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BLAKES 7

A MARVEL MONTHLY

No.4 JANUARY 1982

45p



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FREE COMPETITION INSIDE!



BLAST OFF INTO 1982 WITH SCORPIO AND ITS OUTLAW CREW!



SEDUCTIVE SERVALAN
pull-out colour poster

SECONDS TO LIVE IN LOOP OF DEATH~inside!

BLAKES 7

The Cast
 Paul Darrow Avon
 Michael Keating Vila
 Josette Simon Dayna
 Steven Pacey Tarrant
 Glynis Barber Soolin
 Jacqueline Pearce Servalan
 Peter Tuddenham Voice of Orac/Slave
 Vere Lorrimer Producer

Editor: STEWART WALES Art: BERNARD MCGOWAN
 Art Assistance: JACKI THORN Photographic: KEN ARMSTRONG

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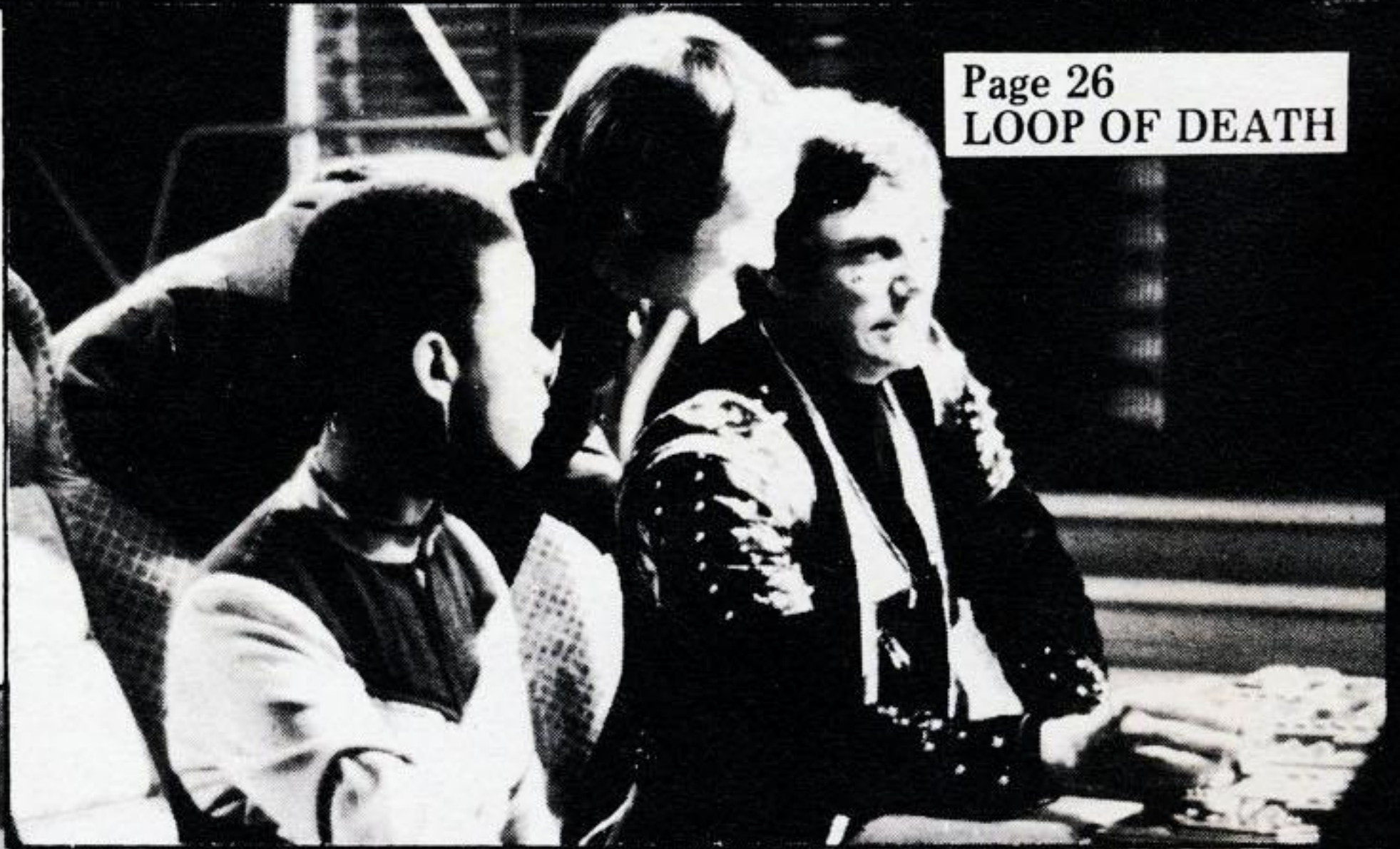
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The Illustrated Encyclopedia of
**SPACE
 TECHNOLOGY**
 A comprehensive history of space exploration

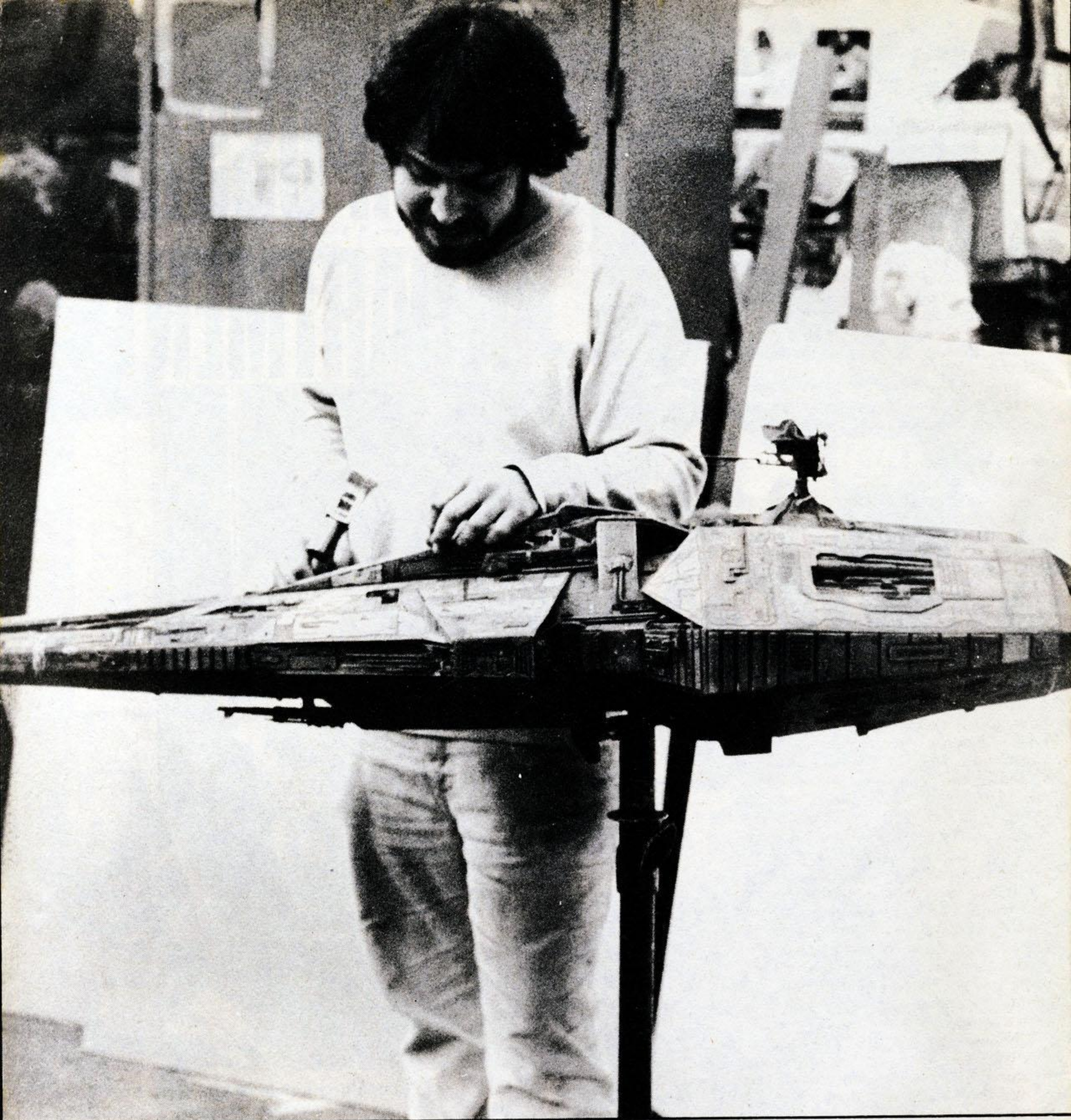


Principal Author
 Kenneth Gatland
 Foreword by
 Arthur C. Clarke



THE IMPOSSIBLE DEPARTMENT

Marooned in a snarling jungle of the west London roadways, number 250 Western Avenue announces itself as 'BBC Visual Effects' by a small sign over the gate. You can easily miss it as you zap past in your 70mph traffic jam — and YOU'D be the loser if you did, for behind that modest sign is an Aladdin's Cave of marvels from your TV screens, including all the models and other demonic devices used in the Blake productions. . .



The BBC's 'Special Effects' department is no longer known by that name — visual effects is the name of the game now since they handle every type of effect from light entertainment to heavy drama. If the props department can't produce it, then it's down to Visual Effects to deliver the goods — be it a spaceship or antique pistol.

There are about forty staff in the department at the moment and that number is constantly growing as increasing demands are made on them.

The majority of staff are effects assistants, which means that they have got to be able to handle almost anything — from model building to blowing things up — although there are some obvious specialists, some guys who are particularly good at working in metal or wood or some other material.

So it has been at the door of this young and keen crew of technicians that the task of creating the hardware and illusions for Blake has been laid. Effects designer Jim Francis told us about some

particular problems that the fourth series of Blake has set for his staff:

"The biggest problem is that all the spacecraft shots have got to be new — now that the old Liberator is gone. All of the model filming, which was already on stock for the previous series, has got to be done again. In addition, we have got to provide, within the budget, something which is at least acceptable to the viewer; a viewer who is already overloaded with stuff from Buck Rogers and Galactica, both of which have got very high budgets

and are 100% on high quality film, which Blake isn't.

"One big change we've gone for is to build a lot of our models very big. The base area which you'll see in the fourth series is also very big: previously it might have been three feet across, but we've built it out to fifteen feet. Now we can make real moves on it — rather than take it from one angle only, we can pan and track round it.

"We've also gone for a really big model of the new ship — the largest one is four feet long, although we also use two small ones for long-distance shots."

All of this should add up to a greater reality and excitement in the special effects shots in the new series and, judging from the pre-release shots which we saw, Jim's boys have certainly pulled a few tricks out of the hat! They have been considerably more ambitious with this fourth series than with any previous ones:

"It has been an ambitious project in many ways. Not the least being that we are to make a craft, the Scorpio, land on a planetary surface, something which previous series have never attempted. For the actual touchdown, we are using a selection of full-size part-models, landing struts and things like that. And we're actually showing our space craft flying in the atmosphere in this series, distinct from the normal, easily-done space shots: we have one shot of the Scorpio actually flying through some huge doors in a cliff wall. I'm not telling how it's done — see if you can spot it when you see it!"

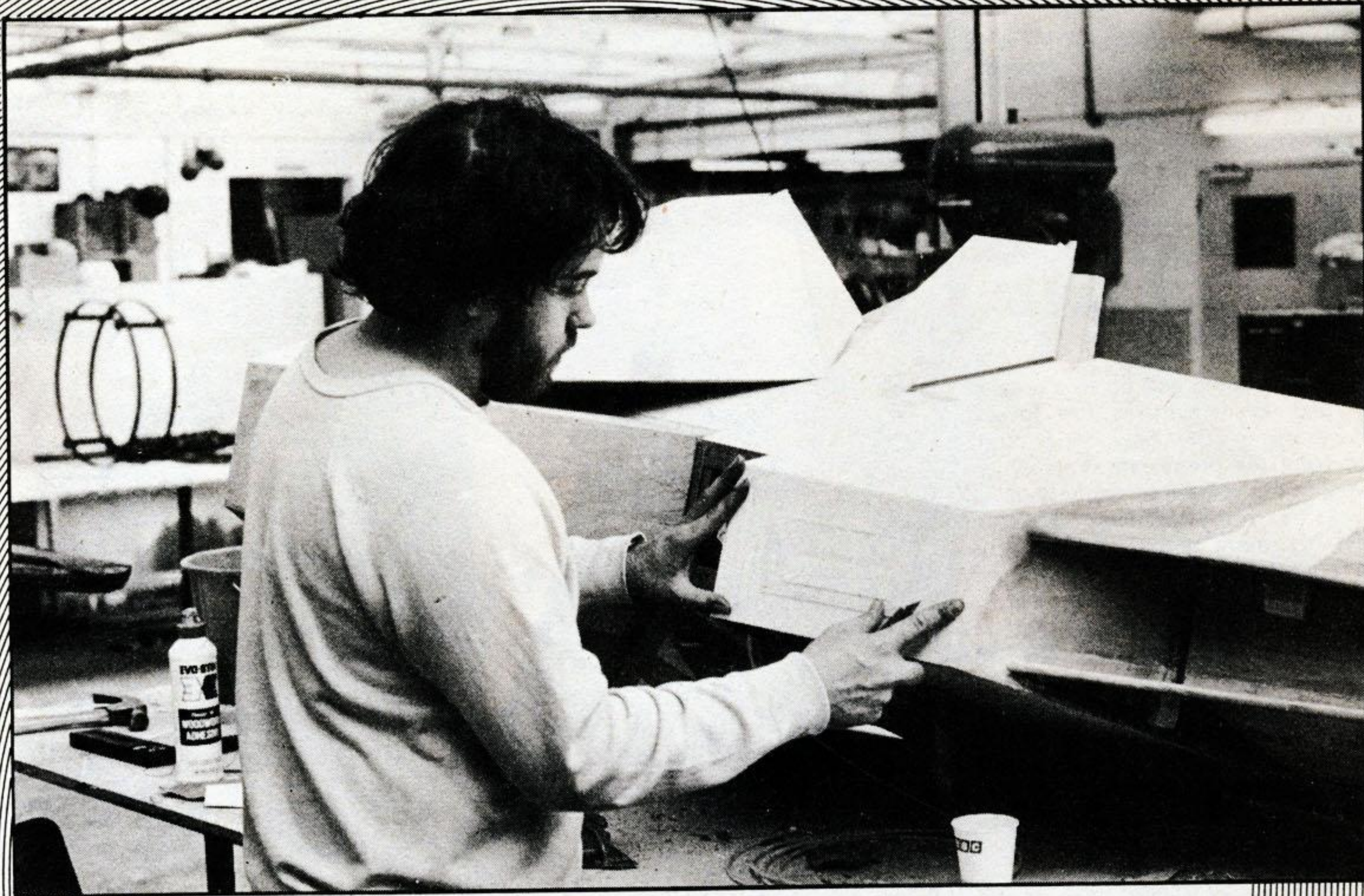
Seeing the Scorpio for the first time, we were a little disappointed with her shape — it was rather conventional and could easily have flown from the screen of Galactica or Star Wars. But, as Jim explained, this is quite intentional:

"It was a requirement of the script that the Scorpio be an old beaten-up ship which was capable of re-entry. So we had to have the basic aerodynamic shape. The producer wanted something which was going to be instantly recognisable, like the three-pronged Liberator, something with a very strong image.

"Now if we tried to do anything too way out, we'd run the risk of not making it acceptable to the majority of viewers. So we've produced something which will be easy for viewers to accept. However, Servalan's new ship is totally opposite to the Scorpio in design concept — it's far more streamlined, has less panel lines and is much smoother. We've played safe with the Scorpio and allowed ourselves to be a lot more free with the rest of the ships in the series."

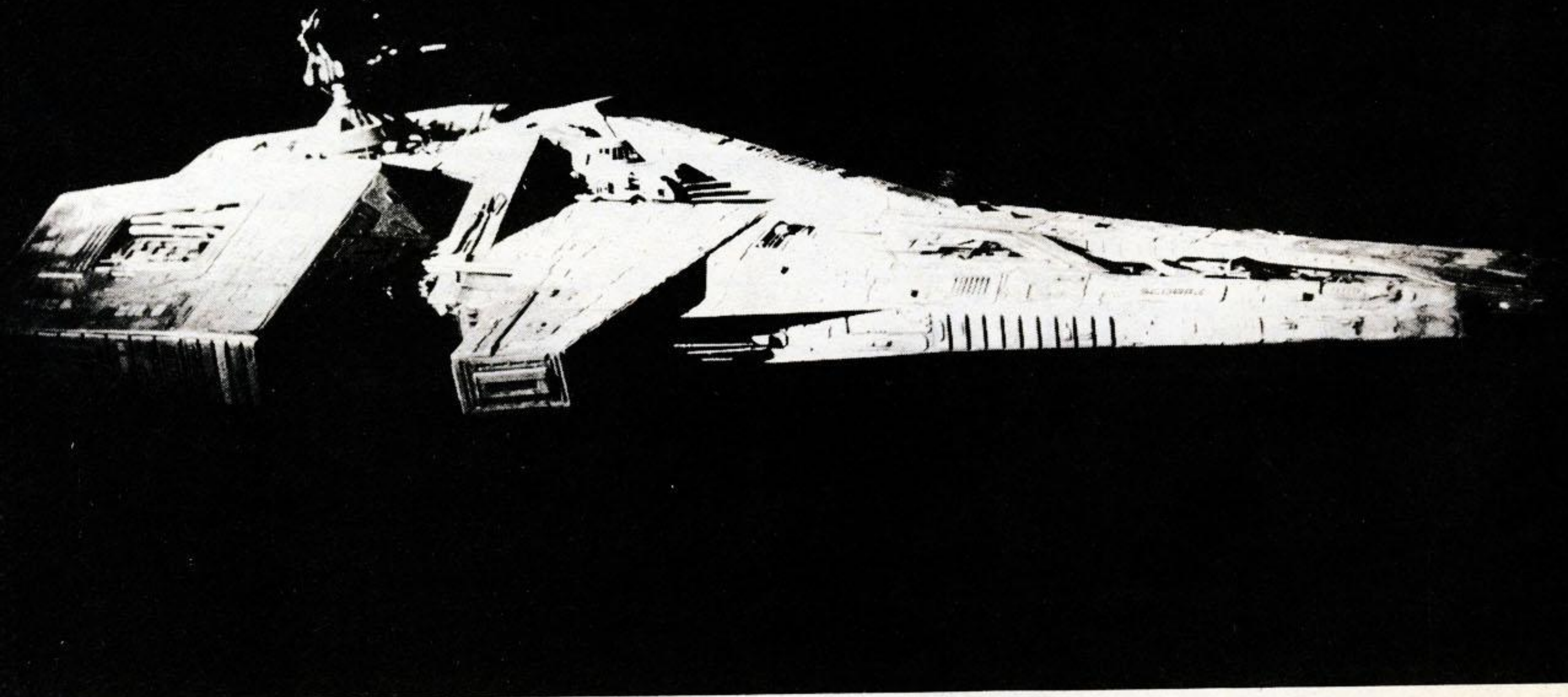
After spending an entire afternoon with us, patiently answering our questions, Jim, and his colleague Andy Lazell showed us round the Effects workshop and introduced all the guys there who so painstakingly create anything from spaceships to spare heads. The





whole field of visual effects is so fascinating and immensely detailed that a couple of pages here just cannot do it justice — over the coming months, therefore, we will be bringing you a series of features about the techniques and characters involved in

producing these amazing illusions. In the meantime, we really must suggest to Jim that he arranges for the sign outside 250 Western Avenue to be changed: it ought to read, 'The incredible we do immediately. The impossible takes a little longer!'



BATTLE CRUISER

HOLDING STATIONARY ORBIT BEHIND THE MOON OF CIGNUS 3 SCORPIO IS RIGGED FOR SILENT OPERATIONS. ON THE FLIGHT DECK IS A TENSION WHICH COULD BE CUT WITH A KNIFE...



TARGETS MARKED. BEARING SIX-EIGHT-HUNDRED AND HOLDING STEADY COURSE AT STANDARD BY FOUR MASTER.

HOW MANY, SLAVE... AND WHAT COMPOSITION?

