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**Misc!MAYHEM**  
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# -SUPERCAR-™

By **Kez Wilson** and  
**Michael Wolff**

BASED ON THE CLASSIC  
**SUPERMATION**  
TV SERIES CREATED BY  
**GERRY ANDERSON**





# FULL BOOST VERTICAL!

Well here it is again. Another new comic book title from another new company. Another opening issue featuring a pithy editorial from which is actually a thinly disguised plea for you and others to continue reading our product.

Are you old enough to remember a time when comics weren't obligated to editorialize? I am. I'm old enough to remember the days when comic books were ten cents apiece and the extent of editorial content was the wondering by fans as to whether or not the Purple Armadillo would

return to threaten the ranks of the Group of Good Guys!

(Go ahead and say it. "Oh God ... one of them! Another old fogey has somehow managed to creep into the business. I thought they sprayed last month.")

But my children, Nostalgia is part and parcel to the deal here. You bought into it the moment you picked up this book. Nostalgia for forty years ago...back in the days of those fabled ten cent comics.

Television was pre-cable in those days, and most of it in black-and-white. Back then we were thrilling to the adventures of Roy Rogers, Video Village Junior, Fury, George Reeves as Superman, Sky King, Sergeant Preston Of The Yukon (with his dog King!) ... and an interesting little show originating from England called Supercar.

Characters portrayed by marionettes flew into adventures on board a sleek and

versatile vehicle. In an age before CGI special-effects or advanced animation efforts, for a lot of us kids it was the only game in town. We let our imaginations take us past the visible wires and fixed expressions and became enthralled in the exploits of test pilot Mike Mercury and Team Supercar. In their high-tech magic carpet they'd travel the world over, matching wits with international spies, mad scientists, modern-day pirates and dictators. They were product of a simpler time ... when Evil could be instantly recognized, and Good thundered across the sky.

The comic you're holding in your hand is a product of fannish devotion. The creative team have spent the past few years devoted to the memory of a classic television adventure program. It's a devotion which has held things together during the numerous trials, tribulations, and many miles traveled. We looked back at Supercar and pondered bringing its adventures into the new century, for this isn't entirely a nostalgia trip. We can't go back and, indeed, the entire concept of Supercar centers around Forward Thinking. We feel the concept can achieve new life and that, with proper care and feeding, it can be just as fresh now as it was back in its days on the black-and-white screen.

We also feel that life has been too quiet.  
We miss the thunder.

Michael Wolff

## SILVER TRAP

A Supercar Adventure

Written by  
**Kez Wilson**  
and **Michael Wolff**

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"Mitch the Monkey"  
by **Michael Hawkins**

Lettering font:  
**San Diego by Blambot**

Special thanks to:

**Charles Barnett III** (Inks pages 4 and 6)  
and **Eddie Eddings** (Inks pages 14-16).

**Dave McCoy** for his invaluable layout assistance.

And last but not least, **Austin Tate** and **Mick Imrie**, creators of the CG 3D models of Supercar and locations, which contributed enormously to the creation of this comic book series.

