

Perry Nakion's

Tom Dow

BLAKES 7

A MARVEL
MONTHLY

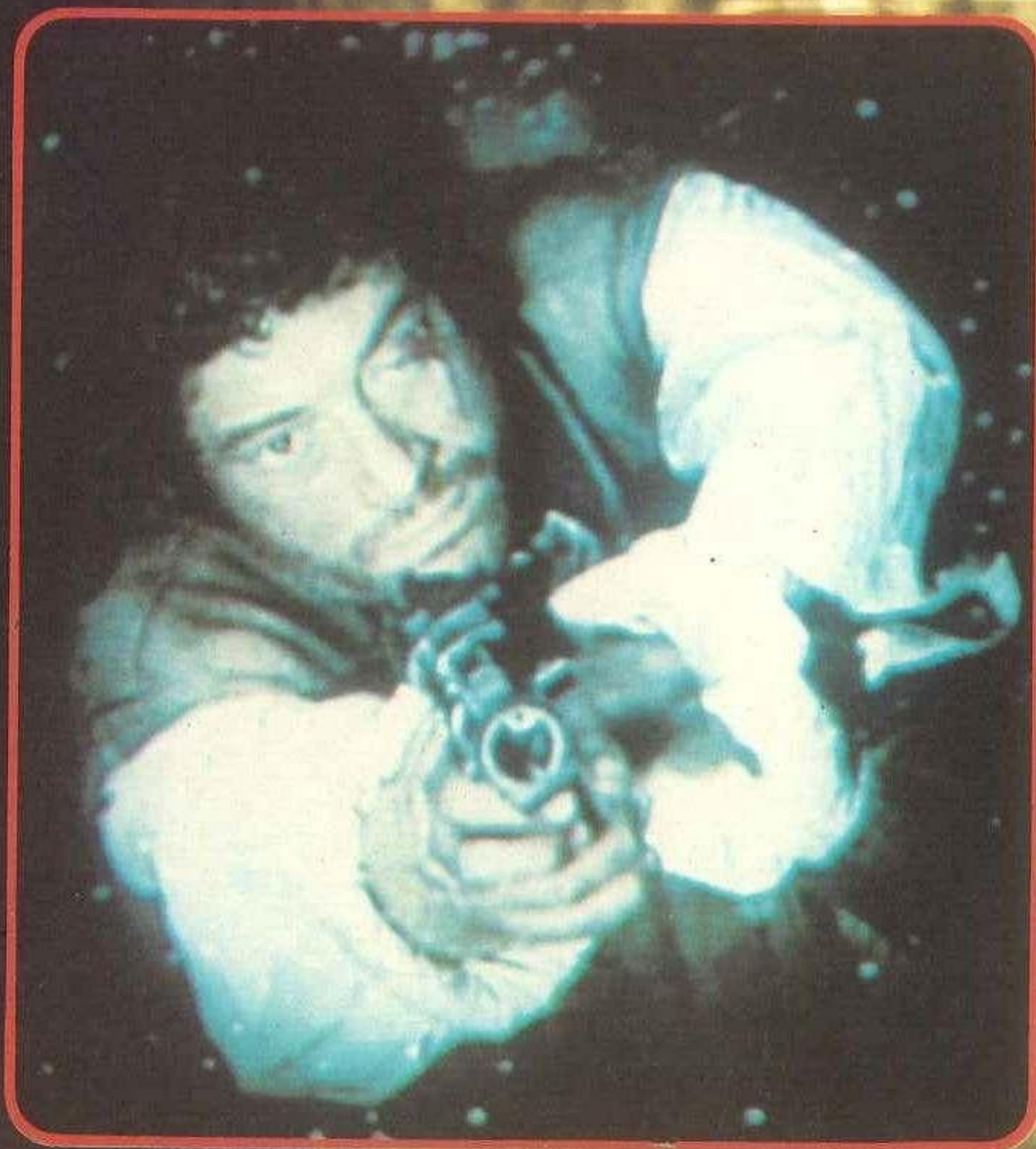
NO.14 NOV. 1981



*THEIR LIVES IN PERIL - CAN
AVON SAVE HIS CREW..
..AND HIMSELF?*

**BLAKE - A MAN NEVER
TO BE FORGOTTEN!**

*SUPER PULL-OUT
COLOUR POSTER OF
SEDUCTIVE SERVALAN!*



SLAVE



BLAKES 7

Editor: Bernie Jaye, Art: Floron Florenzo; Neil Diamond.

Consultant Editor and photographs: Ken Armstrong

FEATURES

SCRAP BOOK P.4
A photo-feature depicting behind-the-scenes action!

PAUL DARROW . . . ARE YOU REALLY ALIVE? P.15
Ken Armstrong calls at Paul Darrow's home in the Surrey Downs to ask the questions we all want answered!

AT THE EDGE OF THE WORLD P.24
A special report on the 1982 Blake's 7 Convention.

TONY ATTWOOD – THE INSTANT BLAKE'S 7 FAN .
..... P.30
Author of 'Blake's 7 – The Programme Guide'. A book no B.7 fan can be without.

COMIC STRIP

STRANDED P.7
A misunderstanding nearly gets everybody killed!

TEXT STORY

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AVON; BLAKE; VILA P.32

Apologies to Ken Armstrong (script), Dave Lloyd (art) and John Aldrich (lettering) for failing to credit them on last issues comic strip – Alliance.



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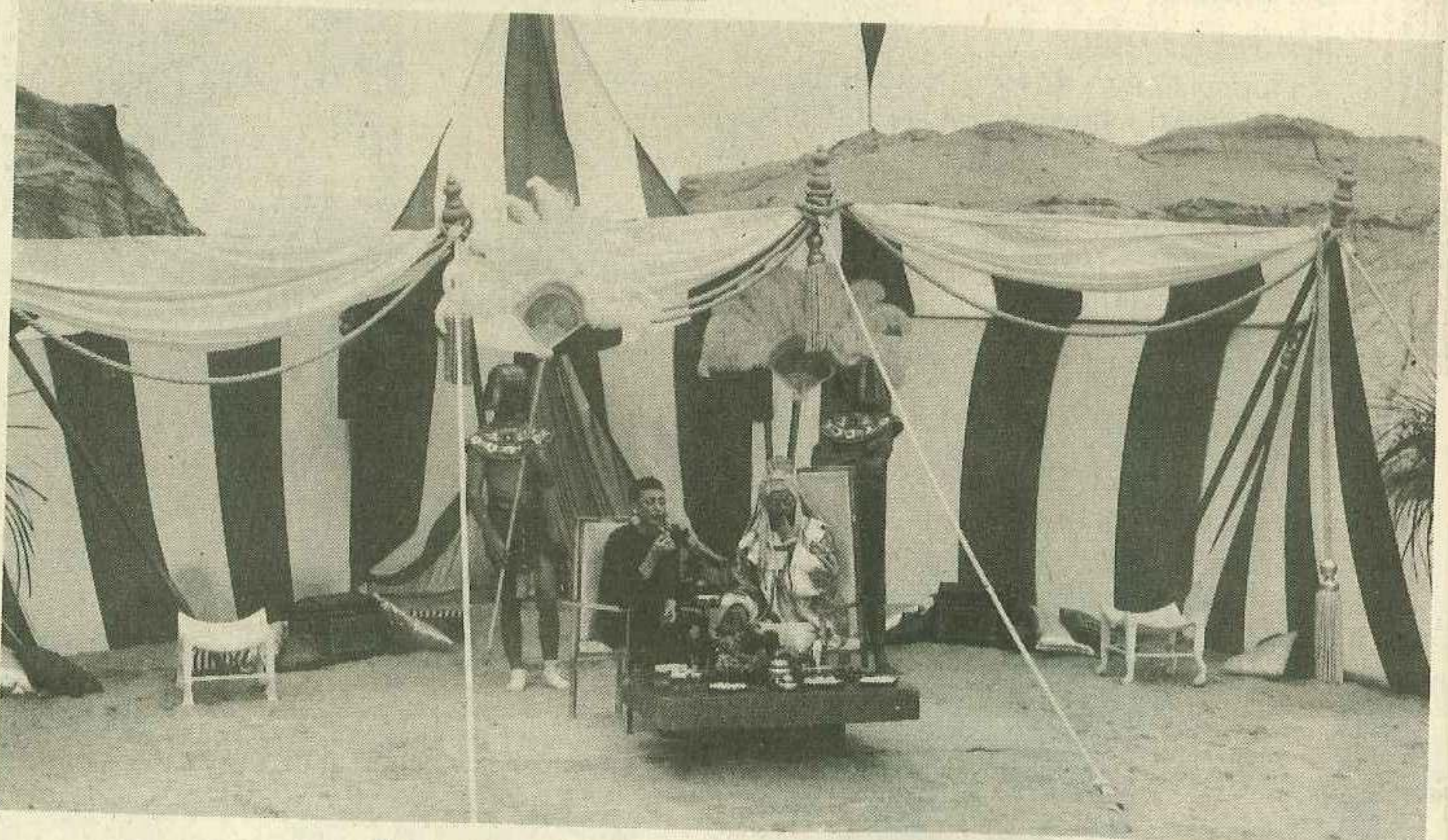
SCRAPBOOK

MORE CANDID SHOTS OF YOUR FAVOURITE TV STARS FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THE CAMERA.

'It just came apart in my hands . . . honest!' A small refinement, like putting the barrel back on, is made to Cally's gun during early filming.



Two additional 'slaves' get in on the act as Betty Marsden prepares for a scene in the fourth series. The 'slaves' were from the Prop Department, trying to get the fire bowls to light . . . using firelighters, of course.




Just time for a quick snack before the camera rolls . . . and time to find out which fruit is real . . . and which is wax!

SCRAPBOOK



← Admiring a labour of love, Peter Tuddenham speaks to a fan at a recent convention whose sweater bears the names of all the characters from BLAKE'S 7.

The things poor professionals have to put up with! Josette Simon takes shelter as the Visual Effects lads toss buckets of plastic bits at her. It was designed to look like the aftermath of an explosion and, certainly, it was just as messy!



↑ The break-up of Scorpio . . . thanks to some stage hands heaving with all their might at the scenery. To portray the flight deck disintegrating, the set was cut into pieces and placed on castors. When the time came for the crash, explosions were set off behind Steven Pacey then the sets pushed and pulled to give that dramatic break-up effect.



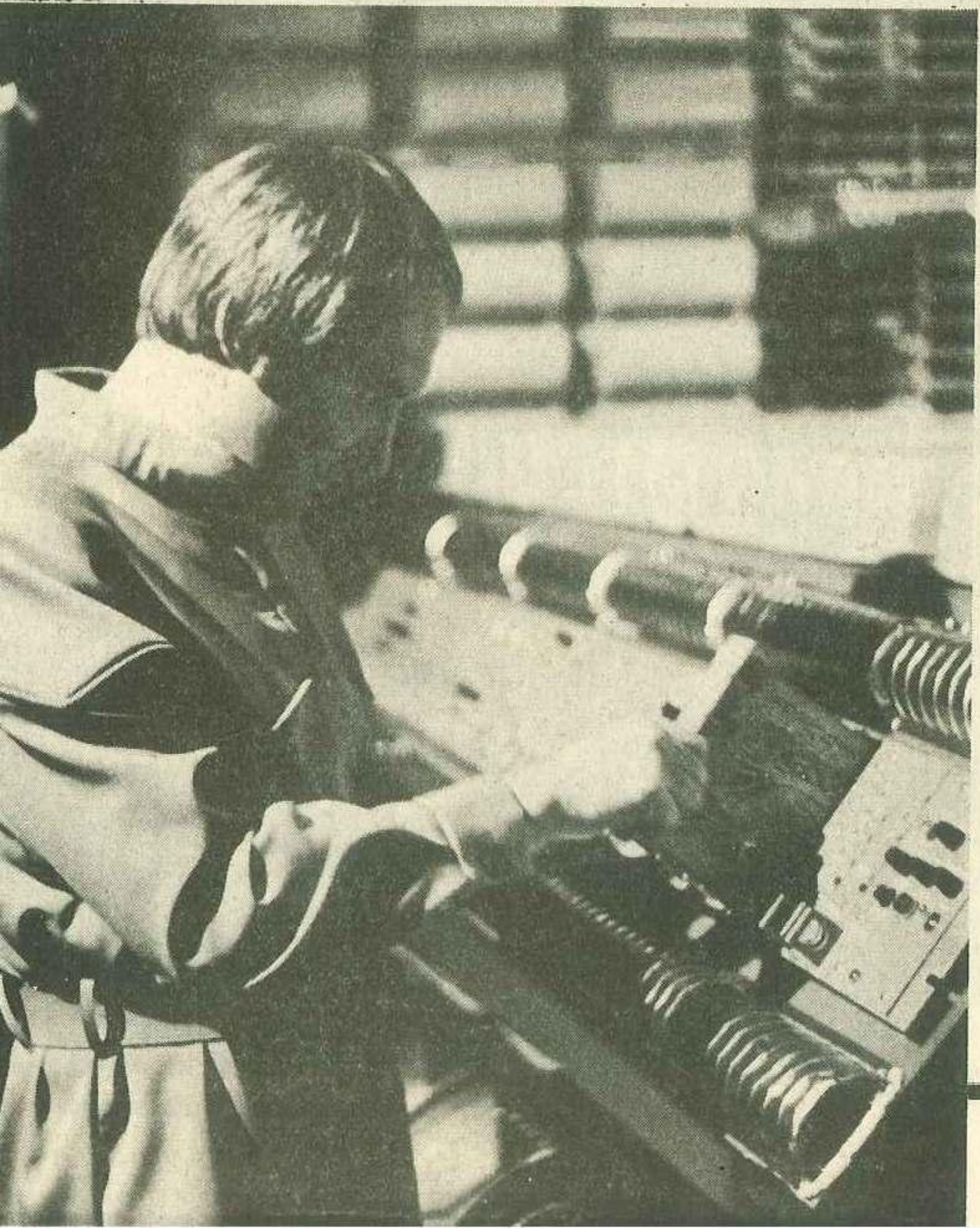
SCRAPBOOK



Just sitting back and watching a Bounty Hunter shoot at Avon? That's not Dayna's normal role! Actually, Josette Simon was out of the camera shot while the action took place – otherwise I'm certain she'd have done her bit.




A more relaxing moment for Vila. He's supposed to be receiving medical treatment from Soolin – but Mike Keating looks like he's enjoying every moment of it.




'These automatic banking cards are getting bigger and bigger!' In reality, of course, Vila is not trying to cheat the banking system but trying to detect a fault in the shuttle craft which he's flying.

STRANDED




WHAT IS IT, ORAC, AND HOW DID IT COME TO BE HERE?



WHAT YOU SEE IS THE REMAINS OF A FEDERATION SPACE STATION IT WAS PARTIALLY DESTROYED IN THE ATOMIC WARS. NOW CLASSIFIED AS SPACE DEBRIS

INTERESTING...



TAKE US CLOSER, SLAVE. WHAT REMAINS OF THAT WHEEL COULD BE USEFUL TO US.

UH? ARE YOU MAD, AVON? THAT THING'S DANGEROUS IT'S STILL TURNING!



ORAC, TAKE COMMAND OF THE MANOEUVRE. MATCH ROTATION WITH SCORPIO.

THERE'S NO NEED TO GO SO CLOSE. WE COULD TELEPORT ABOARD.

PERHAPS, TARRANT BUT IF THERE'S ANYTHING WORTH RECOVERING, WE COULD NEVER TELEPORT BACK WITH IT.

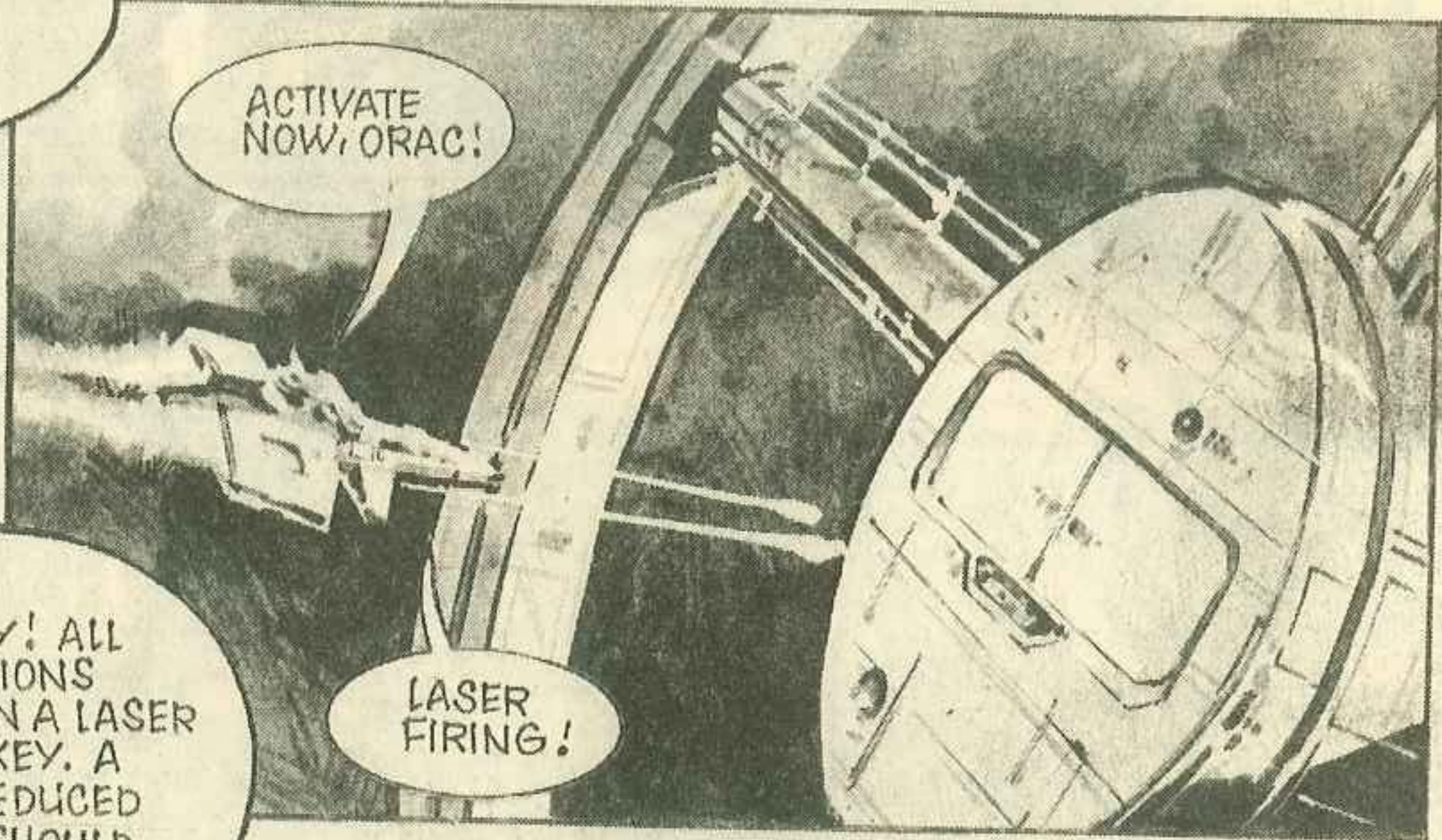
WHAT ARE YOU DOING? CAN'T YOU SEE THERE'S NO WAY IN? THE LANDING PLATFORM DOORS ARE SHUT!

YOU ARE MAD!