I BELIEVE THREE BATTLE CRUISERS, AND ONE LARGE TRANSPORT, MASTER BUT THEY ARE STILL A LONG WAY OFF

WHAT? WE'RE NO MATCH FOR THAT LOT! LET'S GET OUT OF HERE!

VILA'S RIGHT, AVON. A COUPLE OF SHIPS WE COULD MANAGE... BUT NOT A WHOLE FLEET!

I BELIEVE THAT BATTLE FLEET IS BOUND FOR XENON - CARRYING A COLONISING FORCE. WE EITHER ATTACK AND DESTROY THEM RIGHT NOW OR KISS GOODBYE TO OUR BASE FOREVER.

I DON'T CARE ABOUT XENON I'D RATHER STAY ALIVE A LITTLE LONGER.

AVON HAD SPOKEN. THE DECISION MADE. MOMENTS LATER THE SCORPIO WAS THUNDERING FORWARD AT FULL POWER... ITS CREW AT THE BATTLE STATIONS...

IT'S A TOUGH CHOICE. I VOTE WE MAKE A RUN FOR IT.

THIS IS NOT A DEMOCRACY, TARRANT! WE ATTACK!

ALL TARGETS IN RANGE, MASTER.

TARRANT, ENGAGE THE CRUISERS, FIRST!

PLASMA BOLTS FIRED AND RUNNING!



Kennedy



SHTAANG!

YOU GOT IT, TARRANT!

SILENCE VILA! TARRANT, TAKE THE SECOND CRUISER FROM ASTERN!

I'VE GOT HIM ALL LINED UP!

AS AVON ASSUMED COMMAND OF SCORPIO'S FLIGHT CONTROLS TARRANT CONCENTRATED ON THE WEAPONS SYSTEM...



THE TERRORISTS... LED BY AVON! THEY'RE CUTTING US TO RIBBONS! BUT THEY WON'T GET AWAY FROM ME! DIVERT ALL SPARE POWER TO THE LASERS. WE'RE GOING TO NAIL THEM!



I'VE LOST THE THIRD CRUISER - BUT THE TRANSPORT'S NEARLY IN RANGE!

THEN TAKE IT OUT, TARRANT. WE'LL WORRY ABOUT THE CRUISER LATER!

M...MAYBE HE'S DECIDED TO RUN FOR IT..?



FIRE, TARRANT! FIRE, DAMN YOU!

NO! THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE AHEAD. CAN'T MAKE IT OUT!



THE IMAGE CAME CLEAR ALL TOO SOON...

THE LAST BATTLE CRUISER - IT'S TAKING US HEAD-ON! WE'RE FINISHED!

EMERGENCY POWER, SLAVE TARRANT... FIRE NOW! MAXIMUM SPREAD!



HE'S RAMMED US! AAAHHH!

ZAANG!

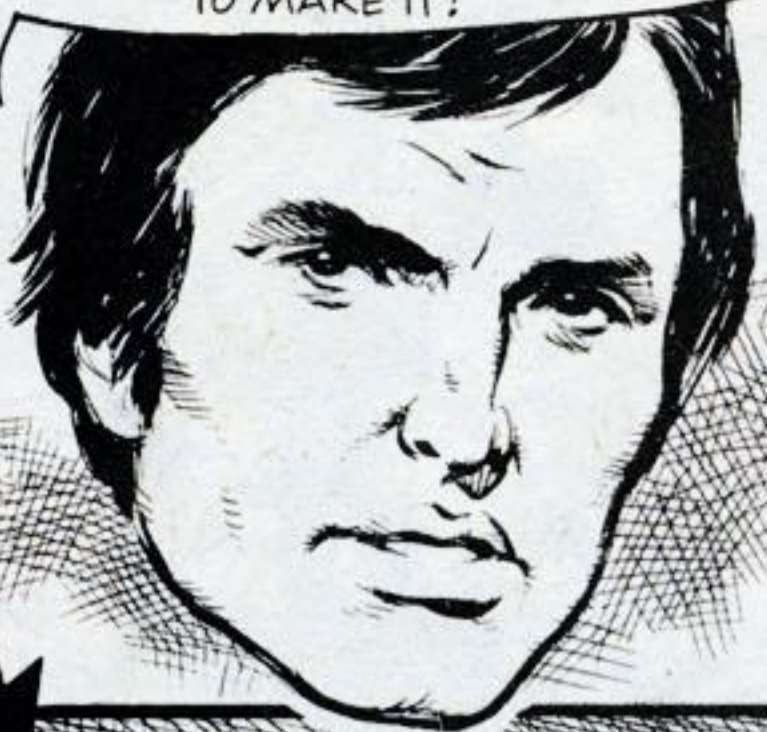


BREAK OFF THE ATTACK, AVON! WE CAN'T TAKE ANOTHER HIT!

SLAVE! DAMAGE REPORT... IMMEDIATELY!

I... I'M AFRAID IT'S VERY BAD, MASTER. LIFE SUPPORT FUNCTIONS HAVE CEASED— MAIN GENERATOR BADLY DAMAGED— TELEPORT OUT OF ACTION...

ENOUGH, SLAVE! THERE IS ONLY ONE COURSE OF ACTION LEFT OPEN, WE WILL HAVE TO FORCE A LANDING ON CIGNUS 3. PREPARE FOR EMERGENCY LANDING... AND PRAY WE HAVE ENOUGH POWER TO MAKE IT!



MOMENTS LATER, LEAVING A FIERY TRAIL IN THE SKY, SCORPIO TORE THROUGH THE ATMOSPHERE OF THE PLANET.

VILA— SCAN AHEAD FOR A LANDING SITE!

I DON'T BELIEVE IN LUCK, VILA! TARRANT... WE'RE GOING STRAIGHT IN. WHEN I GIVE THE COMMAND... FIRE THE PLASMA BOLTS— EVERYTHING WE'VE GOT!

DOWN THERE? YOU'VE GOT TO BE JOKING! THERE ISN'T A CLEAR SPACE THIS SIDE OF THE HORIZON. A GOOD TRY, AVON... BUT OUR LUCK'S JUST RUN OUT!

UHH? RIGHT, AVON...!



NOW, TARRANT! CONTINUOUS FIRE! BRACE YOURSELVES, HERE WE GO!

IT SEEMED AN ETERNITY BEFORE THE MASSIVE SHIP SLITHERED TO A FINAL, SIZZLING HALT...





WELL, DO YOU THINK IT CAN BE FIXED?

PHEW... WHAT A DUMP OF A PLANET. NO WONDER IT'S NEVER BEEN COLONISED.

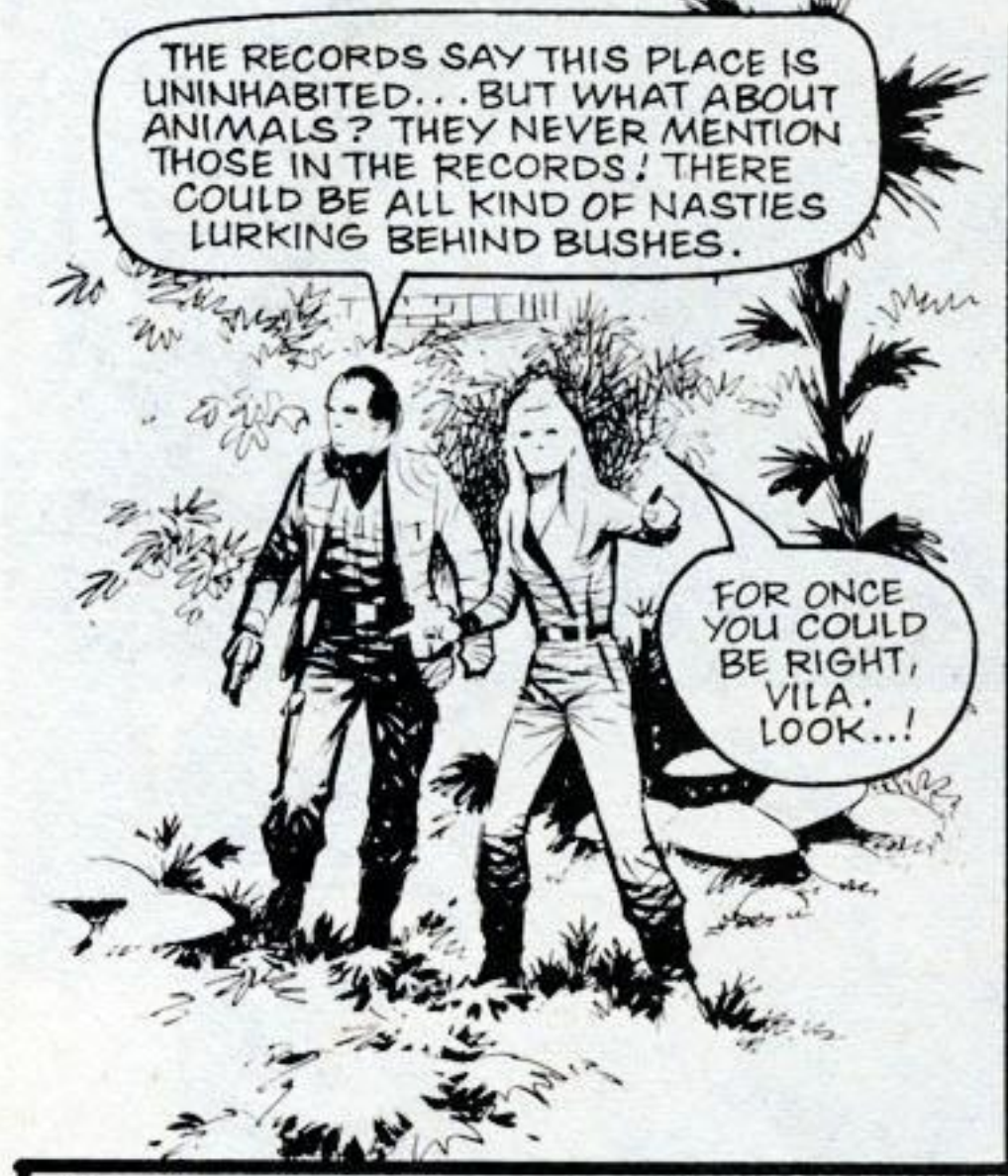
THAT LANDING OF YOURS DID ALMOST AS MUCH AS THAT LUNATIC FEDERATION COMMANDER'S SHIP... BUT IT CAN ALL BE PUT RIGHT IN TIME. EMERGENCY REPAIRS WILL ONLY TAKE A FEW HOURS.



AND TO MAKE SURE IT STAYS THAT WAY, VILA, I WANT YOU AND SOOLIN TO STAND GUARD OUT THERE WHILE TARRANT WORKS ON THE SHIP AND I REPAIR THE TELEPORT.

O-OUT THERE Y... YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUS.

COME ON, VILA. I'LL HOLD YOUR HAND IF YOU'RE FRIGHTENED.



THE RECORDS SAY THIS PLACE IS UNINHABITED... BUT WHAT ABOUT ANIMALS? THEY NEVER MENTION THOSE IN THE RECORDS! THERE COULD BE ALL KIND OF NASTIES LURKING BEHIND BUSHES.

FOR ONCE YOU COULD BE RIGHT, VILA. LOOK...!



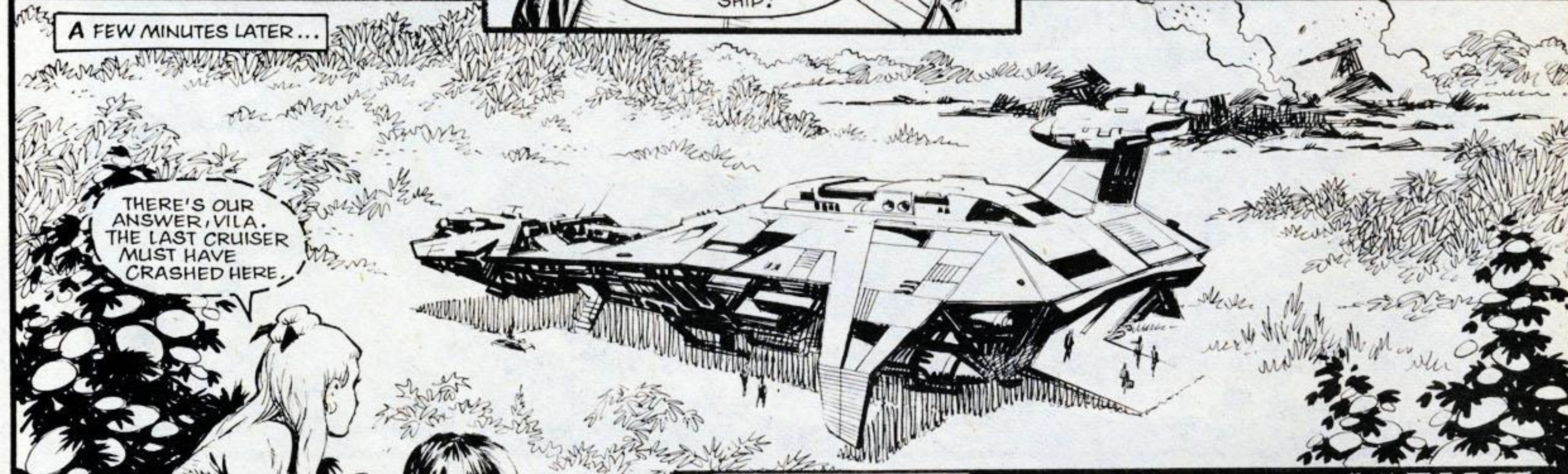
SEE? SMOKE OF SOME KIND. DO ANIMALS MAKE FIRE?

NONE THAT I'VE EVER COME ACROSS! LET'S GET BACK TO THE SHIP!



WE NEED MORE INFORMATION BEFORE WE ALERT THE OTHERS. FOLLOW ME!

WHAAT? ARE YOU MAD? SOOLIN...!



A FEW MINUTES LATER...

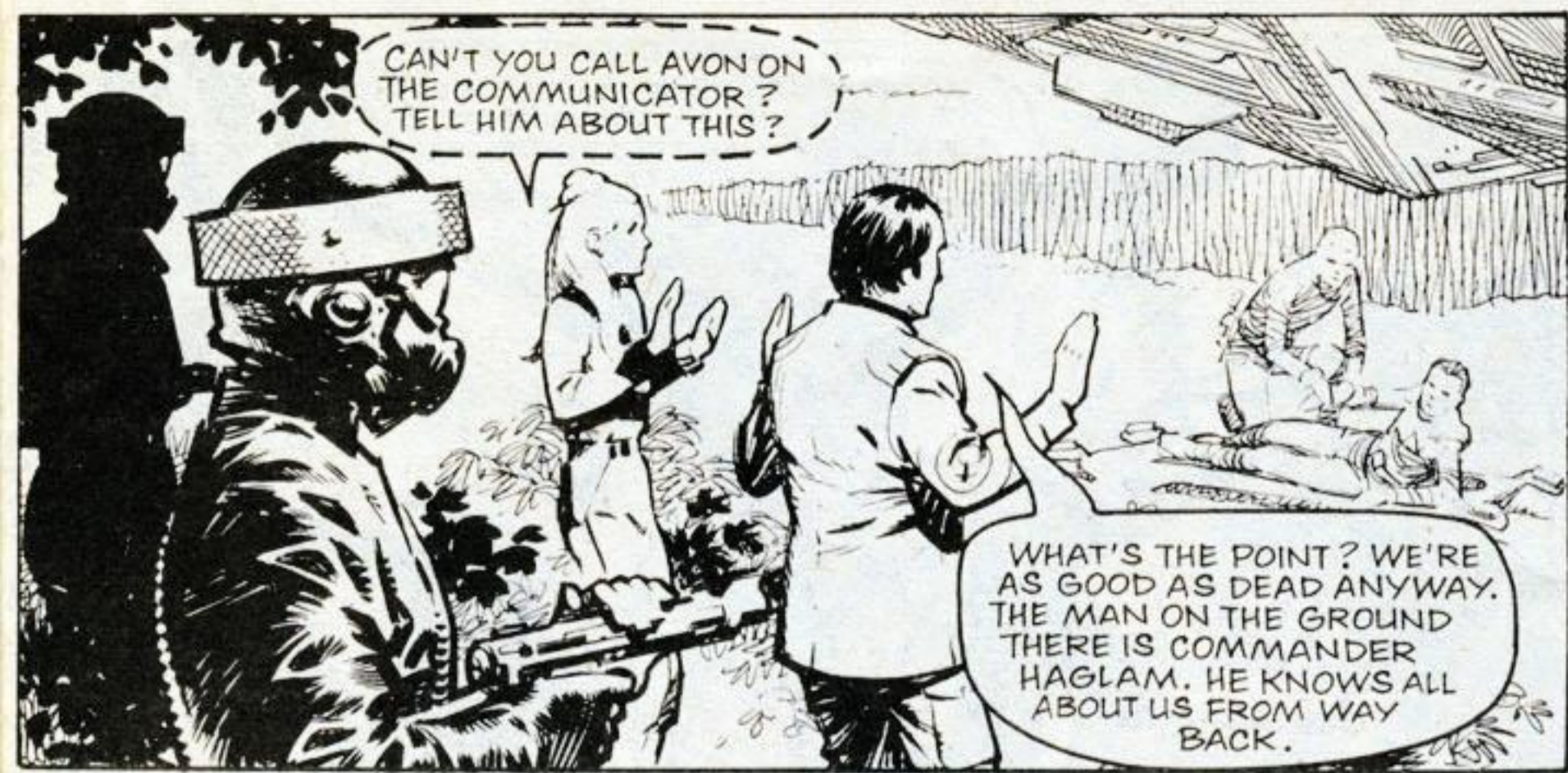
THERE'S OUR ANSWER, VILA. THE LAST CRUISER MUST HAVE CRASHED HERE.

YES... AND THE TRANSPORT JOINED IT. SUDDENLY THIS PLANET IS VERY UNHEALTHY. I'M GOING TO MAKE MYSELF SCARCE!



YOU'RE GOING NOWHERE UNTIL YOU'VE ANSWERED A FEW QUESTIONS, FRIEND!

NO SUDDEN MOVES! ON YOUR FEET... OUR COMMANDER WILL WANT TO TALK TO YOU!



CAN'T YOU CALL AVON ON THE COMMUNICATOR? TELL HIM ABOUT THIS?

WHAT'S THE POINT? WE'RE AS GOOD AS DEAD ANYWAY. THE MAN ON THE GROUND THERE IS COMMANDER HAGLAM. HE KNOWS ALL ABOUT US FROM WAY BACK.



COMMANDER HAGLAM, WE FOUND THOSE TWO SKULKING IN THE BUSHES. WHAT DO YOU WISH DONE WITH THEM?

y-you... v...v...

GO ON... SPIT IT OUT. TELL THEM WHO I AM, WHERE I COME FROM...



