I do everything well,' she declares, coolly.

Meanwhile... in a modern, sterile office at the Ministry of Defence's Department K is Kronk, a fruity but threatening man who picks his teeth with his paperknife, polishes his rubber plant and has an unspecified interest in crime and security for 'the national interest'. The department has surreal technology, including the prophecy approximation machine, a strange hotch-potch of wires and light bulbs which delivers predictions on behaviour in a notably camp voice.

Kronk's main agents are Inspector Blood and Sergeant Hound, two heel-clicking subordinates clad in identical trench coats and hats who move in unison and speak as if from a music hall double act... but are clearly exceedingly vicious ('We're not really gentlemen sir, we're police officers'). This duo is despised by Miss Dunner, Kronk's prim, middle-aged secretary, who undertakes 'special duty' as a 'specialist' who 'specialises' (i.e. shoots) various 'enemies of the realm'. Miss Dunner in turn is armed for her 'specialising' by Major Ironside; however, he resents her role as an assassin because his suffragette mother and domineering wife make him believe that the gun is man's last phallic symbol. Kronk also has a variety of vicious thugs who can quickly be summed up to administer torture and beatings ...

From time to time both Kronk and Syrie use Phil Scrotty, a check-shirted, bow-tied private detective with a weird honesty but no belief system. Enjoying the fun of playing both ends against the middle, he operates out of a tatty ancient monument of an office dominated by film noir imagery of Bogart ('founder of the firm'). Visitors are signalled in advance when they stumble over the blood-stained dustbins in the corridor outside. With a line in hip gumshoe chat and a rate of five guineas a day (plus reasonable expenses and mileage), Scrotty readily admits to being shallow; his perfect woman is 'high income bracket, low IQ' and he too indulges in casual sex.

Caught up in the objectives of Syrie, Kronk and Scrotty were a series of innocents who formed the crux of each episode which bore the format title *Victim as...* With only four scripts written by Boyd, the series was to be made as a summer filler and directed by David Boisseau. Boisseau had worked for the BBC in the early 1950s before directing plays and series like *Murder Bag* for Associated-Rediffusion and arriving at Granada in 1964 to helm numerous shows, including *The Man in Room 17* for Richard Everitt.

Cast as Kronk was 46 year-old, 17 stone Yorkshire-born John Sharp, a former farmer who had turned to acting and recently featured prominently in the BBC2 serial *Take a Pair of Private Eyes* by Peter O'Donnell (the creator of the *Evening Standard*'s comic strip *Modesty Blaise*). With an extensive career in theatre, he had been appearing in films since the 1940s and his guest television roles had been as diverse as the Granada sitcom *The Army Game*, episodes of drama series like *Maigret*, and the acclaimed play cycle *An Age of Kings*. ➤



Above:
American-born
Gary Cockrell as
private eye Phil
Scrotty

Opposite:
Syrie's henchman
Nonesuch
prepares for a
hit in the park,
wheeled into
position by his
mistress in 'Victim
as Whitebait'

Syrie Van Epp was brought to life by 29 year-old Londoner Elizabeth Shepherd who made her mark on television with a BBC adaptation of *Bleak House* in 1959 and the title role in *Amelia* in 1961, in between which had been a notorious stint as Nurse Virginia Birley in a sexy storyline for ATV's *Emergency – Ward 10* in June/July 1960 ("I played 'good girls' on BBC and 'naughty girls' on commercial TV," she says). Having appeared in the gothic horror movie *The Tomb of Ligeia*, for a few weeks in late 1964 she had also played Mrs Emma Peel in ABC's stylish thriller film series *The Avengers* until it became apparent that the ideas which the producers invited her to offer for her character were unwelcome... and she was replaced by Diana Rigg. Following this, in 1965 she had appeared as Antonie in a BBC2 adaptation of *Buddenbrooks*.

"I am not sure how my casting happened, except that I was very current on TV at the time," says Elizabeth Shepherd, "and everyone knew about *The Avengers* and I am sure that had something to do with it!" She was very taken with the scripts which in comparison to the ABC series were "more startling and daringly experimental. 'Far out' as the contemporary expression said it."

Scrotty was personified by 33 year-old Gary Cockrell, a Missouri-born dancer who arrived in London with the cast of *West Side Story* in 1958. Sometimes billed as 'G.A. Cockrell', he also worked as choreographer on BBC2 entertainment shows such as *Gadzooks! It's All Happening* and *Zodiac*, ABC's *Thank Your Lucky Stars* and ATV's *The Dickie Henderson Show*; since 1963 he had established a notable European dance company from his Covent Garden offices.

MANCUNIAN MADNESS

The Corridor People was announced to the press in mid-June 1966 amidst Granada's plans for its summer programming in which – according to *Television Today* (16 June 1966) –

– they promised 'more new programmes than in any previous summer'; this line-up included 'a thriller series called *The Corridor People* created by Eddie Boyd (who created *The Odd Man* and its successors)'.

The series was made almost entirely on 405 line videotape. Outside Broadcast recording for location inserts took place within the municipal area of Heaton Park in Manchester for the first three episodes. The reservoir provided the ornithological settings for the opener '*Victim as Birdwatcher*', various bench-bound scenes for '*Victim as Whitebait*' were recorded within view of the radio relay tower, while a sequence with Syrie's vintage Rolls-Royce for '*Victim as Red*' was taped just outside the Orangery within the park grounds.

"I have especially vivid memories of that walk in the park with my baby assassin in the pram!" says Elizabeth, "And the thrill of driving a vintage Rolls Royce – and having to stop it on the mark exactly, when the brakes were not as precise as modern ones!"

"We rehearsed in London and would prepare two episodes at a time," recalls the show's female lead, "Then record them at Granada's Quay Street studio. There was a real collaboration between Eddie Boyd and the production team – everyone, Richard, David, Eddie and all of us were in it together. It was a deliberate decision to break conventions and use that small screen in a big way."

**"Sometimes it is completely
bizarre... sometimes it becomes
horrifying. It is difficult to put the
stories into any kind of category-
the only common theme is that in
each episode there is always one
innocent victim."**

In comparison to working on *The Avengers* at ABPC Elstree, the actress explains: "One of my ideas [for Mrs Peel] was a large computer watch which would look sexy on a slender wrist ahead of our time. Albert Fennell, the producer, brought a diver's watch on set one day and I was so delighted! Then he took it back saying: 'I only got it to show you how ridiculous it looked.' By comparison, Syrie would have been encouraged to wear it! Ideas were welcome on *The Corridor People* – we were urged to be outrageous and revel in it. I had tremendous fun with innovative costumes and fancy hairstyles. The elaborate Indian silver and gold jewellery I wore was from my own collection. Unconventional was the convention of the show, and it gave us the abundant energy of feeling free to create these outlandish personalities."

"There is no attempt at reality," Richard Everitt told *Television Today* (11 August 1966) in the article *Thriller series from Granada: 'Surrealism' from Eddie Boyd*, "Sometimes it is completely bizarre... sometimes it becomes horrifying. It is difficult to put the stories into any kind of category—the only common theme is that in each episode there

is always one innocent victim."

Atop the article was a photograph of Syrie Van Epp – wearing striking sunglasses with separately hinged lenses, one raised and one lowered – taking aim with her telescopic rifle from the location work on '*Victim as Birdwatcher*' with the caption emphasising of the villainess 'Elizabeth is wearing one of 18 outfits specially designed for the series by Sue Phillips of Granada.'