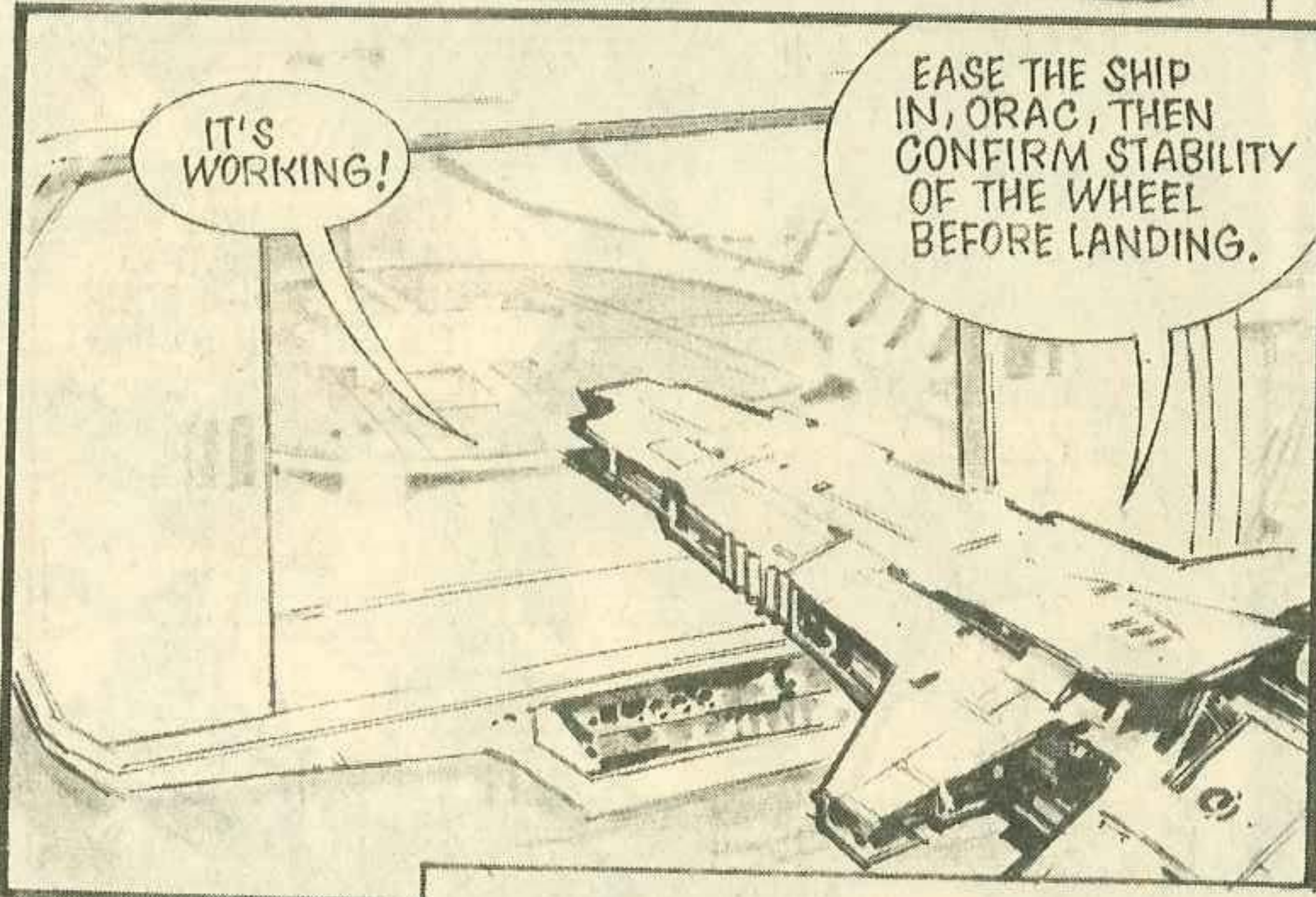
ORAC, IS THERE A METHOD OF TRYING TO OPEN THOSE DOORS FROM HERE?

ACTIVATE NOW, ORAC!



LASER FIRING!

NATURALLY! ALL SUCH STATIONS WORKED ON A LASER TRIGGER KEY. A SMALL REDUCED CHARGE SHOULD ACTIVATE THE MECHANISM.



IT'S WORKING!

EASE THE SHIP IN, ORAC, THEN CONFIRM STABILITY OF THE WHEEL BEFORE LANDING.



STABILITY CONFIRMED. SCORPIO IS LANDING NOW.

LOOK! THE EXTERNAL DOORS ARE CLOSING! WE'RE TRAPPED!



WHAT HAPPENS IF WE CAN'T OPEN THE DOORS AGAIN EH?

IF THAT IS THE CASE, WE'D BETTER START EXPLORING OUR NEW HOME. ARM YOURSELVES AND FOLLOW ME.



CONFIRM THERE IS A SUITABLE ATMOSPHERE IN THE STATION, ORAC.

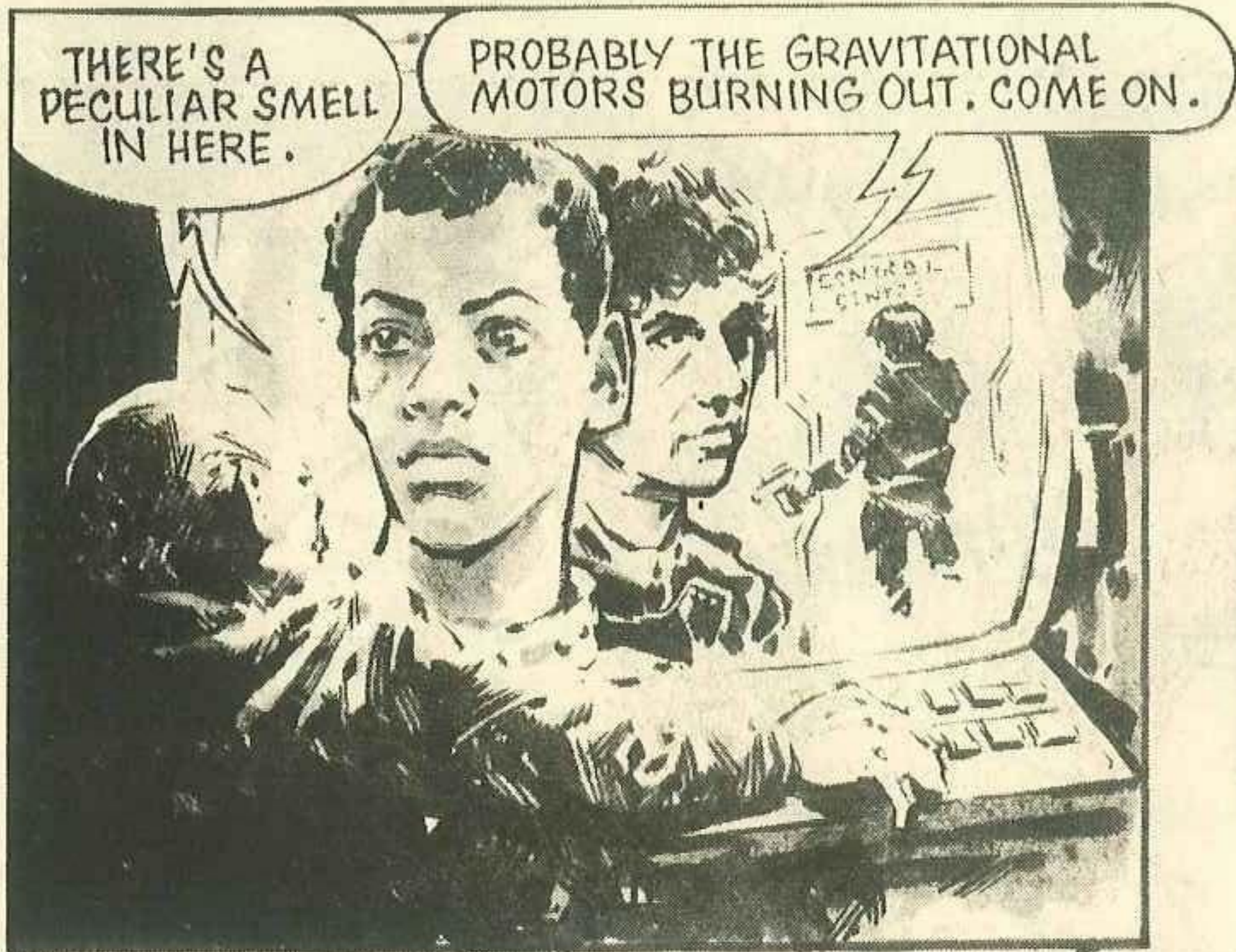
CONFIRMED, ALTHOUGH THERE IS A HIGH NITROGEN CONTENT.



THE CONTROL CENTRE SHOULD BE THIS WAY. FOLLOW ME.

IT LOOKS CREEPY. DO YOU THINK ANYONE COULD STILL BE LIVING HERE?

IN THIS DUMP? YOU MUST BE JOKING!



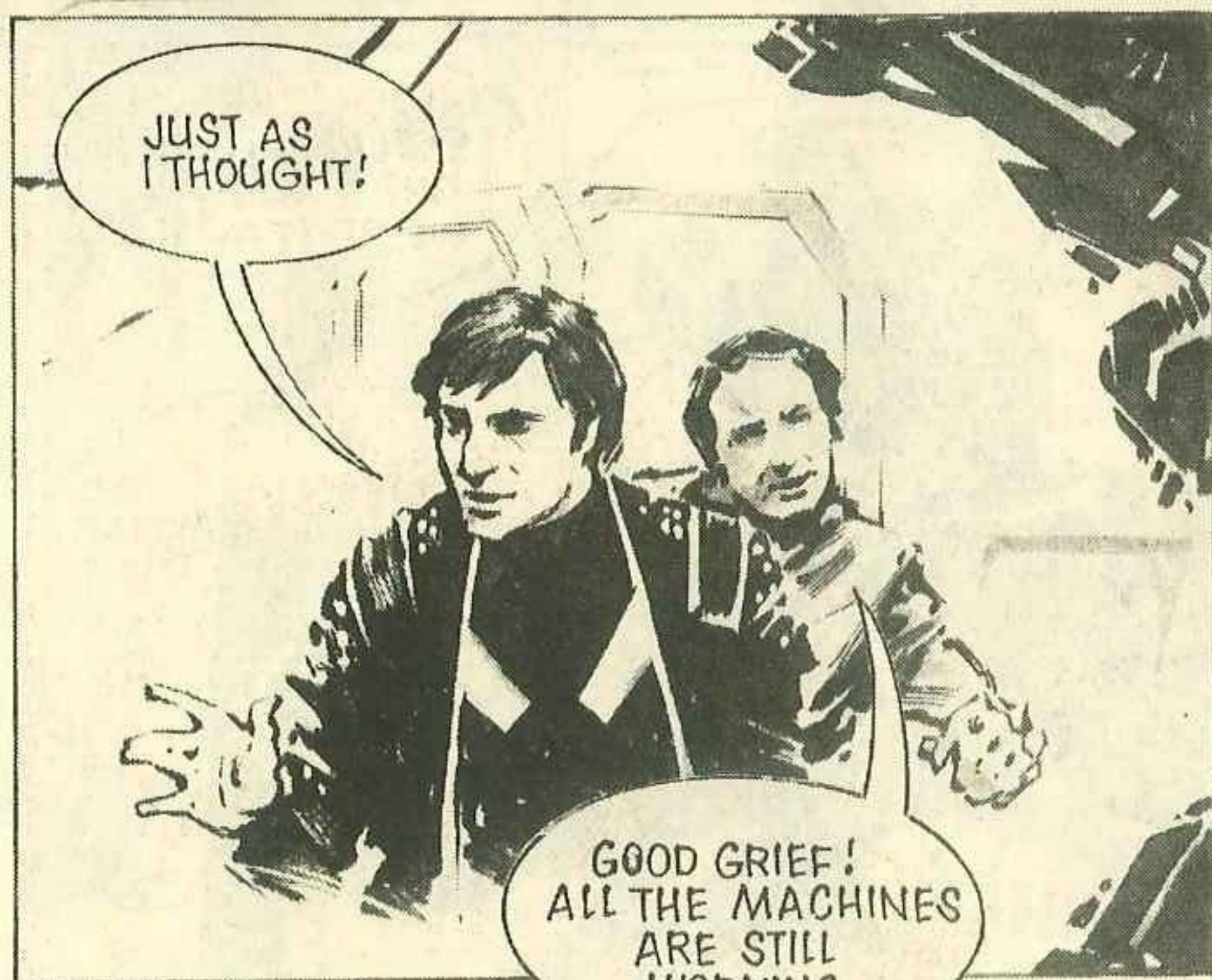
THERE'S A PECULIAR SMELL IN HERE.

PROBABLY THE GRAVITATIONAL MOTORS BURNING OUT. COME ON.



WHAT DO WE DO NOW?

I KNEW THEY WOULD COME ONE DAY. THERE IS NOTHING ELSE FOR IT. I SHALL HAVE TO DEAL WITH THEM.



JUST AS I THOUGHT!

GOOD GRIEF! ALL THE MACHINES ARE STILL WORKING.



PERFECT... JUST PERFECT. WE CAN USE ALL OF THESE AS BACK-UP SYSTEMS ON SCORPIO. START DISCONNECTING THEM.

ALL OF THEM BUT WHAT ABOUT THE STATION..?



WE'LL TAKE NOTHING VITAL TO ITS OPERATION NOT YET, ANYWAY. WE COULD ALWAYS COME BACK...

AVON...

WHAT'S THE MATTER? SEEN A GHOST?



COULD BE, AVON... COULD BE...!



WHAT THE...?

AHHRRGH!

SHTAANNGG!

JUST THEN...



DID YOU SEE WHO HE WAS?

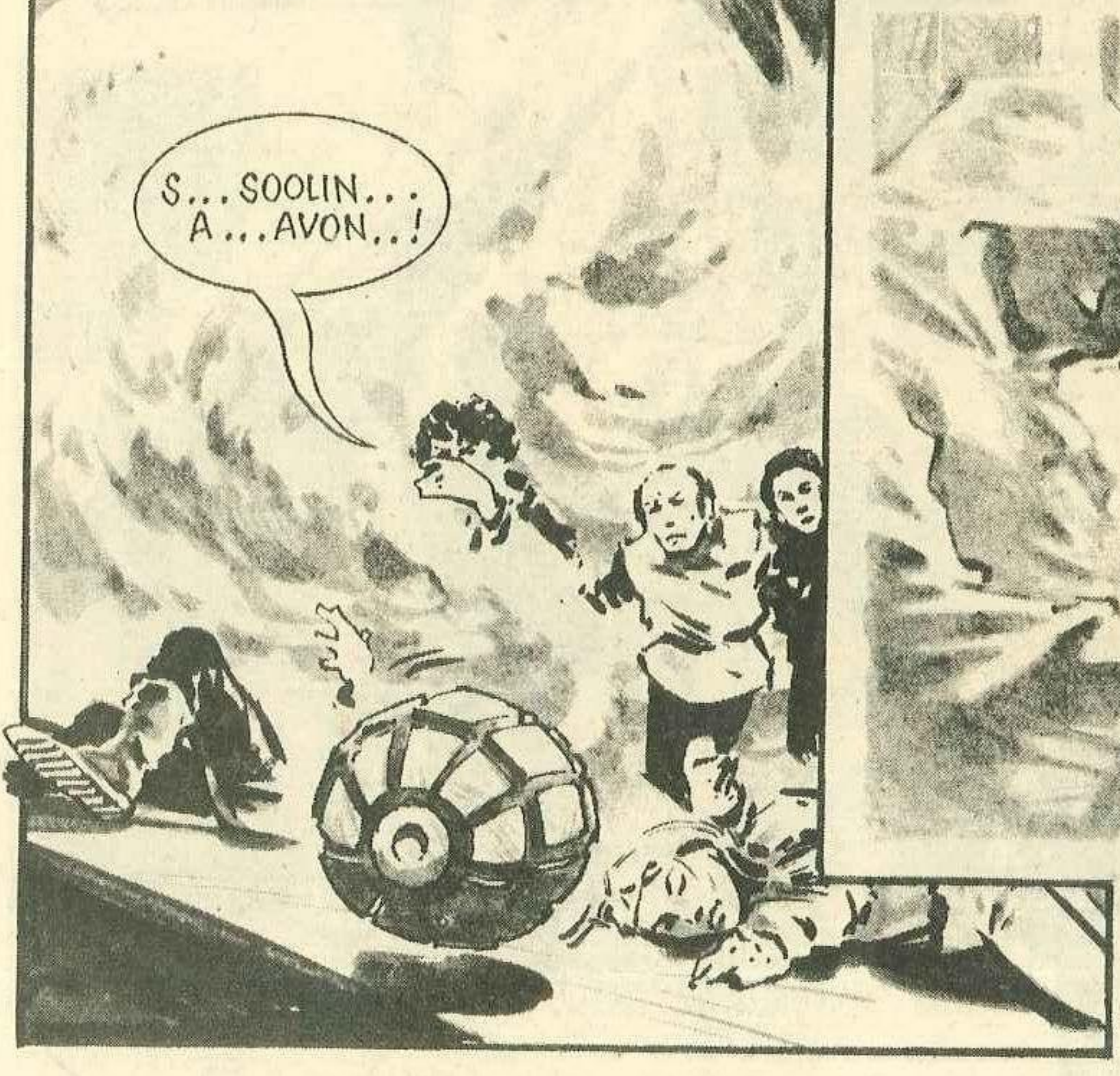
NO... BUT HE WAS GOING TO KILL YOU. LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT HIM!



NNNGHH!

UURGGHH...!

A TINY GRENADE FOLLOWED IMMEDIATELY...



S... SOOLIN... A... AVON...!



THAT SHOULD KEEP THEM OCCUPIED FOR A WHILE...!



VILA... THE DOORS...!

THEY'RE SHUT TIGHT! CAN'T GET THEM OPEN...!



WH... WHAT THE DEVIL'S GOING ON?

WE'RE STRANDED AVON. TRAPPED IN THIS BLASTED CONTROL CENTRE! THAT'S WHAT ...!

THANK THE STARS YOU'RE ALIVE, FATHER. I THOUGHT THEY'D KILLED YOU.

IT TAKES MORE THAN A FEDERATION CHARGE TO STOP ME MANSAA, WHERE ARE THOSE KILLERS NOW?



I DON'T UNDERSTAND FATHER. SURELY WE ARE DESTINED TO DIE WHEN THE WHEEL'S GRAVITY MOTORS FAIL.



NOT NOW, MANSAA. YOU SEE... THERE IS A WAY OFF THIS ACCURSED DEATH TRAP AND THE FEDERATION HAVE PROVIDED IT FOR US.

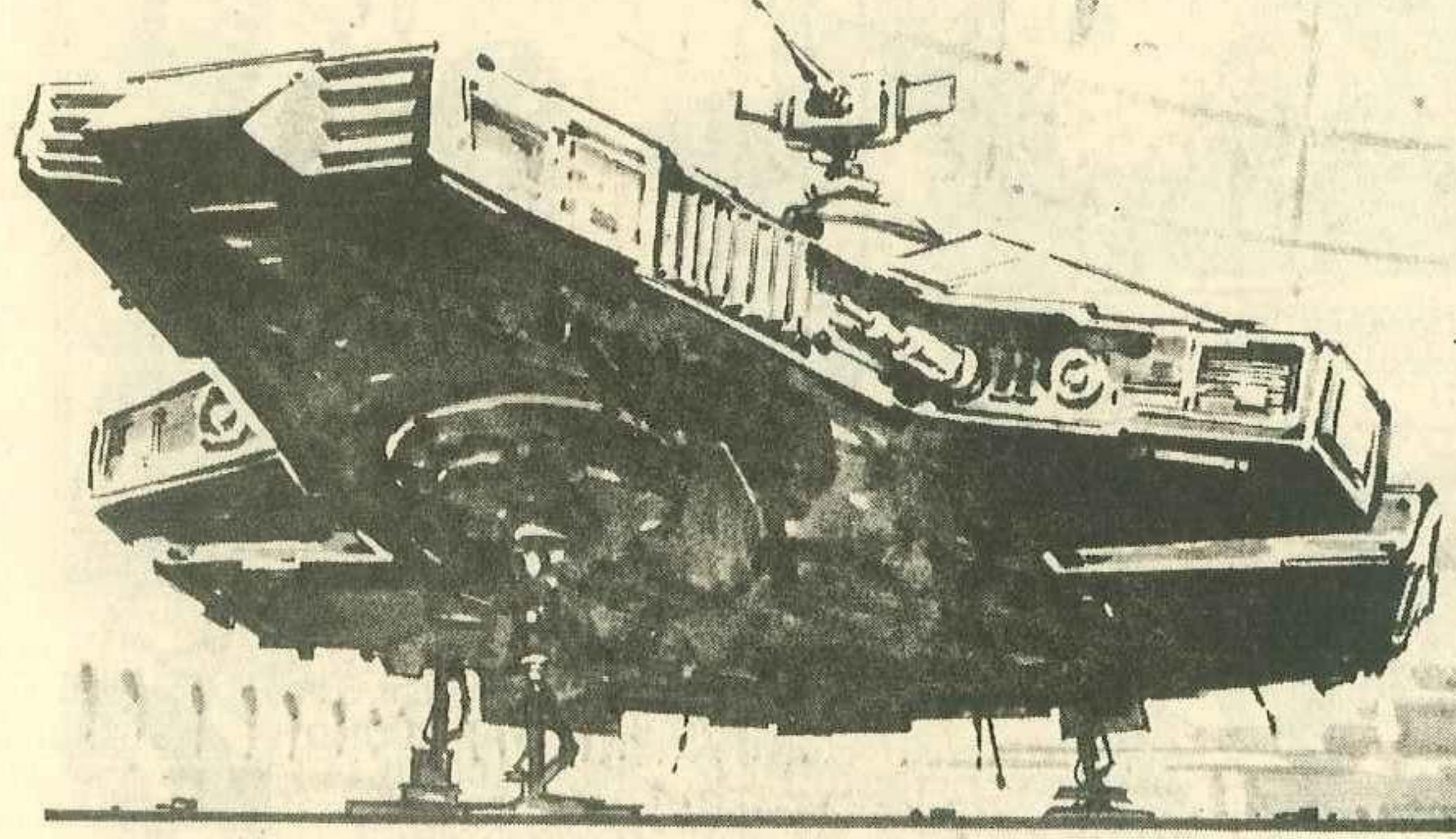


I'VE SEALED THEM IN THE CONTROL ROOM. THEY ARE TRAPPED. THEY CAME TO KILL US BUT THEY WILL PERISH WITH US.

PERHAPS THEY ALONE WILL PERISH MANSAA. I THINK WE CAN SAVE OURSELVES!

THEIR SHIP! IT'S A WANDERER CLASS I USED TO BE ABLE TO FLY ONE OF THOSE.

I PRAY YOU STILL CAN, FATHER COME ON, THERE IS NOT MUCH TIME LEFT!



IT'S HOPELESS EVERY EXIT'S SEALED!

THERE'S AN ELECTRONIC CIRCUIT ACTIVATED TO KEEP US PRISONER HERE. IT'LL TAKE AGES TO BREAK OUT.