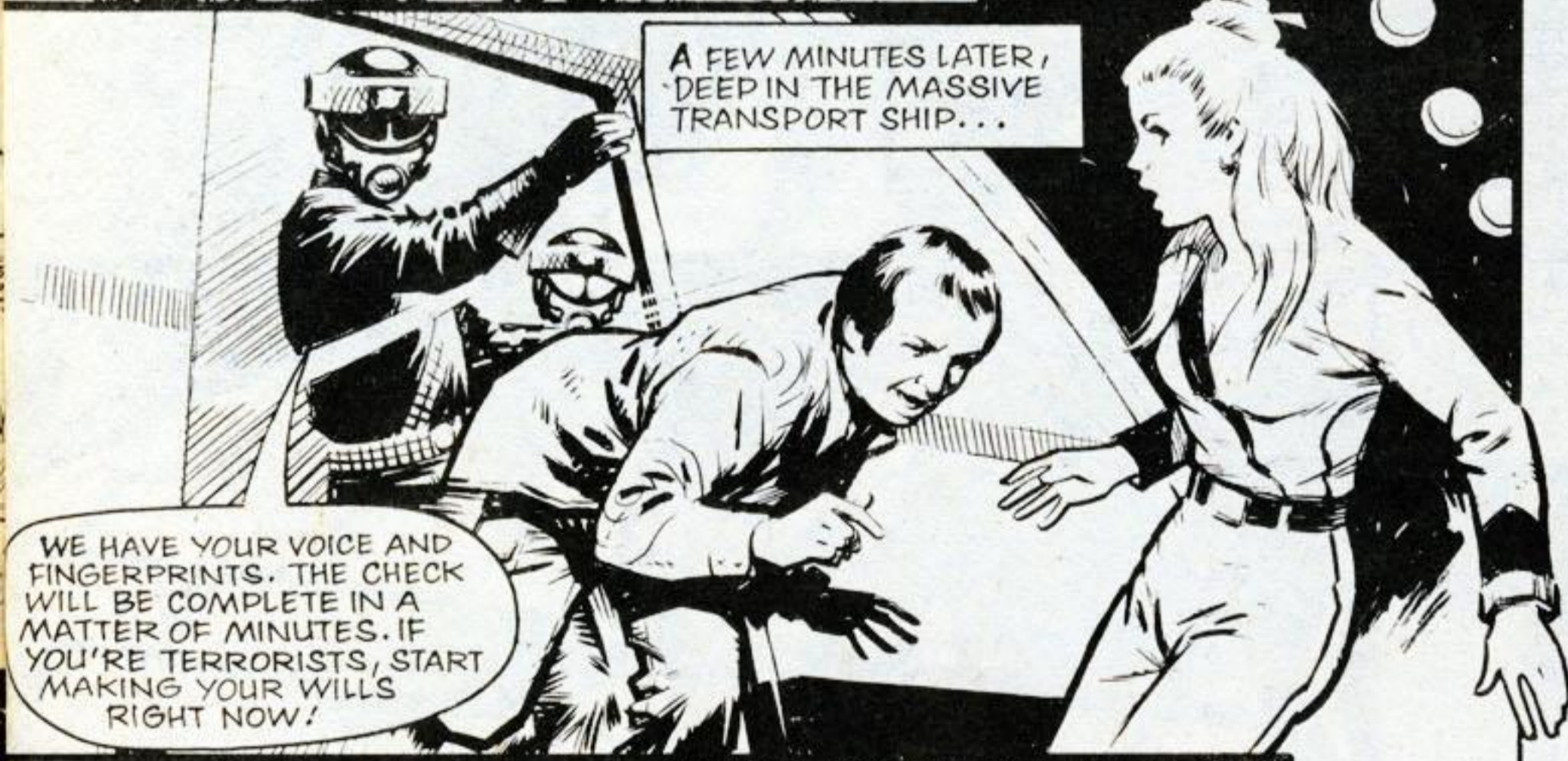
HE... HE'S ONE... G... GOT... TO... UHHHH...

LOOKS LIKE YOUR BOSS HAS JUST SNUFFED IT, FRIEND.



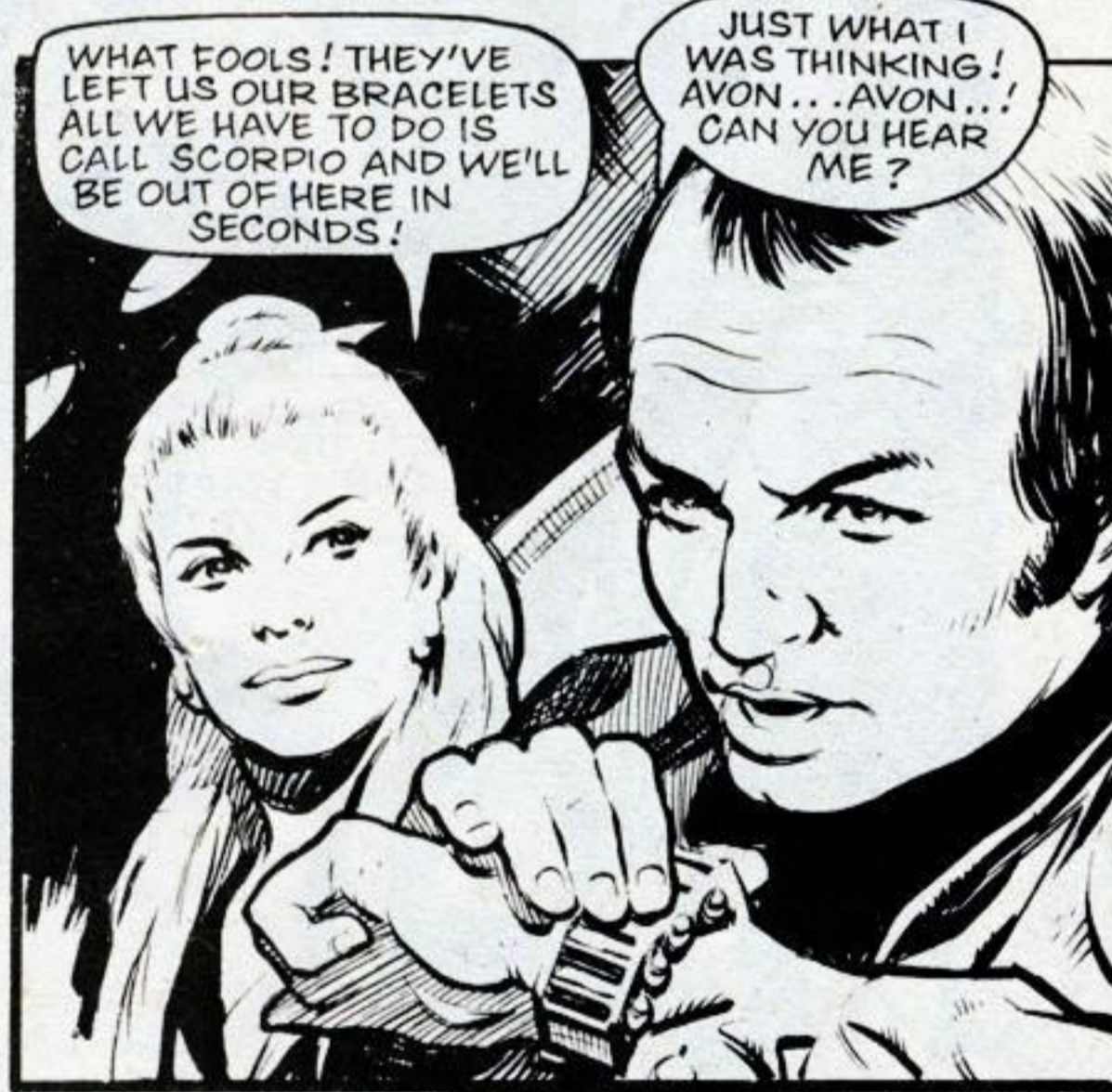
WHATEVER HE WAS TRYING TO SAY WE WILL SOON FIND OUT! TAKE THEM TO THE SECURE SECTION OF THE TRANSPORT. WE'LL RUN THEIR PRINTS THROUGH THE COMPUTER.

JUST WHEN IT LOOKED LIKE WE'D GOT A REPRIEVE WE'RE SENTENCED TO DEATH AGAIN. MAKES YOU WONDER IF LIVING IS ALL IT'S CRACKED-UP TO BE!



A FEW MINUTES LATER, DEEP IN THE MASSIVE TRANSPORT SHIP...

WE HAVE YOUR VOICE AND FINGERPRINTS. THE CHECK WILL BE COMPLETE IN A MATTER OF MINUTES. IF YOU'RE TERRORISTS, START MAKING YOUR WILLS RIGHT NOW!



WHAT FOOLS! THEY'VE LEFT US OUR BRACELETS ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS CALL SCORPIO AND WE'LL BE OUT OF HERE IN SECONDS!

JUST WHAT I WAS THINKING! AVON... AVON... CAN YOU HEAR ME?



... SO WE NEED YOU TO TELEPORT US OUT OF HERE BEFORE THEY DISCOVER WHO WE ARE. CAN YOU DO IT NOW?

SORRY, VILA. THE TELEPORT'S OUT OF ACTION AND WE DON'T HAVE ENOUGH BODIES TO MOUNT A RESCUE MISSION AGAINST SUCH ODDS. YOU'LL JUST HAVE TO FIND YOUR OWN WAY OUT.

AS VILA'S EXCITED VOICE PULSED OUT ACROSS THE AIR-WAVES, EXPLAINING WHAT HAD HAPPENED...



TERRIFIC! WE COULD BE TAKEN FOR EXECUTION ANY SECOND... AND AVON WON'T LIFT A FINGER TO HELP US.

THERE'S GOT TO BE A WAY OUT. THIS LOCK... IT'S NOT A SONIC ONE... IT COULD BE A THERMAL INTERSPACE. IF IT IS...



... THEN THE CIRCUIT COULD BE INTERRUPTED IF ITS REFLECTORS ARE SHIELDED FOR A FRACTION OF A SECOND.

I HOPE YOU'RE RIGHT, VILA. REMEMBER, THESE THINGS HAVE A NASTY HABIT OF SELF-DESTRUCTING IF THEY'RE TAMPERED WITH.



AT THAT MOMENT... ON THE TRANSPORT'S COMMUNICATIONS DECK...

CAPTAIN! IT'S THE ANSWER ON THE PRISONERS... AND IT LOOKS LIKE WE'VE NABBED OURSELVES A REAL PRIZE!

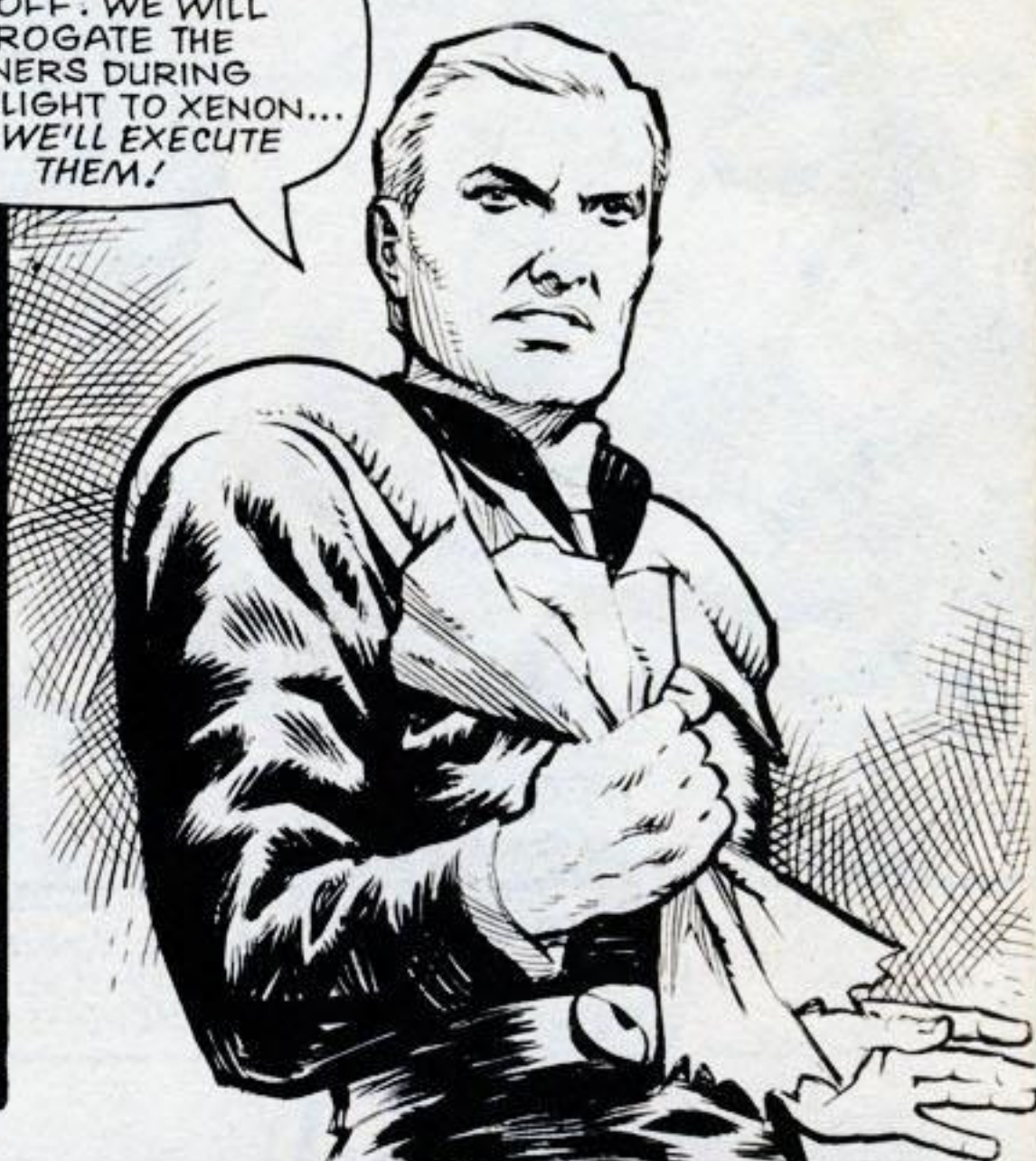
LET ME SEE!



TERRORISTS KNOWN AS VILA AND SOOLIN... PART OF THE SCORPIO CREW! IF THEY'RE HERE THEN SO IS THEIR SHIP! WE'VE A CHANCE TO CAPTURE THE LOT!

CAPTAIN, AN URGENT MESSAGE FROM FEDERATION COMMAND! WE'RE TO PROCEED WITH OUR MISSION IMMEDIATELY. NOTHING MUST DELAY US ANY FURTHER.

CURSES! PREPARE FOR TAKE-OFF. WE WILL INTERROGATE THE PRISONERS DURING OUR FLIGHT TO XENON... THEN WE'LL EXECUTE THEM!



AS THE HEAVY TRANSPORT SHUDDERED INTO LIFE...

AVON... AVON...! WE'VE BROKEN OUT BUT I THINK THE SHIP IS TAKING OFF. CAN'T YOU TELEPORT US OUT YET?

NO. THERE IS STILL WORK TO DO ON THE KEY PANEL. YOU MUST FIND OUT YOUR DESTINATION AND WE WILL TRY TO FOLLOW.

ONE GLANCE AT THE MANIFEST EXPLAINED EVERYTHING...

I KNEW THERE WAS SOMETHING STRANGE ABOUT THIS SHIP. FOR A COLONISING FORCE THERE ARE VERY FEW GUARDS. HERE'S WHY!



BUT IT WAS NOT THE FLIGHT DECK THEY DISCOVERED FIRST...

UHH? WHAT'S THIS LOT?

IT'S THE SHIP'S CARGO. TAKE A CLOSER LOOK.

OPERATION FIVE PLANETS IT SAYS. XENON IS JUST ONE OF THEM. THIS SHIP IS BOUND FOR ALL FIVE. BUT WHAT'S THE CARGO AND HOW COULD THEY COLONISE WITHOUT MEN?

FEDERATION
SECRET
OPERATION
FIVE PLANETS

THEY NEVER INTENDED TO COLONISE! THE PLANETS ARE ALL POSSIBLE TERRORIST REFUGES. THEY INTEND TO SPRAY THIS MIXTURE OF RADIATION AND BIOLOGICAL AGENTS ON ALL FIVE... **KILLING ALL LIFE AND MAKING THE PLANETS UNINHABITABLE FOR CENTURIES!**



SOOLIN IMMEDIATELY CONTACTED AVON.

DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT I'VE SAID, AVON?

PERFECTLY, SOOLIN. THE SHIP MUST BE STOPPED AT ALL COSTS!



LOOK! THE TRANSPORT'S LEAVING THE ATMOSPHERE NOW!

SCORPIO WILL BE READY FOR FLIGHT IN FIVE MINUTES... BUT ONLY ON REDUCED POWER. REPAIRS ARE NOT YET FINISHED...

THEN PREPARE FOR TAKE-OFF. IF WE DON'T BLOW THAT SHIP TO PIECES IN THE NEXT FIFTEEN MINUTES... WE WILL NEVER GET ANOTHER CHANCE!



B... BUT... VILA AND SOOLIN...?

FIVE MINUTES LATER...



TRANSPORT IN RANGE IN EIGHT SECONDS. CAN'T WE TELEPORT VILA AND SOOLIN YET?

NO, IT'S STILL MALFUNCTIONING BUT I'M WORKING ON IT. MAINTAIN COURSE... THEN OPEN FIRE!

TERRORIST SHIP ON INTERCEPT COURSE! ALARM! BATTLE STATIONS!



EIGHT SECONDS LATER...

THEY'RE FIRING! AVON DOESN'T CARE IF HE KILLS US!

FOR PITY'S SAKE, AVON TAKE US OFF!

IF I COULD I WOULD. I'M STILL WORKING ON IT!

THREE MORE SECONDS AND THE SHIP WILL BE OUT OF RANGE. IF WE'RE TO STOP IT... IT'S GOT TO BE DONE NOW.

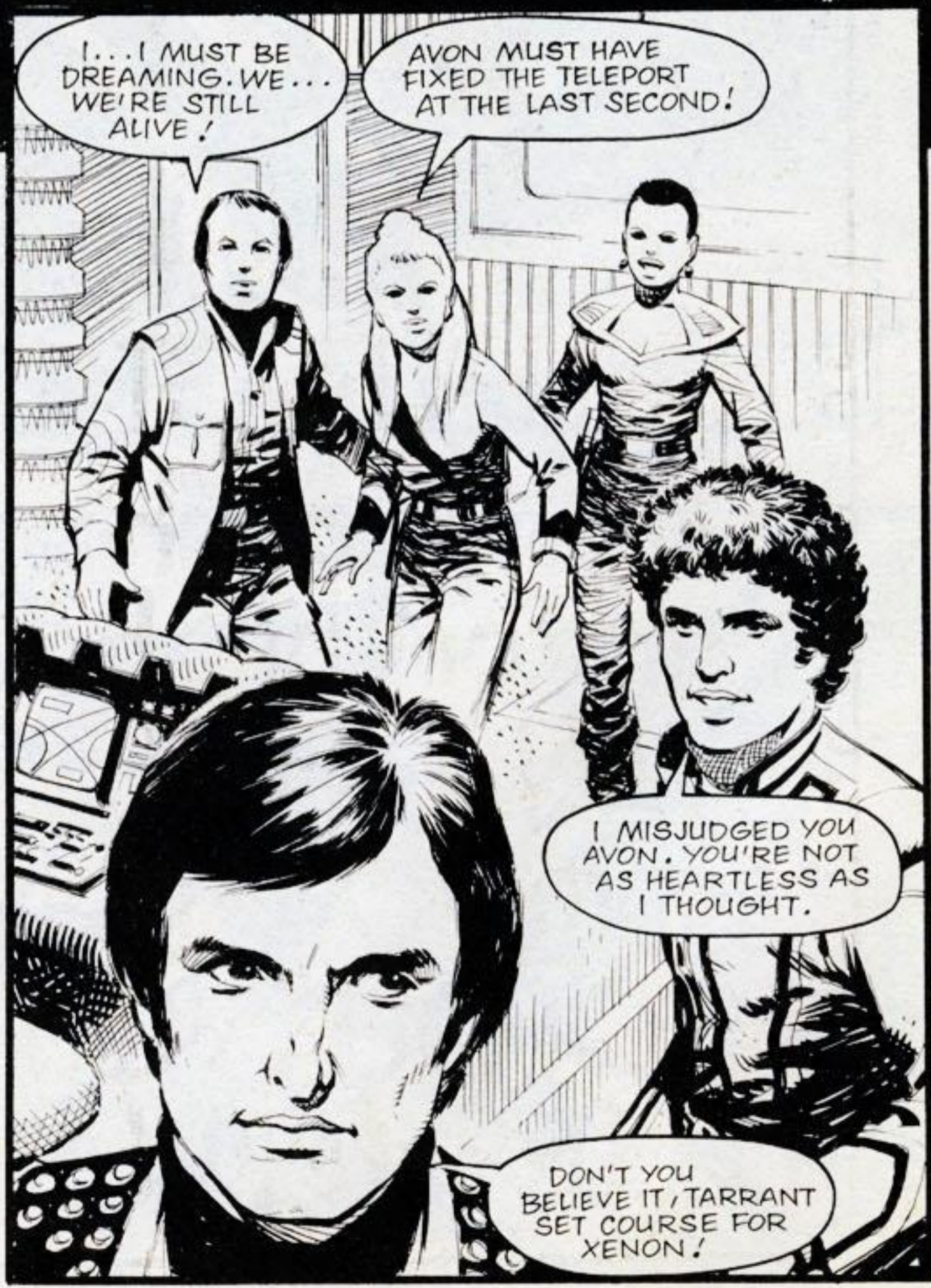


THEN DESTROY IT! THAT'S AN ORDER!