The 'short (four-part) thriller series' had been scheduled to air from Friday 26 August in most areas, although London and Scotland would be screening it a day earlier; the short run of fifty minute episodes was explained by Dick Everitt: "we had four very good scripts and we didn't want to push Eddie into writing more just to fill up programme slots."

The article introduced the characters: 'Kronk, Head of Internal Security CID [sic ...] two faithful assistants Inspector Blood [...] and Sergeant Hound [...] and an adoring secretary called Miss Dunner [and] private eye Phil Scrotty [...] who is perpetually plagued by a beautiful arch-villainess Syrie Van Epp.' David Boisseau, Michael Grimes and Derek Hilton were named as director, designer and composer, with the titles of the first two episodes revealed as '*Victim as Birdwatcher*' and '*Victim as Whitebait*'.

The commercial contractors of Rediffusion in London and Scottish Television in central Scotland opted to schedule *The Corridor People* in a 55 minute slot at 9.40pm on Thursdays as a replacement for Granada's drama adaptation *You Can't Win* (produced by Richard Everitt), placing it across the end of documentaries and the start of the current affairs programme *24 Hours* on BBC1 while other ITV regions ran episodes of shows such as *The Saint*, *Peyton Place* or *Sergeant Cork*. The rest of the ITV network – apart from Teledu Cymru in Wales – would screen it twenty-four hours later at 9.40pm on Fridays while Londoners saw a film, meaning its BBC1 opposition came in the form of imported US light entertainment from *The Andy Williams Show* and the News.

'*Victim as Birdwatcher*' was recorded on Thursday 11 August. As with other Granada thrillers of the time, it was blessed with theme music composed by Granada's musical director Derek Hilton – a soulful jazz beat picked out on bass with smooth syncopating brass; this accompanied stark white animated lines and rectangles, the former confining the latter as they hopped across a black background to the emerging organ melody.

'*Victim as Birdwatcher*' then continues with an opening location sequence of a bespectacled man watching a bird (a Great Crested Train Robber) on a lake... then being joined by a stereotypical gangster in black suit and shirt with white tie who engaged in silent pantomime regarding the object of interest. Behind them on the hillside is a woman in a striking white dress, and at a signal from her, the black-clad hoodlum delivers a karate blow to the ornithologist's neck, carrying away the victim... who wakes in the next scene in a slant-roofed cell where barred windows cast harsh angular shadows, and where the same woman – now in almost a photo-negative black outfit complete with

parasol – enters to start addressing her prisoner in a polite and highly-stylised manner.

The victim in the debut episode is the diabetic, well-known ornithologist Christopher Robin Vaughn who has a single controlling share in the Templar Cosmetic Company, part of England's fabric with major export drives to the former colonies ("Even although they have left the Empire they will still smell British").

The pressure points for this victim are first his love for the rare example of the Great Crested Train Robber (not seen since 1921) and then the insulin vital for his survival. However, stubbornness gives way to love for his captor and a desire for punishment ("You are English upper class," notes Syrie). Control of Templar will also mean control of a special scent, an accidental discovery of research chemist Barrington-Pym which will turn anybody who uses it into an imbecile for 24 hours ("a gentle weapon, the ultimate soothing deterrent"). Oh, and Scrotty apparently ends up dead by the end of the first episode ...

Stylistically, video picture merging and splitting via inlay created narrowly sliced perspectives of Vaughn imprisoned in Syrie's home as he was masked off in black, while other parts of the screen might be turned full white and a distorting, rotating lens employed to add to a prisoner's perspective or a gun's movement. Scene transitions formed black rectangles emerging geometrically from the centre of the picture while a tickertape machine beside a character forms a minimalist Department K office amidst other Spartan settings.

When Syrie is attacked by Vaughn, although she exhibits physical submission, lying prone on her back beneath him, she remains in control of the situation – laughing mockingly at his behaviour with self-assurance. Clearly naked apart from jewellery, Syrie later emerges from beneath what appear to be elaborate sheets where she has been with Vaughn, only for the ornate covering to turn itself into an elegant cape hanging from her shoulders.

A fashion model called Candy arrives at Department K with vital security information which is relayed by a third party when she strikes a series of contrived photographic poses in dark dress, long gloves and broad-brimmed hat in Kronk's office. Traditional organs of British life – cricket, stiff-upper-lip, the former Empire – are satirised with absurd derision. Vaughn is tried by overly-English authority figures – a bishop, a city type, an admiral, a county type, a cricketer, a Field Marshal and an Air Marshal – in a surreal tribunal which debates philosophy while dispensing death and reciting Sir Walter Scott's *Patriotism*.

"The first recording in Manchester was around the time of my thirtieth birthday," notes Elizabeth, "and I was afflicted suddenly with a virus and had laryngitis – the only time it has ever happened to me in my life! So I had to be mute for a couple of days with work held up until Syrie could speak again. That was a real crisis at the time!"

PROMINENT PROMOTION

A colour publicity shot of Elizabeth Shepherd in Heaton Park adorned the 'North' edition of the

TV Times listing magazine for 20-26 August, and inside the familiar image of Syrie taking aim was accompanied by another location publicity shot of the character for Graeme Kay's feature *Fireball* among the corridor people ... which introduced 'the most bizarre characters on television. Screwballs like Kronk, a fatherly CID man; private eye Phil Scrotty; Inspector Blood and Sergeant Hound.'

The main cast were introduced – including 'chubby, balding' John Sharp – while the main subject of the text was Elizabeth Shepherd: 'Direct, driving, single-minded... that's Elizabeth, trim, flaxen-haired and steering head-on for success.' The journalist had been warned that the actress had 'fiery outbursts' and noted that she had 'walked out on a plum part in a major TV series' which he did not specify.

The involvement of Eddie Boyd who developed *The Odd Man* (the 'forerunner of this type of series') was emphasised in the feature as Elizabeth commented: "I don't think I have ever read such an excellent script. So many scripts fall down on dialogue, but I loved this one. My lady has some very nice lines. Such as, 'I

go wandering off, causing chaos for his widow Abigail Whitebait (Scrotty's new lover), the dubious company of Defarge & Defarge and Department K... to the extent that he is another prime victim.

Again, lens rotation and shattered reflection add to the disorientating effect of the show which features a man who claims his job is to "unravel knots" and who informs the audience at home "We're all of us strangers".

On *The Corridor People's* debut day – Thursday 25 August – the *Daily Mirror* ran the familiar publicity shot of the rifle-packing Syrie on its listings page, while Tony Gruner briefly covered the debut in his Television column for the trade paper *Kinematograph Weekly*; amongst reports on Patrick McGoohan's new 'morality play' for ATV (later revealed as *The Prisoner*), *The Corridor People* was compared to the *Francis Durbridge Presents...* thriller serials being aired on BBC2 with the report noting that 'Granada has Edward Boyd, the most intriguing writer ever to work for ITV'.

'Those who liked a light, gay touch in their thrillers would have been vastly entertained,' commented the 'Television Critic' of *The Times* enthusiastically on the Friday morning, feeling

that *The Corridor People* 'struck a new note in spoofing and on this showing the series [...] with a first-rate cast, will be a great success.' In the *Daily Mirror*, Kenneth Eastaugh found it 'as unpredictable as a crowd of chimpanzees in an armoury' offering 'a corridor full of surprise turnings, secret passages and fun [with] lots of room for horseplay, mystery and imagination'. Comparing the appearance of 'Persian sex kitten' Syrie Van Epp to Lady Penelope from *Thunderbirds*, the critic continued: 'I don't recall how either side got involved. But who cares? Because I do remember that it was a lot of fun and, if the series is as wry as this one, it will have the sweet smell of success.'