IT BETTER NOT, VILA... OR WE'LL BE STRANDED HERE.



STRANDED?

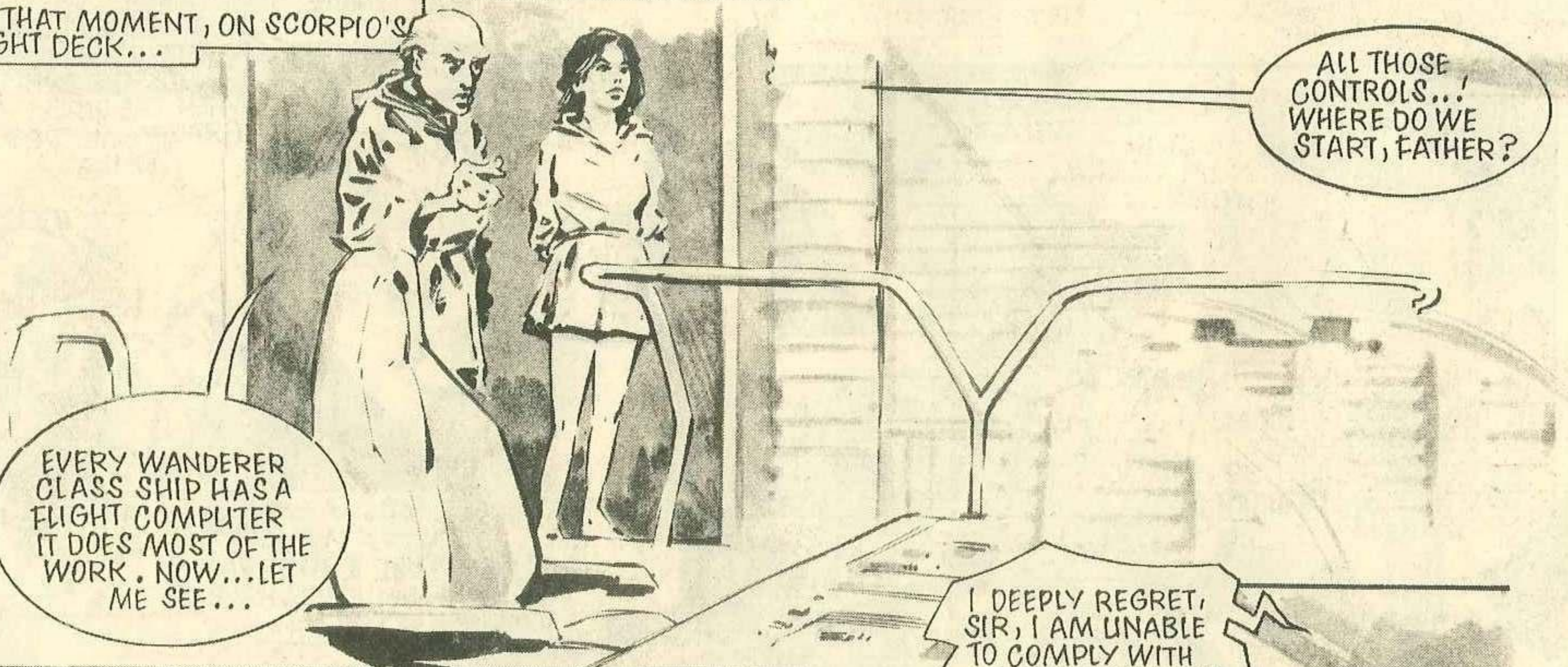
YES, VILLA
THEY'RE TRYING
TO STEAL
SCORPIO..!



IN THAT CASE
I'LL HAVE US OUT
OF HERE IN
MINUTES.

BETTER MAKE
IT SECONDS. THERE'S
NO TIME TO LOSE!

AT THAT MOMENT, ON SCORPIO'S
FLIGHT DECK...



ALL THOSE
CONTROLS...!
WHERE DO WE
START, FATHER?

EVERY WANDERER
CLASS SHIP HAS A
FLIGHT COMPUTER
IT DOES MOST OF THE
WORK. NOW... LET
ME SEE...

I DEEPLY REGRET,
SIR, I AM UNABLE
TO COMPLY WITH
YOUR WISHES. I'M
NOT PROGRAMMED
TO RESPOND TO YOUR
COMMANDS.



THERE...!
COMPUTER...
CAN YOU
HEAR ME?

I BEG LEAVE
TO SAY THAT I
CAN. WHAT IS
IT YOU REQUIRE,
SIR?

YOU'RE A GENIUS,
FATHER!



COMPUTER...
I WANT TO FLY US
OUT OF HERE
TOWARDS A
HABITABLE
PLANET.



WHAT? ARE
WE TO BE STRANDED
HERE AS WELL?



THERE MUST
BE A WAY ROUND
THE MACHINE. I
MUST FIND THE
MANUAL DRIVE
CONTROLS!

BACK IN THE CONTROL ROOM...



DONE IT!
WHAT D'YOU
THINK OF
THAT?

NOT BEFORE TIME
NOT ONLY ARE THOSE
TWO TRYING TO
STEAL OUR SHIP,
BUT...



THERE ARE TWO
FEDERATION PATROL
SHIPS COMING
THIS WAY!

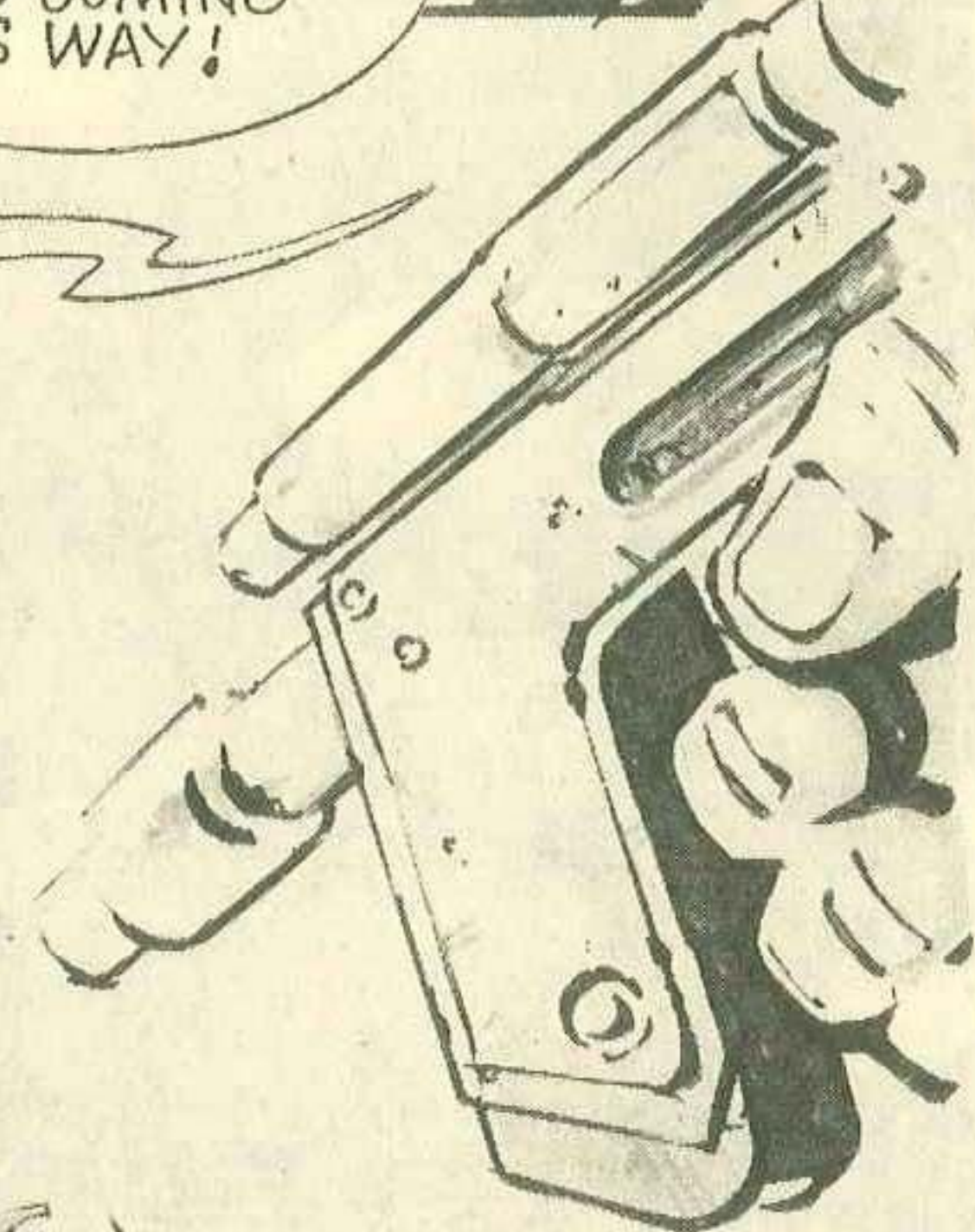
MOMENTS
LATER...

THERE MUST BE
A MANUAL CONTROL
FATHER...!



YES, BUT I
CAN'T FIND
IT. TIME'S
RUNNING
OUT.

YOU NEVER SAID
A TRUER WORD
FRIEND. START
EXPLAINING...
OR YOU DIE!



UHH? THE
FEDERATION
PEOPLE...!

WE ARE NOT
OF THE
FEDERATION!



ON THE APPROACHING
FEDERATION COMMAND
SHIP...

B... BUT
YOUR
COSTUME...

THERE'S NO TIME
FOR EXPLANATIONS
AVON. THOSE
FEDERATION SHIPS
ARE GETTING
CLOSE!



SPACE DEBRIS
NUMBER 709
LOCATED
COMMANDER.

COMMENCE DESTRUCTION
WE CAN'T LEAVE HAZARDS
LIKE THAT FLOATING IN
SPACE.



STARTING BLAST SEQUENCE, UHHH? COMMANDER... LOOK...!



IT'S THE TERRORISTS! THIS MUST BE THEIR BASE! DESTROY THEM!

EVASIVE ACTION, TARRANT!



NOW, TARRANT! FIRE...!

PLASMA BOLTS RUNNING...!

NOO...! AHHRGH...!



WE... WE WOULD NEVER HAVE TRIED TO STRAND YOU IF WE'D KNOWN WHO YOU WERE...

YOU CAME WITHIN AN INCH OF LOSING YOUR LIVES...



HOW COULD I HAVE BEEN SO WRONG? WHAT WILL YOU DO WITH US NOW?



BUT THIS TIME YOU WILL BE PERMITTED TO LIVE. WE'LL LAND YOU ON AN OPEN PLANET SOMEWHERE ON OUR ROUTE...

THE END.

PAUL DARRROW... are you really alive?

by ken armstrong

More than a year after the last, dramatic episode of **BLAKE'S 7** tantalised and shocked the viewing public, Paul Darrow is still stopped by Avon fans who demand to know... "Is Avon still alive?" With such a burning question to be answered, I called at Paul Darrow's charming cottage, tucked away in the Surrey Downs to find out.

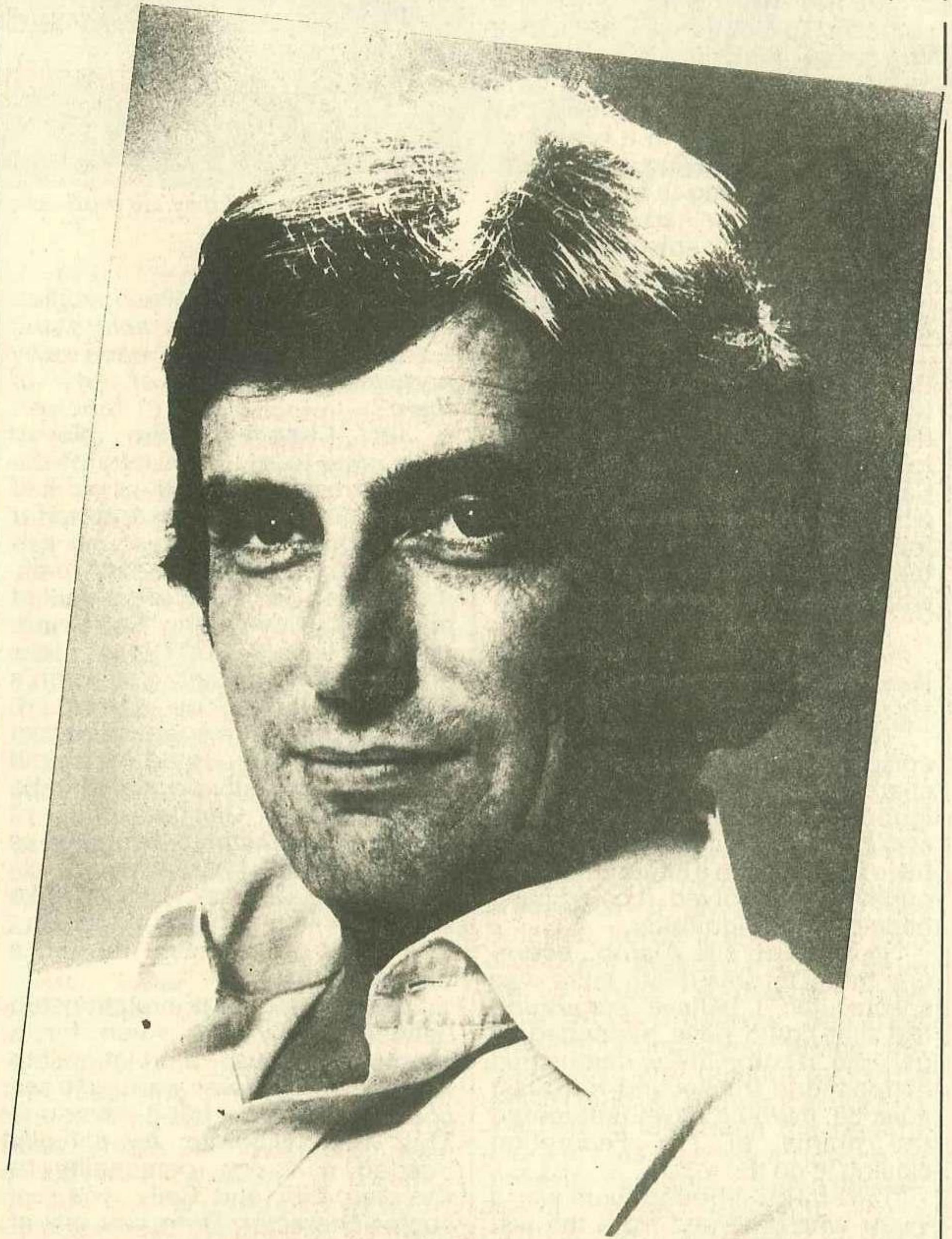
"BLAKE'S 7 fans have been extremely loyal," Paul gestures round his lounge, "and generous." He indicates the numbers of pens, momentos, flowers etc. which have all arrived as gifts from those who slavishly followed the adventures of Avon and his colleagues throughout the run of the series. "I was even given a gift of an extremely rare and expensive wine from a young girl when leaving the stage door one night. I chided her for spending her money on me like that but though at least the gift merited a kiss on the cheek. The reaction shocked me. I thought she was going to have a fit but her friend assured me she would be all right in a few minutes." Obviously the power of Avon lingers on!

Recalling reaction to the ending of the series Paul is still amazed by the viewer response.

"The head of Series at the BBC told me he had received over eight-thousand letters relating to Avon and his untimely end... or was it? I knew there were a great number of loyal followers of the show but it's not until they are deprived of their heroes do they ever put pen to paper."

Now that the months have passed and Paul has had time to reflect on the programme and the personalities involved, is he sorry there will be no more BLAKE'S 7?

"Even if it were announced tomorrow that there would be another series, which is extremely unlikely, it could not be scheduled until 1984 at the earliest, due to the logistics involved, and all the characters would be that much older by then. Perhaps even the 'following' which we had during the fourth series would have waned to such an extent by then that there would not be a demand for that type of programme. Who knows?"



And what of the fourth series itself? Does Paul believe it could have been better?

"My one regret is that Terry Nation, creator of the show, was not involved with the writing. When the series started, I had a chance to speak to Terry about the character of Avon and was told that

if I developed the man he would help me. This was a terrific aid and, knowing I had his support, I began broadening Avon's character and relationships with the other principles."

Does this imply a certain criticism of Chris Boucher, Script Editor of the fourth series?

"Not in the least. Chris did a marvellous job but, due to the restrictions imposed on Script Editors by the BBC, they are not able to write more than two episodes of any series on which they work. This meant Chris was limited to writing the first and last episodes but I would have been happier if he had written the last two. There was so much crammed into that last, dramatic script that it all seemed terribly rushed.

"We had the return of Blake, the character of Soolin was still being developed, Blake meeting Tarrant and Dayna for the very first time and no sign of Servalan anywhere! Yes, there was a lot in it but there was also a lot missing. Too many loose ends needing to be tied up. It was as if someone had planned on having fifteen episodes then found, in fact, there were only to be thirteen and, in a great rush, killed off everyone.

"Another problem we had with the fourth series was that there was no 'through line' dictated. We did not know what the ending was to be until the final script arrived. Candidly, I had a shrewd idea what was going to happen - I'm no fool - but it didn't help the flow of the series not knowing for certain what the outcome was to be."

And what of that final outcome? Was it the sort of ending Paul envisaged for Avon?

"Not really. I don't feel the last episode was at all respectful to the characters. They came to a rather ignominious ending in rapid succession and, while it's possible to have ignominy in a situation where outlaws are involved, it could have been dramatic igniminy.

"In the film 'The Alamo', everyone met a terrible death but it was spectacular. I believe something like that could have happened to us. Also, if some of the deaths had happened in the second from last episode, it would have highlighted the drama of the Federation closing in on the rebels.

"I'm afraid, although there was a victor who emerged from the last episode, in a sense, it was the wrong one. All the morality of fighting the cruel Federation went right down the drain when Avon and his crew were gunned down by Federation guards."

Thinking back to the early days



It's not until they are deprived of their heroes that they put pen to paper . . .

of the programme, Paul worked with a number of fine actors and actresses. Does he have any particular memories of any of them?

"Jan Chappell, who played Cally, was to my mind one of the best actresses I have ever worked with. I said in one of my articles for this magazine that I was very sad when she left the series and I really meant that. Jan put a great deal of effort into developing Cally and, between us, we used to toss ideas about relating to Cally and Avon's possible future. You see, there was, at one time, a suggestion that Blake and Jenna would be paired off. Avon and Cally were also to be paired, leaving Gan and Vila . . . which is interesting! Actually, as Vila and Gan shared a room on board the Liberator, I think Mike Keating was quite glad when Gan was killed off. It meant he had a room to himself!

"Getting back to the relationship between Cally and Avon for a moment, it was a relationship which everyone was waiting to see come to fruition - but it never did. This was deliberate. Avon really needed a strong personality to threaten him and Cally was just such a character. There was one of two ways in which it could have gone. Avon could either have formed a loving relationship with her or, as happened, always keep her and the viewing public guessing as to his intentions. Everyone was waiting for a bond to form between them but, true to Avon's perverse nature, it never

happened.

"Because Jan did work so hard to make Cally come alive I was sad to see her leave the series. It was her own choice since she believed her character had never been fully used in the show. It might have happened if she'd stayed on but she indicated she'd had enough of BLAKE'S 7 so the cast lost a valuable member."

One last momento Paul has of the series came in the form of a gift from an admirer. After episode thirteen of the fourth series he was sent a video cassette of Avon's last stand. Has he watched it yet?

"I haven't really had time yet," confesses Paul, "and I'm not certain if I do want to watch it just yet. Perhaps when my memories of the final episode are less vivid I'll sit down and play it but, for the time being, I'll remember Avon as he was before disaster struck."

The demise of Avon, however, was certainly not a disaster as far as Paul's acting career was concerned. Within a very short time of ending the series a number of offers were coming his way.

"I had one or two of what one terms as 'derisory offers' immediately the programme came to an end then the real offers came along. I must confess that, as one's career develops, it becomes more and more difficult to cast that person. You see, I have become identified as a 'strong' personality and any roles I play from now on must reflect that. I also felt that



I was told by Terry Nation that if I developed the character he would help me . . .



We had the return of Blake . . .

anything I undertook immediately after BLAKE'S 7 should not disappoint fans of the series who might want to come and see me."

Such an opportunity came when Paul was offered a part in the play 'MISTER FOTHERGILL'S MURDER'.

"The script of the play arrived on the first of January and, after reading it, I realised the part was not too dissimilar in character terms to that of Avon although the setting was present day. The character was also cliché, a challenge to any actor to make such a person appeal to an audience."

Destined to tour the country, the play also featured Frank Windsor and Rula Lenska, both as well known for their television roles as Paul. An excellent cast and a fine 'black comedy' play brought out the audiences in droves. For Paul though, did he find a return to the stage a little unnerving after so much television work?

"Not really. In fact it was good to get back on the live stage again and get an immediate audience reaction. Both Frank and I settled down to the hectic touring routine very quickly but Rula, as she will agree, found it a strain in the beginning. She was very nervous about her performance for the first few weeks but soon settled down."

With every new play the cast takes a while to 'get into character' as far as their respective roles are concerned but it was not long before they were discovering

places in the plot where a few more laughs could be gleaned from the audience. Some laughs, however, were not planned by the author!