THAT INSTANT... ON THE TRANSPORT...



Kennedy



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Stepping out in style. The walkers head over London Bridge.

BLAKE'S 7 COMES DOWN TO EARTH... FOR CHARITY!

When Doctor's Barnardo's Homes organised a sponsored charity walk across London's bridges somehow the message reached the Scorpio crew in the future. By means of their magical teleport they were able not only materialise back on earth . . . but in this century as well! Even Servalan decided to forget her vendetta against the crew and came along to lend her support . . . but the truce was to last for only the day, of course!

In reality, Paul Darrow, Jacqueline Pearce, Josette Simon, Glynis Barber and Michael Keating all gave up their free time to publicise the efforts of the charity and lead the thousands of young and old walkers across the bridges . . . and towards a magnificent donation to Doctor Barnardo's Homes.

Before our heroes could teleport back to the future, there was a chance for the lucky youngsters to obtain autographs of the stars . . . and time for the young fans to express their opinions about the fourth series of the programme. All good . . . we hope!



"I feel like Julie Andrews in the SOUND OF MUSIC," comments Jacqueline Pearce, which gets the walk off to a laughing start.



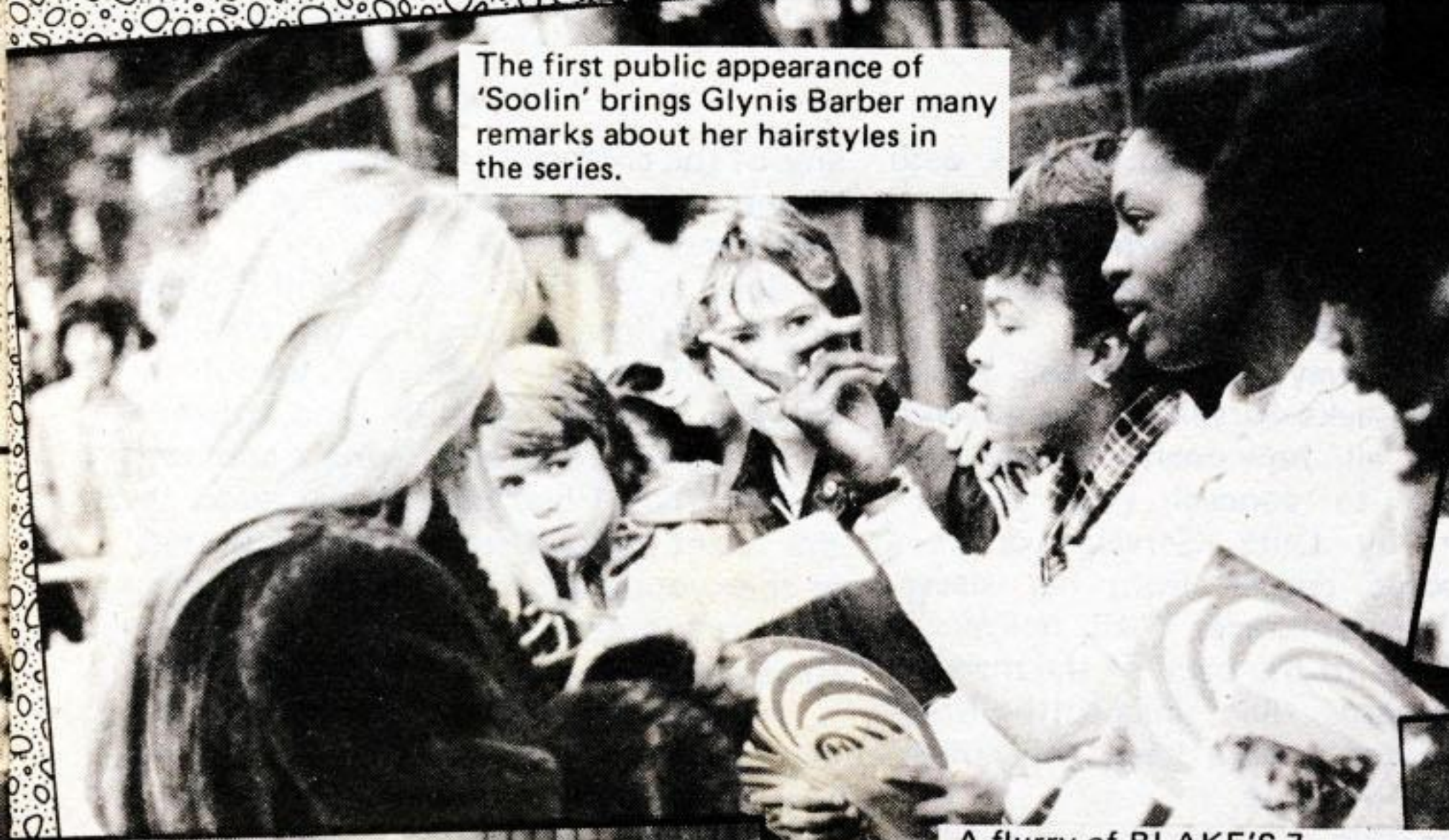
Before they set off to wheel themselves round the entire course, these disabled youngsters are given words of encouragement by the cast . . . and a few admiring looks as well!



Face-to-face with Avon! An adoring fan's expression says it all!



Resting an autographed hat on a copy of BLAKE'S 7 MAGAZINE, Jacqueline Pearce makes another young walker very happy!



The first public appearance of 'Soolin' brings Glynis Barber many remarks about her hairstyles in the series.



Josette Simon is hard pressed to write her name fast enough on the many pieces of paper thrust her way.



Mike Keating writing hard to keep up with the demand for his autograph.



A flurry of BLAKE'S 7 MAGAZINES greets Paul Darrow as he is asked to autograph his portrait in issue one. And when the magazines are done . . . young fans have to be happy with some BBC postcards of AVON.



STAR PROFILE

JACQUELINE PEARCE

"... I'm going to teach you to obey me, Forbus, if I have to destroy all your skinny little body..." Servalan sneers at the poor, broken figure of Forbus slumped in his wheelchair.

Forbus is desperate. He reaches for the contact which will auto-destruct his entire complex. Servalan sees his move, lashes out, sending his wheelchair skidding backwards. In one final, desperate move, Forbus tries to reach the contact again. Without hesitation, Servalan whips out her gun and fires. In a blinding flash, Forbus is catapulted from his chair already dead.

"If you need a witness, Commissioner, I can swear it was self-defence." The imposing figure of Leitz is framed in the doorway immediately behind Servalan. She slowly turns, eyes narrowing. Leitz smiles in a self-confident manner as he draws closer to Servalan, revealing he knows the secret of her identity and that the 'Commissioner' is indeed Servalan.

"What do you want, Leitz?" Servalan is still in charge of her emotions, keeping her wits in a very tense situation.

"The Presidency," smiles Leitz as he draws Servalan into his arms. "and you

know your secret would be safe with me..."

"I'm sure it would," purrs Servalan as she seems to yield to the embrace, "but I don't submit to blackmail."

"There's always a first time," smiles Leitz as he seeks Servalan's mouth with his. "After all, how many people have you killed to conceal your secret?"

Unseen by Leitz, Servalan draws a crystal sonic dagger from her sleeve, tightens her embrace, then delivers a killing charge to the back of the man she kisses. He gasps, then sinks to the floor. Servalan takes a pace back and smiles.

"Twenty-six, now."

Leaving two dead bodies behind her, Servalan turns on her heel and makes her way from the scene of carnage, seemingly unconcerned.

IN REALITY

In that excerpt from 'Traitor', by Robert Holmes, the full venom of the character, Servalan, is exposed. But what of Jacqueline Pearce who so perfectly portrays the 'woman destined to rule the galaxy'? Having been associated with the part for so long, has she succumbed to

any of the characteristics and mannerisms of the most lethal woman in the twenty-fifth century?

Born in Woking, Surrey, and brought up in Byfleet, Jackie has a rebellious childhood. At her convent school she enjoyed drama, english and history.

"I wanted to be a ballerina," confesses Jackie, "but I had neither the build nor the talent. Also, I seemed to know, even at that young age, that a dancer's life is a short one but, as an actress, I can stay on stage until I die... and probably shall!"

Her flair for drama was spotted by a lay teacher at Jackie's convent and her talent nurtured. "Because I come from a working-class background the idea of becoming an actress was abhorrent to my parents since, in those days, the term 'actress' meant something seedy and nasty. However, with the help of the lady who I called 'Nanny' I was able to reach such a standard that I was eventually accepted into RADA (Royal Academy of Dramatic Art). Throughout those early years Nanny was a terrific friend and mentor, giving me help and encouragement when I needed it most and, although she is now sadly dead, she was

A woman with dark hair and heavy eye makeup, wearing a black halter-neck dress and large, ornate earrings, stands in a futuristic, metallic environment. She is leaning against a vertical structure with a grid-like pattern. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting her figure against the dark background.

BLAKES 7

JACQUELINE
PEARCE
as
SERVALAN

able to live long enough to see my career really take-off and see me realise my only ambition in life."

Going to RADA was a big shock to Jackie's system. "I'd led a very secluded and cloistered life having had a convent education and not having been exposed to the big, wide world of reality."

One incident in particular is fresh in her memory. "I'll never forget being in a room with a group of older students and another girl walked in to be greeted with comments such as 'How lovely to see you, darling, etc.' As soon as the girl left the room, the others turned round and muttered, 'Stupid cow!' I was shocked. I couldn't believe that people could be so nasty behind each other's back. I tackled those responsible and asked them why they just didn't tell each other the truth. Why say you like someone to their face then assassinate their character the moment their back is turned? Needless to say, I didn't get a reasonable answer. It's taken me a long time to come to terms with such hypocrisy but it's an approach I would never use. I always believe in telling the truth no matter how painful it is at the time."

Two years of hard study at RADA behind her, Jackie was ready to take on the professional world outside.

"I was very lucky. I went into films straight away. My first part was in the Hammer Film 'The Reptile' and being fresh from RADA, I was still very much a novice and did not know my job properly. Fortunately I have an incredible thirst for knowledge and, with the help of my fellow actors who had a wealth of

experience in the business, I learned very quickly. Having learned the hard way how a professional should behave, I am now very intolerant of actors and actresses who do not know their job and bring the business into disrepute."

A second Hammer Film 'The Plague of the Zombies' quickly followed the first and confirmed Jackie as a screen actress. This led to the film 'Don't Raise The Bridge - Lower The River' in which she co-starred with Jerry Lewis. While there was comedy in front of the camera, things were not so funny off screen.

"An argument flared-up between Jerry Lewis and me when a particular scene did not go well. He accused me of not knowing my lines which was totally untrue. I told him precisely what I thought of him in a cool and collected manner then walked off the set indicating that until he realised he was in the wrong, it would be impossible to work together.

APOLOGY

"The whole crew gasped since, apparently, no-one had ever spoken to Jerry Lewis like this in his entire career. There I was, aged twenty-three, having told one of the most famous comedy actors from the other side of the Atlantic what I thought of his behaviour! Thinking back on it I'm amazed I had the nerve to do it. However, it all worked out in the end as, a few minutes later, he came to my dressing room apologised, and from then on we worked very well together."

Although things were going extremely well for Jackie in her career, her personal life was thrown into turmoil at the same

time. Her marriage broke up and suddenly she felt she wanted to get away from everything for a while.

"I just hopped on a plane and found myself in Los Angeles. I went to an English-speaking country because I needed to work. However, it was only when I arrived there I realised I needed a work permit. While I was waiting for mine to arrive, I auditioned for the Actors Studio and began studying the 'method' with Lee Strasberg. It has been a great help to me in my career to know and understand both the American and English methods of acting. The English way is to work from the 'outside in'. The American method is to work from the 'inside out'. That means you have to feel and believe in the character you are portraying . . . then you have the confidence to carry off that role."

Despite the new confidence in her work, when she returned to Britain three years later Jackie discovered she had made life difficult for herself.

"I had completely 'blown' my career," she admits. "I was quite 'big' in the profession before I left. Then, when I started looking for work again people were asking, 'Jackie who?'. It took a long time to re-establish a good reputation for myself."

It was in television that Jackie's career began to take her to stardom once more. An appearance in NEW SCOTLAND YARD was the start, closely followed by many other television parts. "I felt I was finally back to the point where I was before I left for the States when I was given a chance to star in a West End play, OTHERWISE ENGAGED, directed by



Servalan with her guards in attendance. The way most viewers remember the menacing Commissioner.



Many fine guest artists appeared in the fourth series. Betty Marsden enjoyed her role when she and Jackie 'conspired' together.

Harold Pinter. From then on I have had no complaints."

It was while working at the English Theatre in Vienna that Jackie was first approached about the role of Servalan. "My agent rang me up and asked if I would like to play the part of the Supreme Commander in a TV series called BLAKE'S 7, of which I had never heard! Originally I was to be in just one episode and, as it meant starting work the day I stepped off the plane from Vienna . . . every actor's dream. . . I said, 'Too right I will!' And so, from a start of just one episode, four years later . . . here I am!"

After a very favourable initial reaction to her portrayal of Servalan, Jackie was offered a regular part. "I was absolutely thrilled about it, believing that for the first time as an actress I was going to have financial security. I forgot I was working for the BBC. . .! However, the part of Servalan did not really become my own until the third series. That's when I was given the nails." Jackie proudly displays the 'talons' which have been sunk into many an unsuspecting enemy of Servalan. "They have to be glued on then, once in place, stay there for the whole series. When I was first given them I found it impossible to do any housework so I employed a maid. That arrangement suited us both admirably. I hated housework — she loved it — so we were both happy!"

The 'nails', however, were just a minor part in the making of the character of Servalan. There was a much more personal reason behind Jackie's approach to her role. A dramatic and harrowing love affair which ended almost as soon as it began left her drained of emotion for nearly two years. "I wanted to die but being a professional I had no choice other than to work through the bad times. It was not easy and my nerves were on edge but one's personal life must never interfere with a public career. I did learn at

the end of it that I wanted to live for myself — and I still do."

Her heart-breaking experience coloured her approach to Servalan completely. "There are those involved with the series who believe Servalan is a psychopath, someone totally without conscience. But she's not. She's a highly moral woman. She is someone from the twenty fifth century where, we must assume, the traditional male and female roles have been removed and people are just people.

BACKGROUND

"Servalan's background is explained in episode nine of the fourth series, SAND, by Tannith Lee. She fell in love at the age of eighteen, he left her and it devastated her. She had to grow up. But when you grow up, and she had to grow up to survive, it becomes very lonely because

most people remain immature. They don't question, they don't think too deeply, they are just clothes. The survivors are the individualists, the clowns. And that's what Servalan is. She has the face of a clown but she also knows both sides of the coin. Because I also have to live a part which I am playing, I have become like that too. Now I like to think of myself as an artist rather than an actress. I wish I had known what was going to happen to me when it first started because I probably would have said, 'Pass!' "

The response to Jackie's performance bears out all that she believes she puts into the character of Servalan. "There were letters in the Radio Times about the last series where people wrote to congratulate me and my performance by saying they could actually believe Servalan might rule the Universe. In effect, they were saying Servalan could easily become Mrs. God! Can you imagine living with someone like that?"

The main aspect of Servalan which has caused Jackie the most headaches is the development of the ruthless side of her character. "She has to be able and willing to kill. . . and quickly. But the reason she does it is in order to survive: I've had a terrific tug-of-war going on inside myself trying to portray that aspect convincingly as it goes against nearly every female instinct."

A real test for Jackie came during the filming of the episode already mentioned, SAND. Tannith Lee, the writer, knew of Jackie's personal life and the traumas through which she has had to live and work. The result was a piece with an uncanny number of parallels to Jackie's own life. . . but there were many more to come.



Servalan in full command of her ship. . . and captain. "Servalan is not a psychopath. . . she is a highly moral woman."



Jackie and Steven Pacey in 'SAND'.
An uncanny number of parallels. . .

"When I read the script I phoned Tannith and asked her what she was trying to do to me. It would be like reliving my past. She replied by saying that she thought the part would really stretch me . . . and she was right, but she had a little help from the elements.

"Tannith had written into the story a thunderstorm. We were filming that part of the programme at Ealing Studios and, just as the lights were flashing and the sound of thunder was being manufactured, a real thunderstorm broke right over our heads sending the whole place vibrating. Also, at one time I had said to Steven Pacey that I was really just the girl next door. He replied that if I was the girl next door, he'd move. Tannith heard this and included the lines in the script. During the filming of the episode I mentioned to Steven I had just bought a houseboat and told him where it was. He replied that he had also bought a houseboat. When we talked more . . . we found out he was, in fact, the boy next door . . . AND HE MOVED! It was absolutely freaky what was happening during that episode."

Despite having been thrown together with Tarrant during SAND, it is the situation between Servalan and Avon which is one of the most intriguing relationships of the series.

"Avon and Servalan have been playing 'Casablanca' in space since the very beginning," smiles Jackie. "The love-hate relationship revolves round a constant mental duel. Avon is a highly intelligent man with a brain like a computer and it's not really the body that ever draws people together for any kind of lasting relationship . . . it's the mind. So Avon and Servalan need hardly ever meet face to face. Their relationship will continue through a pure battle of wits. If Avon did not have Servalan to play with, who else could provide a mental match for him? There is no-one else."

MEMORIES

Apart from playing 'Casablanca' in space with Avon, the most memorable piece of music from that film, 'As Time Goes By', has also played a very large part in Jackie's own life.

"The music seems to haunt me now. It meant something very special to me when I was deeply in love and, incredibly it has cropped up at various times in my life to influence me when difficult decisions have had to be made. I still find tears in my eyes when I hear that music today."

As a Sagittarius, Jackie's star sign, fire, indicates just how turbulent her life really is. "I once had my chart done

by an astrologer who is an expert in the field. I was told all my planets were either fire or air and there was very little keeping me on the ground. How true! I believe life deals us the cards and it is up to us how we play them. I don't let such things rule my life but it is interesting to see how life develops according to earlier predictions."

During the quieter moments of her life, Jackie likes to relax to classical music, Albinoni being one of her favourite composers, but ballet is her first love. Whenever the opportunity arises she enjoys nothing better than watching the artistry of ballet stars at work, perhaps thinking of her own childhood desires to be a ballerina.

A different interest is psychology. "Through following the teachings of Yung I began to find myself. I found I was looking back into the past too much and not being positive enough about the future. Now all that has changed and for me the future is really all that matters."

And what of the future of Servalan? Now that the series has ended in such a dramatic manner will we ever see Servalan and Avon developing their mental battles across the universe again? Who knows? Perhaps the answer will come our way. . . 'As Time Goes By' . . .

film review

WATCH OUT FOR WOLFEN!

Wolfen is an extraordinary tale of terror set in present day New York. The forces of modern police technology are pitted against the cunning and malice of an unspeakable alien terror. A series of bizarre murders turns into a desperate struggle for

detective Dewey Wilson (ALBERT FINNEY) as the story moves towards its stunning climax. For lovers of gripping suspense the story is a must, be warned, it's for older readers only!

An alien terror strikes at the heart of New York and detective Wilson is the only man that can stop it.

TEASERS...

ALBERT FINNEY also starring, with JAMES COBURN, in new release called 'LOOKER' – plot concerns the replacement of top fashion models with robot lookalikes, sounds fun and easy on the eye too! DRAGONSLAYER is the name of a new Sword and Sorcery movie from Disney – it stars Ralph Richardson in title role and Disney are spending a lot of dough on the spectacular special effects: more details next month. BLADE RUNNER is a new sci-fi release coming soon; star is HARRISON FORD and it is directed by "Alien" director RIDLEY SCOTT, effects are being done by DOUG TRUMBALL and with that line-up of talent, it's just GOT to be a winner!

BEAT THE EARTH INVADERS!

Just in case you haven't come across this fantastic hand-held computer game before, Earth Invaders is one of the latest games from Computer Games Limited and is fast becoming just as popular as Space Invaders - having had one of the games in the Blake office for a couple of weeks, we can understand why! It's completely addictive - after a while you can really get a grudge against the little four-legged devils who are constantly trying to eat your soldiers!

First of all you have to dig a series of holes (electronic ones of course), wait for the aliens to fall into them and then, here's the real fun bit - you bury the little beggars - but be careful! Some of them can climb out again and still eat you! The whole quick fire game is played to the insistent beeping tones of the built-in sound generator. Need we say more...? Other than we're giving away over £250 worth of these super games exclusively to readers of Blake's Seven...