However, in the *Daily Mail*, things were more ominous as Peter Black opined that the new series was merely 'another of Granada's discouraging attempts at a pseudo-intellectual thriller, but done on the cheap and a perfect example of Granada working its vein of silly-clever in which the silly knocks the clever sillier.'

Across the two days, Television Audience Measurement (TAM) estimated that 4.65 million homes tuned into Granada's new series, placing it at number 17 in the national Top 20; this compared with 4.95 million attracted to ABC's enquiry agent series *Public Eye* with its extremely fragmented regional scheduling and Rediffusion's drama *The Informer* which rated 6.2 million in a similar array of slots.

'*Victim as Red*' was recorded over Wednesday 31 August and Thursday 1 September and found Scrotty receiving his annual visit from Harold Lemming for an update on the whereabouts of his missing brother, Colonel Hugo Lemming. The former missile station Colonel – last seen buying a record in Moscow – is now an amnesiac who falls into the hands of Syrie and can only recall the phrase: "Two million pounds." A complex tale of a novel which details the Radnor Rail Robbery ties in with a deceased, villainous mastermind who shared a wife with Lemming and leads to a new victim, the fanatical communist Mrs Beryl Kempfsford. ➡



have only one commitment – to money. But that commitment is total.'

The programme billing for '*Victim as Birdwatcher*' in the London edition was emphasised by a location photo of Gary Cockrell's Scrotty squatting on top of a dustbin. On Sunday 21 August, Syrie was depicted 'in a black velvet cat-suit, the latest Amazon in the thriller field' in *The Observer*.

'*Victim as Whitebait*' was recorded on Monday 22 and Tuesday 23 August, opening with the exhumation of a grave bearing the legend 'PHIL SCROTTY SLEPT HERE' by Syrie's minions while she herself is trailed by a Swedish film director called Bo (who is studying the "darkest manifestations of the human soul").

The apparently dead private eye needs to be brought back from the dead to identify incorruptible accountant Samson Whitby. For this Syrie hires the services of the drunken, wild-haired Robag, a "mad scientist" and "social drinker" who reanimated an earlier corpse as a drinking buddy ... only for the resurrected Whitebait to

"Well, well, well!" exclaim all the characters directly to the audience as they read the missing Colonel's book manuscript, while the story offers sudden, intense bursts of dialogue against musical frivolity. The plot unfolds as an elegant dance between different protagonists, punctuated by extreme camerawork as the Colonel undergoes brutal Department K interrogation.

On Thursday 1 September, the *Daily Mirror* promoted the London and Scotland broadcasts of 'Victim as Whitebait' that evening with a location shot of Syrie and the pram-bound assassin Nonesuch under the title 'Case of a Deadly Nursemaid' to aid 'Granada's off-beat secret service series'.

Meanwhile in *Television Today*, Margaret Campbell took a look at the opening episode under the ominous title 'Far too many gimmicks in Granada's latest series'. The critic felt that the show 'left me in the corridor with almost every door firmly closed' and while conceding that the script was 'well-constructed [with] occasionally good characterisations' that 'it lacked suspense'. 'I can't help feeling the writer was emulating *The Avengers*,' she ruminated as she recounted the plot and described Blood and Hound as being 'like twin Max Millers' before concluding: 'here lies a perfect example of how a good director can glass over a script's shortcomings – but what a waste of talent!'

It was the turn of 'Victim as Whitebait' to face the reviewers the next day as the critic of *The Times* looked more optimistically at the series under the title 'Distinctive appeal of the off-beat thriller.' Following an overview of the same evening's edition of BBC1's adventure *Adam Adamant Lives!*, it was felt that 'After a promising start' *The Corridor People* 'looked impossibly involved in a maze of characters who had to follow too many threads [...] one could never be sure who was battling for whom'. The reviewer noted that 'Eddie Boyle [sic], with some success, has written spoofs like this before' and felt that the performances of John Sharp, Elizabeth Shepherd and Gary Cockrell were 'well on target – if only the script does not go round too many bends.'

The second instalment held a respectable joint sixteenth slot in the TAM charts with its 4.65 million homes, but still trailing the weekly encounters with Alex Lambert and Frank Marker. Meanwhile, 'Victim as Red' was promoted in the new *TV Times* when Graeme Kay spoke to John Sharp in *Merry man along The Corridor People*.

'Latest of the send-up thrillers is probably the most way-out yet devised,' commented 'Otta' in the US trade paper *Variety* on Wednesday 7 September, feeling it 'removed all the action from reality' with characters and events 'closer to the comic-strip. Given its inherent absurdity, it should collect a handsome following, for it's a stylish

offering in a fashionable idiom.' Michael Grimes' sets were praised, Elizabeth Shepherd 'gave a zestful portrait' while John Sharp was 'effective'. 'What it lacked,' felt the critic, 'was any sense of identification—which even comes with *The Avengers* and *Adam Adamant* – so it existed as a clever exercise, rather than a blood-tingler.'

A LASTING LEGACY

Gary Cockrell's PR went into overdrive, generating articles for publication about his dance troupes on Thursday 8 September such as 'Scrotty can't keep place with Gary' in *Television Today* and 'Private life of a private eye' in the *Daily Mirror*. 'Victim as Red' aired at the end of the week and gained TAM's joint nineteenth slot with 4.75 million homes, but by now the viewers were sending their correspondence.

'I award *The Corridor People* a gold medal for being the daftest programme on television,' H Oakes of Plymouth declared in the *Mirror*'s Televuepoint on Saturday 10, while AC of London wrote: 'TRIPE is the only word I can use to describe *The Corridor People*.'

"Do you have a licence to knock, Sergeant?" asked Blood of his underling early in 'Victim as Black', recorded on Tuesday 13 September. "Gave me last one away to a television critic," replied the trenchcoated operative as the series' swansong got underway. This particularly brutal entry revolved around the innocent victim Pearl, a West Indian cinema usherette and Cinderella figure in a shoe-orientated quest; although having done nothing, she becomes an inconvenience for the shoplifting Balkan Queen Mother Helena of Morphania, her half-witted son Ferdinand XVIII, and President of the International Brotherhood of Emergents Theobald Aboo who aims to use Morphania as a European base for black world domination.

This final show is punctuated by a series of to-camera monologues by the protagonists, each outlining their perspectives on the world, culminating in the chilling final scene. The only sequence shot on film for the otherwise taped show, this showed Pearl in her bedsit pondering "I wonder what my horoscope will be for tomorrow?"... as a gun barrel appeared beside her head...

'Victim as Black' concluded the series' brief broadcast life a couple of days after recording in the London and Scottish areas, and on Friday 16 September elsewhere. With less than 4.8 million homes tuning in, it failed to feature in the TAM charts.

With the show done and dusted, delayed reaction appeared in the viewerpoint section of the *TV Times* for 17-23 September. 'Congratulations on the first episode of *The Corridor People*... especially Elizabeth Shepherd's clothes and the

room designs. This is a contemporary and original programme,' celebrated 15 year-old P Walker of Nantwich, while Mrs M Reid of Bury wrote: 'I have just watched the first of *The Corridor People* and hope it will be the last. My fervent hope is that all the cast take a whiff of the potent perfume mentioned and that no antidote is ever found!'