**Misc!**  
MAYHEM  
PRODUCTIONS

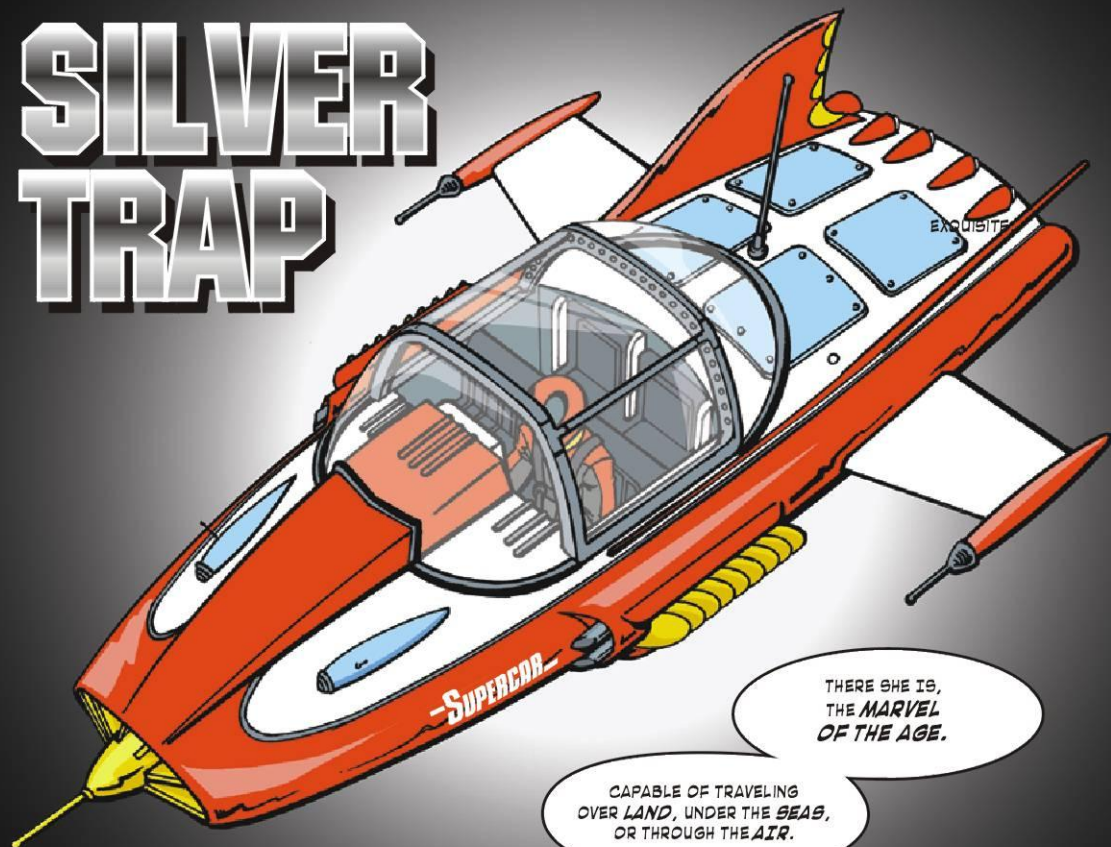
**CARLTON**

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At last! A NEW **SUPERCAR**™ Adventure!

# SILVER TRAP



THERE SHE IS,  
THE **MARVEL**  
OF THE AGE.

CAPABLE OF TRAVELING  
OVER **LAND**, UNDER THE **SEAS**,  
OR THROUGH THE **AIR**.

SO SLEEK.

SO POWERFUL.

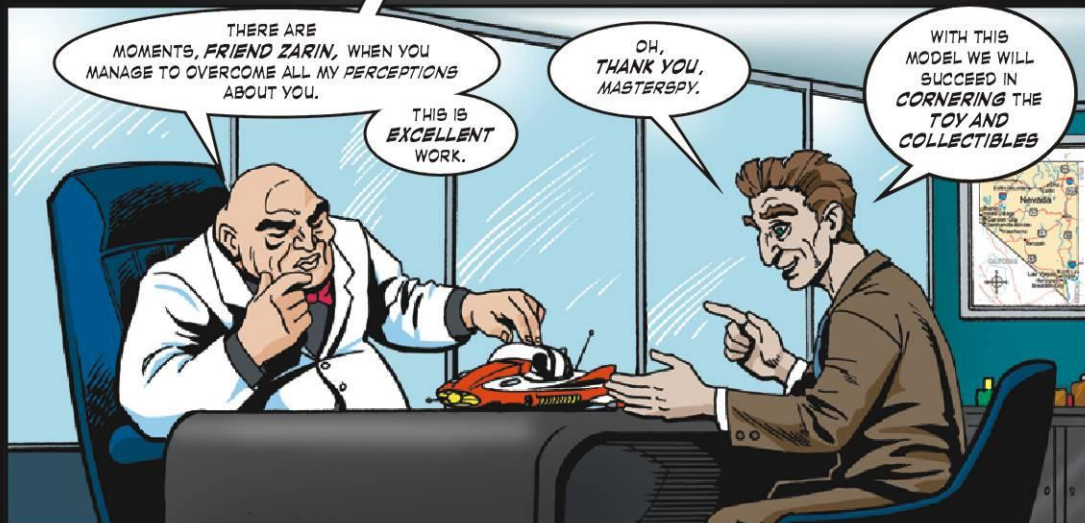
SO ELUSIVE.

THERE ARE  
MOMENTS, **FRIEND ZARIN**, WHEN YOU  
MANAGE TO OVERCOME ALL MY **PERCEPTIONS**  
ABOUT YOU.

THIS IS  
**EXCELLENT**  
WORK.

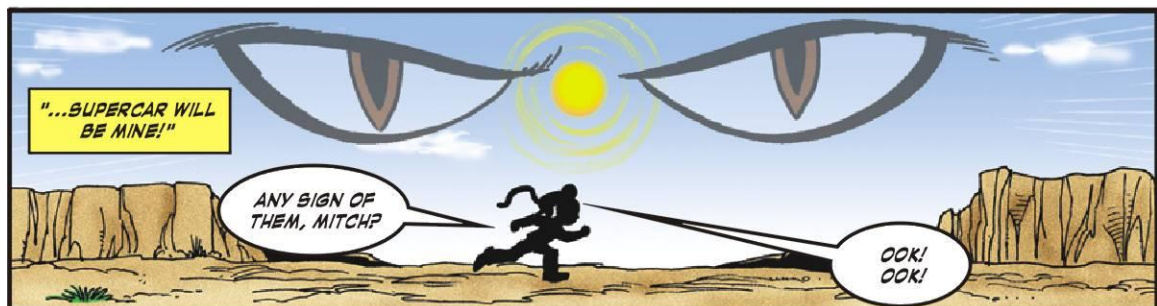
OH,  
THANK YOU,  
**MASTERSPY**.