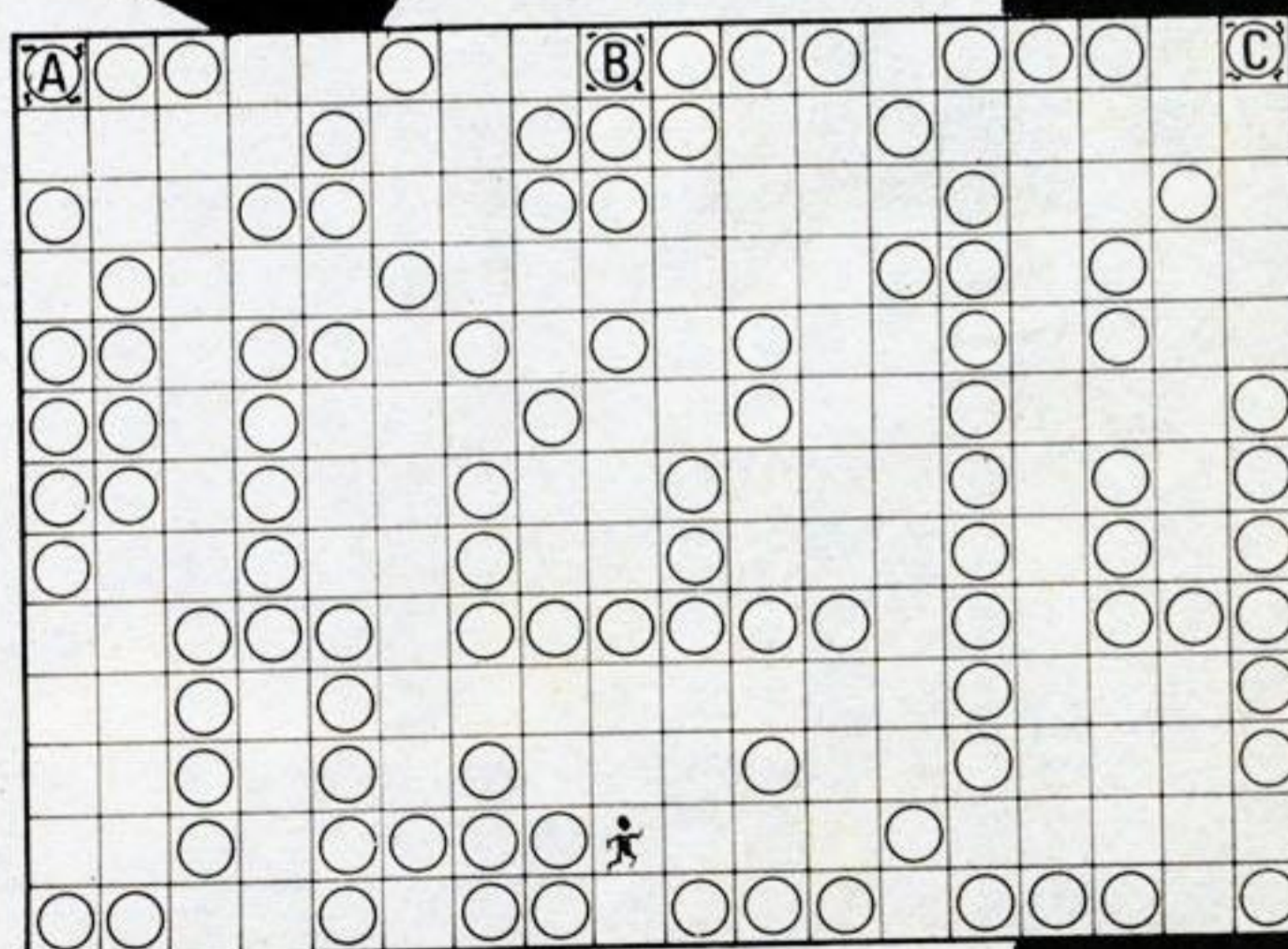
The soldier in our picture here is going to get eaten - no doubt about it - but which alien is going to do the eating? Unlike in the real game, the aliens here in our puzzle have to go round the holes to reach the soldier and only one of them can get to him.

When you have decided on your answer, write the key letter of your chosen alien on a postcard then add your own full name age and address, ask an adult to sign it as your own unaided work and post it to the following address to arrive not later than January 1982.

Earth Invaders Competition, Blake 7, Marvel Comics Ltd., Jadwin House, 205/211 Kentish Town Road, London NW5 2JU.

Rules

This contest is open to all readers in the UK aged under 18 except employees (and their families) of Marvel UK Ltd., Computer Games Ltd., and the printers of Blakes Seven. The prizes will be awarded for the first ten correct entries checked. The editor's decision is final.



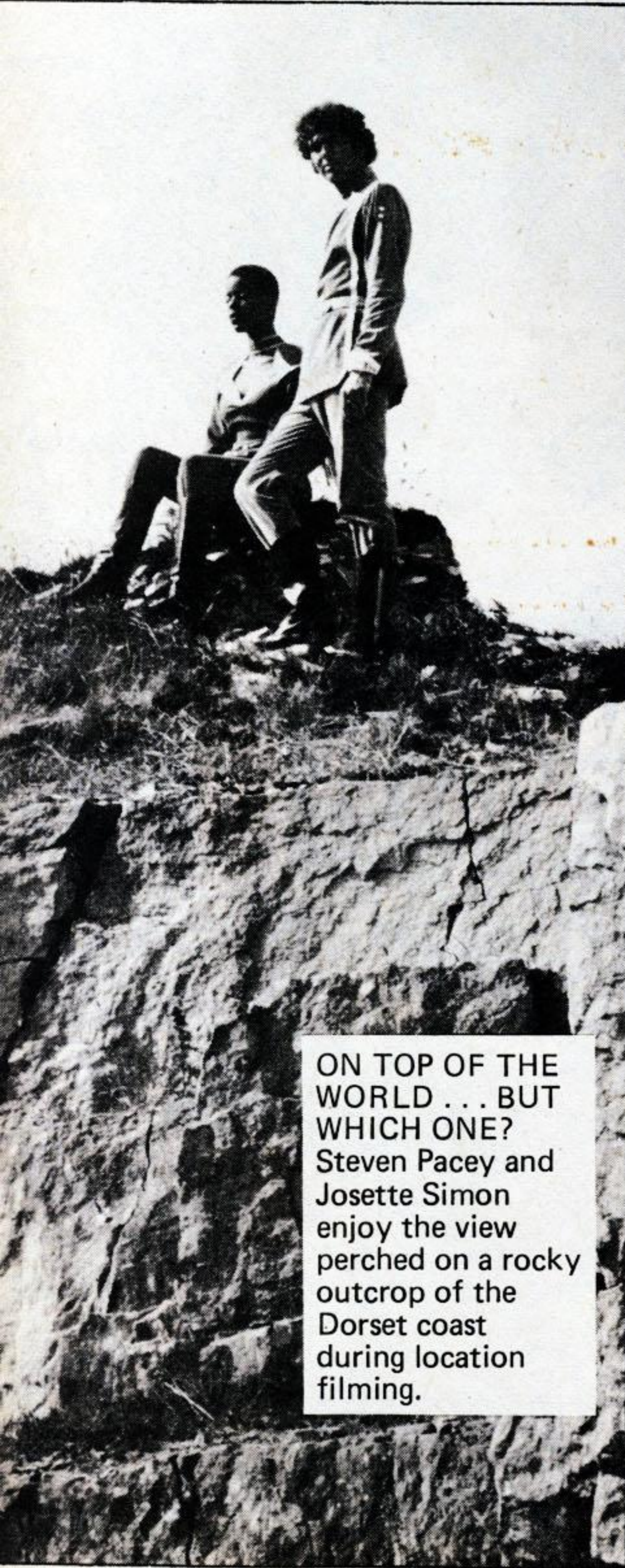
Soldier N.B. INVADERS CANNOT MOVE DIAGONALLY
 Hole ALIEN

**TEN COMPUTER
GAMES MUST BE
WON!**

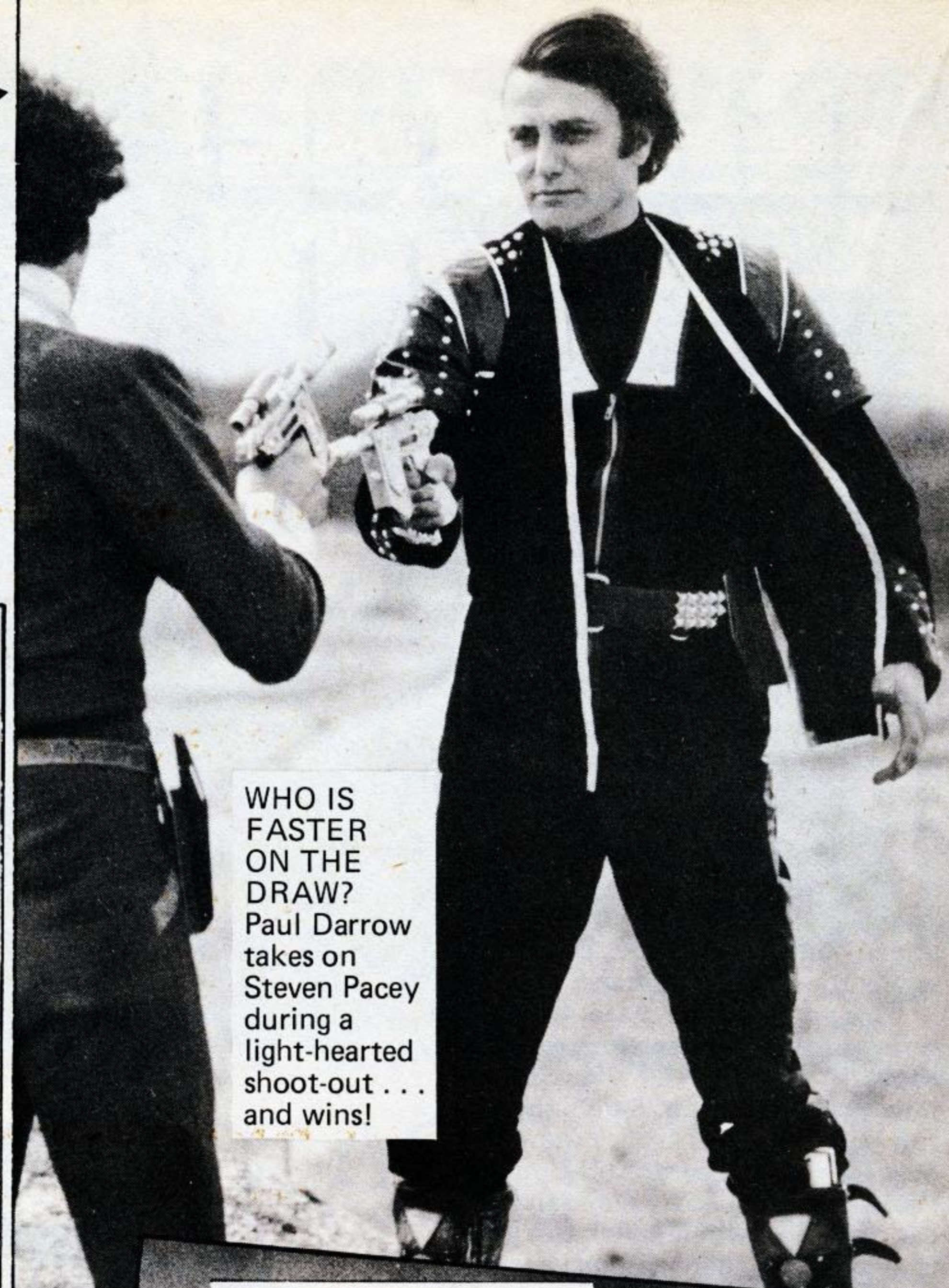


BLAKE'S 7
SCRAPBOOK

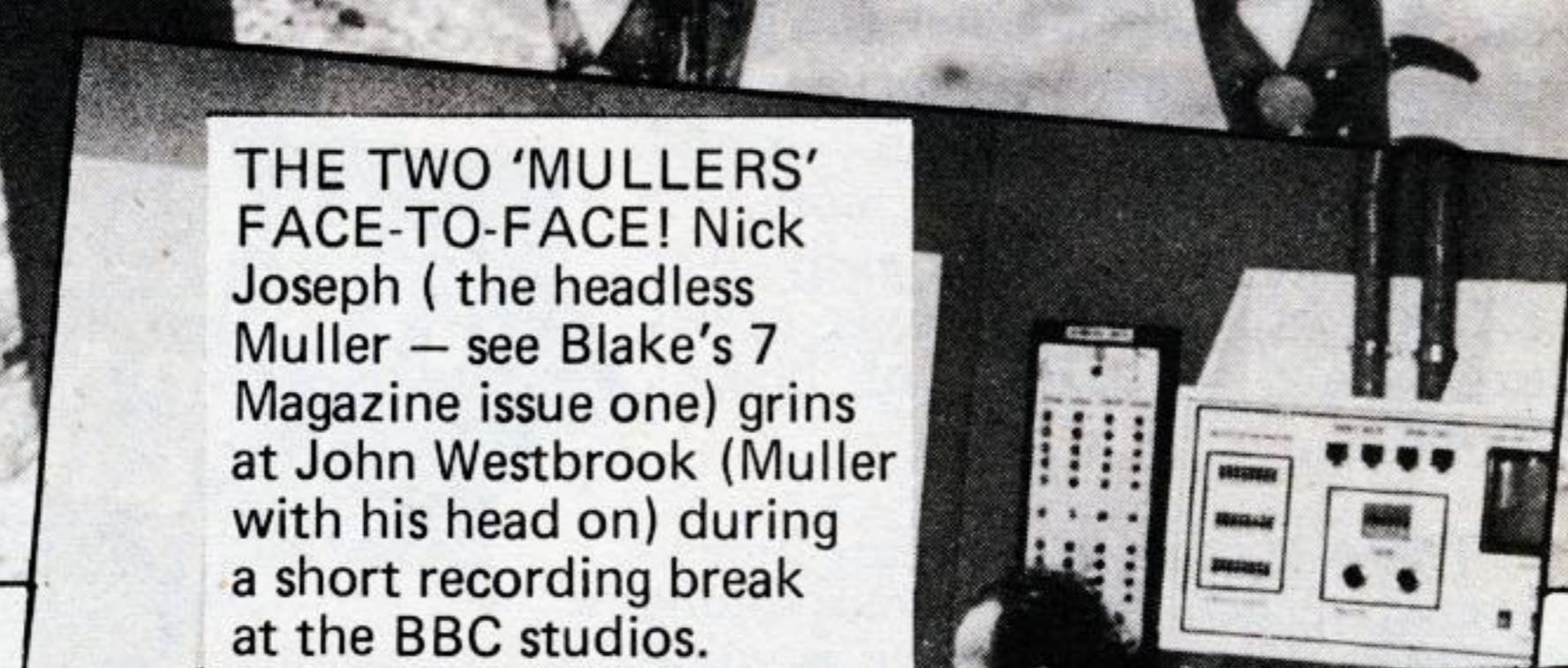
Treasured moments not seen on the TV screen during the filming of BLAKE'S 7.



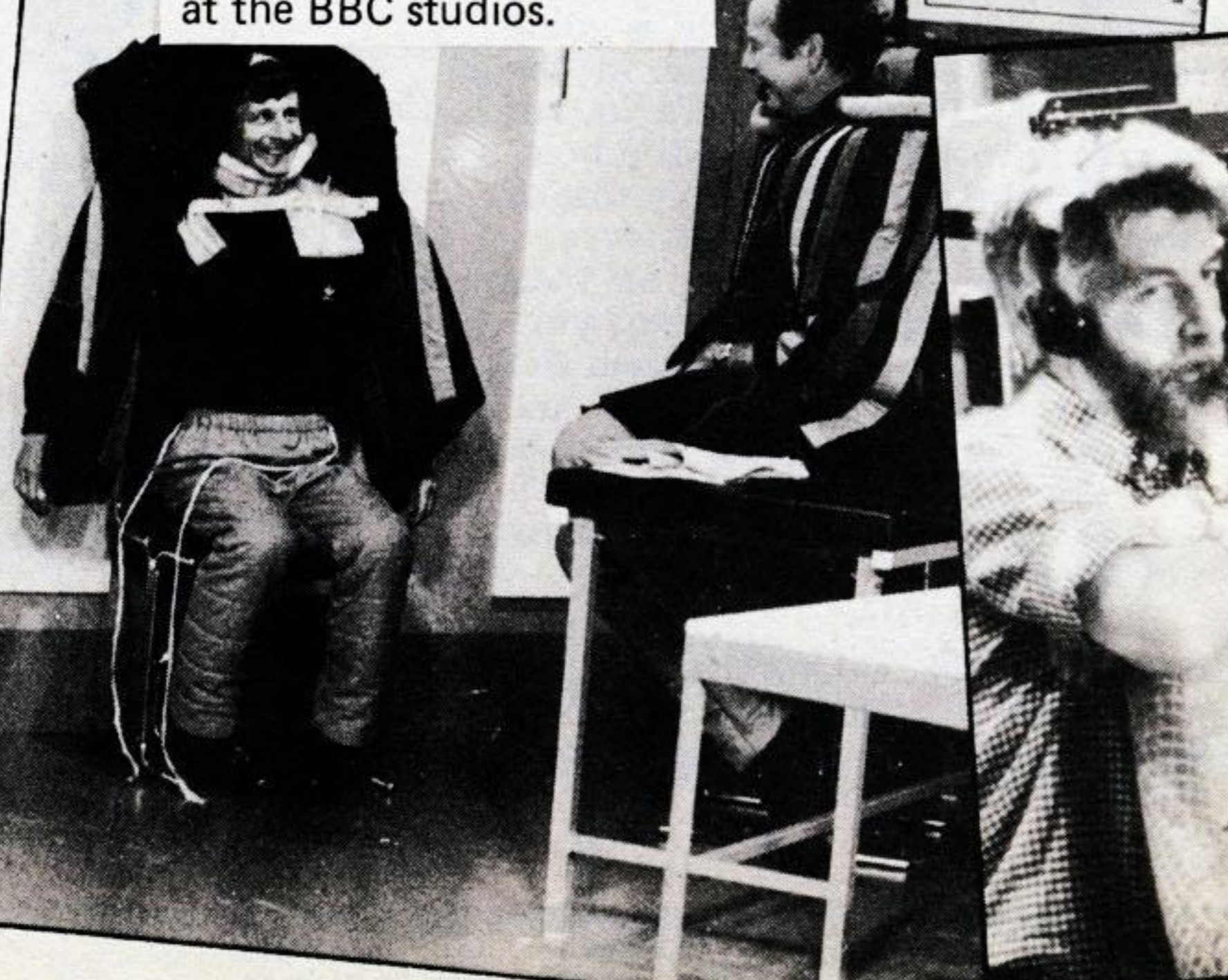
ON TOP OF THE WORLD... BUT WHICH ONE? Steven Pacey and Josette Simon enjoy the view perched on a rocky outcrop of the Dorset coast during location filming.



WHO IS FASTER ON THE DRAW? Paul Darrow takes on Steven Pacey during a light-hearted shoot-out... and wins!



THE TWO 'MULLERS' FACE-TO-FACE! Nick Joseph (the headless Muller - see Blake's 7 Magazine issue one) grins at John Westbrook (Muller with his head on) during a short recording break at the BBC studios.



ARTISTS! Ian Kennedy (centre), the superb artist who has created the fantastic picture-strip for this magazine, meets the stars of the series he so carefully portrays each month. Watch out for a special feature on Ian in a later issue!