As the autumn season got underway, the month-long life of *The Corridor People* faded from the public consciousness. *Television Today* got in a last word on Thursday 22 September when N. Alice Frick considered 'Victim as Black' under the heading 'Cast accepts the open invitation to over-act.' She felt the programme was 'taking the spoof thriller to the point of no return [...] like a comedy with every gag underlined [...] I realized that it wasn't intended to be comedy, that it is, in fact, a television cartoon strip.'

Frick compared Granada's offering to not only the televisual capers of *The Avengers* and MGM's *The Man from UNCLE* on BBC1, but also to *Modesty Blaise* where she likened Syrie and Scrotty to the title character and Willie Garvin. While unsure about the 'Rube Goldberg' style prediction machine, she did appreciate the 'comic-strip laced with a modicum of social comment' but still found the result to be 'one great ham-feast'.

"We all would have loved to continue!" enthuses Elizabeth Shepherd, "But I remember Eddie Boyd being adamant that these four were the best he came up with and he did not want to dilute the quality – by pushing himself beyond his own creative high, and certainly not putting the series into another writer's hands."

Shuffled into the backwaters of television history, *The Corridor People* slowly gained notoriety as cult television became a sub-culture during the 1980s, aided in the ensuing years by screenings at events staged by Kaleidoscope, the National Film Theatre and local arts cinemas such as the QUAD in Derby. Finally, in August 2012, the 405 line videotapes were released in their full surreal glory by Network on DVD to startle a new generation.

"It did feel like a golden time because there was so much work," says Elizabeth of this era, "all the best writers writing for TV, anthology play series as well as episodic series – a pity so much of it got lost and taped over, but good that a good deal of it does remain and has been restored. I was thrilled when *The Corridor People* was resurrected!"

"I think it is captivating still because it was full of all that 60s sizzle, and we are duller now! It reminds us how to loosen up and go for broke. We would not behave like that in a show now. I think *The Corridor People* takes us by surprise, even shocks in its daring to go too far, and that is exciting. It is a good show according to its own lights, which is why it deserves to last."

Elizabeth Shepherd and John Woodnutt (in car) during location recording for 'Victim as Red'



***The Corridor People* is available on DVD from Network Distributing.**

Thanks to Steve Hardy, Steve Rogers and Elizabeth Shepherd



It wasn't always alright on the night for the recording of some of our favourite shows, and many of the fluffed lines and cock-ups were preserved in the legendary BBC Christmas tapes, as Richard Molesworth reports...

MERRY CHRISTMAS, VT...



Right:
An outtake from
*'The Armageddon
Factor'*, with Mary
Tamm (Romana)
bedecked in
curlers, sharing
a kiss with Tom
Baker's Doctor

Although video technology was the cornerstone that television broadcasting was built upon in the 1930s, it took roughly another 30 years for videotape to be invented, and yet another decade still before videotape editing fully allowed broadcasters to create programmes that were slick, fast-paced, and generally free of fluffed lines and cock-ups. Videotape editing became commonplace in television, and videotape editors became gods amongst men at places like the BBC in the 1970s.

For it was the videotape editors who took the raw studio tapes of programmes, and excised the unused takes, the fluffed lines, the non-working special effects, and presented the BBC programme makers with the finished, fully-polished articles.

However, if amongst the rushes there was a particularly amusing fluffed line, or costume malfunction, or an instance of a high-profile TV star throwing a hissy fit on camera, or some news footage from a packed sunny beach that just happened to linger over topless sunbathers, then these bits and pieces of raw footage were passed from edit suite to edit suite. Watching television's naughtiest outtakes became a perk of the VT industry.

At some point in the late 1970s, BBC VT editors decided to package-up all the goofs, gaffes, tantrums, and tits into their own not-for-transmission programme, and also roped in a few BBC stars to record special links or messages for inclusion. This became the very first BBC 'Christmas Tape', which was unveiled at the annual Christmas Party (usually held sometime in the last working days before the Christmas fortnight break).



It was the perfect accompaniment to sausages on sticks, and warm beer served in Styrofoam cups, and soon became something of a Christmas tradition at the BBC. The on-screen talent eventually got wind of this practice, and many a mistake, flub, or cock-up was followed by a cheeky wink at the camera, followed by the phrase, "Merry Christmas, VT!"

The tradition of 'Christmas Tapes' initially stayed something of an industry secret to begin with, but sometime in 1979, a copy of the BBC's 'Christmas Tape' from the previous year got into the hands of a reporter from the *Sunday People* newspaper. The newspaper then devoted a front-page scoop to the story, focussing in particular on a re-edited interview with Princess Anne, which was re-cut to imply she was talking about sex, and not about her passion for horse riding. The BBC senior management were not at all happy that their private party fun was made public.

Nevertheless, the BBC VT department continued to make 'Christmas Tapes' for their annual party for next few years, but the very existence of the tapes increasingly became something of



the white oxide that 2-inch videotapes shed when played, or to the type of recreational substance favoured by certain TV people) is the earliest of the recognised BBC 'Christmas Tapes'. Running to just over 40 minutes, the programme is presented by Michael Crawford, in-character as Frank Spencer (from *Some Mothers Do 'Ave 'Em*), partnered by newsreader Kenneth Kendall. Their not-really-funny-at-all links are interspersed with various gratuitous shots of topless women, clips of some of the funnier scenes from the *Kentucky Fried Movie*, and a whole load of outtakes from BBC programmes made at the time.

Doctor Who makes its first appearance early on, in an outtake from the story *The Androids of Tara*. Mary Tamm, playing the android double of the Princess Stella, has a lengthy Shakespearean monologue.

"I, Princess Stella, descendant of the Royal Kings of Tara, Mistress of the domains of Thorvald, Mortgarde and Freya, do humbly offer my loyalty to the King..." was what she was meant to say. However, she gets her final words muddled, and instead says, "... do loyally offer my loyalty to the King..."

Realising she's messed up, Tamm breaks into a broad smile, and mutters, 'Oh f**k, I've blown it!' A few minutes later, we are treated to a scene from *The Armageddon Factor*, the inclusion of which is presumably down to some barely-there innuendo in the dialogue ("...It's a pretty little thing, isn't it...?"). Later on, rehearsal footage from the same story is included, which sees Mary Tamm (Romana) bedecked in curlers, practising her lines next to Tom Baker's Doctor (wearing his civvies).

After they get to the end of the scene, they two of them stare at each other, before

moving in together for a kiss, only to break away and giggle at the crew just at the last second.

Staying with *The Armageddon Factor*, another rehearsal scene follows later. Tom Baker's Doctor asks K9 a scripted question, and the tin dog replies, "Insufficient data, master". "You never know the f**king answer when it's important!" retorts Baker, and out-of-vision, the studio crew all guffaw loudly. This is followed by no less than four attempts at a scene from the story *The Sun Makers*, where Roy Macready (Cordo) runs into shot and fires a prop gun into the air, only for the gun to refuse to work each and every time.

Next is an outtake from the *Blake's 7* episode *'Seek-Locate-Destroy'*. Travis (Stephen Grief) sits at a desk, with Servalan (Jacqueline Pearce) sat behind him, as the pair listen to a report on a spiffy communicator prop. As the report ends, Grief reaches for the prop on the table, as his character has to briskly turn it off in frustration. As he grabs the prop, he manages to spin the device off the table, and it disintegrates in mid-air before smashing to the studio floor. 'Well, what do you say about that?' says Grief in a camp American accent, which causes Pearce to corpse in the background.