"There was one classic line I was required to say," continues Paul, "which nearly brought the house down and, until I explained the reason behind it to the director, remained a mystery to him. The line was speaking in the voice of the fictional character from outer space created by Frank Windsor, 'Assessing voices of aliens from outer space is out of my line.' As you can imagine, BLAKE'S 7 fans in the audience went wild with laughter! The line was said with Frank Windsor standing over me and, if it brought about a big cheer from the house, Frank would whisper, 'They're in tonight!' We all treated the line as a bit of fun and, at every performance waited to hear the reaction."

Two other unscheduled incidents also brought the audiences alive.

"Crucial to the plot was a tape recording of a conversation I had with the character played by Rula. Frank, her husband, was supposed to walk in on us and declare that he'd trapped us now. He'd recorded everything. He then walked to the machine to play it back but, during one performance in Stevenage, the tape failed to work. He tried it again and still no response. Frank tried to get out of it as best he could by turning to me and saying 'she's told me all about it.' This was fine up until the

moment when I was supposed to say that I was going to take the tape and destroy it. Rather difficult since it was not supposed to exist by now. I had no choice but to say the line then burst out laughing. Fortunately, so did the audience.

"All hell broke loose with the props people after that and the tape never failed us again. It should never have happened in the first place but, with a live show, something, somewhere is bound to go wrong."

Another instance of things going wrong was when Rula failed to get to the theatre in time for curtain up.

"It happened during a time of very bad weather. I guessed conditions on the road would be difficult so I left early to get to the theatre. Frank had also taken the precaution of arriving early but Rula left home at her usual time only to get stranded in about three feet of water somewhere near Cricklewood Broadway. She tried everything, including asking the Police for help, but not even the police could get through. In the end she had to telephone the theatre and warn us she wasn't going to make it. The understudy, the assistant stage manager, was warned and made ready to take Rula's place."

"Before going on stage, both Frank and I went to her dressing-room to reassure her everything would be all right. Frank asked her if there was anything about the play she wanted to run through before going on. It was then she

made the classic statement. 'No Frank. I'm perfectly happy about my scenes with you. It's the scenes with Paul which worry me.' Realising she might get stuck, I arranged with her to give me a certain look if she forgot a line, then the curtain went up. As luck would have it, at a crucial point in the play, a twenty minute scene in which the whole plot is outlined, the poor girl looked at me then buried her head in her hands. Her memory had gone blank! The only way out was for me to say not only my lines but hers as well. I carried on with this two-sided monologue for about ten minutes until the scene was over. I never want to have to go through that again!"

Having opened with the play in Hull, the cast played to audiences right across the country and down the south coast. Dates in Cardiff and Kirkcaldy took in Wales and Scotland then, after sixteen different venues, Paul decided it was time to leave the play.

"There was nothing left for me to do with the character," he explains. "I had taken him as far as he would go and, from an acting point of view, if I had carried on playing him, I would have grown stale in the part."

At the same time, however, Paul was also offered a plum role in the BBC Television's Classics series. He was asked to play Mister Carker in Dickens' 'DOMBEY AND SON'.

"I accepted the part on one condition," he explains, "that I knew who was to play the part of Dombey. You see, as I said before, my type of role is a strong one and I have to play against other strong actors. It's just the way my career has developed but it's necessary to be cautious about such things so that my character does not impose so much on the plot that the whole thing becomes ludicrous. Julian Glover, cast as Dombey, however, is just such a powerful actor so the balance between Dombey and Carker will be perfect."

Is Paul happy to be playing the part of a villain again?

"Delighted," he smiles. "As I said once before, villains, from the acting point of view, are always worth exploring and Dickens is full of villains. They give you so much scope for acting"

No doubt, also, it gives Paul a chance to use his famous 'Avon look' again. Talking of looks,



Jan put a great deal of effort into developing Cally . . .

I would have liked to come top of the 'least Liked' list as well . . .



though, Director Rodney Bennett, asked Paul to give him a look for the television production which, in the book, was covered by about thirty or forty pages of dialogue. It was the meeting between Edith, Dombey's second wife, and Carker. Carker eventually steals Edith from Dombey and the 'look' desired was one requiring such burning passion that about twelve seconds of film would replace all the preamble detailed by Dickens.

"When the Director told me about this," grins Paul, "I told him I had three looks – up, down and sideways. Which one did he want? Actually, it's a real challenge to any actor to create just one look which will say everything. I hope the end result will justify the Director's faith in me!"

As Paul points out, critics over the years have been less than kind to the character of Carker. "It's been said that any actor with a good set of teeth can play Carker. After all, he smiles with his teeth, the smile never reaching his eyes. It's also been said he sits like a cat at a mousehole, cruel of heart and sly of thought." Anyone recognise Avon in all that?

On the subject of Avon, concludes Paul, he doubts if he will ever better that performance as far as reaching audiences is concerned.

"I was sent a copy of a survey carried out by a fan magazine. It listed the favourite and least liked characters in the series. Predictably, Avon came top of the most liked list. Avon also came second top in the least liked survey. It's a pity," muses Paul. "I would really like to have come top of that list as well. It would have shown I had crossed that magical barrier which spans all spectrums of taste. To get people to love and loathe you is what acting is all about. Still," he smiles, "I suppose I shall have to settle for coming close. As Oscar Wilde once said, 'When critics disagree, the artist is in accord with himself.' I take the survey as a great compliment. To be able to provoke a response like that . . . it's just perfect."

During the tour of his play, stage-door fans always lay in wait for Paul and the first question asked was, 'Are you really alive?' I think we have shown here that Paul Darrow is very much alive and Avon still lives on in the hearts of all true BLAKE'S 7 fans – thanks to the man who made the character come alive . . . Paul Darrow!

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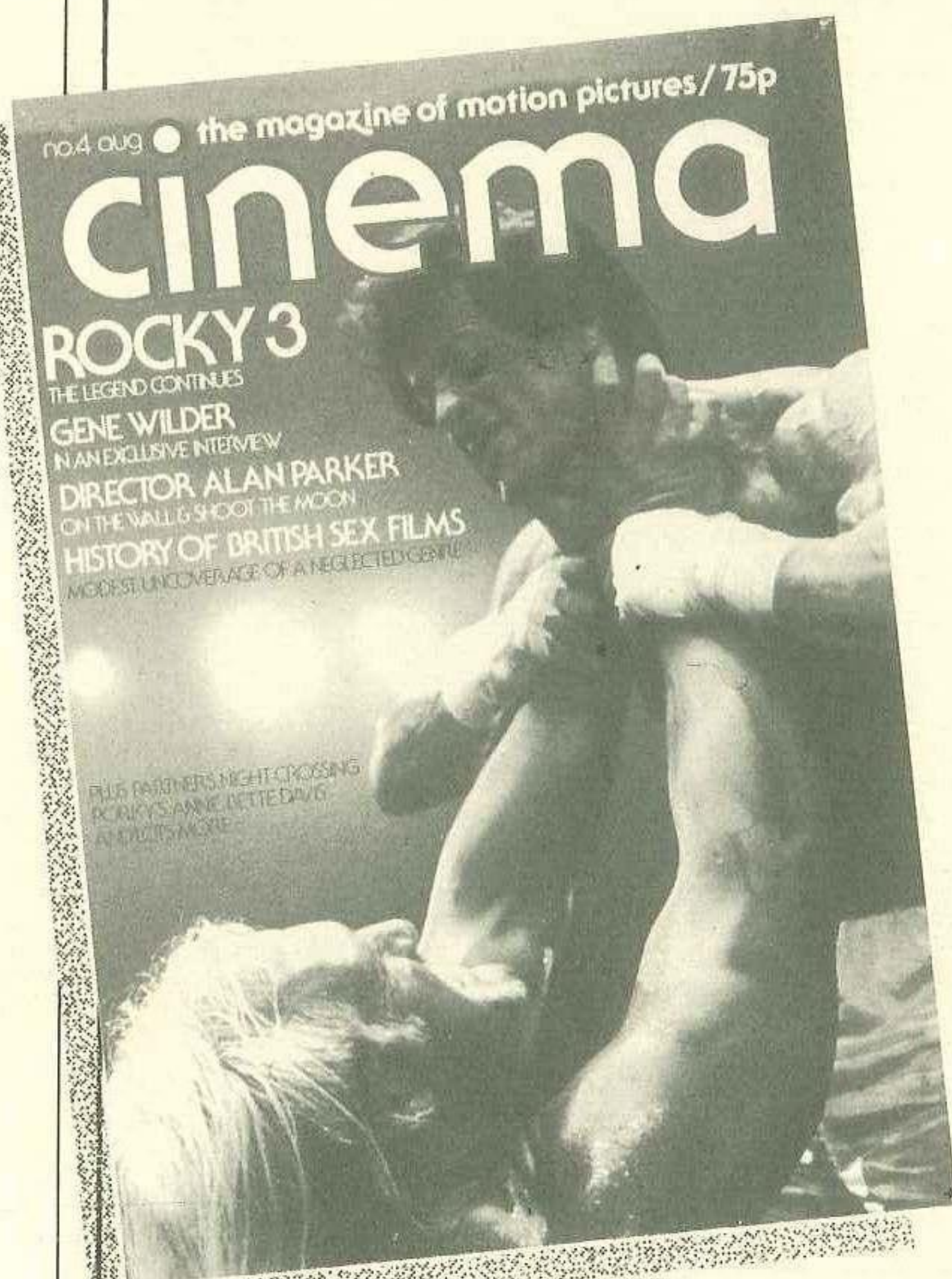
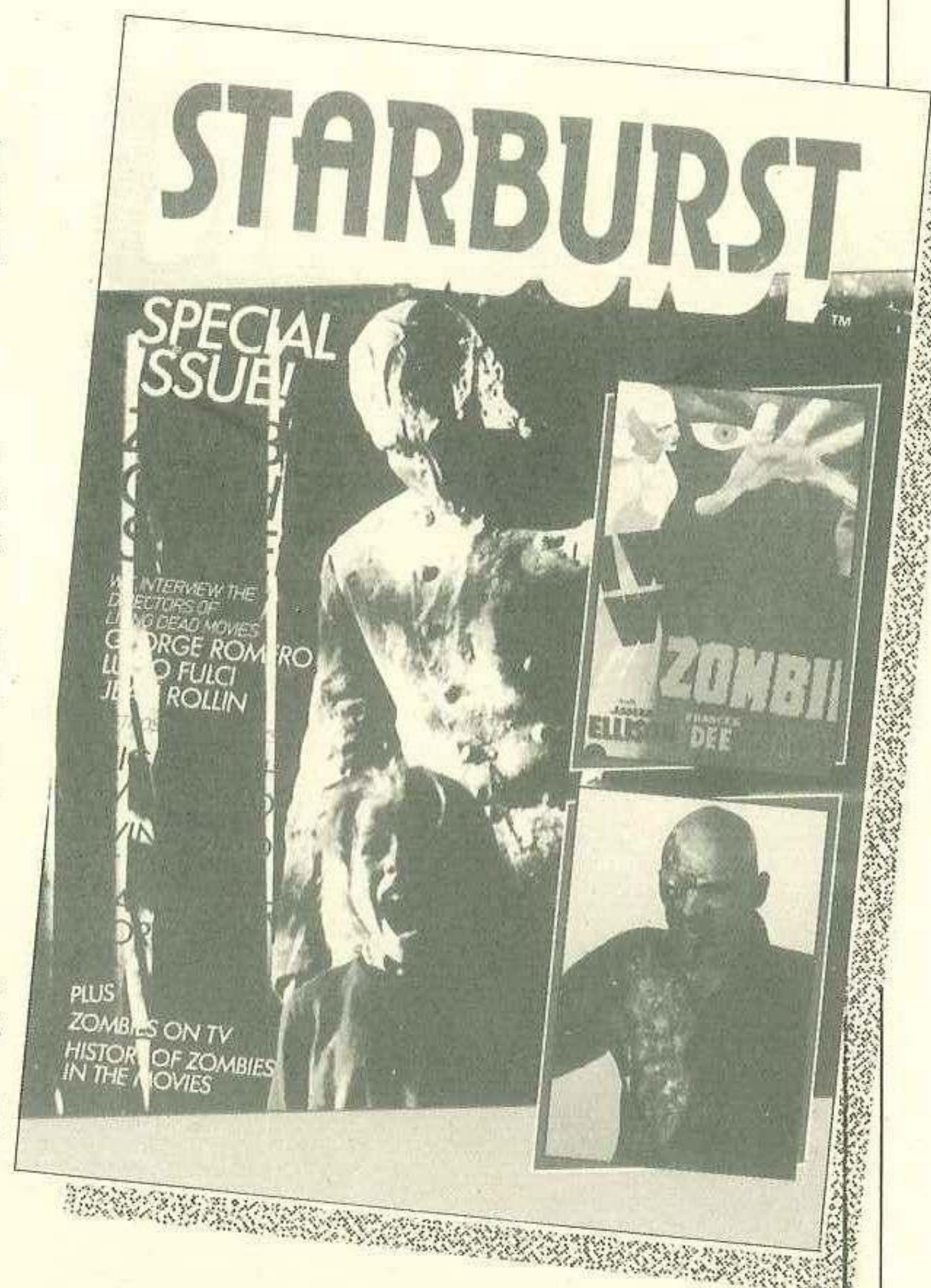
Star Trek 2, The Secret of Nimh, The Thing, Poltergeist, Blade Runner, ET, Dark Crystal, Tron and Videodrome are among the biggies lined up for pre-Christmas release. Not to mention *Revenge of the Jedi*, slated for an '83 opening.

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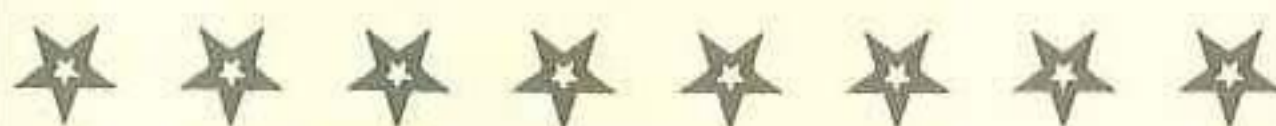
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Here are a selection of the letters we've received so far . . .

Dear Ed.,

I'd just like to say how amazing your magazine is. Well done! I think the photographs you publish are the best and I would like to know if it would be possible to buy any of them for my BLAKE'S 7 collection. I've saved all the posters from the mag, as well as clippings from other books and things but to have actual photos would really make my collection something special. Can you please tell me how I can go about getting some photos?

Eric Bradbury,
Southend-on-sea.

We hope to be making an announcement in the near future about photographs, Eric, so keep on watching this space for details.
Ed.

Dear BLAKE'S 7 Magazine,

I'm writing to say that I've just seen Paul Darrow in 'Mister Fothergill's Murder', a play, and he was fantastic! I also think his articles in your magazine were excellent. It was nice to hear his reaction to some of the stories and the other characters in the series. But, please, please, can we hear more from Paul? He's my favourite person and I want to know as much about him as possible.

Judith Cruyton,
Blackpool.

Keep reading this magazine, Judith! In this issue Paul brings us up-to-date with what's been happening to him since the end of BLAKE'S 7!

Ed

Dear Editor,

I'm a great fan of the series – and also of Glynis Barber. Can you please tell me what she's been working on since the end of BLAKE'S 7?

Paul Forester,
Derby.

Well, Paul, as you can see from the picture printed here, Glynis starred as the comic-strip heroine, JANE, in the BBC2 television serial . . . looking nothing like Soolin at all! Currently, Glynis is working on a major film, 'Wicked Lady', co-starring Faye Dunaway. It should be well worth seeing when it is released sometime next year. Keep your eyes open for it!

Ed.

Can you please tell me what happened to the real, live Orac once the series finished, asks Rhona Young of Edinburgh.

Orac is in the capable hands of BBC Visual Effects, Rhona, except, of course, when he lends us a hand in the office to answer your 'Ask Orac' questions. And, speaking of those questions, please keep them coming. Our little electronic wizard is complaining about his brain not being taxed enough. Why not help him out? Send your questions to him at the following address:-

Ask Orac

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Marvel Comics
Jadwin House'
205-211 Kentish Town Road
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at the edge of the world-

the 1982 blake's 7 convention

★ A SPECIAL REPORT ★



Not quite at the edge of the world, merely teetering on the fringe of Richmond, Surrey, in the unlikely setting of THE BULL, the 1982 BLAKE'S 7 Convention got underway earlier this year. Fans from all over the country gathered together, took part in contests, listened to informed speeches, watched selected video recordings and collected memorabilia related to their all-time-best programme... BLAKE'S 7.

Initially bedevilled by double booking of accommodation, requiring the use of another hall close to the main meeting place for the first day, the organisers soon got to grips with the situation and had a constant flow of people moving to and from the Bull to the assembly rooms.

Having made the trek to the large hall, fans found it worthwhile since such people as Mat Irvine from BBC Visual Effects and his team were on hand to give presentations of model-making and effects for the show. Mat's detailed inside knowledge of not only the models but the technology concepts behind their design was well worth hearing. If the writers ever had any doubts as to what made the Liberator or Scorpio such powerful ships, all they had to do was ask Mat and he would soon put them straight. He knew what every piece of machinery, every probe and

every hatch on the ship was for. After all, when designing a craft to appear on television, things have to be in a logical place and have a reason for being there.

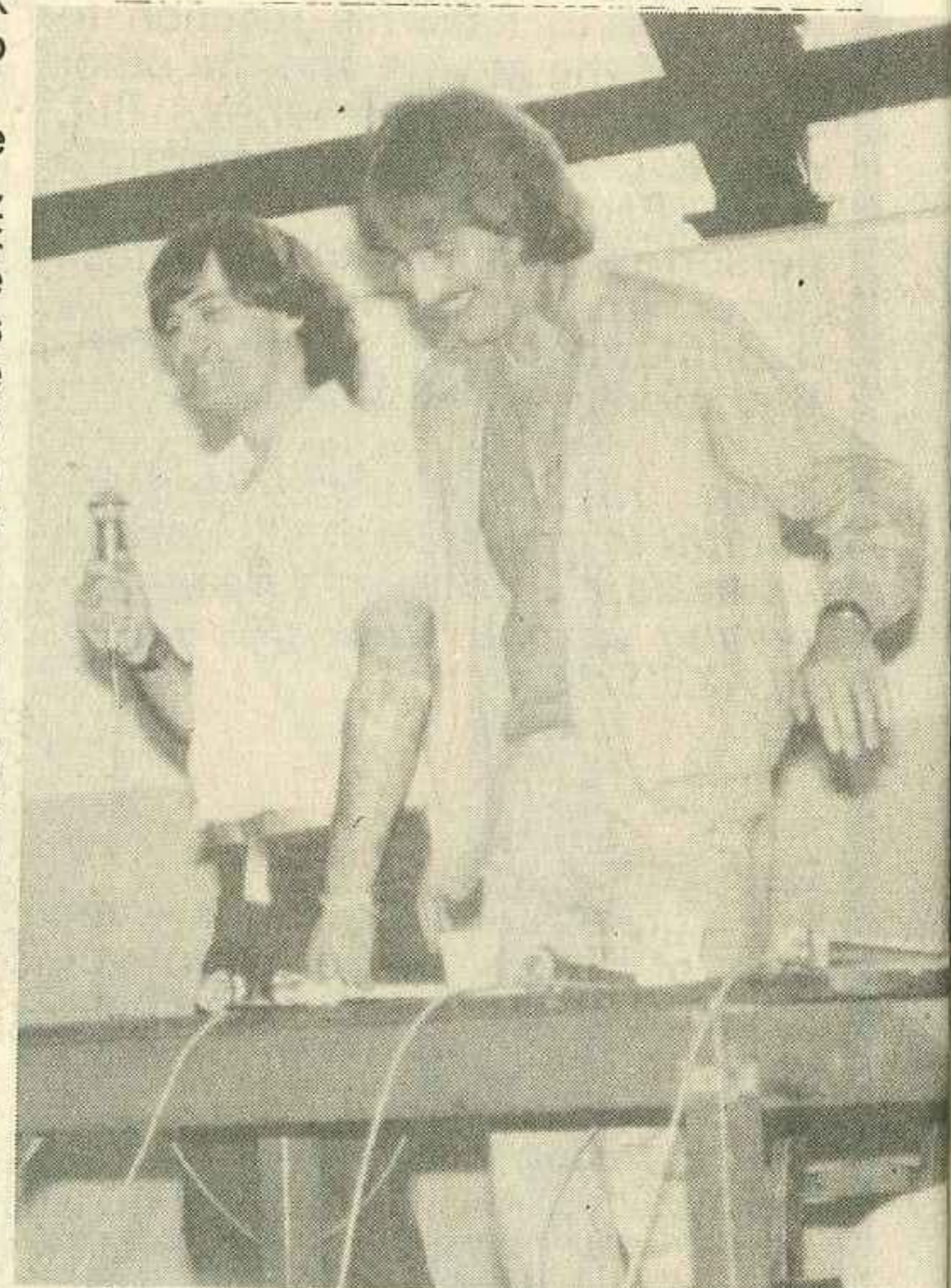
The BBC Visual Effects Department were also able to produce a display of some of the models and weapons used during the programme, much to the delight and amazement of the audience. To see such perfect and detailed work first-hand was an eye-opener to many.