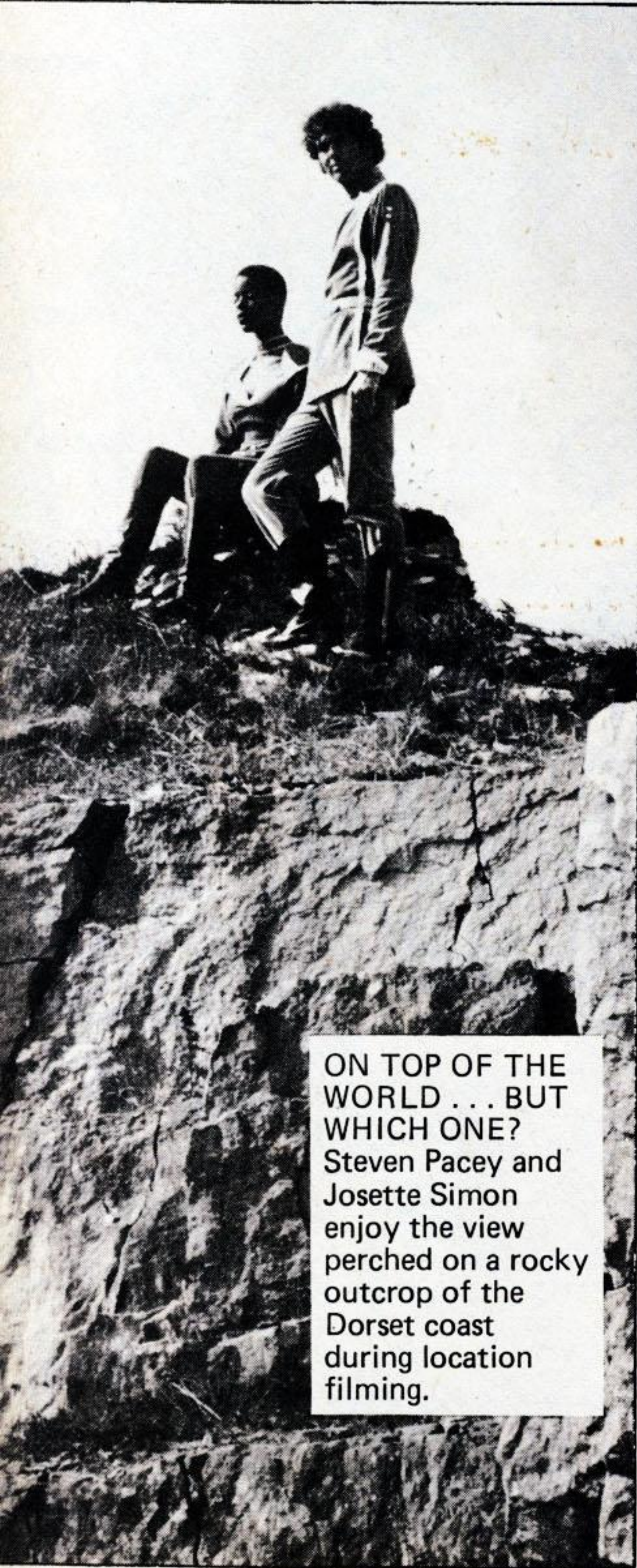
HOW WAS THAT FOR YOU? That seems to be the question Paul Darrow asks senior cameraman, Dave White, after a 'take' during a recording session. Dave, the senior man of Crew 2, has been responsible with his team for all the excellent camera work during the fourth series.

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BLAKE'S 7

SCRAPBOOK

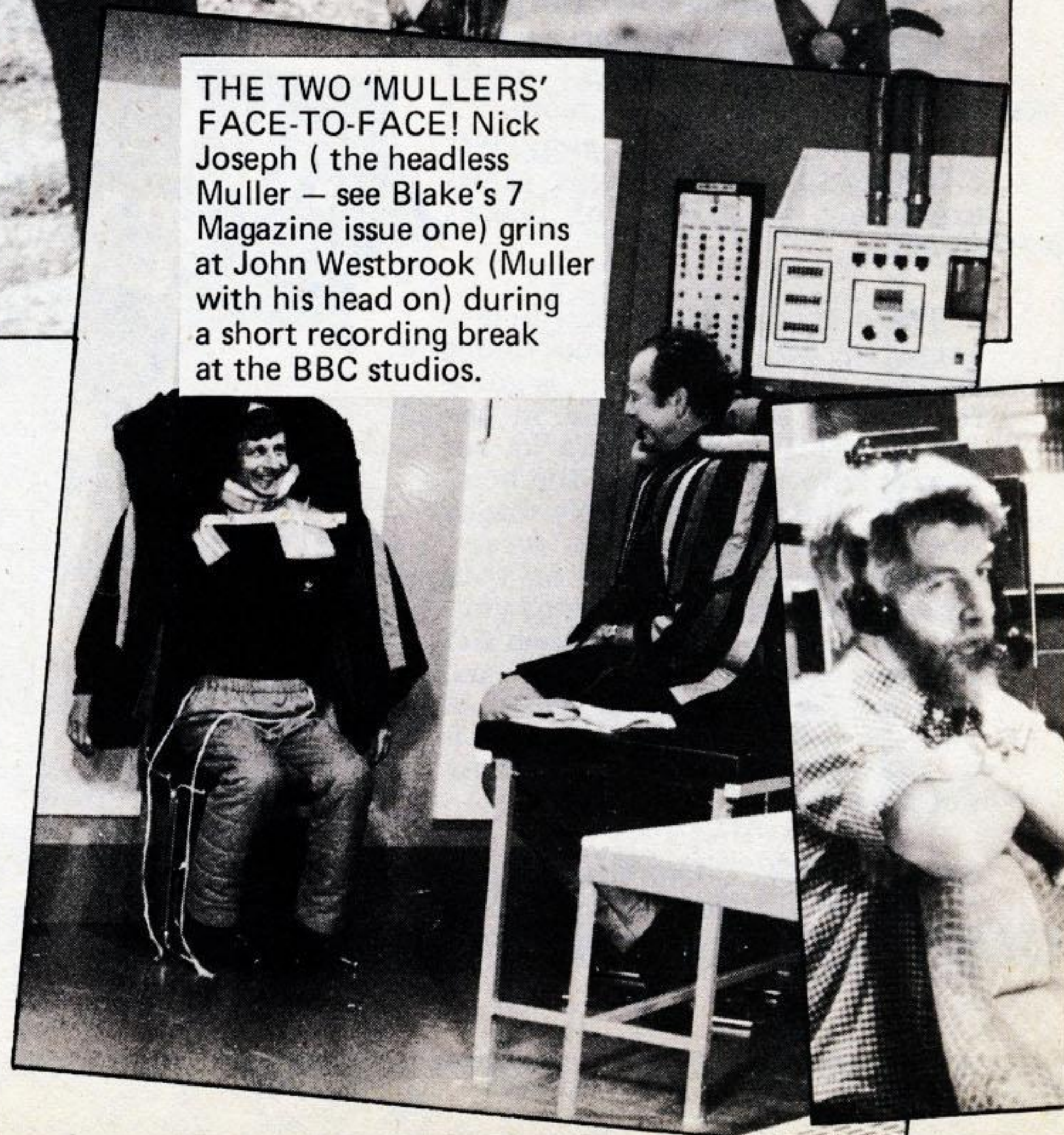
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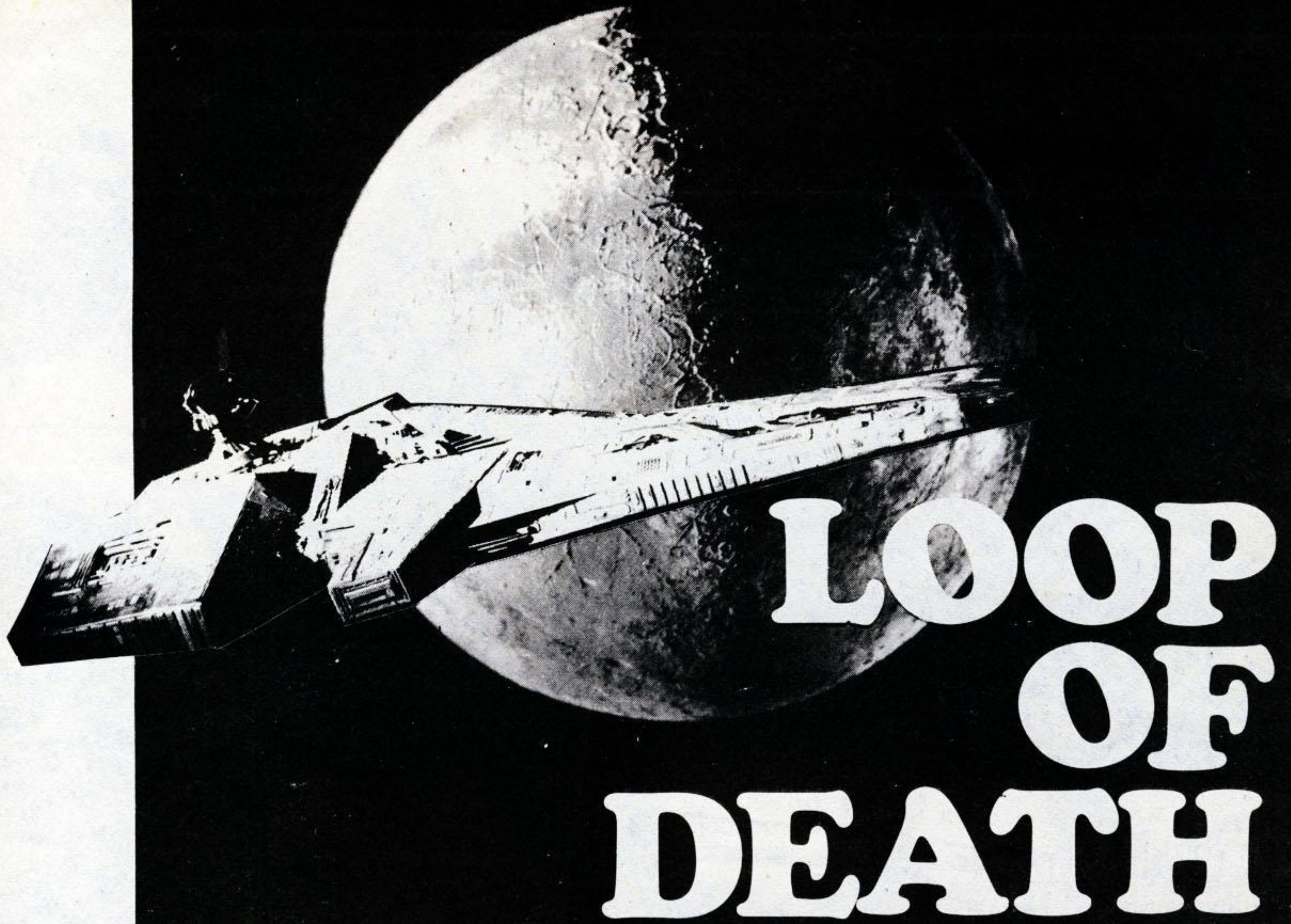


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LOOP OF DEATH

A powerful shock wave shuddered through the Scorpio. 'Force Wall has been penetrated!' yelled Tarrant. 'Another direct hit and we've had it!'

'Impossible!' shouted Avon above the resonating metal of the Scorpio's tortured frame. 'Federation Plasma Bolts should not penetrate the wall, not from head-on!'

Tarrant punched a few more buttons on his console. 'Impossible or not, that's precisely what's happening.'

'Orac,' growled Avon, 'what's behind this? Is there a fault in our defence system?'

'Negative,' responded the flickering computer. 'This craft's defences are functioning correctly. The cause of plasma bolt penetration comes from the fired charges being of a greater intensity than normal. The energy seems to have been concentrated by some process.'

That instant the Scorpio lurched, a blinding flash from behind Tarrant threw the alarmed faces of the crew into sharp relief as the deck seemed to drop from beneath their feet, throwing them from their places. Acrid smoke, indicating a massive electrical failure, billowed into the flight deck area.

'We've been holed!' screamed Tarrant as he fought to regain control of the ship. 'Direct hit on the power supply unit!'

'Get us out of here,' commanded Avon as he struggled to his feet, his face set in stern lines. 'Use all available power, divert some from life support systems if necessary, but get us clear of those accursed Federation battle craft!'

In the icy blackness of space, Scorpio was seen to veer from its predicted path, a brilliant white cloud partially covering its form as if using a smoke screen. The cloud, however, was created by the atomised metal of its hull. Although dramatic in appearance the actual damage as seen

from outside was limited to one small hole in the thick plating of the engine area. The Federation battle craft already engaging the Scorpio fired twice more but missed both times.

'Rebels are trying to make a run for it, Commander,' called the weapons officer. 'Shall we pursue and destroy?'

'No. We've damaged them sufficiently for them to die slowly as their atmosphere is drained through that hole. They're finished.' The Federation Commander grinned at his men. 'We can report back to control that our enhanced weapons have indeed made their first kill. The first of many rebels to be wiped out of the galaxy thanks to that device our scientists fitted. From now on, all Federation craft will be invincible!'

'Will it hold?' Avon was feeling his way through the darkened corridor towards the hatch sealing the engine compartment from the rest of the ship.

'Orac estimated about fifteen minutes.' Tarrant heaved the laser welder into his arms from its locker. 'Just long enough to patch the hole providing the fractures are no longer than a metre.'

Avon paused with his hand on the hatch lock, tension showing on his face. 'By diverting what remains of the force field to this area, the ship's atmosphere leakage has dropped to a trickle but we don't know what will happen when this door's opened. The excess pressure could collapse the shield.'

'And we could get sucked out into space through the hole along with whatever remains inside the Scorpio. Right?' Tarrant looked grim.

'Right,' affirmed Avon. 'But there's only one way to find out. . . .' Avon's knuckles showed white as he turned the handle. The sudden rush of air did not happen. Both men

breathed again. They would have their fifteen minutes to repair the damage.

Inside, the engine area was a mess. Pieces of shattered metal littered the complex machinery while a haze of white dust filled the area, the atomised remains of the pierced hull. Through the gaping hole, the stars seemed to glitter invitingly. A fine sight which both men would have enjoyed were they not aware that unless they worked fast, they would soon join these celestial bodies. . . without space suits.

'Stand back,' growled Avon as he lined up the laser on the hole. 'I've set it for full power.'

A blinding flash and hiss of melting metal filled the small compartment. 'Steady,' yelled Tarrant above the din. 'Melt too much of the bulkhead and you'll weaken the whole structure!'

'I know what I'm doing,' hissed Avon as he carefully edged the beam across the boiling metal. 'There's no time for finesse. It's either a fast patch like this . . . or we run out of time, air and life expectancy. I prefer this!'

Even as the last molecules of molten metal formed their new shape behind Avon, completing the seal, he was turning his attention towards the blackened machinery beside him. The complex array of charred wires made repair seem a daunting task.

'Very neat,' complimented Tarrant as he examined the patch in Scorpio's hull. 'Couldn't have done better myself.'

'I'm glad you're pleased,' mocked Avon as he studied the wires. 'Now, if you're quite finished admiring my handiwork, get over here and help me sort out this jumble.' Avon held up the wires for Tarrant to see. 'We may have stopped our air leaking but without power the ship will be unable to generate more.'

'The regenerator!' exclaimed Tarrant as he noticed the mess for the first time. 'It must have been out of action since the plasma bolt hit us!'

'Quite so,' muttered Avon as he began selecting wires. 'You might not have noticed it either but the air is becoming thick. There's hardly enough oxygen in here to keep a bird alive. Unless we get the regenerator working again. . . and soon . . . my hull welding job will have been a waste of time. Now, where do we start?'

'What the devil are Avon and Tarrant playing at?' Vila was tetchy as he ran his finger round his collar, feeling the clammy sweat trickling down his back.

'They're still in the engine compartment,' muttered Soolin as she mopped her brow. 'They're working on the regenerator.'

'And taking their time about it,' snapped Vila as he paced the silent deck. 'Don't they realise we're slowly dying from lack of air in here?'

'They're in the same position,' retorted Dayna, her temper rising. 'Perhaps even worse. They've been sealed in the compartment for twenty minutes. The air in there must be pretty foul by now. So,' she pointed an accusing finger at the worried Vila, 'why don't you sit down and save what little air we have!'

'I suppose you'll suggest we take turns in breathing next,' sneered Vila as he slumped reluctantly in his chair.

'You've just used your next turn,' said Dayna, menace in her voice.

'It's still not working!' Tarrant's fist slammed down on top of the regenerator. 'I'm sure the contacts are in the right place!' The sweat was beading on Tarrant's face as desperation crept into his voice. 'The . . . the thing must be beyond repair. M. . . must have missed something!'

'Impossible,' muttered Avon as he wiped a hand across his face, staring hard at the complex arrangement of coloured wires in front of him. His chest ached with the effort of trying to draw in enough oxygen to keep conscious. 'It's all there. . . all colour-coded. Just as it was. . .' Avon saw the image of the regenerator swim before his eyes. He knew it would not be long before he lapsed into the blackness which would become

death for him and all the crew. Suddenly, something registered in the recesses of his brain. There was something wrong with the wires. 'Th. . . that's it!' he exclaimed.

'Wh. . . what is. . . ?' Tarrant was close to passing out as well.

'Two black wires,' gasped Avon as he rubbed one of them. Nothing happened. He rubbed the other. He must be right . . . ! The black smear came off on his fingers, underneath, the colour was brown. Struggling hard to focus, Avon pressed the bare end of the wire into a small metal clip. There came a distant whine, the regenerator throbbing into life. Avon felt himself sink to the floor with relief. The air was flowing again. They would live!

* * *

'Well, that's it,' said Vila emphatically. 'We can't risk combat with Federation ships any more. We'll just have to find ourselves a quiet corner of the galaxy and try to live as best we can. I might even try growing some Callon berries. They make terrific wine.'

'Before you have us all weeding your vineyard, Vila, I suggest we apply our minds to more realistic matters.' Avon's remarks were cutting. They hurt Vila. They always did. He never got used to it. 'There must be a way of enriching the energy discharges of our plasma bolts. The Scorpio must never be out-gunned by patrol ships again. . . but how? Orac, do you have any answers?'

There came a pause, as if Orac was mulling over the question. Avon was frowning, about to demand an answer to his question when the computer flickered then spoke. 'I have considered every possible avenue associated with your question.'

'Get on with it,' growled Avon impatiently.

'To enhance the energy emissions, the beams must pass through a focussing device similar to the one used by the



Federation. No device of that nature is possible to manufacture from materials either on board this ship or at the Xenon base.'

'There you are,' chipped in Vila. 'I told you it was hopeless!'

'Hold your tongue before I have someone do it for you,' snarled Avon. 'Continue, Orac.'

'As I was saying,' commenced Orac in a slightly offended voice, 'it would be impossible to manufacture such a device. Even capturing one from a Federation vessel would not help since they work to a different wavelength. It leaves only one possibility.'

'Spit it out,' rumbled Tarrant.

'I abhor spitting,' sneered Orac, 'but I shall conclude my report without further interruptions, if you please. There is one possible source for obtaining the kind of device you seek. A probe was sent to observe the changes taking place in Akandra thirty Earth Standard years ago. The probe carried a crew of twenty and was equipped with a device which focussed the image it was observing to beam it back to planet Earth. The device was the forerunner of that now used in patrol craft weaponry. All information points to it being suitable for conversion to Scorpio's systems.'

'Interesting,' mused Avon as he rubbed his chin. 'Akandra? That name means something to me. What is it, Orac?'

'Akandra is a star moving towards the latter stages of its life. Present information indicates it has passed its red giant phase and is now in the form of a white dwarf. Predictions indicate it will continue in such form for a further 499,982 million years.'

'Then the probe crew seem to have a job for life!' laughed Vila.

'That's not such a stupid remark,' frowned Avon as he turned to face Orac. 'Such a crew would require constant re-supply. What do you know of them?'

There came a pause while Orac searched his memory banks. 'No information available regarding re-supply of Akandra probe. It would appear there has been none since it was launched. Neither did they have the means to return to Earth.'

'Good grief!' exclaimed Dayna as she looked with disbelief at Avon. 'That means they've been left to die!'

'The probe was launched before the Atomic Wars,' said Avon flatly. 'The Earth controllers would have other things on their mind. What are twenty lives when two-hundred-million are at stake?' Avon turned to survey the grim faces of his companions. Then he turned again to Orac. 'Is the probe still at its fixed location and operational, Orac?'

'My sensors indicate all mechanical functions are still in perfect order but no signals have been transmitted to Earth for ten Earth-Standard years.'

'That settles it.' Avon strode towards the far end of the flight-deck. 'Slave, set course for Akandra. We're going to visit the dead probe.'

Vila gulped.