The 1978 tape concludes with a scene especially recorded on the set of the *Doctor Who* story *The Armageddon Factor*. It begins with the Doctor (Tom Baker) and Romana (Mary Tamm) having a bit of a snog, before the Doctor offers K9 a drink of vodka. At the Doctor's request, K9 then sings 'We Wish You A Merry Christmas'. The Doctor then interrupts him, and asks the tin dog what he would like for Christmas. After K9's somewhat lame response ("...



Above: An outtake from the *Blake's 7* episode *'Seek-Locate-Destroy'*. Travis (Stephen Grief) sits at a desk, with Servalan (Jacqueline Pearce) behind him

Above, right: K9 is offered a large vodka for Christmas during the filming of *'The Armageddon Factor'*

Far right: John Cleese wants Tom Baker's autograph in an outtake from *'City of Death'*

a political hot-potato for the BBC top brass. Eventually, the instruction came down from on-high that the making of the 'Christmas Tapes' needed to stop, and so the practice came to an end in the mid-1980s. The idea was briefly revived a decade later, but the end results were so anodyne and diluted that they bore little resemblance to the anarchic, vitriolic, non-PC 'Christmas Tapes' of the late 1970s and early 1980s.

What makes the original BBC 'Christmas Tapes' so interesting to genre fans is the number of behind-the-scenes insights, outtakes, spoofs and sketches from the BBCs benchmark shows which are included. This is in the main material from *Doctor Who*, but *Blake's 7* also rubs shoulders with classic BBC shows such as *Fawlty Towers* and *The Goodies*, while BBC staffers like Legs & Co, and musicians such as Suzi Quatro, all gamefully play along in segments recorded specifically for the shows. This, then, is our guide to the BBC 'Christmas Tapes'...

OOH, BETTY!

1978's offering (tastefully titled *White Powder Christmas*, in either a reference to



enough ball-bearings to last through a season, and fewer sill irons on the floors of the planets we visit.”), K9 asks the Doctor what his Christmas desire is. Tom Baker leers knowingly at the camera, and then gazes



lasciviously at Romana. Mary Tamm holds his gaze for a moment, and then collapses in fits of giggles.

FAULTY PROPS

The 1979 BBC 'Christmas Tape', *Good King Memorex*, also has a large slice of *Doctor Who* content. In a fictitious advert for a Christmas line-up of BBC programmes, a section of rehearsal footage from the story 'The Armageddon Factor' is featured, where Tom Baker drops the f-bomb as he implores the studio crew to stay quiet while he and Mary Tamm go through their lines.

One of the highlights of this year's tape are a series of outtakes from the second series of *Fawlty Towers*, which show John Cleese at his manic best, ad-libbing with props, and examining shaky sets. These clips are followed by a skit in which Cleese's *Monty Python* co-star, Michael Palin, is being interviewed by Michael Aspel. Dissatisfied with the technical quality of the programme, Aspel ventures down into the BBC's technical area to find out what the problem is. He meets with an engineer, who assures him in a conversation littered with technical gobbledegook, that the VT playback machine they were watching is one of the most advanced, sophisticated and expensive bits of machinery that the BBC possess.

At the same time, a Dalek creeps into the background of the conversation, and earwigs the boasts made about the VT machinery. "It's the best machine the BBC have," says the engineer. The Dalek looks into the camera, and simply says, "Bollocks!"

John Cleese returns in a later skit, to team up with Tom Baker on the set of the *Doctor Who* story 'City of Death' (in which Cleese had a cameo appearance). This time Cleese knocks on the door of the TARDIS, and when Baker's Doctor answers, he presents him with a working 2-inch videotape machine, a gift from the mysterious 'Doug Who' (who 'Doug Who' is or was remains an elusive mystery to this day).

Later, we return to the Dalek, now alone with the VT machine, which the Dalek tries to seduce. "Ah... Let me probe your proc-amp and lick your lockout, you randy bitch," grates the amorous Dalek. "Not tonight mate. I told you, I've got a head-clog," replies the VT machine. Undeterred, the Dalek keeps going. "Let me fondle your drop-out compensator....", but it's all to no avail, and the rest of the machines in the edit suite then start laughing at the lovelorn pepperpot.

In another skit later on, a sports producer asks if they can have more editing time

for *Match of the Day*. He is referred to the supervisor behind him, who turns out to be the Dalek. The Dalek promptly exterminates him, saying "Bloody Sports PA's!!"

Later still, the Dalek is re-united with his VT machine, and as it manipulates the controls, explains that we are about to see more clips that his girlfriend has collected over the year (mainly outtakes from *The Goodies* and *Terry and June*). Then, towards the end of the programme, during a montage of various BBC stars prancing around in Christmas paper hats, one lone shot of K9, with a paper hat perched jauntily on his head, is included.

Finally, in a post-credits sequence, we return to the set of 'City of Death'. Tom Baker is staring moodily off-camera, as John Cleese strides onto the set and approaches him. He proffers a photograph of Baker towards the actor, and says, "Tom, sorry to bother you, but sign this for my godson would you? Nice little kid - he's blind."

Tom goes fruitlessly searching through his many pockets, searching for a pen, before turning to Cleese to ask him if he's got a pen he could use. Cleese hasn't. They both stand looking at each for several seconds, before Cleese takes back the photograph. "Oh, never mind. I'll tell him you signed it...."

The 1980 and 1981 BBC 'Christmas Tapes', although mainly devoid of any genre content (apart from some dubious scripted double entendres from the *Blake's 7* episode 'Harvest of Kairos'), were packed with outtakes from some of the more edgier comedies in production at the time, with clips from *Alexi Sayle*, *Kenny Everett*, and *Not the Nine O-Clock News* helping to fill out the tapes.

Genre outtakes returned for the 1982 tape, *Flash Frames*, which included some very old, rosey, black and white outtakes from the 1960s US series *Star Trek*. They are mainly comprised of Kirk and co. walking into doors which refused to open on cue. Later, a scene from the BBC's science fiction children's series *Captain Zep*, *Space Detective* comes crashing to a halt, as it's interrupted by the unscheduled arrival on set of the fifth Doctor, in the guise of Peter Davison. "Very nice place you've got here," Davison opines. "You've obviously got a bigger budget than us..." He then hands the startled cast a celery plant, before explaining that his appearance on-set had been orchestrated by "... the demon Doug". But Doug Who...?

Merry Christmas VT, indeed! 🍷

Clockwise from top left:
Newsreader Kenneth Kendall and Michael Crawford get in the Christmas mood in 1978, (Basil Fawlty) John Cleese pulls a funny face as wife Sybil (Prunella Scales) looks on, Peter Davison, gatecrashes an episode of *Captain Zep*, *Space Detective*, Tim Brooke-Taylor in *The Goodies*, K9 in a Christmas mood, the mysterious Doug Who, a Dalek gets randy in a VT Edit Suite, and Michael Aspel has an encounter with one of *Doctor Who*'s barking pepperpots in the BBC's technical department...

ED TV

We take a trip back in time to 1986, when Paul Mount conducted this fascinating and previously unpublished interview with Ed Bishop, star of Gerry Anderson's *UFO*...

When it debuted on British television in 1970 *UFO*, Supermarionation superstar Gerry Anderson's first live-action science-fiction series, disappeared virtually without trace. The show had its admirers, but without proper network support in the UK it never found its feet.

