

# Supercar Superfan!

Austin Tate

Gerry Anderson TV was a backdrop to my school years in the early 1960s and Supercar was my favourite. Having seen adverts in TV Comic, I was an early member of the Supercar Club which had a tie up with National Benzole "Super National" petrol and produced a flexi-disc with a Supercar story along with the Supercar theme and more Barry Gray music. I still smile when I remember my dad pulling into a National station to fill up, and as we drove away he accelerated fast and shouted out "zooooom". My dad, who had been in the Royal Navy, even got me a captain style peaked cap like Mike Mercury wore which I mounted my Supercar wings on.



A number of scientists and engineers have noted how they were influenced in their career choices and areas of interest from watching early Gerry Anderson programmes. And so it was in my case too. The Black Rock Laboratory team under Professor Popkiss and Doctor Beaker created Supercar (fictionally) using a grant from the US Air Force and their research people. Reality can follow fiction... I have (in real life) received research funding for my Artificial Intelligence work on planning, command and control of spacecraft and in search and rescue applications from the US Air Force Research Laboratory and the US Defense Advanced Research Agency (DARPA) using the very same research mechanism that funded the X-15 rocket plane (and, one imagines, Supercar).

I look after a web site for Supercar (and Fireball XL5) resources that has been running since 1995 and is amongst the earliest sites on the World Wide Web. During that time I have been fortunate to be part of the international community who continue to enjoy Gerry Anderson TV programmes and have worked with some very creative people all round the world who are also very interested in Supercar over the years.

60 years later and Supercar is still in my life via the detailed and accurate 3D models produced over two decades ago with friends and collaborators around the globe through the Gerry Anderson Model Makers Alliance (GA-MMA) and looking even better today as computer graphics have improved. The fan produced resources and computer models created with others internationally has enabled me to make virtual world and virtual reality (VR) experiences to continue to enjoy Supercar, to visit the (virtual) Black Rock Laboratory and take Supercar out for a spin in flight simulators and space simulators.



*Supercar in OpenSimulator: Austin Tate – 2010-2020*

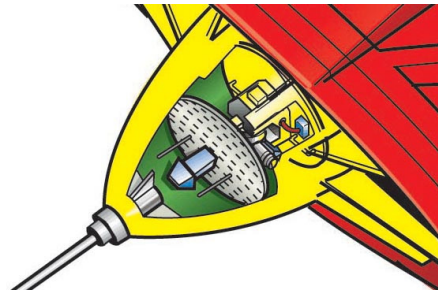
Some of my colleagues who I have enjoyed working with to create Supercar computer models and materials are as follows...

Mick Imrie in the UK in the late 1990s created Supercar and Black Rock Laboratory 3D computer models, originally in Cinema4D and they subsequently ported by Mateen Greenway, myself and others in the Gerry Anderson Model Makers Alliance (GA-MMA) to Studio 3D Max, Lightwave, Blender, etc. A lot of time was spent to get these models to be a good replica of the puppet-scale studio model. Work is underway in 2021 to improve on that with better colour images and more information gleaned from the TV shows themselves.



*Supercar and Black Rock Lab 3D Models: Mick Imrie and Austin Tate – 1998*

Shane Pickering, a graphic artist and private pilot in New Zealand, in the late 1990s worked on schematics and internal details for Supercar compatible with the TV shows and annuals. We had a lot of exchanges about plausible internals for Supercar taking into account many references in the TV shows and (mostly) using plausible aerospace concepts with a bit of advanced technology known only to the research community of the time. Remember the late 1950s and early 1960s was the age of the hypersonic X-15 rocket plane, Harrier VTOL Jump Jets and the SR-71 Blackbird!