* * *

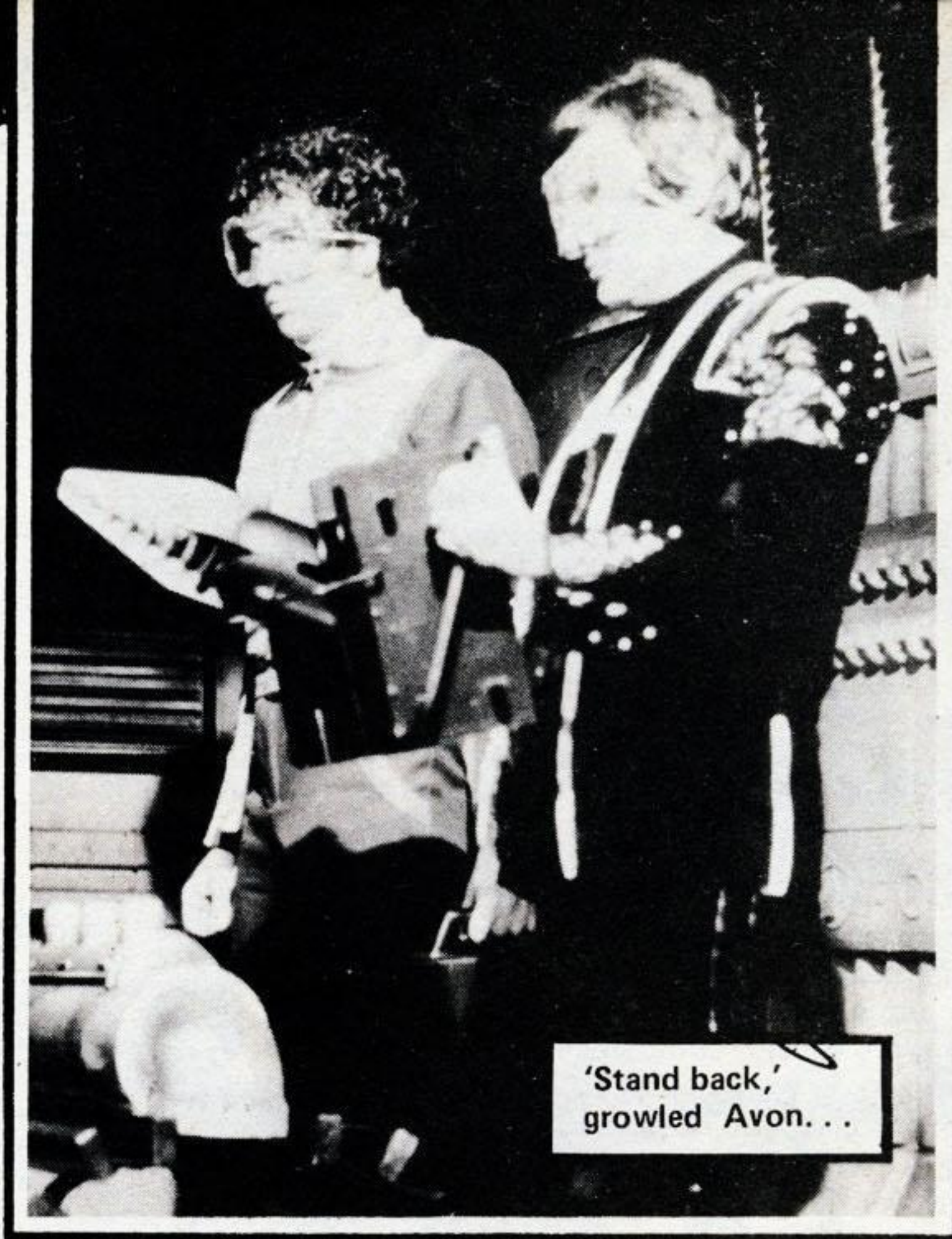
'It looks creepy.' Danya looked up towards the display screen ahead of her. Shining out was the brilliant whiteness of Akandra magnified several thousand times. 'I've never seen a white dwarf this close before.'

'And this is close enough,' rumbled Vila. 'The gravitational pull of a dying star like that can suck you in from thousands of spacials away and smash you to pieces. I hope Avon knows what he's doing.'

'I always do, Vila.' Avon's voice caused Vila to jump.

'Must you always creep up behind people like that?' Vila was annoyed at Avon surprising him.

'Any sign of the probe yet?' Avon chose to ignore Vila's remark.



'Just scanning now.' Dayna pressed a sequence of buttons before her. 'There. . .! There's something coming up now!' The screen grew dim and then an object shone from the blackness. Gradually as Dayna enhanced the picture, the shape came more clear.

'Looks like a big silver cigar tube hanging in space with antennae sprouting all over it. But, there's something else.' Vila drew closer to the picture. 'What's all this stuff?' He indicated to a patch of material in a band not far from the probe. 'Looks like bits of wreckage.'

'What do you make of it, Orac?' Avon sounded guarded.

'Analysis shows particles to have come from at least two space craft, both approximately the size of Scorpio.'

'B. . . but. . .', Vila was becoming even more alarmed. 'I thought you said they had never been re-supplied! Explain that!'

'Insufficient data,' said Orac curtly.

'There could be many reasons for pieces of other craft ending there.' Avon moved to join Vila by the screen. As he looked, the images grew more clear. 'There's only one way to discover the answers to our questions. Orac, is there an atmosphere inside the probe?'

'Affirmative. I reported all mechanical systems were still fully operational. That includes an atmosphere which is somewhat better than the air in here.'

'You'd think the scabby little rat needed air himself,' muttered Vila. 'What now, Avon? You intending to visit that Marie Celeste of space?'

'That's why we're here, Vila. Get over to the teleport with your gun. Soolin and I will join you in a moment.' Vila was about to argue but Avon's expression told him it would be unwise.

* * *

'Who will do it?' hissed the voice from the gloom. 'Has anyone ever used a Wanderer Class craft before?'

'I have. It is perfect for our needs.' The reply came from a woman but there was something in the tone which indicated a cold bitterness. There was little womanly about its owner.

'How do we know you can be trusted, Vanda?' hissed the other. 'You could steal the ship and leave the rest of us here to die. . . just like the others.'

'That's a chance you'll have to take. At least I could not do worse than you, Gallok. Your methods destroyed the other chances we had to escape. This time it will be done my way.'

There was a heavy silence for a few moments then a reluctant voice spoke from the gloom. 'So be it. Are you certain this teleport device of yours will work?'

'You are a fool, Gallok!' The bitterness was evident as the female voice drew closer. 'How do we know anything for certain? There has been nothing on which to test it. . . thanks to you! Now pass me that gun and stand clear. I will give the signal when the ship is within our range. The rest of you know what to do.' A low rumble came from many throats. At last they had something else on which to concentrate. It was a relief for all.

Three shimmering figures grew in intensity then solidified in a gloomy corridor of the vast probe craft. 'Which way, Avon?' Soolin was searching the dark recesses of the area with her narrowed eyes, gun at the ready.

'This way.' Avon turned on his heel and carefully stalked towards a hatchway. Vila only paused to become alarmed by his new surroundings before following hard on the heels of the others.

As Avon pressed the glowing panel, the hatch hissed open. The scene inside made Soolin gasp. Vila swallowed hard but Avon merely snorted before stepping into the operations area. It was a mess. Old disposable plates littered one corner of the deck, locker doors stood open with their contents strewn before them. There was an unmistakable smell of death about the place.

'If I didn't know better,' whispered Vila in a hoarse voice, 'I'd say the occupants of this place moved out about ten minutes ago. . . leaving their rubbish behind them.'

Avon said nothing but he had a familiar feeling in the pit of his stomach. He tightened his grip on the clip gun he carried and pressed on. Somewhere in the gloom was the device he sought. It had to be there. Just then, a low whirring sounded to his left. In a split second, Soolin turned and fired. The charge slammed into a computer bank sending up a shower of bright sparks.

'Sorry,' she muttered under her breath. 'Just a bit jumpy. . .'

'Save your apologies,' exclaimed Avon as he darted forward towards a dark corner, the smoke of the explosion billowing about him. 'You've just shown me what we're after.'

'Is that it?' Vila sounded edgy and uncertain. 'It doesn't look like much.'

'It's the device we're after,' said Avon confidently as he holstered his gun. Here, give me a hand to lift it from its mountings.'

Vila was reaching to take it from Avon as, in the gloom, he knocked over an old plate beside him. The noise made him jump as something heavy fell on the floor. Instinctively he reached to pick it up then recoiled in horror.

'A. . . Avon,' he stammered, his eyes rivetted on the object. 'I. . . I think I know what happened to at least some of the crew.'

'What are you trying to say?' hissed Avon in an irritated manner as he struggled to lift the device on his own. Then his eyes moved to see what Vila and Soolin were staring at. He took an involuntary gulp of air. On the floor was a bone which had been picked clean.

'That came from no beast I've ever seen,' whispered Soolin, trying not to believe what she was looking at.

'You've seen plenty,' grimaced Avon, 'But they're usually walking about like you and me.'

'Avon. . . Avon!' Dayna's worried voice cut the silence about them.

'Yes?' Avon pressed his communicator. 'What is it?'

'Avon, we. . . we've got a real problem here. . .'

* * *

A loud and menacing cackling filled the compartment as Avon and the others gazed with horror at the creatures slowly circling them. 'Here' Avon handed the device to Vila as he fingered his gun, not knowing which target to choose. 'Keep your eyes on them. Shoot the first to make a move.'

'A. . . are they. . . human?' Soolin's voice sounded distant and frightened.

'Of course they are.' Avon was irritated. There was something awesome about the creatures in the control room which made even his stomach muscles tighten. 'At least they were once. I suppose even we would become animals like them if we had lived through their hell.'

The eight shabby dishevelled, hunched figures in the tattered



'You might not have noticed it. . . but the air's becoming thick. . .'

ed remnants of space suits shuffled about, their small blood-shot eyes seeming to shine with death. Each held an old-fashioned type of weapon. Old — but lethal enough.

'Wh. . . what are they going to do?' muttered Vila, his eyes growing wider by the minute.

'Kill us, Vila. What else?' Avon seemed resigned to die but Vila knew Avon too well to accept that.

'Why don't you speak?' Vila found himself shouting. It had a strange effect on the creatures. Instantly, their chatter stopped, their expressions changing to ones of disbelief. There was a moment of eerie silence then one figure, much older than the others (Vila put him about seventy years of age but it was difficult to judge), stepped forward.

'You realise it's hopeless? You might as well surrender — before we are forced to kill you.' The voice sounded even older than the body out of which it came. 'Your ship is under command of Vanda. You cannot return to it. . . nor ever shall. You are doomed to die here as we once were!'

'That would be a grave error on your part.' Avon sounded deadly calm. 'Apart from the fact that I would kill at least half of you before you could beam to my ship, you would be unable to benefit from the device on which I am working. And . . . ' Avon indicated the device held by the worried Vila, 'this completes the mechanism.'

'What device could ever be of use to US?' The old man's voice was bitter. 'Our years have been taken from us by the Federation Controllers who left us here to die. . . to suffer agonies you could never imagine in your wildest nightmares!' The old man's eyes drifted towards the bone on the floor.

'I believe you,' continued Avon with a hint of sympathy in his voice, 'but my recycling machine could give you back your lost youth.'

'Recycling. . .?' Vila shot Avon a startled glance. Avon's kick to Vila's shin was missed by the creatures before them.

'And just what does this, er, recycling machine do?' The old man was showing interest. Avon permitted himself a sly smile.

'It is a method of turning the clock back for those exposed to the beam. It can rejuvenate human tissue, giving the subject back at least twenty years.'

There was a buzz of excitement in the command area as the creatures drew together but the old man stood apart, his shining eyes still on Avon.

'Impossible! No machine could ever do that! Besides, the focussing device you came here to steal could play no part in rejuvenation.'

'That's where you're wrong.' Avon never sounded more convincing. 'It has already worked perfectly hundreds of times but the beam focus I used was smashed during a meteorite storm — hence we needed this replacement. It will work as well if not better than the original. However, it is your choice. If you do not wish your youth to be restored, kill us right now.'

Vila shot Avon another worried glance and swallowed hard. A further silence followed. It seemed Avon's ruse had failed. Suddenly, a voice crackled from a nearby speaker.

'Don't you dare use his machine without me being there.' It was an old woman's voice coming from the Scorpio. 'You hear me, Gallok?'

'I hear you, Vanda,' muttered the old man. He turned to look at the eager faces of those who had suffered the long and bitter years in space with him. Each had hope written on their haggard faces. 'So be it. But if you are lying to us,' he pointed his crude weapon towards Avon, 'you will be atomised where you stand.'

'Agreed,' confirmed Avon. 'But, first, you must allow me to beam certain other pieces of equipment from the Scorpio to complete the machine.' The old man nodded.

'I suppose with you here the others of your crew will not try anything stupid.' Avon nodded, praying he was right.

'Tarrant,' Avon barked into his communicator, 'I want all

the machinery from the locker in sector Delta six . . . and I mean EVERYTHING. Understand?'

'Understood.' Tarrant's voice drifted back.

'Beam it all in one batch then stand-by to generate power from the Scorpio to make this work.'

'It will be done. Oh, by the way, our, er, guest up here will be teleporting back with it. I'll have everything together in five minutes.'

'Have you never tried to escape from this hell-hole?' Avon was trying to put the old man at his ease but the gun never wavered from the middle of Avon's chest.

'Many times,' growled the old man bitterly. 'But all our attempts to stop passing ships have ended in disaster. We've blown them to pieces using the energy focusser. Then Vanda rigged her teleport device. It seems her way worked best after all. Personally, I would have approached your ship with one of our two shuttle craft stowed below but Vanda insisted on saving what little fuel they have on board.' There was an unmistakable bitterness in Gallok's voice.

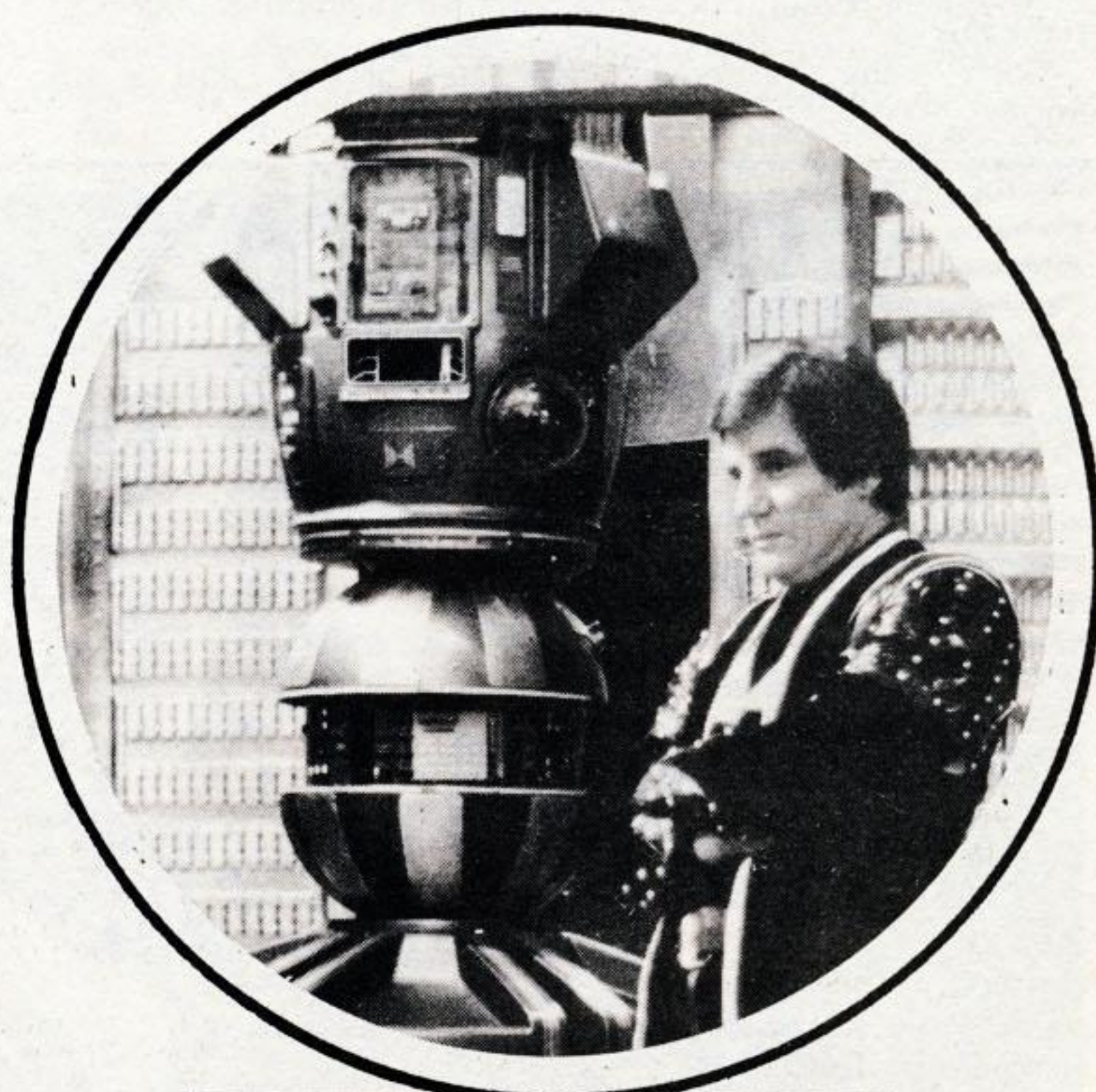
Just then, the area behind Avon shimmered as objects materialised. As their form solidified, the awesome and horrifying form of an old hag armed with a wicked-looking knife and laser gun lurched forward. Her wrinkled face was pure evil.

'You have all you requested,' she hissed. 'Construct your machine at once or,' she flashed her blade within an inch of Avon's face, 'you become the main dish on tonight's menu!' The hideous cackle was echoed by the other shuffling forms which pressed closer towards Avon and his companions.

'You're mad!' Vila's hoarse voice hardly carried at all. 'I know what I'm doing,' snarled Avon as he pulled the items Tarrant had delivered into some kind of machine.

'If one of them spots the fact that this. . .', Vila pointed to a laser welder close to his foot, 'works fine on metal but it bores holes in humans. . . then we're dead! Can't Tarrant beam us out of here right now? There's no-one on board the Scorpio from the probe now!'

'If I did that they could use their crude tele-porter to place others on board the ship. I can't risk that. Now, tell them to gather in a group. I'm ready.'



'Slave. . . set course for Akandra. . .'



'This way,'
murmured Avon...

Tension mounting within the probe, Avon braced himself against the laser welder which was aimed through the energy focus device. Beyond that, the huddle of frightening figures stared back at him, pitiful hope written on their haggard faces. As Vila and Soolin watched with bated breath beside Avon, it seemed for a moment as if the ruse would work.

'Keep your hand away from the trigger,' yelled the harsh voice of Vanda. She moved away from the figures, her weapons still clutched in her bony hands. 'If this is a trick, I shall see you never live to enjoy your success.' With that, she darted quickly, grabbed Vila and Soolin, dragging them to one side. 'Now,' she hissed. 'Show how good your device is on the others. If it works, I shall be next. If it's a trick, your friends will die before you can do any real damage.' With that, she pressed the blade of her knife to Vila's throat. Vila's pale expression said it all.

'A minor adjustment before the first rejuvenation,' muttered Avon as he fiddled with the settings on the side of the laser. His deft movements screening the angle of the laser. The trick was realised too late. A powerful and dazzling beam of refracted light shot across the deck, scything into the screaming group waiting for their miracle cure.

'Now, Soolin!', yelled Avon as he sprayed the sizzling beam across the deck, stopping just short of Vila. In the blink of an eye, Soolin's hand slashed sideways into Vanda's neck, sending her screeching to the floor, her blade dropping in front of the terrified Vila. Shrieks of pain from the wailing group filled the air as Avon flung himself across the energy focus device, his hand feeling for his communicator, 'Dayna. . . teleport us now!'

'Stop them. . . stop them!' Vanda's hysterical shrieks had little effect on the figures slowly vanishing before her eyes. In an instant, the trio were gone. . . and so was the precious energy focusing device.

'Phew! Thought we'd really had it that time,' gasped Vila as he stepped across the Scorpio's flight deck. 'What a bunch of creeps! They nearly had us then.'

'And they still might,' growled Tarrant as he studied his display screen. 'They've just launched two shuttle craft.'