Today, however, *UFO* is generally regarded as one of Anderson's crowning glories, sitting alongside his best Supermarionation efforts such as *Thunderbirds*. Last year the show was re-released by Network in a lavish and comprehensive Blu-ray box set and more recently ITC issued a budget-priced DVD set which spent several weeks in the UK TV DVD Top 40 best seller charts.

George Victor Bishop – better known as Ed Bishop – who portrayed the obsessive, charismatic Commander Ed Straker in every episode of the series, passed away in 2005. This previously-unpublished interview was conducted in 1986 and sees the actor discussing his career, his time on earlier Gerry Anderson productions and, of course, his career-defining role as the Commander of the Supreme Headquarters Alien Defence Organisation in the seminal *UFO*...

What do you remember of your childhood and your early years growing up in the United States?
I was born on June 11th 1932 in Brooklyn in New York. When I was a kid the family lived out of Brooklyn and went forty miles up the Hudson River to a little village called Peekskill, and that

was where I spent my childhood. I graduated from High School in 1950 and I spent a couple of years working and then I was drafted into the Army to do my National Service in 1952.

I left the Army in 1954 and went to Buffalo in New York where I worked for Remington Rand, the typewriter machine people, and during that time I went to night school before going on to Boston University, specifically the Theatre Arts Division. In 1959 I got a Fulbright scholarship which brought me to England to study at Lamda (London Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts). I started working here in the summer of 1960 and the rest, as they say, is history.

What made you gravitate towards the arts and acting as a potential career?

I don't know when I decided, but I always knew I wanted to be an actor. I was a very precocious kid, always showing off, always wanting to be the centre of attention. I'm sure that's what actors are, there's a sort of arrested development about them, an emotional insecurity. You get dressed up in a costume and walk on stage or prance about or work in a film; it's the kind of ego trip that kids seem to indulge in and I always wanted to do that.

After arriving in the UK you worked fairly steadily almost immediately – uncredited in Kubrick's *Lolita* (1962), an astronaut in *Mouse on the Moon*, the classic *2001* and several TV appearances in *The Saint* and your first Bond role in *You Only Live Twice* in 1967. Around this time you began your working relationship with

Gerry Anderson as he was putting together his *Thunderbirds* follow-up, *Captain Scarlet* and *the Mysterons*. How did you come to be cast in the regular role of Captain Blue in the series?

It happened by chance really. Sylvia Anderson (Gerry Anderson's then-wife) called up an agent I was with at the time and they wanted to meet the singer Cy Grant for the voice of one of the puppets. A girl at the agent's office said 'Yes, we've got Cy but we've also taken on a new young American actor by the name of Ed Bishop and I know you guys use American voices.' Sylvia said 'Send him along' so I went to do an audition and fortunately got the job as the voice of Captain Blue. That was when I first met Gerry.

What was the process of recording the voices for *Captain Scarlet*?

The way we did it on that series involved the actors standing around the microphone and reading our parts, and afterwards they would take the voice tapes we'd recorded and make the puppet movements fit the tapes. In other words if we gave a voice inflection or we gave a certain reading of a certain line that was interesting they could make the puppets respond accordingly. If, for example, you had an inflection that sounded as if you were raising an eyebrow as you were saying it, like an element of surprise, they could alter the puppet to replicate that inflection – in other words the puppets had to match us, not the other way around. It was the way Gerry liked to work which I found very freeing because we as actors weren't constrained in any way, we didn't

have to meet the technological requirements of the puppets, they had to meet ours and they had the ability to handle that. From my point of view it was like acting in a radio play and we had some very clever directors who pulled it all together. Gerry himself directed a lot of the episodes and we had a good bunch of actors and I think the result was a very good series.

You were back with Gerry for his first live-action feature film, *Journey to the Far Side of the Sun*, where you played NASA's David Poulson. Is it true you were drafted into the film to replace an actor who hadn't worked out in the role?

They'd cast another actor, Peter Dyneley (best-remembered as the voice of Jeff Tracy in the original *Thunderbirds* series) in a part in the film – at that time it was called *Doppelganger* – and after a few days shooting with him they looked at the rushes and whilst it was nothing at all to do with his acting they felt he was very similar in style to the actor Patrick Wymark who was playing one of the film's leads. The American producers and distributors looked at it and said 'This isn't going to work out.'

I was brought in and obviously I was much younger so the contrast between a younger man and Patrick Wymark was much better so I was a last-minute replacement and that's how I got into the film. I never got to see the film under either of its names and I have no idea if it made any money or not but it was a great pleasure working on it.

One of your co-stars in *Journey*, of course was George Sewell, who you would go on to work with on your next Anderson project, *UFO*. Can you remember when the idea of the show was first put to you?

'I remember that it was a blisteringly-hot summer day and I was living at that time in Hampton Court, just outside London, and my next-door neighbour came over and knocked on my door and said 'Ed, would you come over and give me a hand unloading a load of bricks I've just had delivered for a garage I'm building.' I said 'Sure' – this was just what I wanted on a hot summer's day – so we got some gloves and started unloading 5,000 bricks off the back of this truck. We'd been working for about an hour when the phone rang at home. My wife answered and she called over and it was Gerry Anderson's secretary who said 'Ed, Gerry's wondering if you could go out to Pinewood Studios right away' and I said 'Sure, what's it about?' and she said 'Something to your advantage.' I didn't care what it was, anything to get me away from those bricks! So I said to my neighbour 'Hey, man, sorry I've got to go and see about a job', I had a quick shower, hopped into the car and drove out to Pinewood and that was when Gerry put the idea to me.

Of course I was absolutely over the moon because, although Straker was not at that time going to be the central figure of the series he was going to be one of about four running characters. Well, on any level a young actor who's only been in the business about five years and who's going to be involved in seventeen one-hour episodes is going to be delighted and I was.

When did the actual filming of the series start and what was the schedule like?

We started in around March 1967 and we finished

in 1969. It sounds like a two-year job but I think it only worked out at around fifteen or sixteen months of actual filming as we had a break after shooting the first seventeen episodes at the old MGM Studios. By the way, I just want to say that I was the last actor to be photographed at the old MGM Borehamwood studios! I carefully researched this and although there were supposed to be a couple of TV commercials coming in after us they never actually went in and I was the last actor actually photographed there in the episode 'Sub-Smash' where I was looking breathless and sweaty at an oxygen gauge as it was rapidly dropping to zero. It's not a great claim to fame but whatever's going I'm going to grab! 'Sub-Smash' is actually a favourite episode of mine, it seemed to have a slickness about it, a real sense of urgency. It was well-directed and had a real pace.

How involved was Gerry Anderson with the show on a day-to-day basis once production was up and running?

I would say he was very involved. He had his office and they had a system which I think was called 'Adavision', a sort of closed circuit television so that in all the senior executive's offices they had monitors showing what was going on – not actually on the floor but what was being seen through the cameras that were doing the filming.

If there was a problem Gerry would come down onto the floor and help sort it out but I must say as an actor it was good to know that there was someone up in the executive office keeping everybody on their toes. Sometimes producers hang around and inhibit people but I knew Gerry well enough by that time that I was more or less glad that somebody was watching what was going on.



What was the typical shooting schedule for the series? Were you ever in the position where you were filming scenes from more than one episode at a time?

No, we never made more than one episode at a time. Gerry brought with him a high degree of organisation so we didn't have to do a lot of Mickey Mouse things like a lot of other series where you pick up a scene from another episode that you didn't get around to shooting or a close-up that was missed. We always finished one, put it in the can and went on to the next one. It was very well organised from that point of view. I think our schedule was a ten-day turnaround, shooting an

episode in those ten days and then starting the next one.