WITH THIS  
MODEL WE WILL  
SUCCEED IN  
**CORNERING** THE  
**TOY AND**  
**COLLECTIBLES**













GOOD  
THING YOU  
WERE PAYING  
ATTENTION...

...OH,  
NO!

SCREECH!

R-R-R-RATTLE!

QUIET, MITCH!  
WE DON'T WANT  
TO SPOOK IT!

THAT'S THE  
BIGGEST RATTLE-  
SNAKE I'VE EVER  
SEEN!

NOW I WISH WE  
HADN'T DONE SUCH  
A GOOD JOB OF  
LOVING MIKE AND  
DR. BEAKER.

WHIMPER...

I'M  
SCARED TOO,  
MITCH.

GNAH,  
THERE IS  
NOTHING TO  
BE AFRAID  
OF, JIMMY...

...AS LONG AS  
YOU AND MITCH STAY  
PERFECTLY STILL.

PLEASE HOLD  
SUPERCAR STEADY  
PILOT.

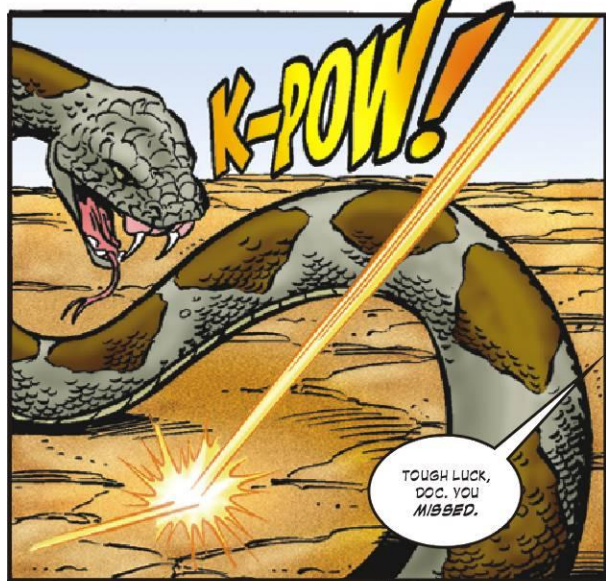
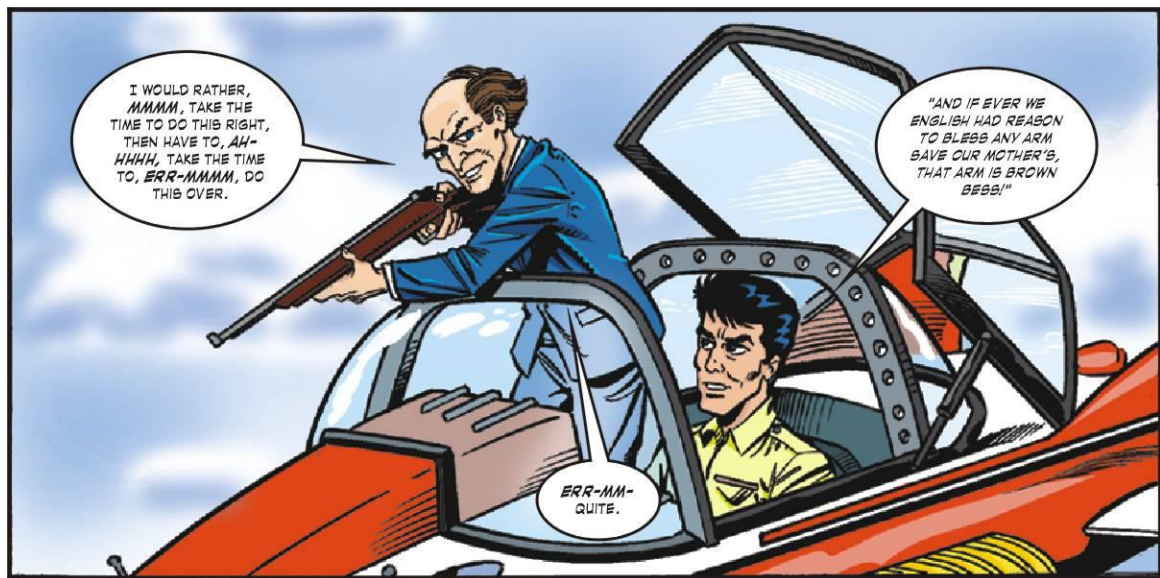
YOU'VE  
PICKED  
A FINE TIME  
TO BECOME  
A BACKBEAT  
DRIVER,  
DOC.