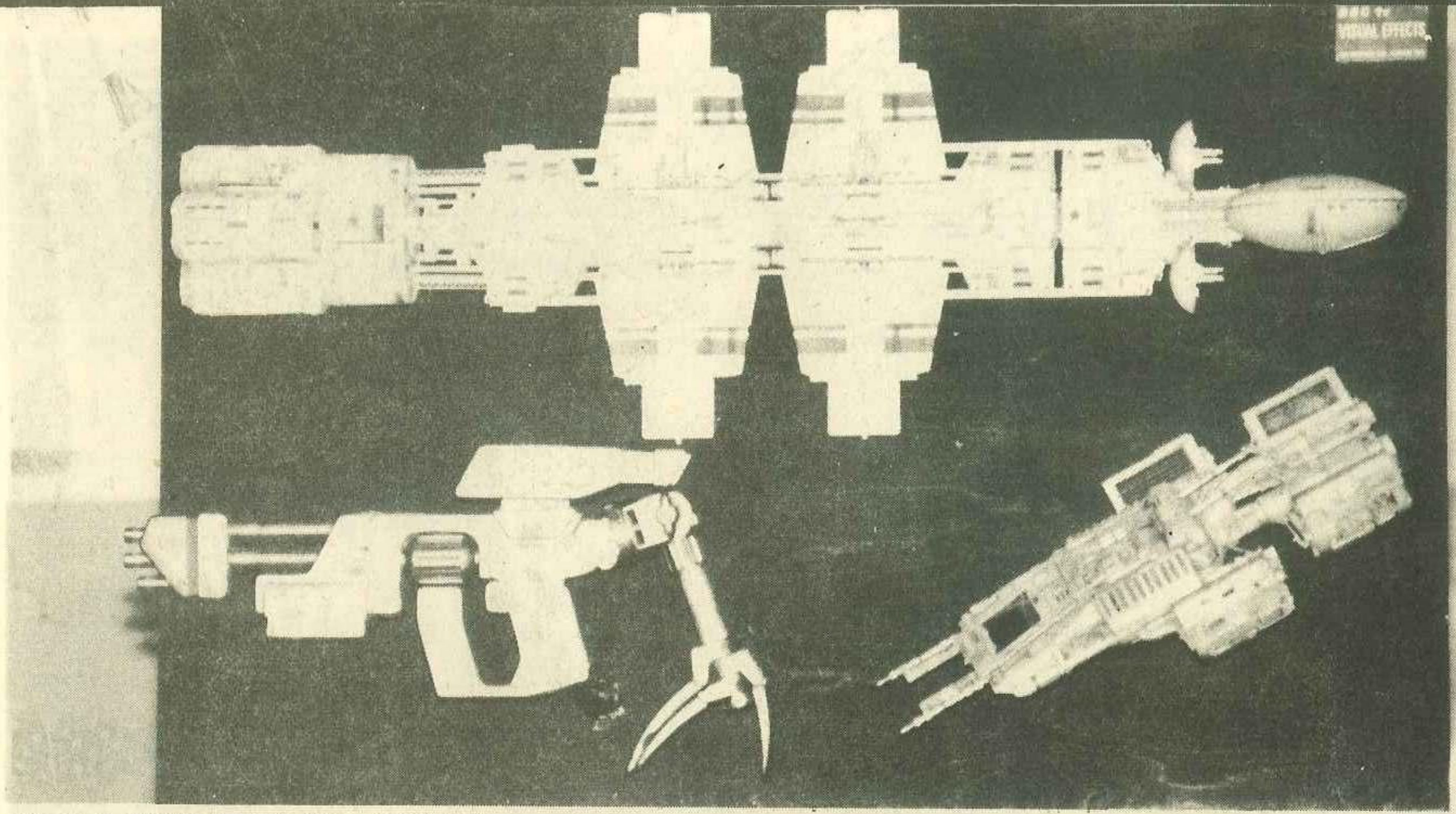
Another guest speaker at the Convention was Tony Attwood, author of BLAKE'S 7 - THE PROGRAMME GUIDE (see page 30). Tony's knowledge of the series was put to the test by many of the audience, some of whom stayed behind after his talk to question him further about not only his book but aspects of the series as well.

Following hard on Tony's heels was Chris Boucher, Script Editor of the fourth series, who came in for some harsh criticism about his script, BLAKE, which brought about the demise of Scorpio and its crew. Chris explained his reasoning in treating the story the way he did, gracefully fended off questions about a further series or a follow-on using at least some of the characters, then sat back to be grilled by the audience on almost every BLAKE'S 7 related topic under the sun.

Above: At the Edge of the World, bordering on the best sales ever, the combine editorial and art teams of STANDARD BY SEVEN and SLAVE get the BLAKE'S 7 Convention off to a hilarious start.

Below: Mat Irvine, left, from BBC Visual Effects, was the first guest speaker. With a little help from his BBC colleagues, he answered questions on everything from model-making to space technology.



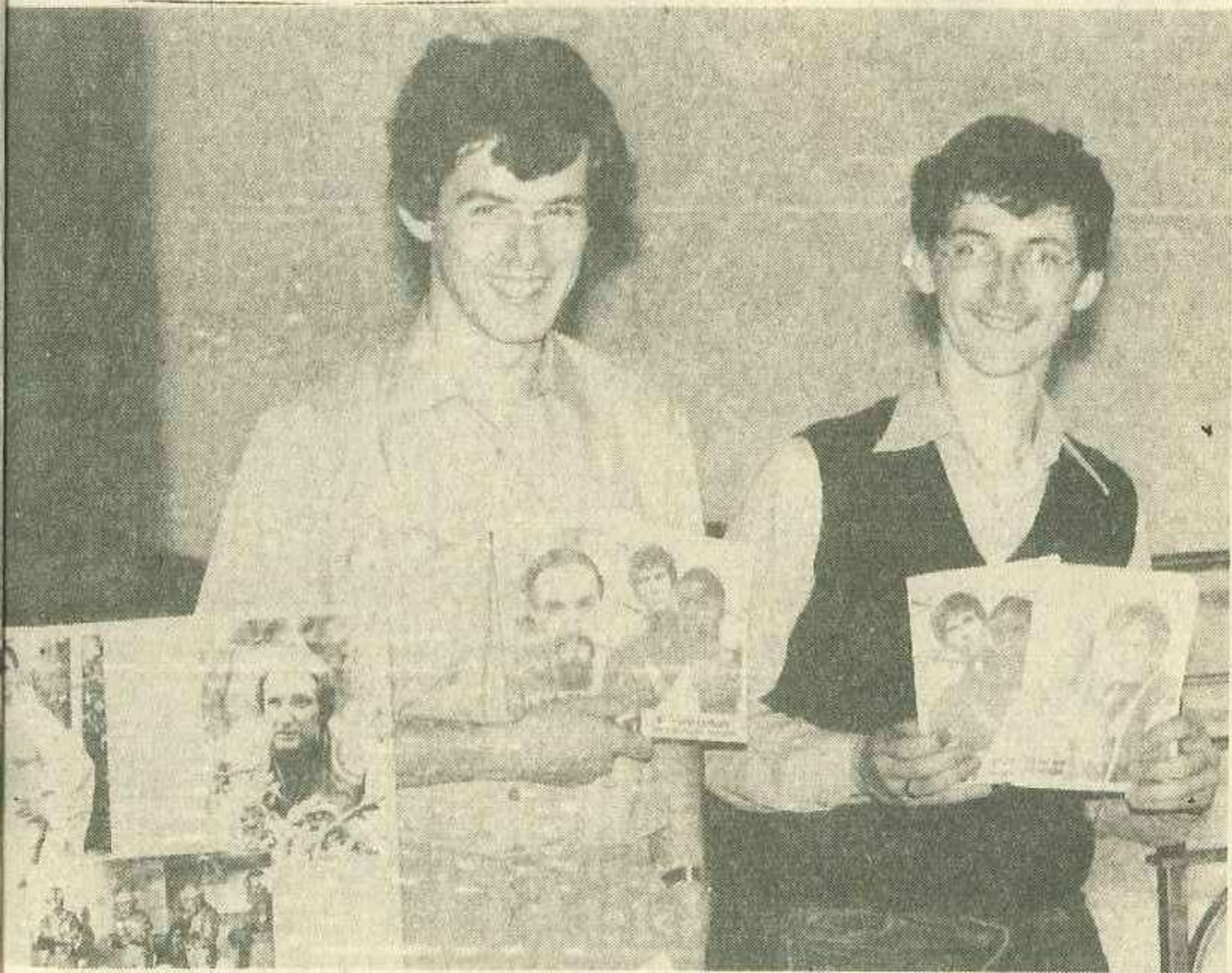


Above: A chance to look at the real thing! Two models from the last series . . . and the gun which killed Blake were on display, thanks to the BBC Visual Effects Department.



Right: Also on display was the trophy won by Peter for his How, Why and Where of Doctor Who.

Below: Pleased with the sale of their material during the convention, Peter Angellides, right, and his friend proudly display their latest issues of Frontier World.



It was quite a gruelling session for someone more used to arguing with his typewriter than an audience of a few hundred but Chris equitted himself very well. He revealed he was astonished by viewer response when the final episode was transmitted, saying that although he was still receiving letters about it, he firmly believed it was the only way to conclude the series. There were a great number of people in the audience who would have preferred not to see the show end at all . . . but that decision was not Chris's responsibility.

While Convention-goers were being entertained in the Large hall, round the corner at the Bull those followers of the show who have launched into print their own BLAKE'S 7 stories were hard at work. Business was brisk as latest editions of Horizon, Frontier World, Standard by Seven, Slave, etc. sold like hot cakes.

It was also possible to buy BLAKE'S 7 related badges (choose your own design) as well as, if you so desired, a quick face-paint job to make yourself more like a friendly alien. Competitions were running throughout the two days of the Convention, ranging from crazy captions on some of the more unusual BLAKE'S 7 photographs to model work of a high standard.

One of the highlights of the first day was the judging of the fancy dress contingent. Falling into three categories, Blake's 7 related, other science fiction and plain way-out, the parade was held in the large hall. Judging such a varied and mind-boggling selection was not easy especially as fans of Doctor Who seemed to have slipped in without so much as a by your leave!

Nevertheless the parade was colourful and dramatic with some of the contestants having gone to great lengths to make their costumes as authentic as possible.

The first day drew to a conclusion with a dinner-dance for those with any energy left and the promise of much, much more of BLAKE'S 7 to follow the next day.

The second day of the Convention was centred on the Bull with several competitions and a few film clips thrown in between yet more trading in BLAKE'S 7 material. One film which drew a very large audience was the 'Bloopers' film (all the out-takes) of everyone's favourite series. Avon was heard to say words which



Above: Tom Clarke, dressed as a Cyberman, despite winning the 'Best Other' class was still found threatening L. Bate from Wombourne, left, after the competition.



Left: June Cook was awarded the Judges' special prize for her creation in silver.

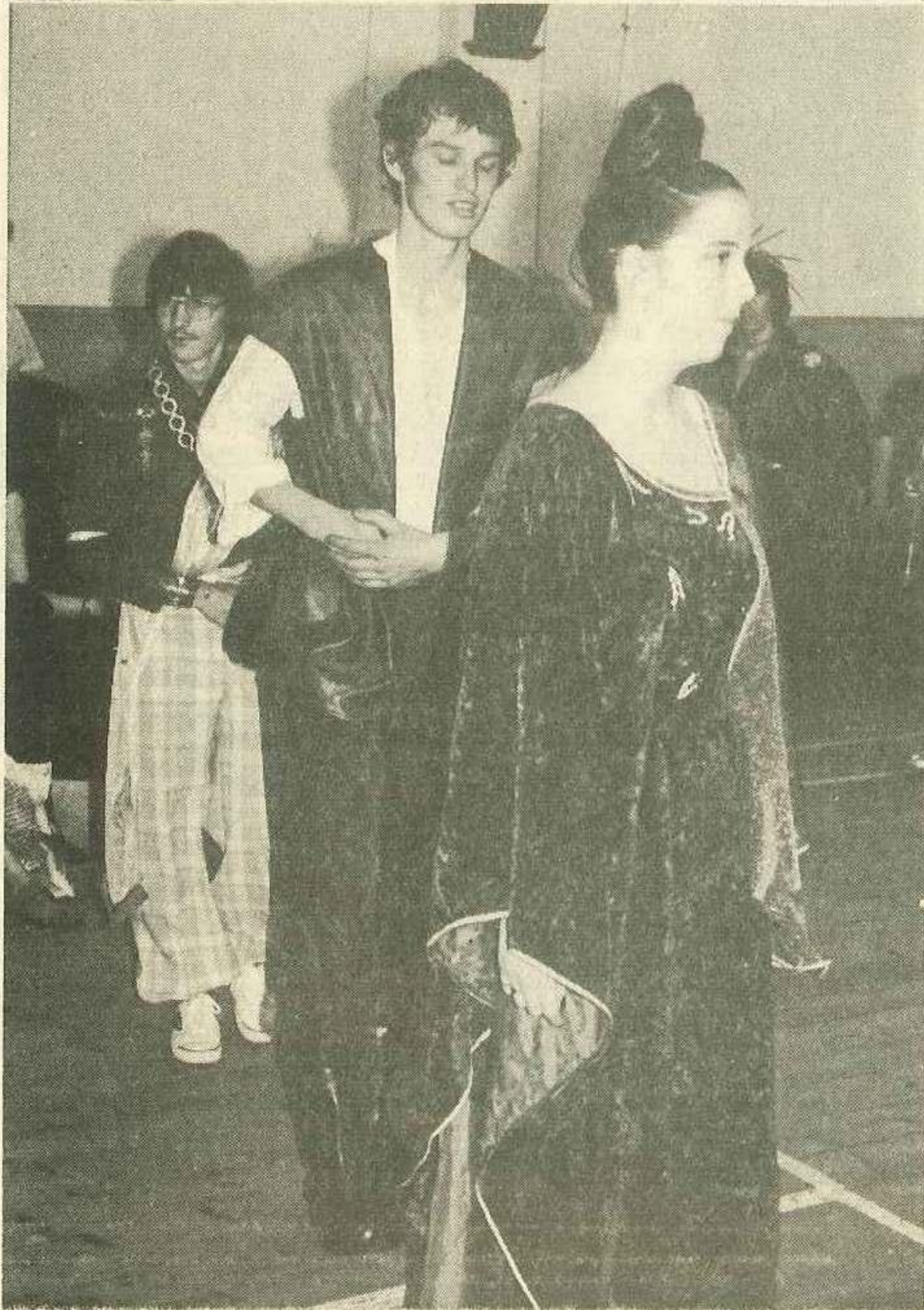
Below: There were many excellent entries for the fancy dress competition, one of which is shown here. Sorry we couldn't show you more.





Above: Many and varied were the costumes on show. By the way, one of the two above is a man! Any guesses as to which?

Below: Winner of the BLAKE'S 7 related class was Alison Fry, right, being closely followed by someone looking very much like a young Tarrant!



Below: Need a hand? Try counting the number of hands you see here . . . then decide who's the alien!



were never heard on television, all the cast shot enemies with guns which never fired and Blake was seen to threaten Avon with a Teddy Bear! If ever the film falls into the hands of Dennis Norden for another series of 'It'll be All Right on the Night' ... don't miss it!

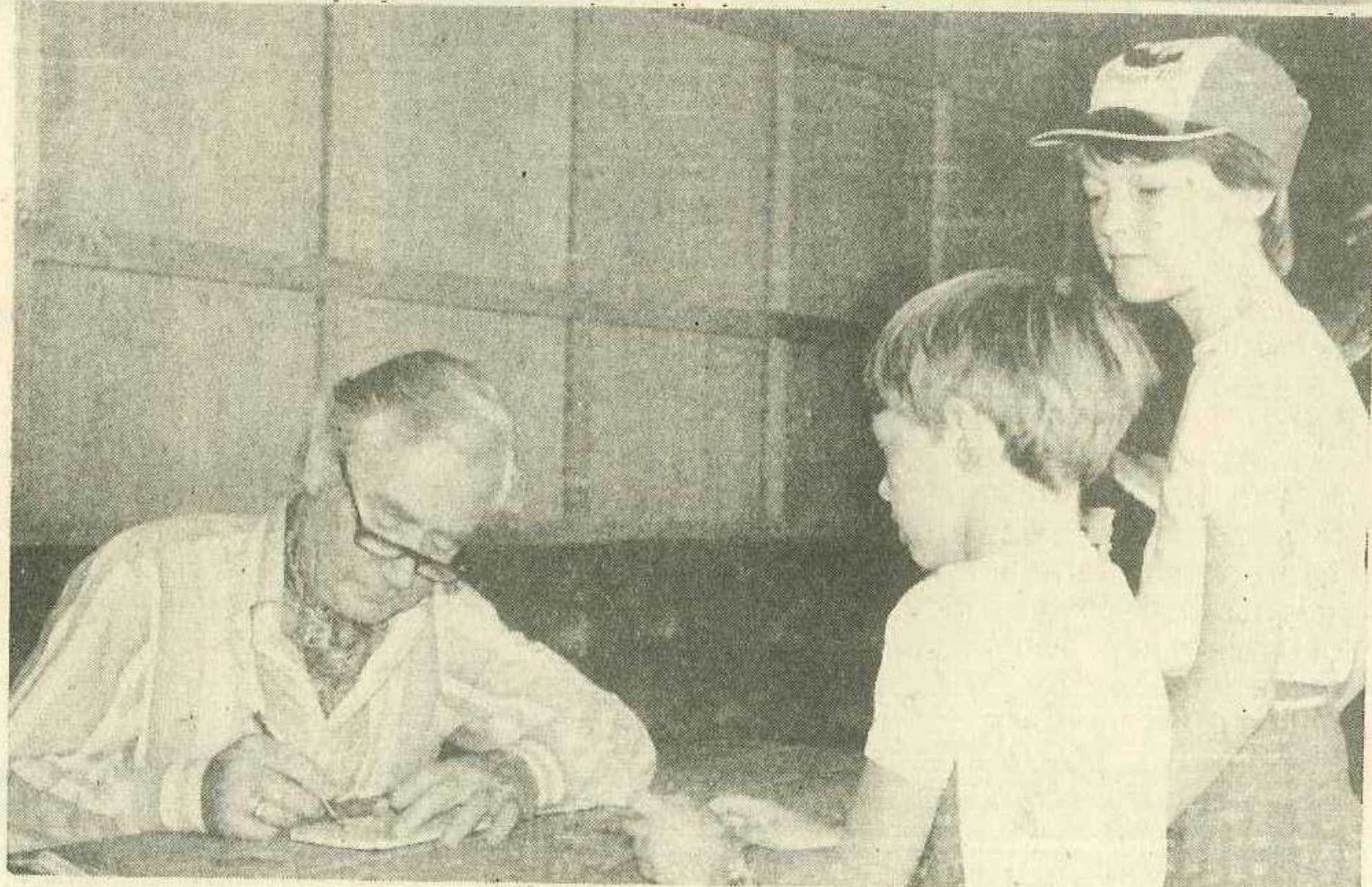
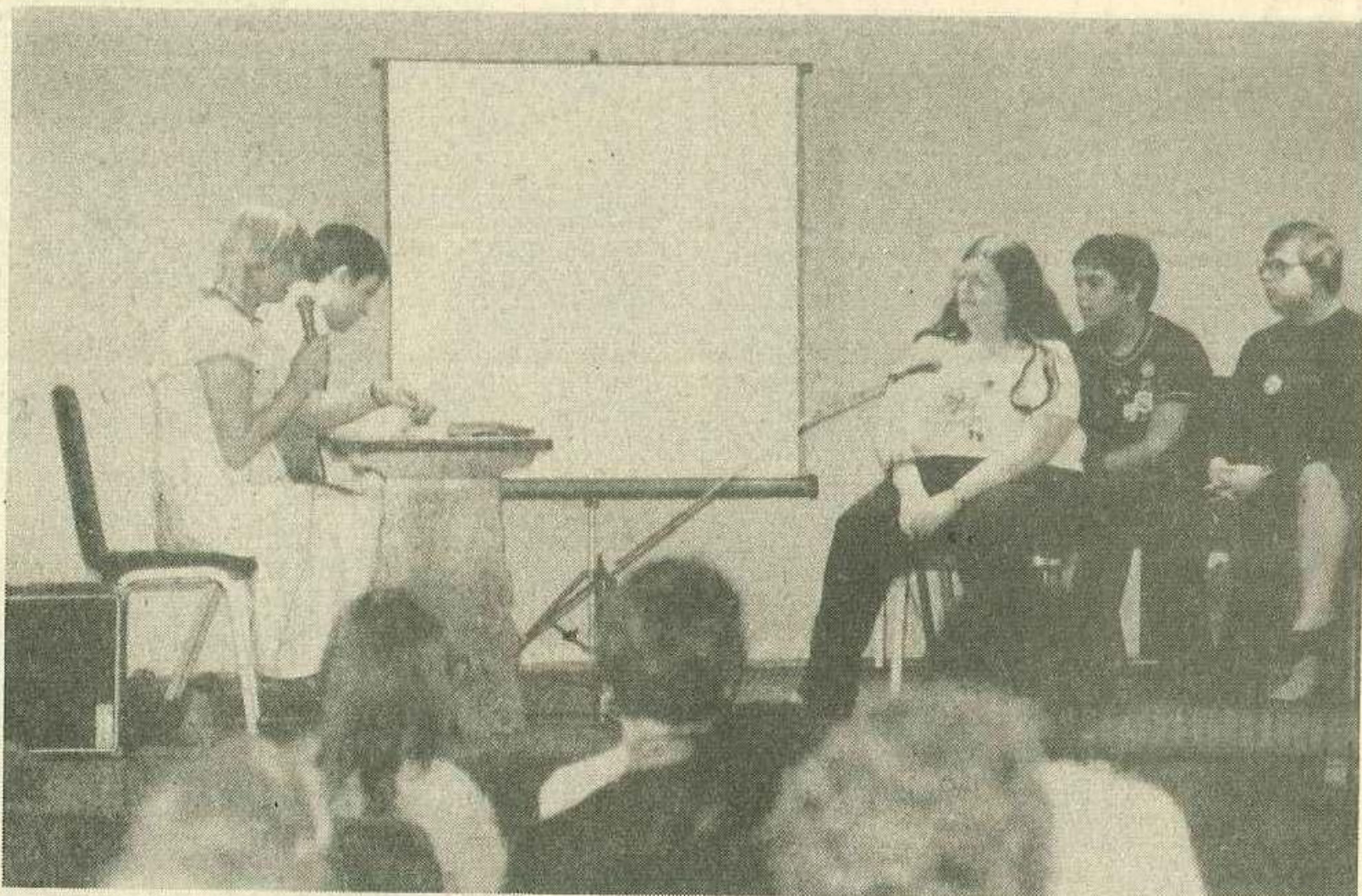
It is not only in BLAKE'S 7 that mistakes appear on film, however, since the score was evened by a showing of the 'Bloopers' film from STARTREK. It had just as many mistakes in it but nothing like seeing Scorpio and the Liberator suddenly taking a nose-dive to the floor during model filming!