Presumably on a long shoot like *UFO* cast and crew must become quite close and tightly-knit?

Yes, we did become quite tightly-knit. We got on very well; there's been a lot of rumour to the contrary but in fact we all got along extremely well. When you take a bunch of emotionally-immature people – actors, in other words! – and put them into a very intense creative situation where their egos are at stake and where their careers are at stake you can understand volatile situations occurring but nevertheless we did all get along very well and there was no hassle or arguments between the actors. But we did not get along socially – not that we ever really tried. It was quite funny because whenever we went off the lot we didn't have any social contact whatsoever. Mike Billington (Paul Foster in *UFO*) didn't call me up, Wanda Ventham (Col Virginia Lake) didn't come over to visit me and my wife for dinner with her husband; we didn't have any social contact of that sort, it was a purely professional relationship. We don't keep in touch now; I think I bumped into Wanda – always a very pleasurable experience – at the opening of a musical called *Doctor Barnardo* a few years back. Her husband was appearing in it and I went backstage to see some people and I just happened to see Wanda and she was as hale and hearty and beautiful as ever but unless we just happen to bump into each other we don't really keep in touch.

***UFO*'s production was famously split into two blocks; the 17 episodes filmed at Borehamwood and the remaining nine filmed at Pinewood. Many of the cast from the first block – George Sewell, Gabrielle Drake, Peter Gorden – to name just three – didn't continue into the series in the second block. What was the reason for this?**

There was a very boring contractual arrangement between me – Ed Bishop the actor – and Century 21 Productions. My original contract was for 17 episodes with an option for 9 more. I don't think the other actors had that sort of arrangement. I think we had about 4 months between the end of filming at MGM until we started up at Pinewood and it was envisaged as two separate packages. The others weren't signed for the full 26, they only signed for the MGM package.

I know George Sewell had a very successful police series (*Special Branch*) which he went into. Peter Gorden I don't think even signed a contract for the first 17, he was contracted to do freelance episodes because he was very busy at the time as a choreographer and he did a handful of episodes and then went on to do a summer show.

I think the others didn't want to sit around waiting for however long it took for them to decide whether they were going to make the additional episodes and whether they wanted them in them so they were free to look for and take other work if it came their way.

I have to point out that the contracts that were drawn up, especially on series like this, are very much weighted in favour of the producers and not the actors. I signed to do all 26 but there was no guarantee they'd do 26 so at the end of the 26 if they didn't pick up the option I just had to whistle Dixie! It gets complicated as there was no financial responsibility on the producer's side to pay me if the show didn't go beyond the first 17.



Left to right:
Ed with George Sewell
and Dolores Mantez,
and seen on set with
two unidentified crew
members

How do you think the show holds up years after the event, particularly when compared to contemporary big budget sci-fi feature films?

The series was clearly divided into two categories – the 17 episodes we shot at MGM and the 9 at Pinewood. I think most of the MGM episodes were slow; the acting was slow, the editing was slow, they were very ponderous and what tended to happen was that the audience got there before we did. The 9 episodes we shot at Pinewood were all very fast, very slick so that in a sense the audience doesn't have time to think, they're shown a sort of razzle-dazzle full of pyrotechnics on the screen. Everybody moves so fast, everything happens so fast, it takes your breath away. If they sat and analysed it later they'd see all the holes but they're not supposed to see them while they're watching!

So if I had to level any criticism at the show it would be that it was often very slow. In those last 9 episodes we had directors who'd come along and say 'Now come on, Ed, move along here, don't dwell on this so long, just say it!' David Tomblin, who directed a lot of episodes of *The Prisoner*, was a very good director and we had people like Jeremy Burns and Cyril Frankel, guys who could look at three or four pages of dialogue and boil it down to the essence of the dramatic moment and go for it, send it into the cutting room and the editor just had to stick all the ends together and it worked.

Visually, movies like *Star Wars* and *Close Encounters* had zillion-dollar budgets and a lot of time to make those feature films. You can't compare us with films like that. *Star Wars* wipes the floor technically with *UFO*. A guy called David Lane, who directed several *UFO*s, was a second unit director on one of the *Superman* pictures and he was given something like 3 or 4 million dollars and something like 6 months to go to New York and film one shot, which was the burning of New York city. That's the kind of budget these guys are talking about. We had a turnaround of 9 or 10 days, it's a different ball game.

UFO didn't make a lot of impact in the UK but when it arrived in America a couple of years after filming had wrapped it became something of a hit and there was talk of a second series. Were you approached about the prospect of returning to the role of Straker in a retooled second series?

Yes, I was in Los Angeles - this must have been around 1972 - and I got a letter from Gerry saying that they had been alerted and we were going to go for another series and that advance preproduction was going ahead. I was very excited because I think the 9 episodes we did at Pinewood were very good and I thought we had all matured a little bit – the writers, the directors and certainly I had a better grasp of the character and what was happening and the idea that we'd make another

batch was very exciting. I genuinely think that if we'd made another series we'd still be making them, I think it would have become another *Star Trek* because we would have really taken off. The history of why we didn't make another series in the end – and we came within a hair's breadth, I assure you – is a very long and complicated story to do with network politics and all the rest of it. But we did get very close. I wasn't involved with the plans for the second season but I was devastatingly heartbroken. I still have the letter from Sylvia saying it wasn't going ahead and I was really very sad about that.

The proposed second *UFO* series eventually morphed into what would become *Space:1999*. Did you ever get to see any episodes of the series which might have been *UFO 2* and were you ever invited to appear in the show?

I didn't see any of the series so I can't really say what it was like in comparison to *UFO*. But I do know – and I can tell you this in all candour – that *UFO* was not a success. There are millions of people who like it but on the scale by which these things are measured it doesn't even register. It did not pull in the audience it wanted and needed – it was not a success. There's one thing in show business that people avoid like the plague and that's something that's not a success. So *UFO* was not a success and CBS did not pick up their option for another 26 episodes.

Everyone likes to bury their failures and forget about them. This is what happened in the case of *UFO* and then Gerry went on to make *Space:1999*. I remember reading a big article in the *Hollywood Reporter* which said that Gerry and the people who were involved with him in 1999 had watched 40 episodes of *Star Trek* to find out what the formula was that made *Star Trek* so successful and they tried to duplicate that format in *Space:1999*.

UFO and, unfortunately, *Captain Scarlet*, the first job I had with Gerry was, of all the puppet series Gerry made, the least successful of his shows. I don't know whether they put two and two together and said 'Ed Bishop was involved in *Captain Scarlet* and *UFO* and neither of them scored, maybe we'd better keep him away from *Space:1999*' but I was never asked to go out and do one!

UFO ended without any resolution to the scenario or for the characters. Have you given any thought to what might have eventually happened to Ed Straker?

I think that possibly Straker would have come unstuck. As a matter of fact over the years people have said 'Wouldn't you like to make a feature film about Straker?' and I would like to. I keep thinking of that wonderful movie *Dark Star* which was made for about fifty cents in somebody's garage and I think that kind of low-level, low-budget

feature that would pick up Straker's character as he might be now would be really interesting, a sort of cross between *Dark Star* and *Blade Runner*. I've often thrown this out at conventions and I say 'Yeah, I'd like to see somebody come up with a nice, low-budget script.'