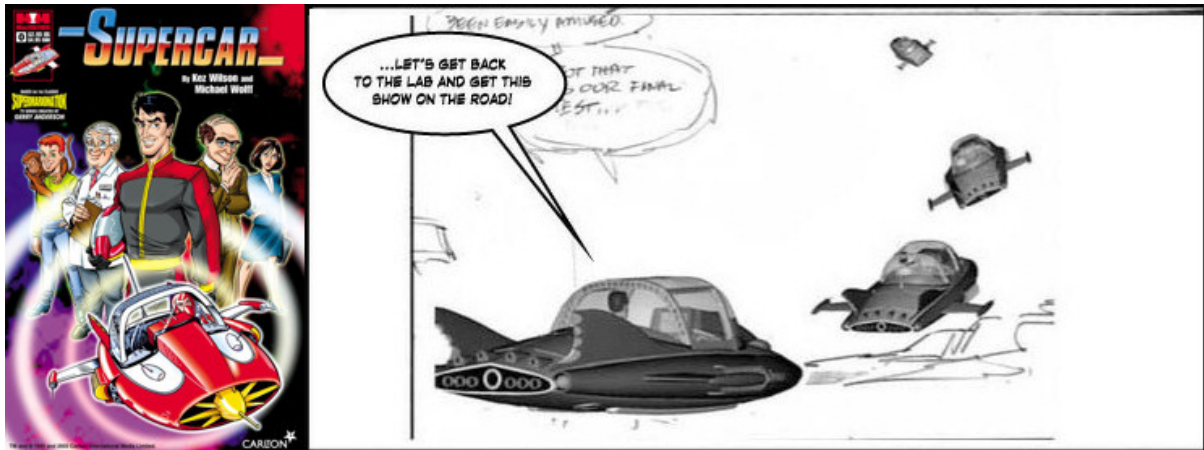
Brian Douglas, a Microsoft Flight Simulator enthusiast in the UK, worked with me in 2003 to improve the visual appearance and flight dynamics for the earlier versions of Supercar for Flight Simulator I had created. Iain Murray and I worked to improve my earlier Black Rock Laboratory scenery for Flight Simulator.



*Supercar for Microsoft Flight Simulator – Austin Tate and Brian Douglas - 1996-2003*

Kez Wilson at Misc!Mayhem in Texas created the Supercar Comic published in 2003, working with script writer Michael Wolff, and I was happy to help with its production using our 3D models used to get accurate outlines for rotoscoping of some image panels. I met up with Kez and Graydon Gould, the voice of Mike Mercury, at a Fanderson event that same year. Kez and I created a Supercar Club 2000 to give new resources to fellow fans.





*Supercar Comic Sketch Panel– Misc!Mayhem - Kez Wilson and Michael Wolff – 2001-2003*

Playing Mantis in the USA produced the Johnny Lightning miniature diecast Supercar models originally in 2001 with colouring reflecting “The Little Golden Book” drawn images. Working with their designer Alan Pletcher I was able to give a little input to improve the later versions for colour and details to better reflect Supercar as seen on TV. I was fortunate to get deliveries of each new variant and limited edition that came out over the following years and some have been auctioned at a Fanderson event to raise money for its charities.



I have also had fun interactions with Martin Woodhouse (who along with his brother Hugh wrote the stories for Supercar series one), Dirk Maggs (a fellow lifelong Supercar fan) and the good folks at Fanderson.

More details of the collaborations and experiments can be found on my blog, via my Supercar web site and the GA-MMA web site.

## Resources

- Supercar Web Site: <http://atate.org/ga/supercar.html>
- Gerry Anderson Model Makers Alliance (GA-MMA): <http://atate.org/ga/ga-craft.html>
- Other Gerry Anderson Resources: <http://atate.org/ga/>
- Austin Tate’s Blog Posts on Supercar: <http://blog.inf.ed.ac.uk/atate/?s=Supercar>

*Original Supercar designed by Reg Hill of A.P. Films.  
This is fan produced material to promote the shows of Gerry Anderson and provided for your enjoyment, and should not be used for any commercial purpose.  
Version: 12-May-2021.*