Do you fancy your chances as a BLAKE'S 7 Mastermind? You would have to go a long way to beat Janet Ellicott from Hackney in answering questions about the series. With hardly a 'pass' she sailed home to win the Mastermind final by a mile. If ever there was a real fan of the show, Janet is the one.

Although fans waited in expectation to see Michael Keating who was the scheduled guest speaker for the afternoon, they were disappointed. Michael was delayed after his play 'Anyone for Dennis' finished in Cardiff the night before. The fans were not denied a special guest, however, since Peter Tuddenham, the voice of Zen, Orac and Slave, was able to come along.

Currently working with the BBC Radio Theatre, Peter was given a rapturous reception from a packed house and, when he 'went into character' to say a few lines of computer talk, brought cheers from the fans.

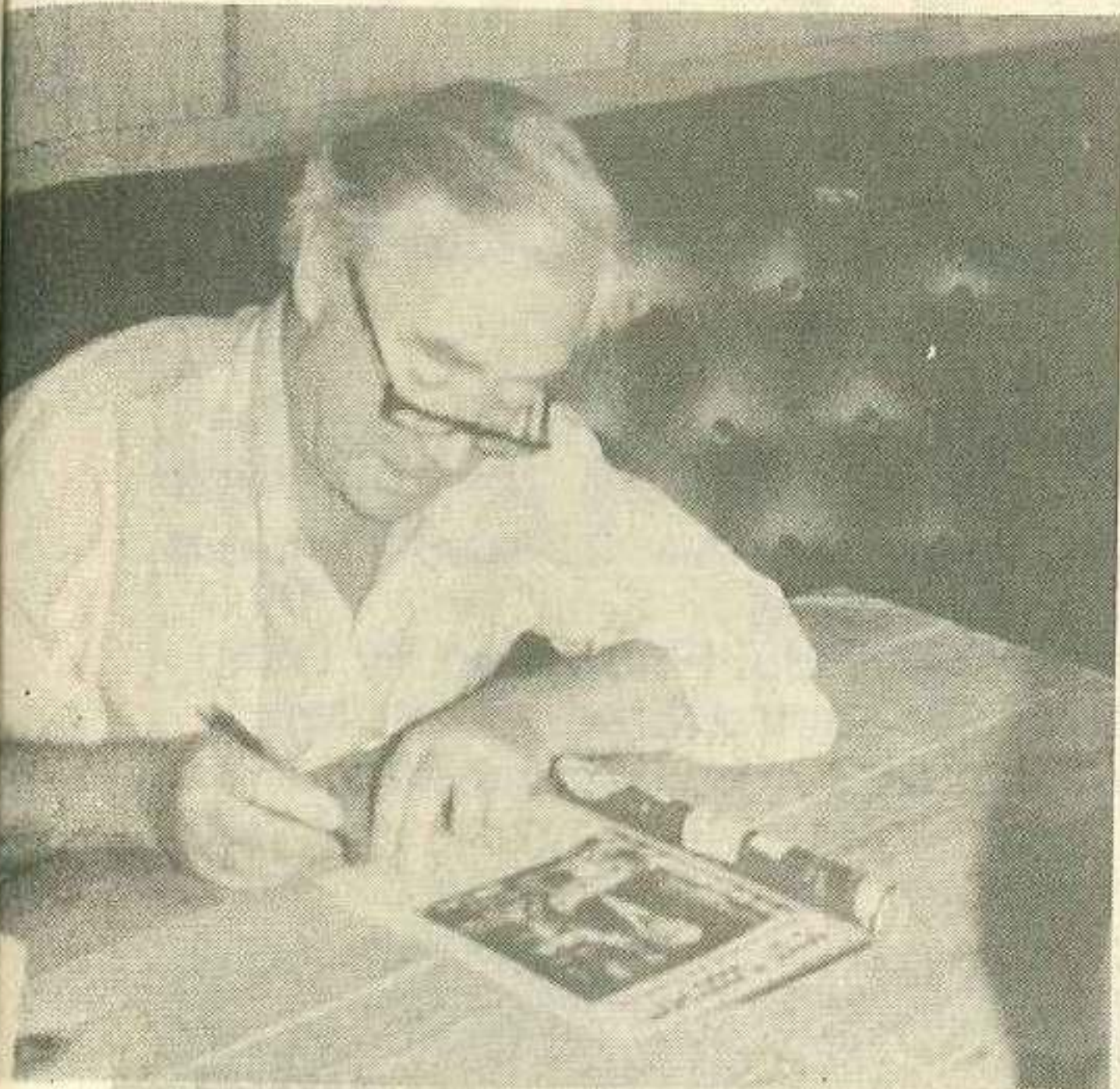
Peter was closely questioned about the computers which he



Top: Winner by a mile! Janet Ellicott from Hackney, in the hot seat, proved she knew her science fiction and every last detail of BLAKE'S 7 inside out to carry off the trophy.

Middle: Peter Tuddenham, voice of Zen, Orac and Slave, made a welcome guest appearance to answer questions about the series.

Right: These young fans were not going to miss out on a chance of collecting Peter's autograph and, when things were offered for signature ...



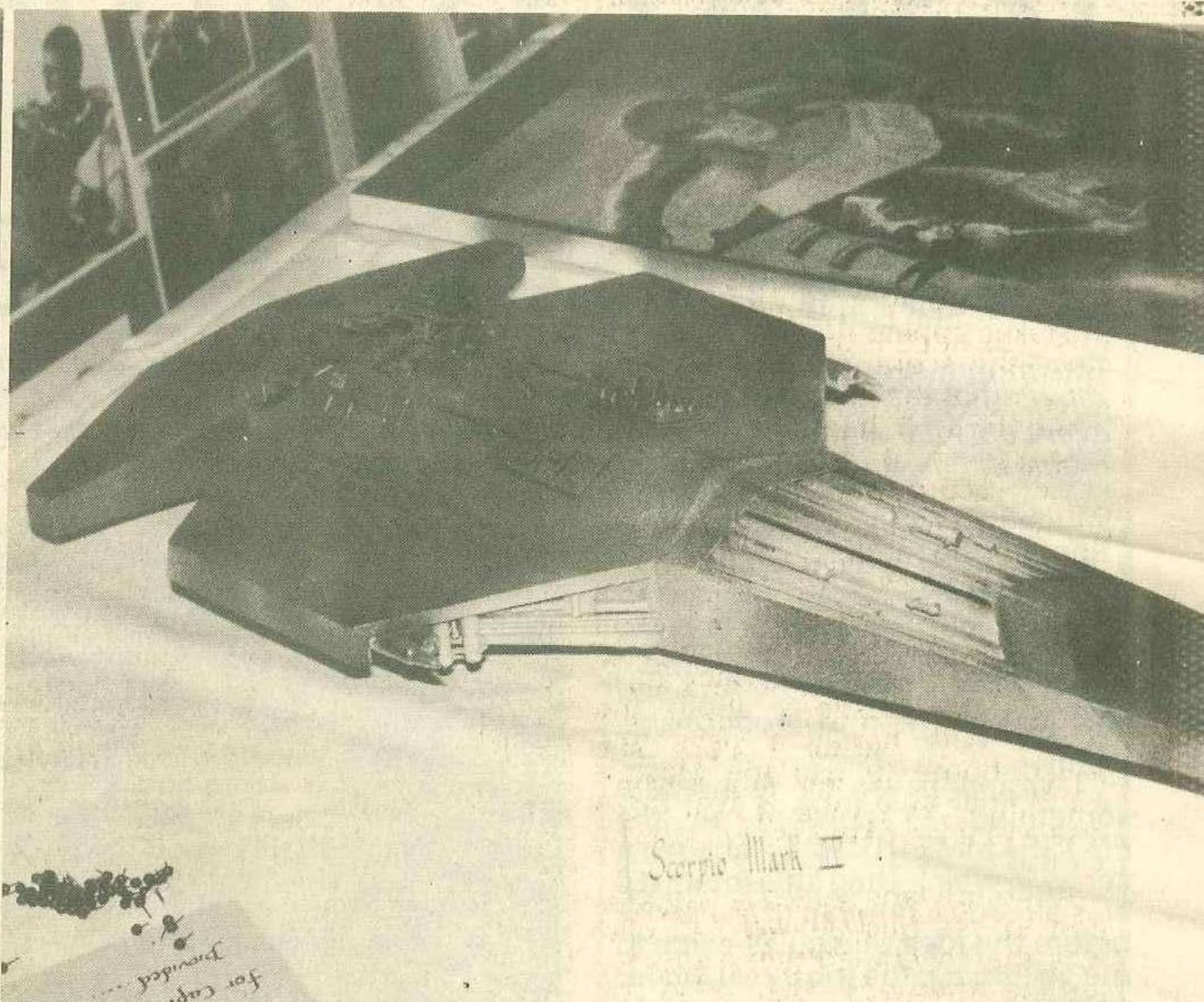
brought to life and, when pressed, admitted to liking Orac the best of all. And which of Orac's pieces did he like the best? The one where Vila tried to teach Orac jokes!

One admission Peter seemed to stun the assembled throng. For someone who has been associated with space and space characters for so long, Peter confessed he had never seen any of the recent major science fiction films . . . not even Star Wars! Peter did point out that, from an actor's point of view, it was perhaps a good thing since he missed all the films because he was working at the time. There's no answer to that!

To conclude Peter's personal appearance he was asked if he would sign a few autographs. An hour-and-a-half and four hundred autographs later, Peter was able to leave!

To round off the Convention, Judith Cross, the Convention Committee Secretary, had another surprise up her sleeve. Presenting prizes to the winners of the competitions, Gareth Thomas made a short but nevertheless welcome appearance, much to the surprise of all those about to drift home.

Organising and running a Convention is never an easy affair especially when so many different activities must run simultaneously to keep the Convention-goers happy but Judith Cross and the rest of her committee did an excellent job. Although she confessed not being a terrific BLAKE'S 7 fan herself (she likes all kinds of science fiction) she did all true fans of the series proud. We hope many more such conventions will be held so that even more fans will, once again, be able to see their heroes on the screen - even if it is only on video.



Above left: . . . Peter's interview in BLAKE'S 7 Magazine was high on the list. A real treasured memento!

Above: Scorpio Mark 2 won the Art/Model prize for the under 18 group for Christian Taylor.



Below: 'Encounter on Surian Major' was the title of this diorama which won the over 18 prize in the Art/Model competition for Wendy Ingles.

TONY ATTWOOD - the instant blake's 7 fan!

This month sees the launch of one book which is a must for every true fan of BLAKE'S 7. Published by W.H. Allen, 'BLAKE'S 7 - THE PROGRAMME GUIDE,' written by Tony Attwood, provides a chronological listing of every episode of the series, a synopsis of every storyline and, of greatest value to those who demand facts, a highly detailed index of places, characters, equipment and terminology.

To prepare such an exact record of a programme which ran for five years requires not only many hours of painstaking work but also a dedication to a series of which one is already a fan. Tony Attwood was just the man to produce this book.

"I would never try to prepare something as detailed as the PROGRAMME GUIDE about a series in which I had little interest. I was already a firm fan of the series before the idea of a guide came to me so it made the job a real labour of love."

To enable a true record of events, places and equipment to be prepared, Tony had to sit through over fifty hours of BLAKE'S 7 videos then, to add to the knowledge gleaned from those, spent many hours discussing the episodes with Paul Darrow, Chris Boucher (Script Editor) and Vere Lorrimer (Director of many episodes and Producer of the fourth series).

"Everyone was extremely helpful," says Tony, "especially Paul Darrow who has an excellent recall of all his episodes. Mike Keating was also able to expand on some of the topics which related to Vila's role".

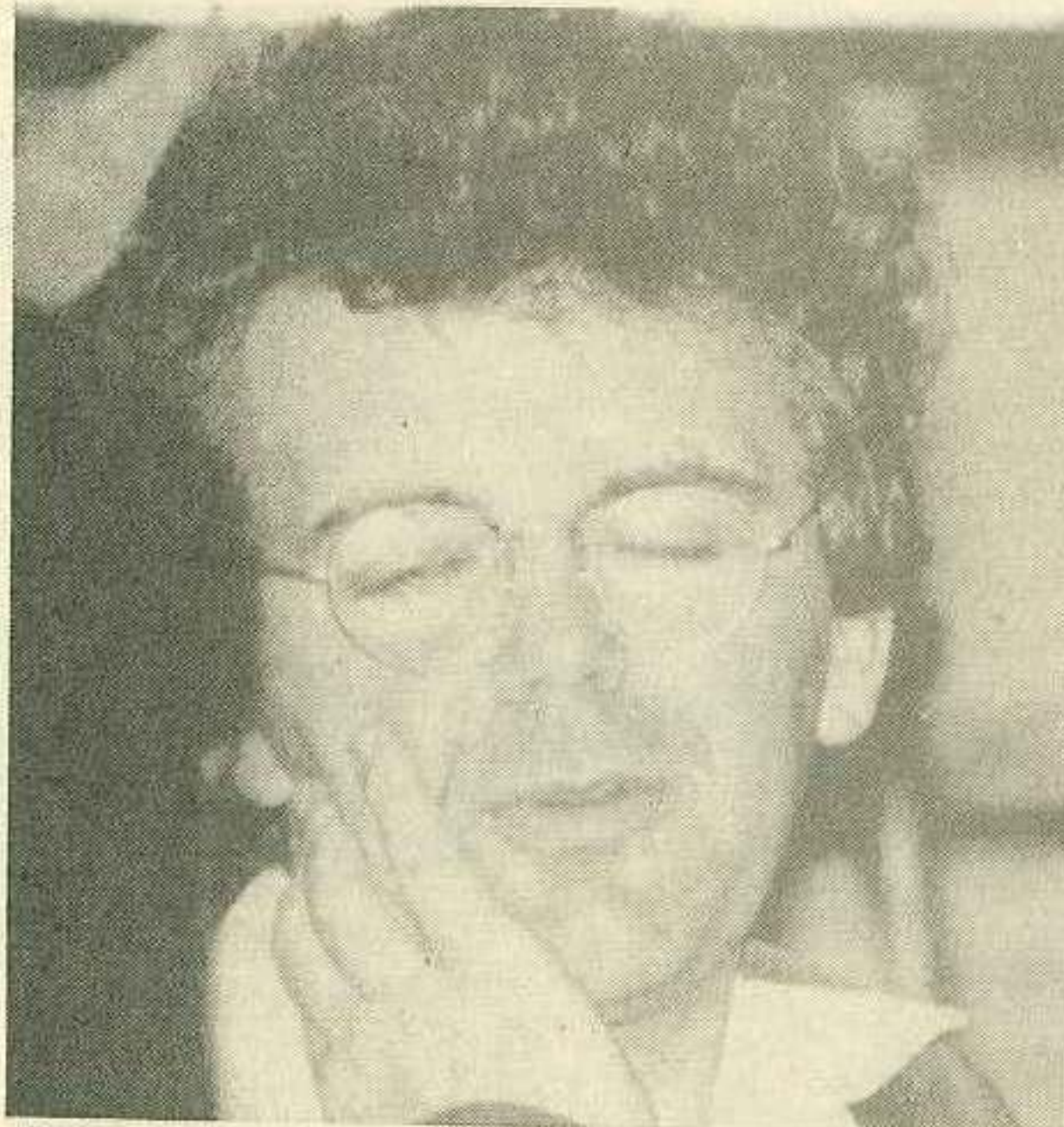
Being such an authority on the series, Tony was a guest speaker at the latest BLAKE'S 7 Convention held recently in London where a whole battery of questions were fired at him by a knowledgeable audience. Thankfully for Tony, he was able to provide all the answers - which augures well for his book!

Tony is no stranger to the world of publishing. Having started his working life as a music teacher, trying his hand at freelance writing in his spare time, he now heads his own publishing company dealing with subjects as far-reaching as his 'Guide to Transport Cafes' to his latest project, a detailed guide to 'Sherlock Holmes.' Without a



doubt, if his Sherlock Holmes book is as definitive as his BLAKE'S 7 PROGRAMME GUIDE it will be an indispensable reference for all lovers of the character.

For those of you considering buying Tony's excellent Programme Guide, we include here a short excerpt of the detailed index. As you will see, no true fan should be without one!



Deep in thought as he searches his memory for an answer, Tony Attwood faces questions from fans after his talk.

BLAKE'S 7, THE PROGRAMME GUIDE, is published by W.H. Allen, price £5.95. Available at all good bookshops.

INDEX

ANDROIDS - Sophisticated robot-like creatures highly developed by the Federation. Among the most sophisticated was that developed by Muller, a pupil of Ensor. His android had all the power of Orac plus a circuit influencer and mobility. Its nearest rival were the android version of Avalon created by Federation scientists and Vinni the gunfighter who became Champion of Vandor.

ANDROMEDA - Nearest large spiral galaxy to our own, known astronomically as M31 or NGC224. It was the source of the invasion fleet in the Intergalactic War. The war was launched with the help of Travis who discovered Star 1 - the centre of all Federation computer control - and who deactivated all the defences in order to betray our entire Galaxy. The ANDROME-

DANS were multicoloured jelly-fish-like creatures, measuring about 6 feet across and with highly advanced technological ability.

ARISTO – Planet on which Ensor built and maintained Orac. Ninetenths of Aristo was covered by water, the land masses were arid, the oceans highly acidic. There had been a number of cities built by earlier civilisations but the rising of the water has covered most of these. Life was slowly beginning to evolve in the oceans by the time of Blake's visit.

ATOMIC WAR – Major war affecting much of the galaxy, occurring several hundred years before Blake's birth. It was in the aftermath of this war that the Federation arose.

AURON – Inhabitants had telepathic powers and prized their isolation. Cally and others were outlawed for becoming involved in outside affairs. Servalan launched an alien pathogen onto Auron and wiped out the entire population. However some gene banks were saved and transferred to a new planet.

BATTLE COMPUTERS – Selection of the computing system on Liberator controlled by Zen which automatically computed the best manoeuvres for the ship when attacking or when under attack. The battle computers suffered from the disadvantage of having to be put on line via an instruction from one of the crew, thus wasting valuable seconds during a surprise attack.

BETAFARL – Federation planet in the Ark Rough Bennet Complex, in a group of stars which had been abandoned by the Federation. Ruled by Sukan, the planet had perpetual day, presumably because it revolved around a binary star system.

CLASS-GRADING – All Federation citizens were graded Alpha to Delta. Blake was Alpha, Vila was Delta.

CLIP-GUN – Developed by Dorian for use on Scorpio. Mage of Argentuim, recoil-less and able to fire under water. Designed to fire a variety of projectiles, it had a guidesight

mounted on top and laser guiding towards the target. Each clip fired a different projectile, each being colour coded. The black clip fired plasma bolts.

CLONE-BLAKE – Created by Fen on Servalan's command. The clone survived with Rashel on an uninhabited planet. **CLONING** was controlled by the Clone-masters, who could create life in any form but had very strong moral principles and guarded their secrets well. Cloning was also developed by Clinician Franton on Auron.

CONTROL – Main computer complex set up by the Federation on Earth to monitor all political, military and other sensitive activity throughout their empire. It was initiated two centuries before, when the Federation started its programme of expansion. However it was abandoned when Star 1 was built. Gan died there.

COUNCIL OF THE FEDERATION – Equivalent to an unelected parliament through which the President ruled. Technically the Supreme Commander of the armed forces was answerable to the Council. However, political intrigue and in-fighting meant that the Councillors and Supreme commander invariably held each other in mistrust and, where possible, at a distance.

DETECTOR RANGE – The distance at which one space ship can detect the presence of another in open space.