You don't need all that pizzazz, you just need to stay with that guy. Maybe he's broken down somewhere. There must be lots of guys out there who either work for the CIA or MI5 or something who have are carrying some massive secret that they can't unload and they're living in some seedy rooming house somewhere or maybe hitting the bottle.

Where did your career take you immediately post-*UFO*?

'Well in fact I hit a bit of a recession. I had been tied up for about 15 or 16 months working on the series, so people fell into two categories when the series came out. People would say 'Well, there's Ed Bishop, he's a lousy actor, we won't employ him' and the other category said 'Ed Bishop is now a major international star in a TV series shown all over the world, he's obviously booked solid so he's not going to be interested in our radio play/stage play or whatever.' As a result I didn't do anything! I had a very lean time for a year or so after the series finished. I did a tour of a play throughout the West Country, a few radio jobs and it was as a result of that depression in my career that I went back to the States where *UFO* was showing so I thought I'd try to capitalise on that and get some work out there which I did but it meant we had to make a decision as to whether we were going to move to Los Angeles in particular or live in England. We had four small children and I just didn't think they'd transplant from their little hothouse in England to LA and who knows whether I made the right decision? You never know.

This interview was conducted in 1986 in the wake of *UFO*'s long-overdue reappearance on selected ITV Networks. At the time Ed had just finished filming a two-part American TV production entitled *The Two Mrs Grenvilles* and was about to start a short stint on a co-production called *Three Wishes For Jamie* (which doesn't appear on his listed imdb credits so may never have possibly come to pass).

In the following years he would continue to work steadily on British television in comedies such as *French and Saunders*, *2.4 Children* and *The Punt and Dennis Show* and on popular US shows such as *The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles* and *Highlander*.

His last TV appearance was in the 2005 drama/documentary *Hiroshima*. Ed Bishop passed away from a chest infection on June 8th 2005 in Kingston-Upon-Thames at the age of 72, just five days after the death of his *UFO* co-star Michael Billington. 🍂

INFINITY



ISSUE 16 - LANDING 17.01.19

If you love a bit of sci-fi and retro telly you won't want to miss the next issue of *Infinity*, which is so packed with fabulous treats its a wonder we can get it off the launch pad!

For a start there's an amazing cover feature on the 1968 Jane Fonda favourite, *Barbarella*, the one where Jane Fonda plays a sexy space gal who can speak 28 languages - and doesn't know how to say 'no' in any of the m. We're already taking regular cold showers thinking about it.

We also take you back to 1955 for a *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* in company with Pat Boone, James Mason, Arlene Dahl, Diane Baker, Thayer David, Peter Ronson and a duck. Let's hope they find some orange sauce down there.

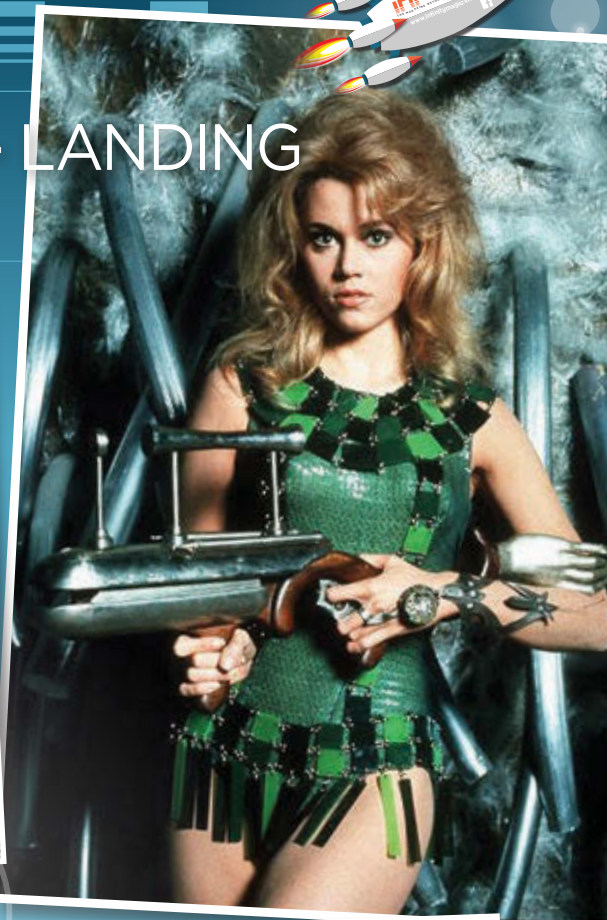
Heading in the same direction but without a duck we continue our *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea* with a look at the latter shows of this ever-popular Irwin Allen series. You'll be surprised at what was going on below the surface.

Captain Zep is another character some of you may remember from your misspent youths. Those who don't will still thoroughly enjoy our feature on him, which will reveal how he attained the rank of 'Space Detective'. Fascinatingly it has a lot to do with Ernie Wise, erstwhile punk rockers and a semi-naked Glynis Barber!

The name Gary Pollard may not be familiar to you, but he's an unsung hero as you will discover in our fascinating interview with him next time round. Special Effects wizard Gary's work in films and TV include *Labyrinth*'s The Goblin King, the Bog of Eternal Stench, Audrey II, Yoda, the Vogons, the Zygons, and a heck of a lot more.

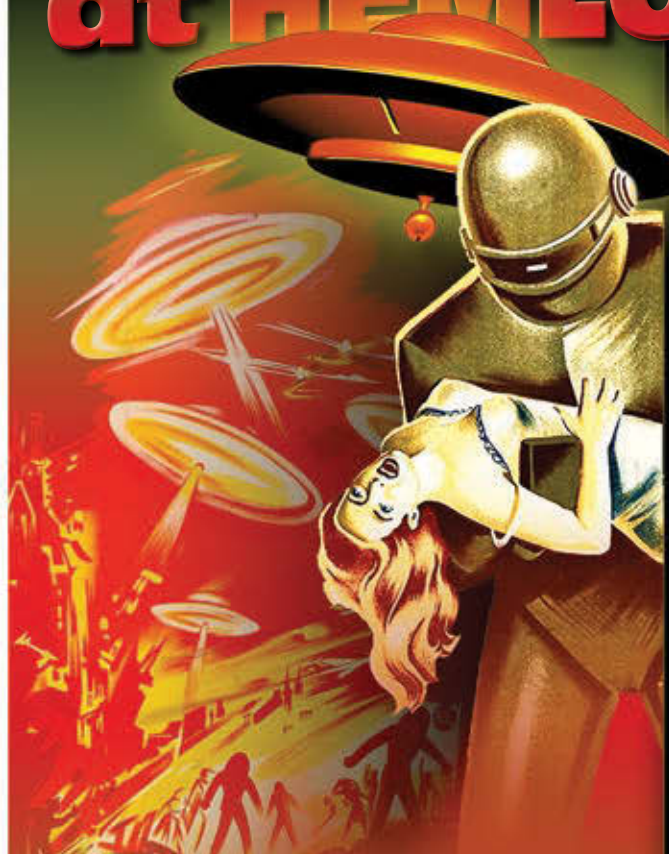
In the mid-1960s, Italian popular cinema produced many interesting cult movies, and none were stranger or more engaging than its attempts at science-fiction, which rank among the decade's weirdest offerings. We'll be taking a look at some of them too, and did we mention we have a feature on jigsaw puzzles?

Yes, it all fits together nicely to make up *Infinity* issue 16, a magazine that solves all your sci-fi and cult TV needs. It's touching down in your local newsagent on January 17th, 2019, so be sure to grab a copy!





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