'Then get us out of here immediately,' ordered Avon as he marched across the deck with the device in his hands. 'I need time to fit this to the weapons system.'

'We also need time to raise the power to maximum drive.' Tarrant was looking hard at Avon. 'You see, our visitor knew something about ships like this. She removed our booster pack before she arrived on the flight deck. I've just checked. It's nowhere to be found.'

'Y. . .you mean we're sitting ducks for those blood-thirsty space cannibals?' screeched Vila.

'Precisely.' Tarrant flashed an ironic smile. 'It was a brave escape but all for nothing. Their shuttles will overtake us in a few minutes.'

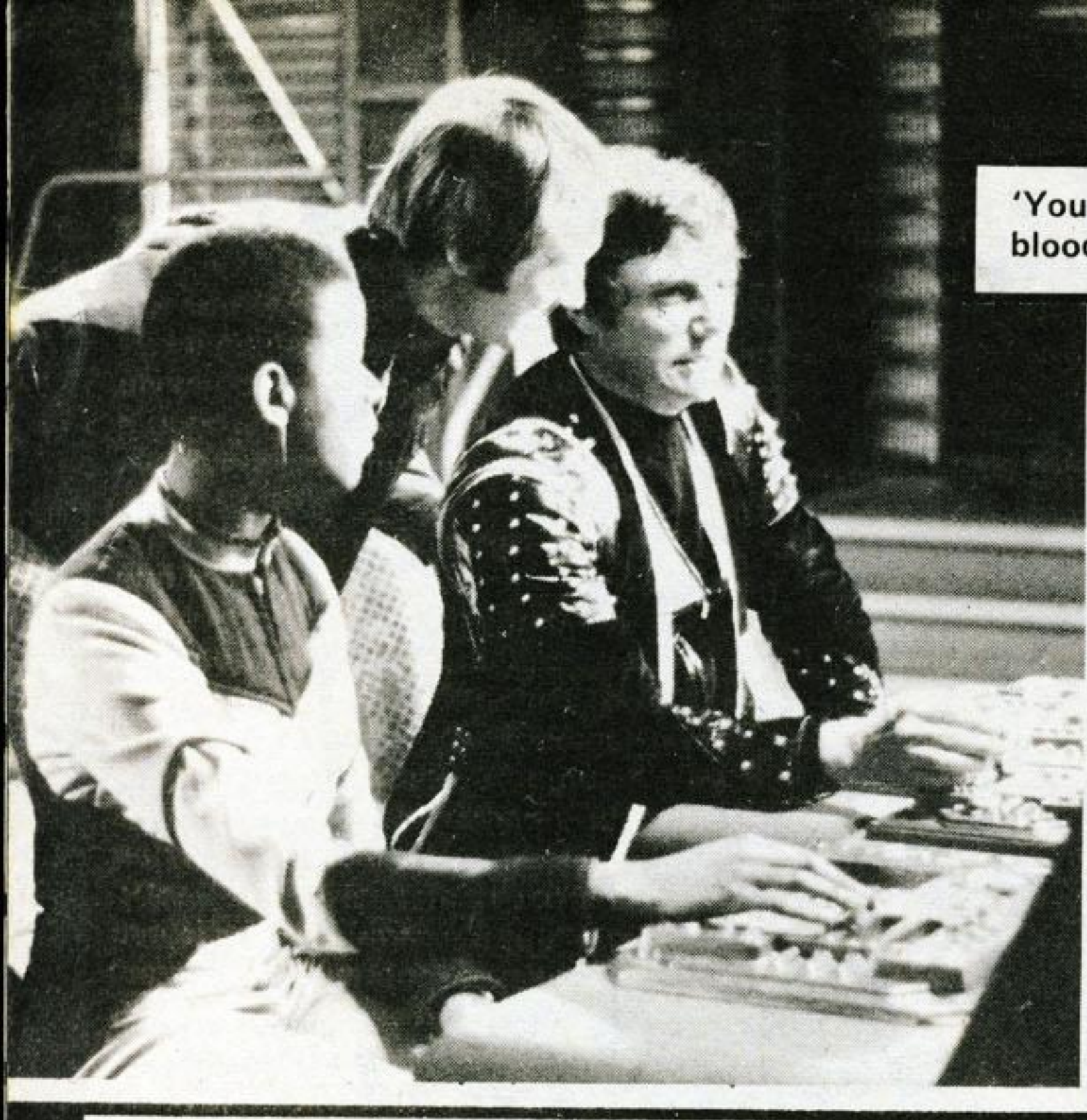
'Set course for Akandra,' growled Avon.

'No!' screamed Vila. 'You'll kill us all! The gravity of that white dwarf will pull us in then crush us to smithereens before we hit the surface!'

'It's a chance we'll have to take, Vila. It's either that or you become a poor meal for those starving wretches now hot on our heels. Which is it to be?'

'The fools,' hissed Gallok. 'They'll never make it. They should surrender immediately. We could do a deal with them. Spare their lives. . . 'Would you?' sneered Vanda as she flicked the controls of the shuttle to maximum boost. 'No, it's up to us to catch them. I know what that creature they call Avon is trying to do. He's trying to gain maximum power by doing a loop round the dwarf star. . . then breaking off into space but it will be a loop of death for all of them. We must catch them before they get too far. It's our only chance to take over their ship. Stand by on the laser charges. We'll blast them if necessary. If we can't have their ship. . . nor shall they!'

As Scorpio dived towards the shimmering core of what was once a brilliant star, metal sections heaved and groaned as



'You mean we're sitting ducks for those blood-thirsty space cannibals...?'

extra stress pressed inwards on its structure. Moving twice as fast the two shuttle craft, manned by the survivors of Avon's laser blast, drew ever closer.

'They're gaining on us,' called Tarrant. 'We've only a small reserve of power left. We've got to pull out of this dive soon! Avon... can you hear me?'

From deep in the weapon section of Scorpio, Avon's grim voice boomed back through his communicator. 'Hold course until stress factor seven, Tarrant. Then, and only then, apply all power to break free of orbital loop. I need more time to fit the energy focus.' The air went dead. Avon had issued his orders.

'They're firing at us,' yelled Dayna. 'Laser charges aimed at our engines! They'll hit any second.'

'Keep your course, Tarrant.' Avon was still listening from deep in the ship.

'B... but...'

'No buts, Dayna. Tarrant has his orders. Just keep watching the screen.'

As Dayna, Vila and Soolin all stood with dry mouths, waiting for the explosions they knew would come, they watched the laser charges on the screen. Suddenly, the trace seemed to curve downwards behind them as if deflected by some unseen hand. 'I... I don't believe it,' muttered Vila. 'How...?'

'Gravity.' Avon's voice boomed back from below. 'The star's gravity has warped their trajectory. Now keep your course, Tarrant, as ordered.'

'Curses,' screamed Vanda as she saw her death bolts vanish towards the star. 'There's nothing else for it!' She leaned over the controls and jerked a throttle lever with her bony hand.

'No,' screamed Gallok. 'Give up, Vanda! Admit to yourself they have beaten us. Head back to the probe before we run out of fuel!'

'Never,' hissed the deadly serious voice. 'They will not make fools of us. They will die as I promised. We're going to ram them!'

'Stress factor six.' Soolin's voice seemed strangely calm above the din of groaning metal. 'Factor seven in five seconds.'

'Standing by with power reserve,' said Tarrant glancing about him at the buckling plates of the hull. 'I just hope Avon's got his calculations right.'

'Factor seven... now!'

There came a deep rumble from within the body of

Scorpio. 'More power, Slave,' yelled Tarrant.

'I... I'm doing my best, Master,' offered the computer. 'But it's not very easy. The energy is very limited...'

'They're pulling out of the loop!', screamed Vanda in disbelief. 'Must pull with them!'

Drawing on every energy resource, Scorpio strained to free itself of the deadly gravitational pull of the star. It seemed an eternity before the shuddering lessened. 'Coming out of it,' exclaimed Tarrant. 'Speed increasing every second.'

'Yes,' confirmed Dayna, her eyes glued to the screen, 'but we haven't shaken the shuttles! Their lasers will soon be effective again.'

That instant, the second shuttle seemed to lurch, its engines still belching fire, but all power directing it towards the shining star. The screams of its helpless crew sealed in their metal coffin.

'Poor beggars,' muttered Vila. 'What a way to go. Crushed to death like a used beer can.'

'Save your sympathy,' snapped Tarrant. 'We've still got the other for company and they're out to destroy us. Remember?'

'There's still a chance to stop them,' called Gallok excitedly as he studied the instruments. 'The gravity is almost zero. The laser charges will run true. We could disable them long enough for us to board them!'

'Then stand by for attack,' hissed Vanda. 'We'll teach them they are not the only ones able to pull stunts in space. I will enjoy watching them die!'

'We're free of the gravity but it was all for nothing,' said Tarrant as Avon strode back to the deck. 'There's no power available for a force field and we're about to be used for laser-charge target practice. This is the end, Avon.'

'You accept defeat too easily,' growled Avon as he lunged into his control seat. 'I'm turning the ship around.'

'They're giving up,' exclaimed Gallok as he saw the Scorpio veer round ahead of them. 'We've still a chance to take the ship!'

'I don't believe it,' hissed Vanda. 'It smells of another trick... but what?'

The answer came only too soon. Two superheated energy bolts flashed from Scorpio's weaponry. Gallok and Vanda's throats tightened, then the charges flashed below them.

'Th... they missed,' shouted Vanda in triumph. 'Now we show no mercy. We go for the kill. They have no energy left!'

Two seconds later, it was as if the whole universe erupted round the shuttle craft. Elements of blazing matter engulfed the ship and the tortured screams from within. The wave washed on to and over the Scorpio, tossing it back into the heavens like a cork on a mighty wave. It was some time before the crew recovered their senses and stabilised their erratic course.

'Wow,' declared Vila at length. 'That was really something,' he said turning to Avon who was unstrapping himself from his seat. 'You must have fixed the plasma bolt focus. That was a brilliant idea you had of firing into the White Dwarf. You turned it into a Supernova! Those energy bolts are really something! When you put your mind to it, you really come up trumps, Avon.'

'Not really, Vila. 'I wasn't aiming for the planet,' confessed Avon. 'I was aiming for the ship. I think the focus needs adjusting.'

Everyone watched in stunned silence as Avon walked from the deck.

'He... he didn't know he was going to create a Supernova?' stammered Vila. 'He could have killed us!'

'But he didn't,' beamed Tarrant. 'Did he?'

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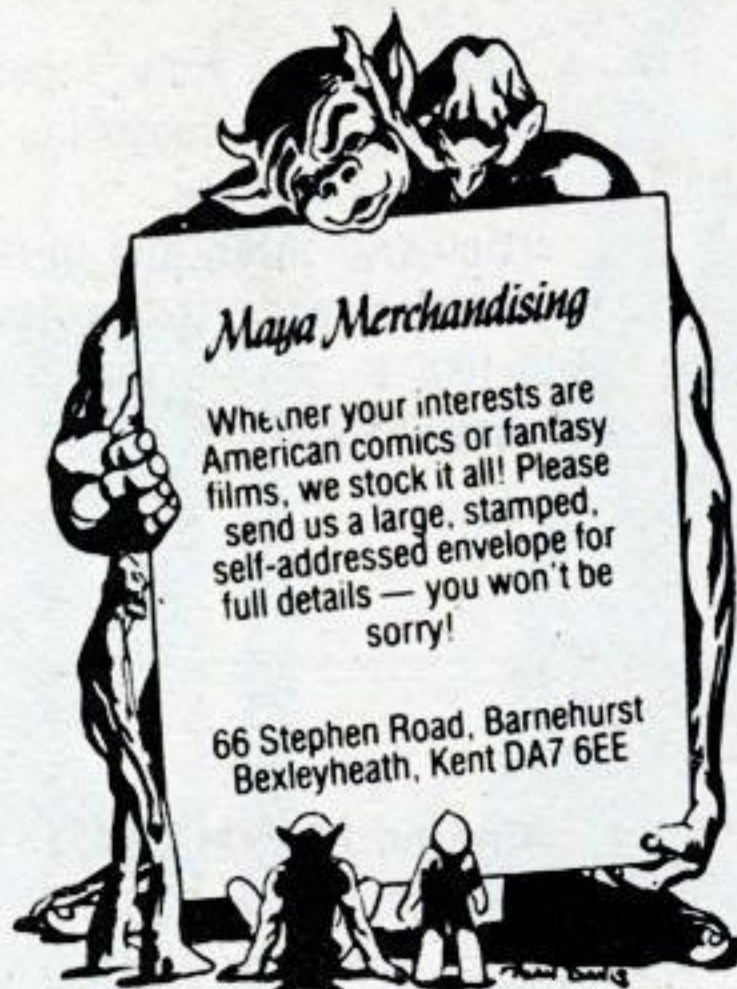
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POINTS OF VIEW

Dear Sir,

Just a note to say how much I enjoyed the first issue of your magazine – especially the feature on Paul Darrow.

I am particularly interested in reading about how the stories and characters developed, and would like to see features on the writers of the TV series.

Joan Dunnett,
Edinburgh.

Dear Sir,

I can find no fault at all with your magazine but I would like to make a couple of suggestions: could you put in some features and interviews with the old members of the cast such as Gareth Thomas, Sally Knyvette, Jan Chappell etc.

Karen Vanstone,
Sidmouth.

These letters from Karen and Joan are typical of many we have received asking for more details of the early series. In response to them we will shortly be running a series of features about the early shows and the characters in them.

Dear Sir,

When Dr Who first came out as a weekly, it was little better than your first effort. Although the comic strip was better and it contained more information, there was also padding in the form of features. It wasn't until it went monthly that it improved drastically into its present state of brilliance. You've started out on the right lines by being a monthly already. So, provided you shoot your comic strip writers, scrap the padding and tell your feature writers to get their fingers out, I have high hopes that we will soon have a high quality Blake's 7 mag' comparable to (or better than?) Dr Who monthly. The decision is yours.

Paul Jeffries,
Stockton-on-Tees.

Many of you have written to ask for details of the Blake Seven Fan Clubs, well, there are dozens of these, and we'll be bringing you details of them soon. But to keep you going, this is the address to write to for details of the biggest one:

Anne Lewis
Liberator Popular Front
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Dear Sir,

I'm just writing because I've bought the first issue of Blake's Seven Monthly and I think it's absolutely fantastic. I really enjoyed 'Mission of Mercy' and the film review and 'Heads and Tails' were smashing. The star profile on Paul Darrow was great and I like the idea of puzzles and jokes as it makes a great contrast to Dr. Who and Empire Strikes Back Monthly. I hope your mag is a great success and continues for a long time.

Karl Dislay,
Everton.

Dear Sir,

On the whole I liked your magazine, the stories were well-written and I liked the features (especially the Star Profile). However I have some criticisms – the overall tone of the magazine is a little juvenile for one of my advanced years (I won't see 19 again) and it seems to me that the features on fantasy films and books were put in almost as an afterthought. The new TV series is looking every bit as good as the previous ones.

Gillian Moore,
Maryport.

Dear Sir,

Marvel have done it again! I'm a great admirer of Marvel comics from Spiderman to Star Wars. I am a great fan of the Blake 7 TV series and I liked the features on the characters. The film reviews is a great idea and I loved the stories. Well done!

Suzanne Perry,
Canterbury.

Well, we asked for your comments and we got 'em! We are just as grateful for letters telling us what you hate as well as those saying what you like – it is only through comments like those from Paul and Gillian that we can learn exactly what you want: you'll have noticed that 'Vila's gags' is no longer with us – purely as a result of what you told us. Another feature which we hope to run soon, as a result of much interest from you, is a short feature about artist Ian Kennedy. If we tried to print every enthusiastic comment about Ian's work that we have received, we would not have space for anything else in the mag'!

BLAZES BOOK REVIEW

TIMEWARPS by JOHN GRIBBIN published by Sphere at £1.25

John Gribbin is a very accomplished scientist and astrophysicist who, of late, has produced some very interesting science fact works on the 'mysteries of the universe'. Timewarps investigates the paradoxes and possibilities of our relationship with time: is it possible to travel in time? If so, how? Could we get back again? These are just some of the questions examined by Timewarps in John's very readable and highly detailed style. Definitely worth reading if the factual basis for sci-fi has ever interested you.

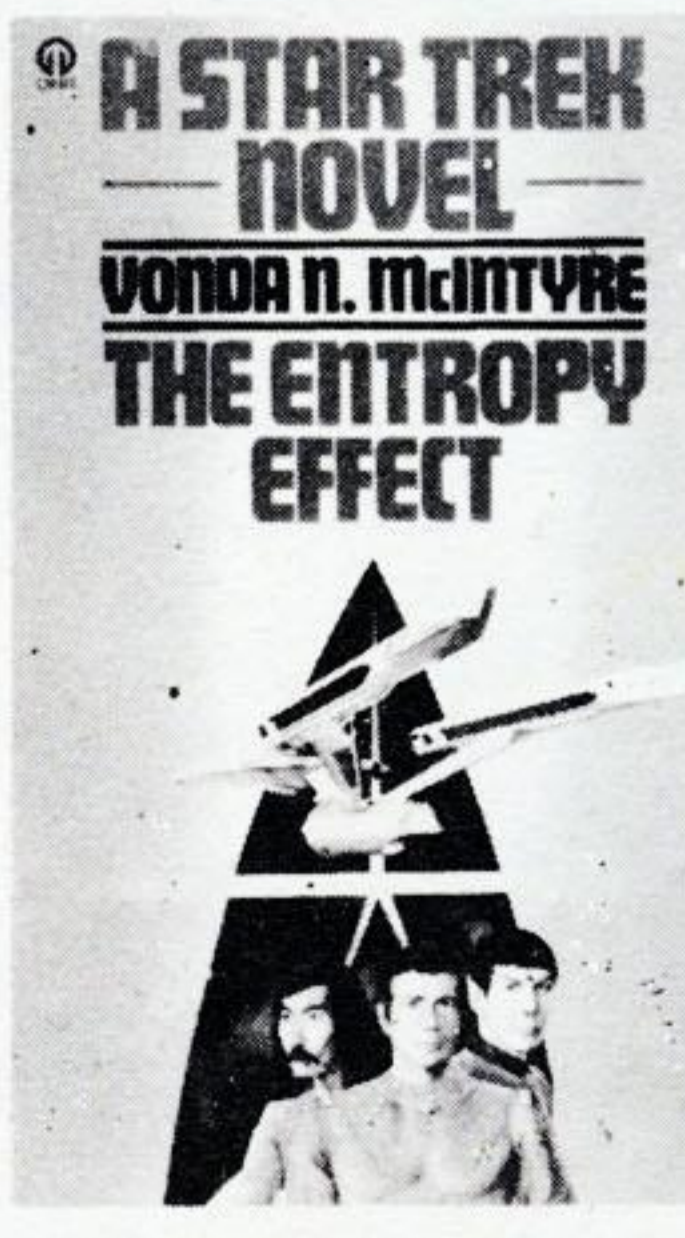


THE ILLUSTRATED ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF SPACE TECHNOLOGY by Ken Gatland published by Salamander Books. This is definitely the best work available detailing the history of space exploration so far. It traces the development of the science from the early days at the turn of the century in Europe right up to Space Shuttle and beyond. Presented in an easily understood, manner and profusely illustrated in colour, it makes compulsive reading — a great buy!



HEROES OF THE SPACEWAYS compiled by BILL HARRY published by Omnibus Press at £3.95.

Definitely one for the Sci-fi buffs! This softback, large format compilation is a hero-by-hero account of a wide range of good guys from sci-fi — and some of the better villains as well. From Flash Gordon to Skywalker, they're all there, together with details of where they came from, who invented them and virtually everything else you might want to know. The book is well illustrated with black and white photos and there is a small colour section in the centre.



THE ENTROPY EFFECT by Jonda M. McINTYRE Published by Orbot at £1.25

The entropy effect is what happens when people start playing around with time travel and the Universe starts to collapse in on itself far faster than nature had planned. Only the crew of the Starship Enterprise can avert the disaster, but they are at a great disadvantage because Captain Kirk is dead! Despite taking on the complex subject of time travel m/s McIntyre has produced a gripping and immensely readable novel which we found impossible to put down — a classic sci-fi novel in the old tradition.

Guest artist
STRATFORD JOHNS
as **BELKOV**

in 'GAMES' by BILL LYONS