DETECTOR SHIELD – Masking device used on certain Federation ships from time to time, invented by Avon. The Liberator once had a Detector Shield, but it was put out of operation and stayed out for a prolonged time due to lack of spare parts. Avon suggested that he was at one time hoping to sell the Federation the idea of the Detector Shield, only to discover that they had already invented it themselves.

DORIAN – 'Rescued' the survivors of Liberator after it had been destroyed on Terminal. When asked, he described himself as a salvage operator. During his long life, Dorian had become an expert on weaponry

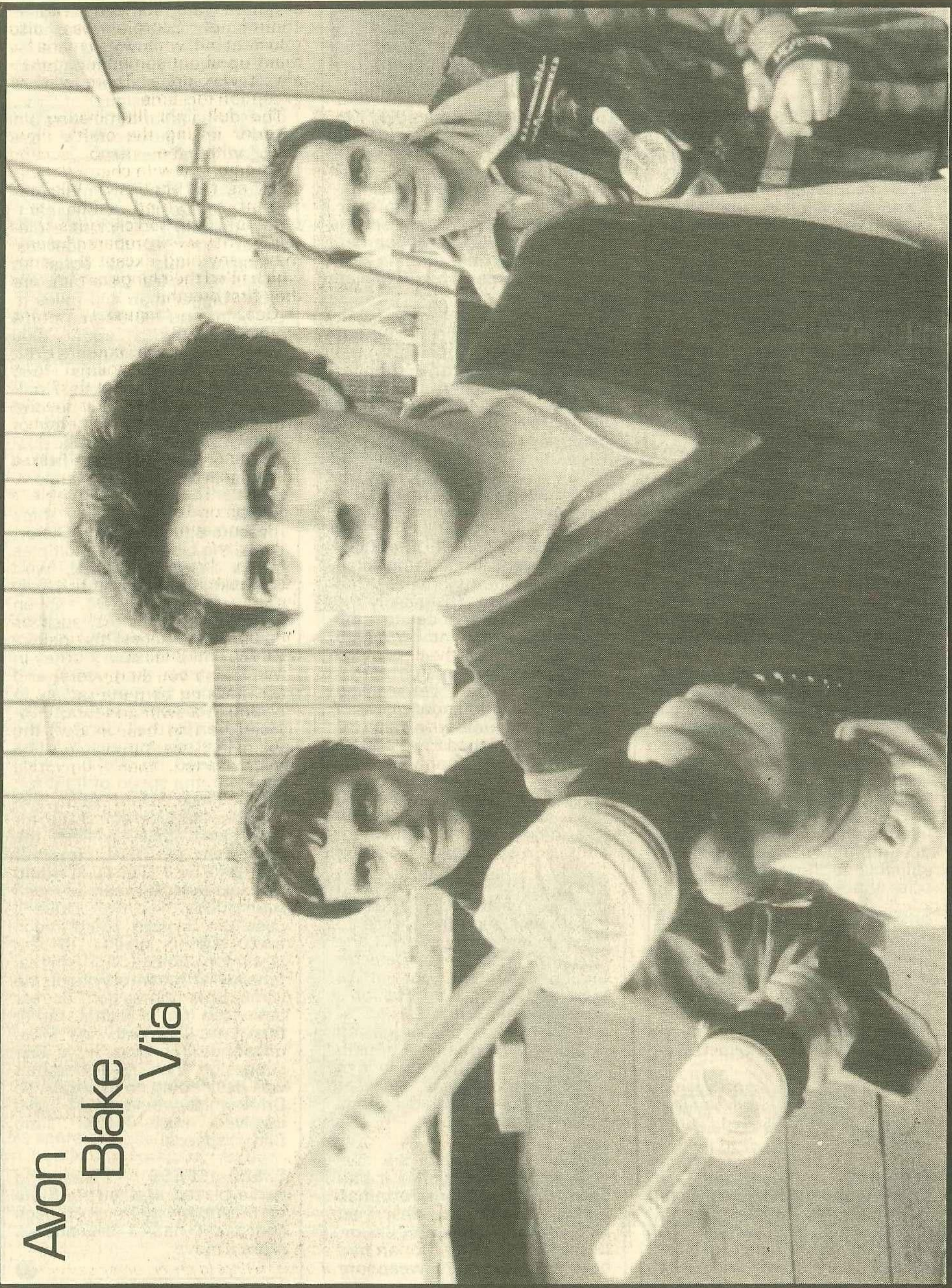
system design, computers and computer repairs – he was able to repair the damaged Orac – and apparently numerous other fields. he also claimed to have met Enso, the designer of Orac. Dorian was around 200 years old when the survivors of the Liberator first met him.

SPACIAL – Unit for the measurement of distance used on Liberator. Asteroid PK118 had a diameter of 0.102 spacial. Assuming this was equal to about 100 miles (asteroids are rarely bigger than 400 miles in diameter, and 100 is common), a spacial would be about 1000 miles. Liberator's standard orbit around a planet was 1000 spacial, which at about 1 million miles would put it beyond the orbit of the majority of natural moons and offer the possibility of rapid departure from a system in the event of trouble.

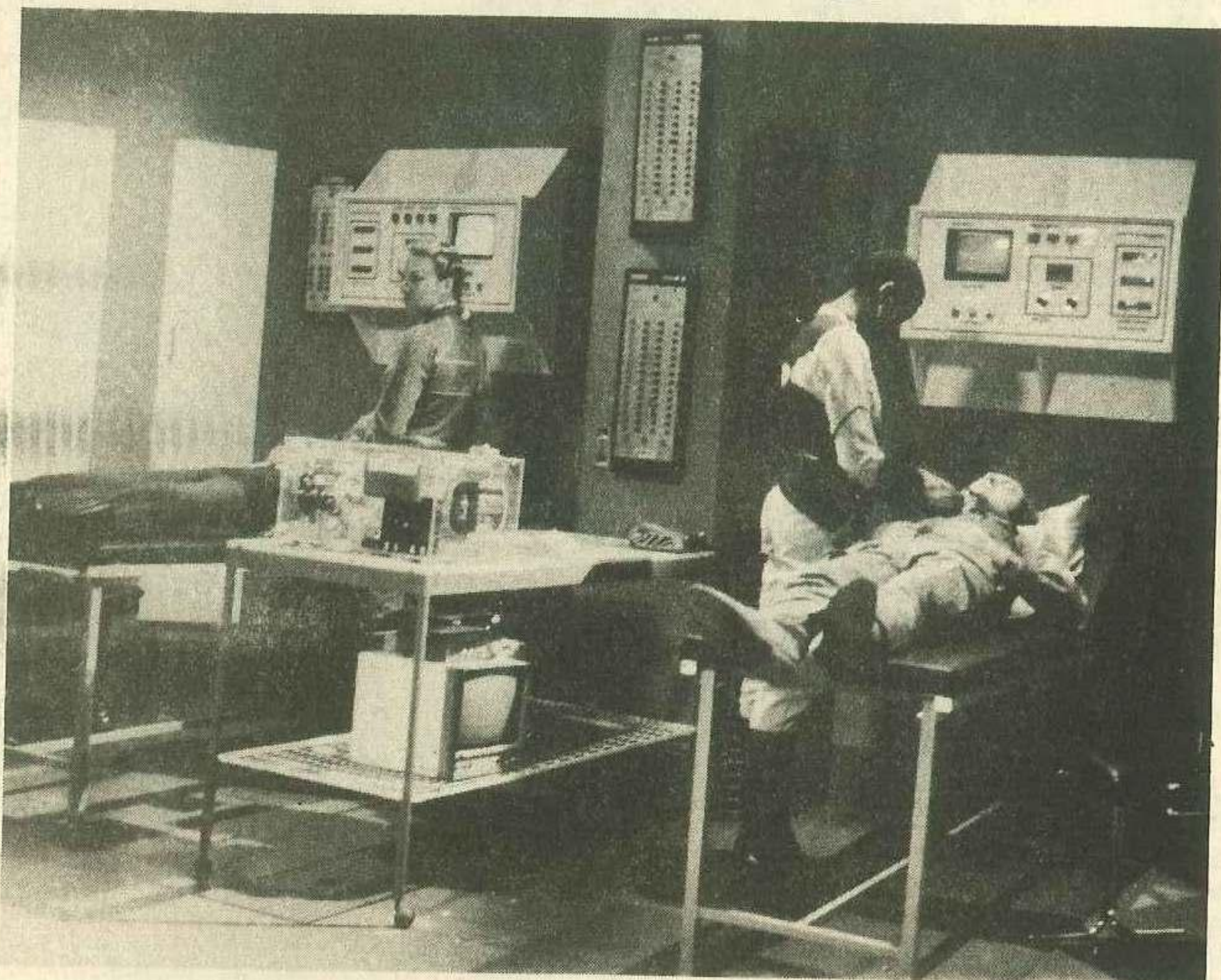
SPEED – Federation ships measure speed in Time Distort Units, the Liberator in multiples of its Standard Speed, with Standard by 1 possibly being equal to about TD4. Given certain known factors, such as the distance across the galaxy (which was a feasible journey in months rather than years) and the distance from our galaxy to Andromeda (which was not possible, even for the Liberator), the following assumptions can be made based on the universal constant, the speed of light (c): TD1 = 1000c, TD2 = 2000c, TD3 = 3000c, etc. Liberator could, for very short spells, achieve the equivalent of TD16. However Standard by 7 (TD11), it would take just over 200 years to reach Andromeda. The Star Drive II used on Scorpio could reach even higher speeds in the laboratory, going to TD15 in real time, which meant staying in the same time dimension as experienced on a planet rather than moving into a time-distorted dimension. It was also suggested that the Federation was developing an Intergalactic Drive which would clearly have involved much higher Time Distort speeds.

SPEED CHESS – Gambling game played against the Klute on Freedom City in which each contestant had 5 seconds to make a move

Avon
Blake
Vila



PLAGUE part 1



about leaving someone else in control of Scorpio was also reluctant but, when Avon made his mind up about something, generally it was done. There was no exception this time.

The dull light illuminating the corridor linking the craft's flight deck with the cargo section became bright with charged molecules as the shapes of Vila and Tarrant reformed after teleportation. Both had clip guns at the ready. They were prepared for anything—anything except the smell which filled their lungs as they took their first breath.

'Geez . . .' cursed Tarrant, gagging.

'Th . . . the stench,' coughed Vila, trying to cover his nostrils. 'Why didn't Orac tell us about this?' The pair looked at each other in the dim glow of the craft's emergency lighting.

'Remind you of anything?' asked Tarrant in a cautious manner.

'Yeah. The Warg Strangler's killing pit on Targaan.'

'Rotting human flesh?'

'Exactly!'

'Then brace yourself. We'd better take a look up on the flight deck.'

'After you, my hero,' mocked Vila, trying to conceal his dread of what they might find.

'Why don't you sit down, Avon? You're making us nervous.' Avon shot Soolin a swift and hard look, realised he had been pacing the flight deck since Tarrant and Vila had teleported, then reluctantly

What do you make of it, Orac? Can you specify its origin?' Avon studied his monitor in great detail. Beyond the main objects there was no sign of other ships or unusual star patterns. The centre of the screen showed a dark, forbidding silhouette of a craft whose design was as unfamiliar as the star system in which it was drifting.

'Sensors indicate life support systems are operating normally,' replied Orac, 'however, there is no indication of intelligent life on board. As to its origin, I have insufficient data.'

'You're a big help,' grumbled Vila, glaring at the flickering computer. 'You never give a straight answer.'

'I can only give information where facts exist,' snapped the computer. 'Were your questions to be more precise . . .'

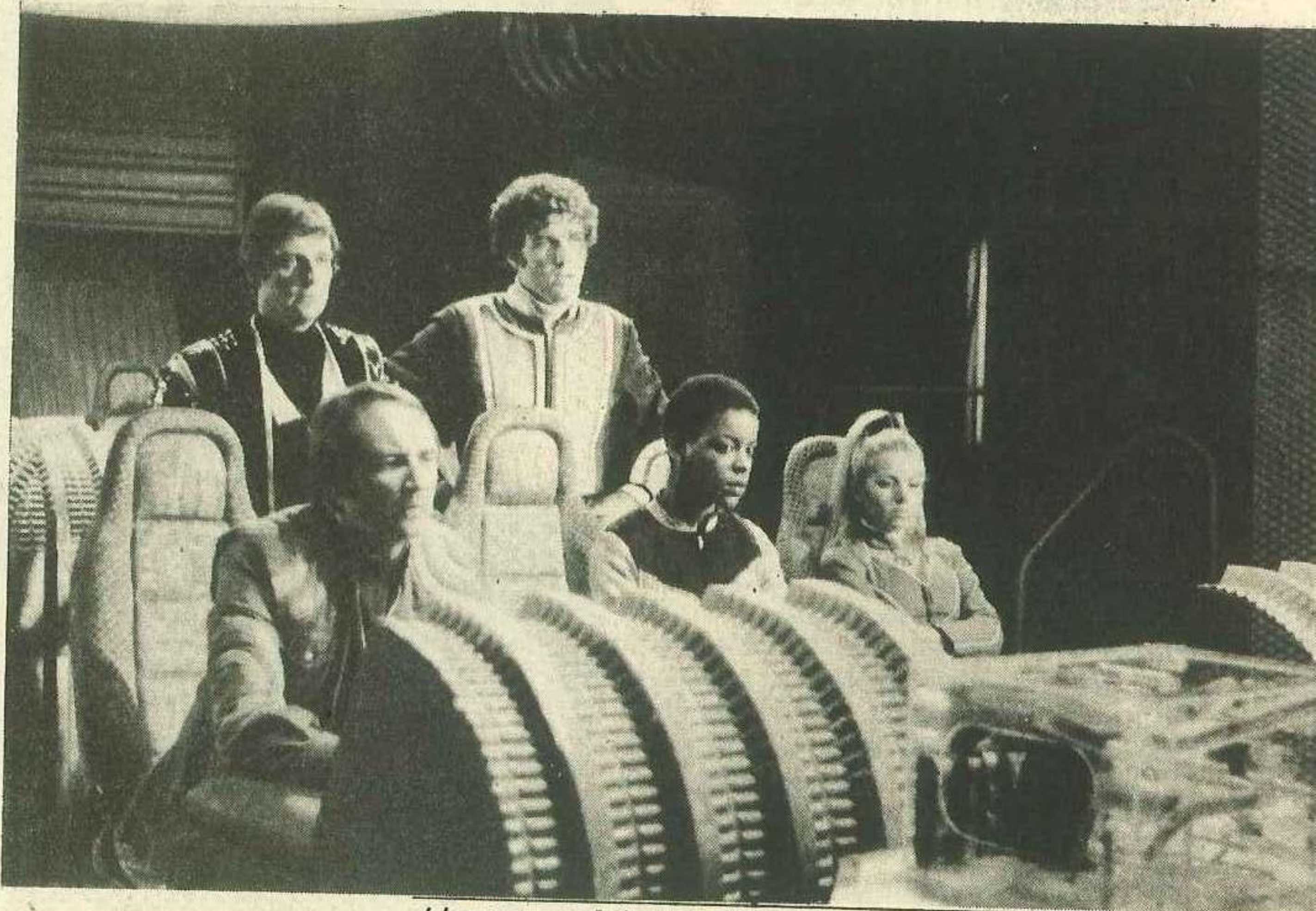
'Enough, Orac!' Avon's angry voice echoed round Scorpio's flight deck. The dark-suited figure walked towards the large display screen, studying the alien ship with a keen eye.

'I have one of those feelings in the pit of my stomach again,' whispered Vila to Dayna. The dark girl's expression matched Vila's. They both knew what was going

through Avon's mind. At length Avon spun on his heel, his eyes fixed on Vila.

'You and Tarrant get ready to teleport. I want to know what's on board that ship and why it's here.'

Vila, as usual, had tried to argue against going. Tarrant, unhappy



I have one of those feelings in the pit of my stomach . . .

took his seat.

'Why the devil don't they communicate?' asked Avon under his breath. 'Are their bracelets working?'

'All electrical equipment is in perfect working order,' replied Orac. 'At present my sensors indicate they are on the craft's flight deck.'

Avon glared at the small computer, a look which would have cautioned a human being not to press his luck further, but Orac had no such sensitivity. Avon was about to reach for the communication transmitter when the small speaker burst into life. It was Tarrant's voice but there was something in the tone which made the hairs on the back of Avon's neck rise.

'We've got a problem here, Avon. Something has wiped-out the entire crew. They're all dead and have been for some time.'

'Any indication as to the cause?' Avon was suddenly alert.

'Not so far.' Tarrant sounded very depressed. 'But whatever it was it happened gradually. There are signs that some of the crew were put to their bunks while others tried to work the ship until they, too, succumbed. There were only two people flying the ship towards the end.'

Avon's mind raced. 'What cargo was the ship carrying?'

'We don't know yet,' confessed Tarrant. 'We haven't been into the hold.'

'Then get down there quickly and report what you find.'

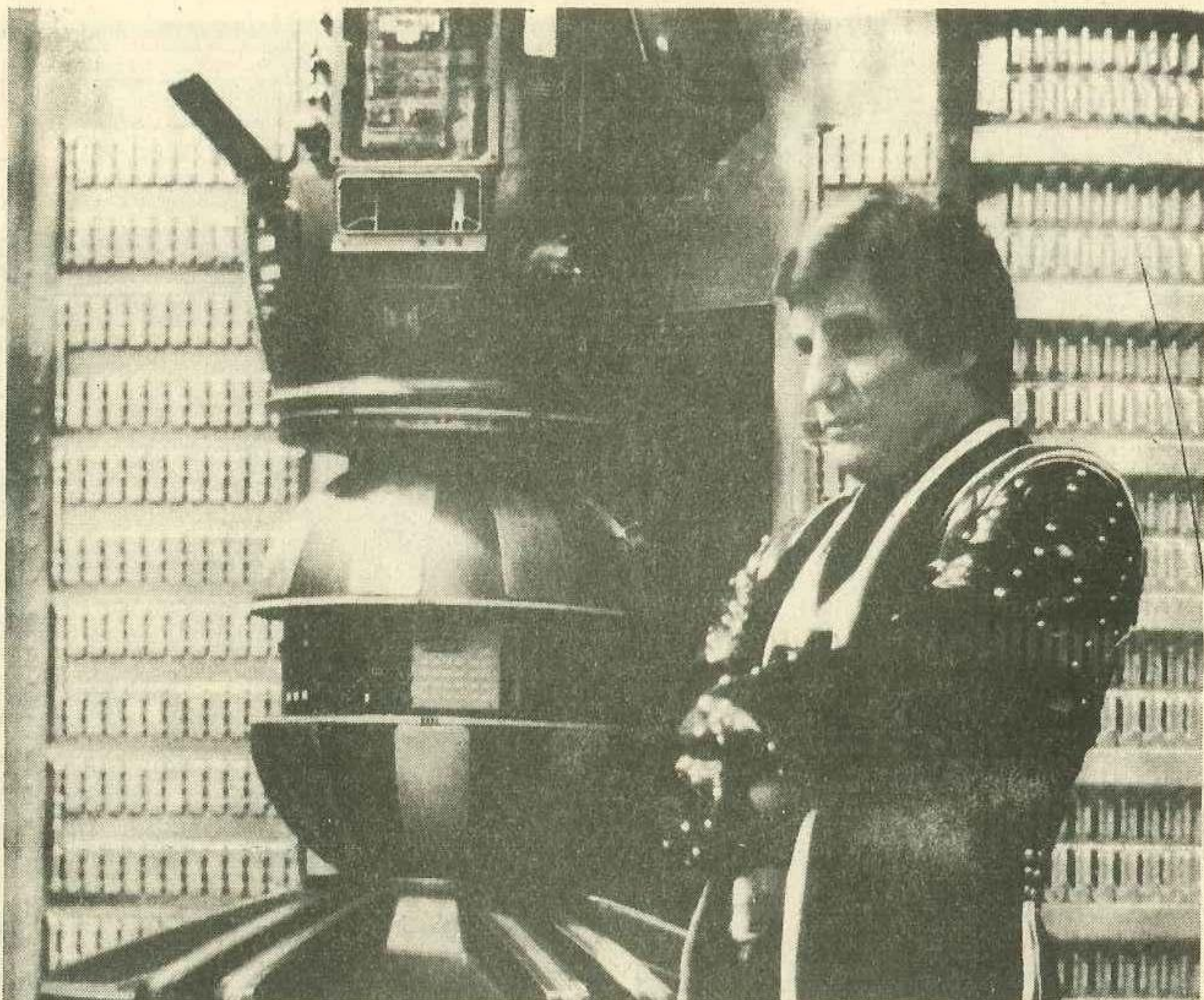
'We're on our way—at least we will be as soon as Vila's stopped retching.' With that the communication ended.

'Avon,' began Soolin in a worried tone, 'if there was some kind of disease on that ship...'

'Then there's nothing we can do immediately,' snapped the moody leader. 'We'll give them a full medical when they get back.'

'If they get back,' retorted Dayna, 'and there's no certainty of that!'

The walls of the darkened ship felt cold and damp. Vila knew it was probably condensation but his imagination was beginning to run wild. After what he had seen on the flight deck who was to say what other dreadful horrors awaited himself and Tarrant at the end of the corridor? Tarrant was picking his way very carefully past the series of doors which opened out onto their corridor. Some doors stood ajar revealing crew quarters where the remainder of the craft's



Why the devil don't they communicate?

Avon . . . if there was some kind of disease on that ship . . .



company had perished. In the half light the shapes were more grotesque than those seen on the flight deck. Trying to suppress nausea which rose at the back of his throat again, Vila screwed up his eyes, swallowed hard, then felt for Tarrant just ahead.

'How much longer?' Vila's strangled question told Tarrant he was close to breaking point.

'Only another few paces,' he replied. 'I can see the cargo door ahead.'

The pair were unprepared for the sight which met their eyes. Even under emergency light the display dazzled them.

'I . . . I don't believe it!' gasped Tarrant, 'Have you ever seen anything like it before?'

'Only once,' said Vila, recovering his usual composure. 'But then it was behind a servo laser-lock system and guarded by a thousand hand-picked security men.'

'You know what this means?' asked Tarrant in a low voice.

'I sure do,' grinned Vila. 'It means we're rich!'

'Nevo crystals,' said Tarrant in an excited voice. 'The ship's hold is full of boxes of them!'

There came a long pause. Avon's brain was racing. 'Have they been tampered with,' he asked at length.

'Some have been opened,' confirmed Tarrant, his voice returning to something near normal. 'There are crystals scattered across the deck. About twenty of the boxes have been tipped on their side but all of them are identical. It must have been the entire wealth of whichever nation these people came from.'

'And you confirm they are all dead?'

'Every last one,' replied Vila's tense voice. 'There's no-one left to dispute ownership. We can buy our freedom from the Federation with this lot. We might even be able to buy the Federation!'

'Stay where you are and don't touch a thing,' ordered Avon moving away from the communication console.

'What's the matter with him?' asked Vila in the gloom of the cargo hold. 'Doesn't he realise what we've found? If we don't get this lot back on Scorpio double quick some Federation patrol ship might discover us and we could lose the lot!' Vila moved to pick up

the shimmering crystals so highly prized as the one true mineral of value in the universe.

'No!' Tarrant caught Vila's arm. 'Better do as Avon says. He has a sixth sense about this sort of thing.'

'He's got damned little sense if you ask me,' muttered Vila. 'We're wasting valuable time!'

It was a few tantalising moments before Avon's stern voice cut through the ether again. 'Stand by to teleport immediately.'

'B . . . but the crystals . . .?' stammered Vila.

'Leave them. Do not touch anything in that cargo hold!'

Tarrant looked at Vila and shrugged. 'Ready, Vila?'

'No I'm not,' retorted the other. 'You go back now. I'll join you in a few seconds.'

'Vila . . .?' began Tarrant, giving him one of his quizzical looks.

'Go on,' snapped Vila testily. 'I'll return in a few moments.'

'Where is that damned fool?' growled Avon as Tarrant materialised on Scorpio's flight deck.

'He said there was something he wanted to look at before teleporting back.'

'I'll bet there was,' hissed Avon, 'Dayna, get him back immediately. I'm taking Tarrant down to area Delta Three. Call me as soon as Vila is back on board.'

Dayna nodded in agreement then scanned her screen, trying to pinpoint Vila's exact position.

Vila knew he had little time. Avon would soon be after his blood but it was a risk he was prepared to take. His eyes scanned the piles of black boxes surrounding him as he stuffed handfuls of the precious crystals into his uniform.

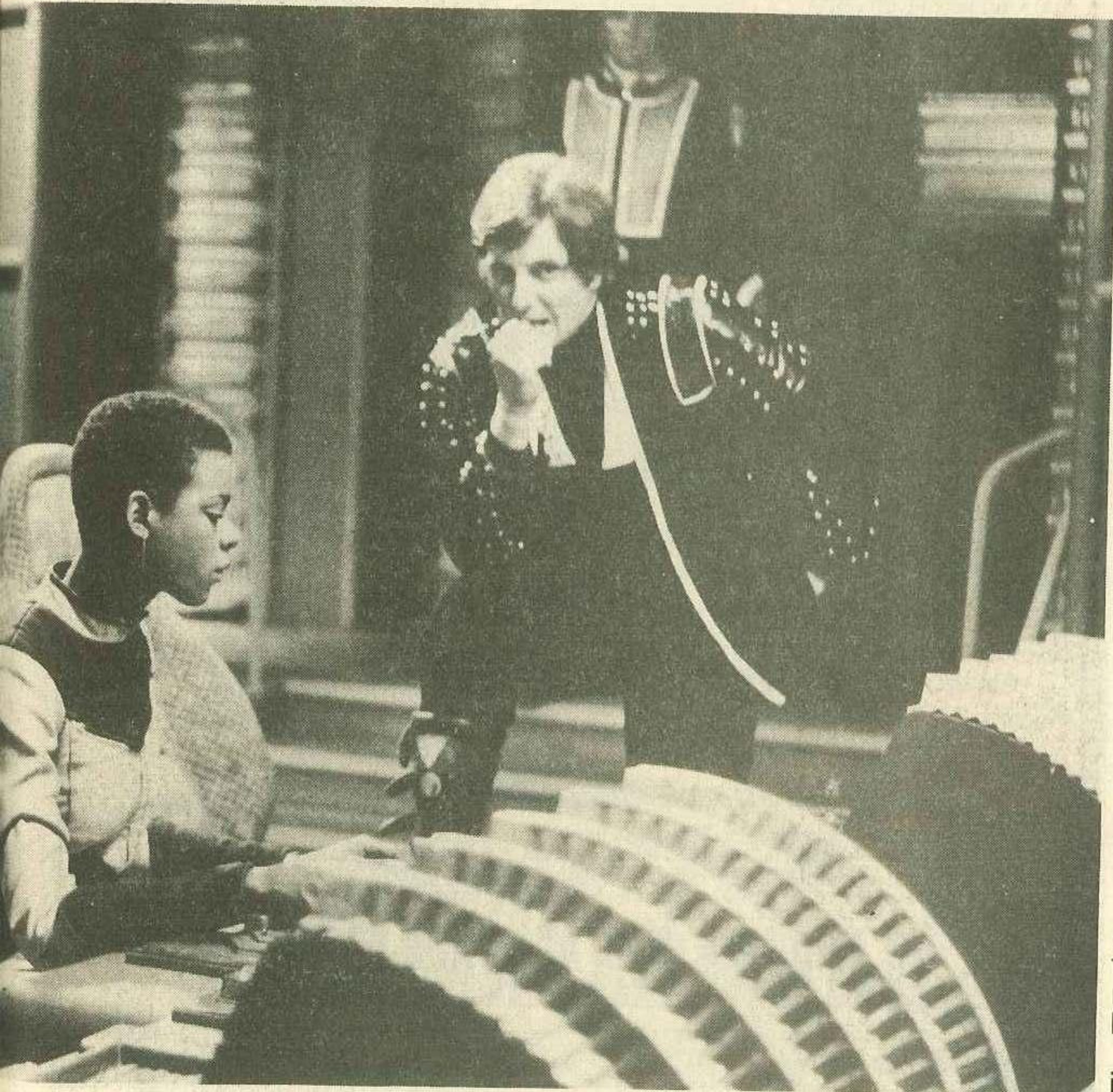
'Vila?' It was Dayna's voice. 'Avon's getting annoyed. I've located your co-ordinates. I'm teleporting you back right now.'

'Just a second,' called Vila. 'Just one more thing I've got to do!' He reached out and, in the gloom, located a small black box sitting on the deck surrounded by piles of crystals. If his guess was right, there would be about a billion credit's worth of crystals in the unopened box. As his hands grasped it, he felt the familiar tingling sensation as his body was snatched back to Scorpio.

'He'll kill you,' predicted Dayna as Vila's image materialised in the teleport section. 'You know he said nothing was to be brought back on board from that ship.'

'Where is he?' panted Vila, peering about the flight deck.

Where is that damned fool . . . ?



'Down in Delta Three with Tarrant. He wants you down there immediately.'

'Right, I'm on my way.' Vila moved towards the door, still cradling the black box in his hands, his pockets bulging with loot.

'He'll have a fit when he sees that box,' said Soolin, moving to join Vila.

'Probably,' replied Vila, 'but only if he sees it.' Vila gave the blonde a knowing wink as she followed him down the corridor.

'What's in it?' Soolin's curiosity was getting the better of her.

'Let's go in here and find out.' Vila pointed to a small cabin in the Alpha section. 'If it's like the others, you'll see enough nevo crystals to keep yours truly in wine women and song for the rest of my natural... on my own planet, that is!'

Vila set to work examining the sealed box. At first glance it seemed there was no lock but Vila's eye was trained for such things. He withdrew a small toolkit, unfolded it, selected a slim device and started probing the edge of the box.

'Er, Vila...' began Soolin hesitatingly. 'What if it's not full of crystals? What if there's something else in there? Something dangerous?'

'That's a chance I'm prepared to take,' muttered Vila, feeling for the almost invisible atomic lock.

'Yes,' confirmed Soolin under her breath. 'But is Avon...?'

'Where the devil is Vila?' snapped Avon over the communication system.

'He came back on board a few minutes ago,' replied Dayna. 'Both he and Soolin went off to join you. I told him which area you were in. Maybe he's got lost.'

'Or maybe he's avoiding me,' hissed Avon. 'Make a search of the ship now! He must be found and brought to Delta Three for an immediate medical check.'

Something in Avon's tone made Dayna's skin prickle. 'Is there something wrong?' she asked in a low voice.

'You could say that.' Avon's voice was tense. 'I've just given Tarrant a thorough medical. He's showing signs of a fever and Vila may have contracted it as well.'

'Y... you don't mean...'
Dayna's voice tailed off.

'Yes, Dayna. It looks like Tarrant has caught the plague!'

The atmosphere in delta Three was tense. Avon worked quickly to connect sensor contracts from Orac to the prone form of Tarrant.

The ship's pilot was deathly pale, perspiration dripping from his face.

A soft moan escaped his quivering lips as he tried to twist and turn on the medi-couch but his strength failed him.

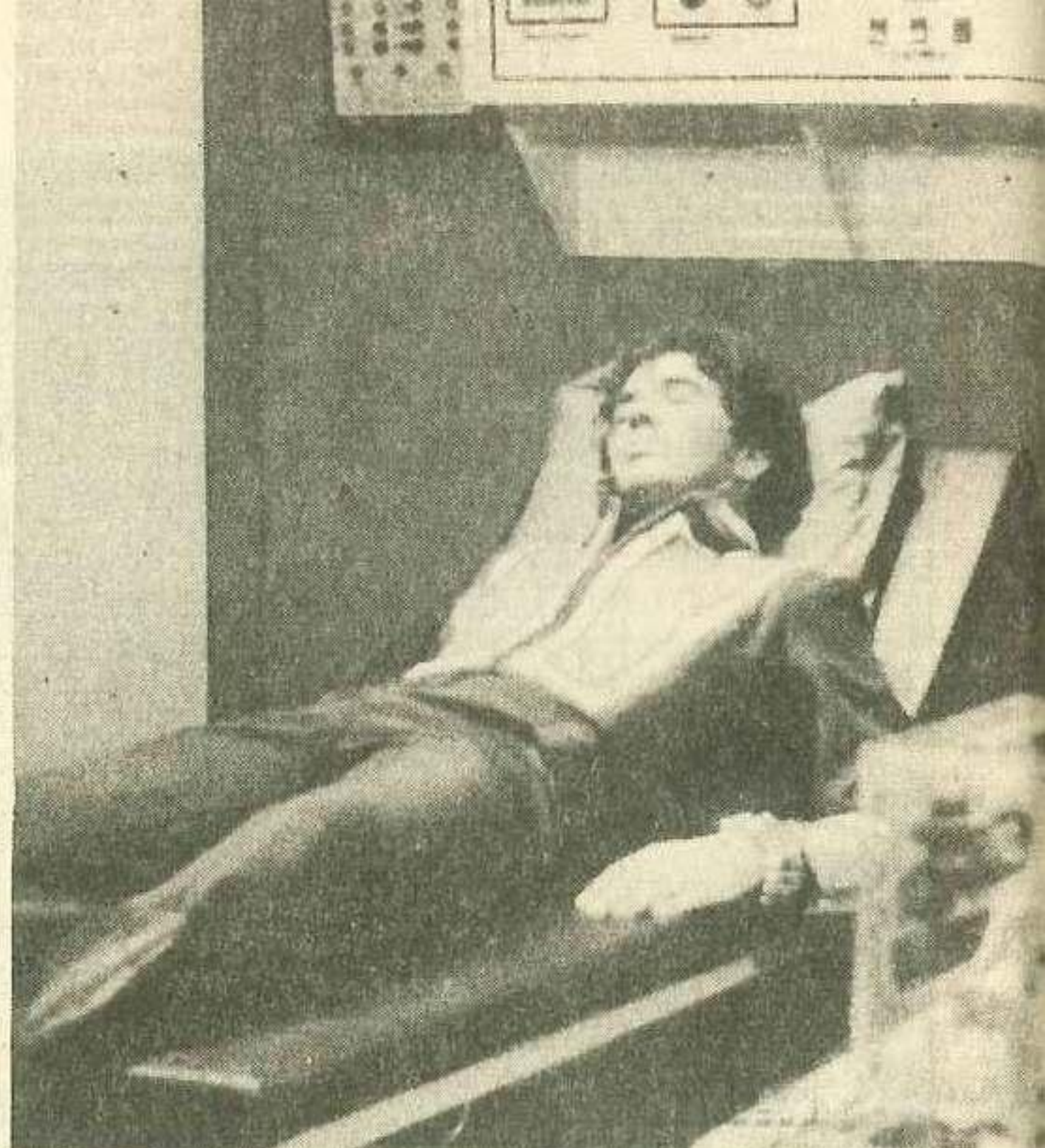
'He looks terrible,' gasped Dayna as she stepped through the door. She looked at Avon's taut face as he turned to acknowledge her presence.

'He's worse than terrible,' said Avon. 'He's dying. Whatever it was that killed the crew of the ship he boarded has now begun to work on him. I just pray we're in time to save his life.'

'But what can it be?'

'I'm hoping Orac will give us the answer to that,' said Avon reaching to switch on the small computer. The lights flashed then pulsed in a steady rhythm. 'Well, Orac? Have you an answer?'

'Tarrant is suffering from a non-viral infection,' chirped the machine. 'He has been subjected to a Theron ray which has affected his metabolism and produced the same physical effects as the plague virus which was rife on planet



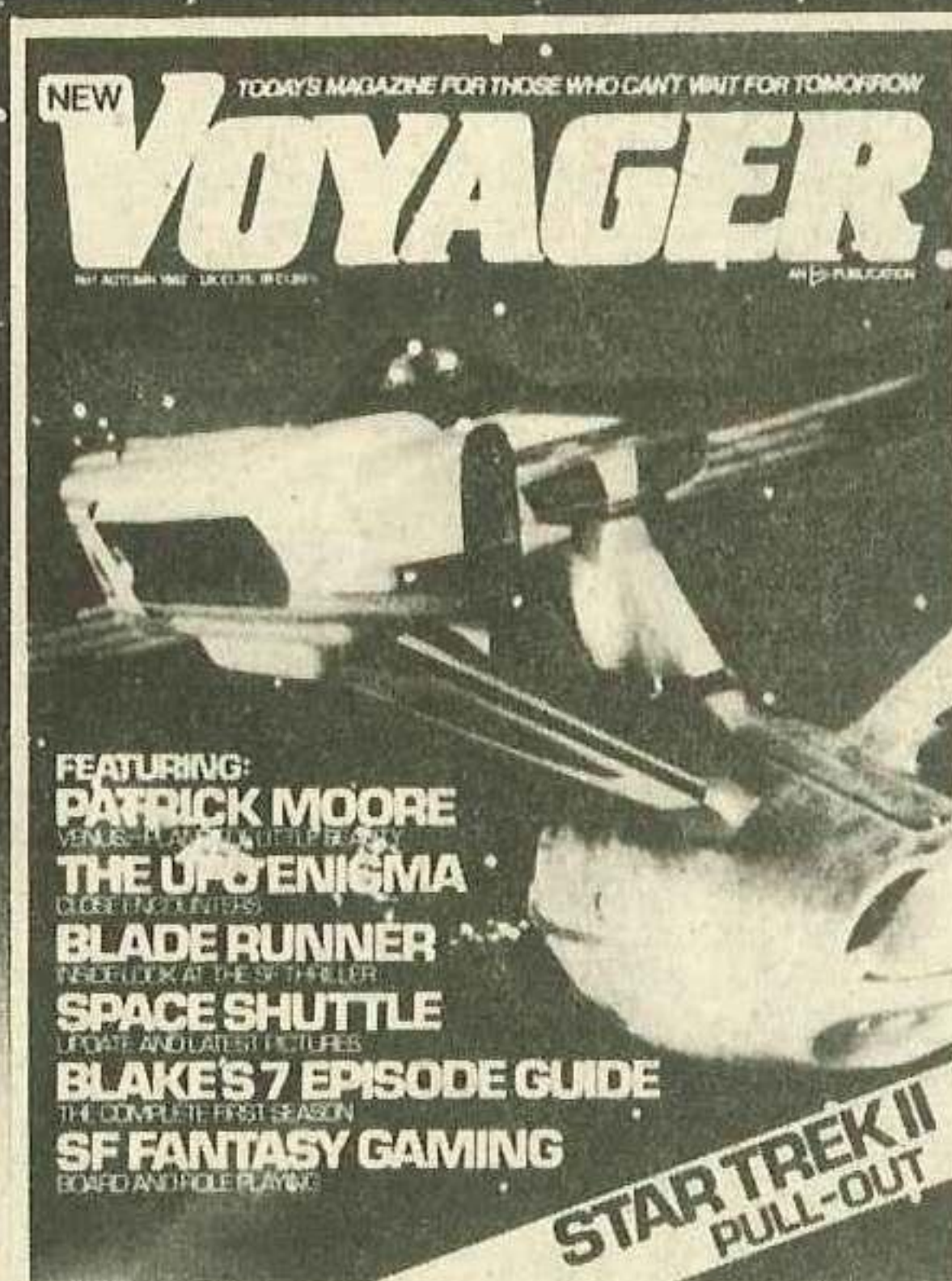
A soft moan escaped his quivering lips as he tried to twist and turn on the medi-couch.

Earth in centuries gone by.'

Dayna and Avon looked puzzled. 'You mean there was a ray device on that ship which caused not only this effect on Tarrant but the deaths of the crew as well?'

part 2 next month!

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INTRUDER! PREPARE TO DIE!

OUT OF MY WAY, YOU PATHETIC FREAK. YOU'RE WASTING MY TIME!



HA! SUCH FOOLHARDINESS MAY BE BRAVE, BUT IT'S HARDLY INTELLIGENT! YOU'LL PAY DEARLY FOR THAT INSULT!!



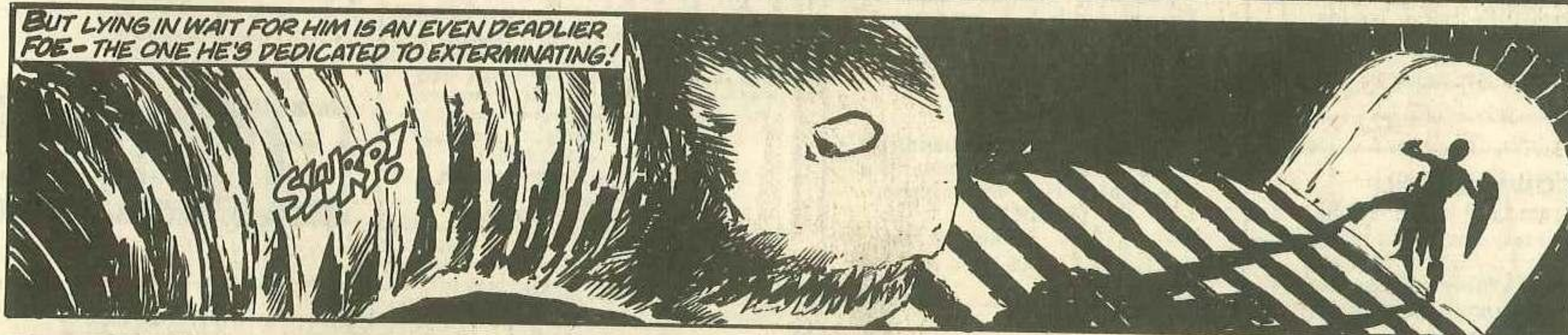
NOT AS DEARLY AS YOU, MY UGLY FRIEND!

HERO CONTINUES HIS JOURNEY BELOW, AND THE DEEPER HE GOES THE MORE ABOMINABLE THE MONSTERS BECOME. BUT LUCK APPEARS TO BE WITH HIM AND HE'S INVINCIBLE.



EVEN WHEN THREATENED BY THE HORROR OF THE GREEN SLIME!

BUT LYING IN WAIT FOR HIM IS AN EVEN DEADLIER FOE - THE ONE HE'S DEDICATED TO EXTERMINATING!



AH! AT LAST! THE DEADLY PURPLE WORM! IT'S EVEN MORE HORRIFIC THAN I IMAGINED!



MY SWORD!

I'VE LOST IT!!

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To: TOWEL OFFER, Marvel Comics Ltd., 205-211 Kentish Town Road, London NW5 2JU.

Please supply (give quantity) Spider-Man towel(s)
..... Hulk towel(s).

Name: (Block capitals)

ADDRESS

I enclose cheque/PO No.

Value £

(cheques made payable to Marvel Comics Ltd).