HOOT!  
HOOT!

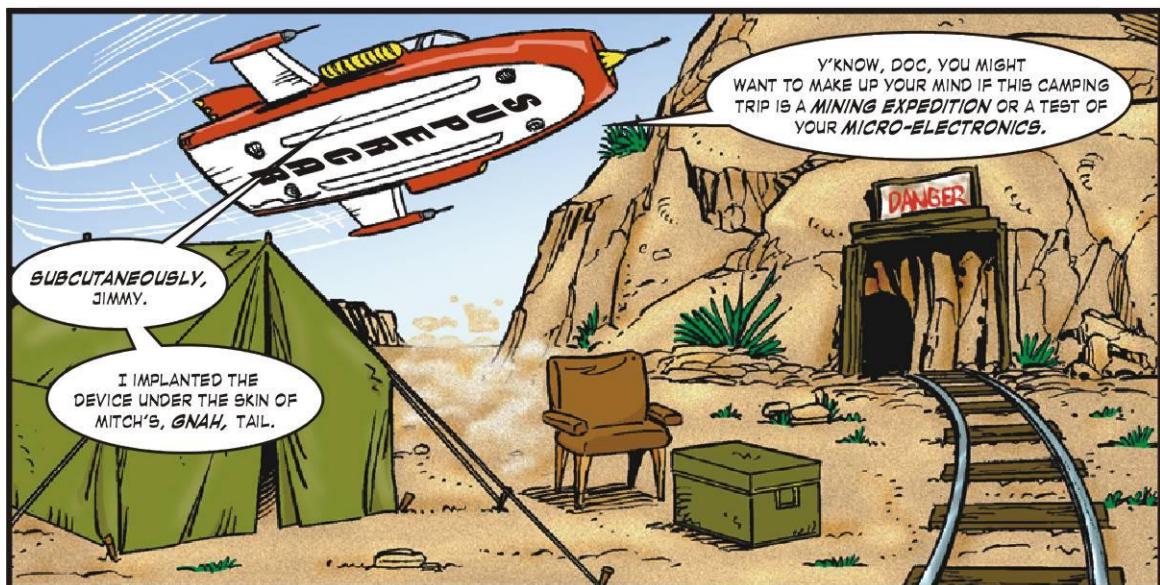
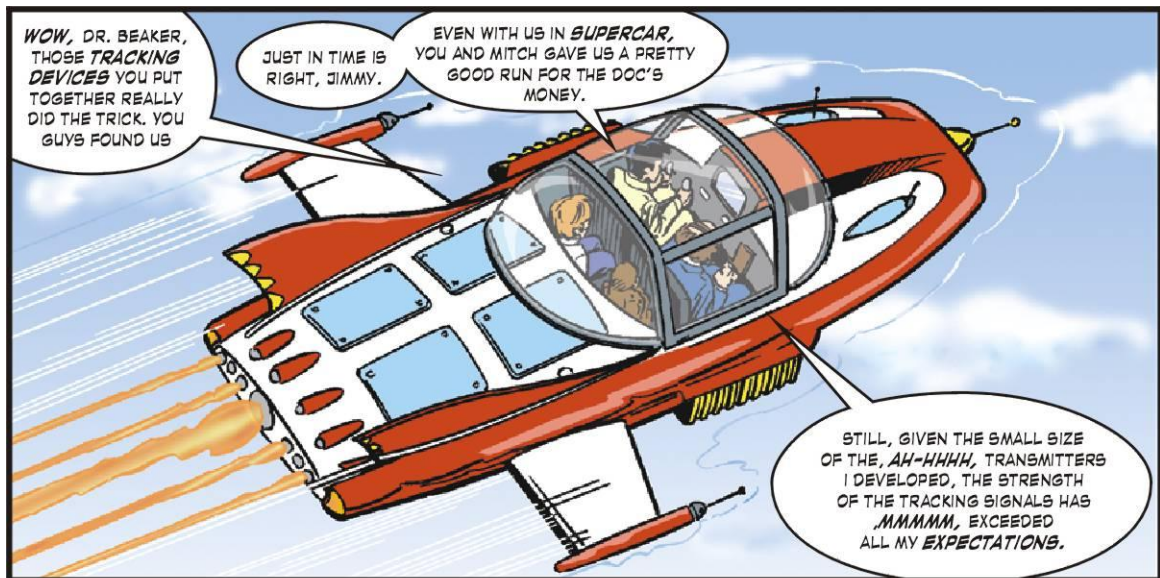
DR. BEAKER!  
MIKE!

R-R-R-RATTLE!

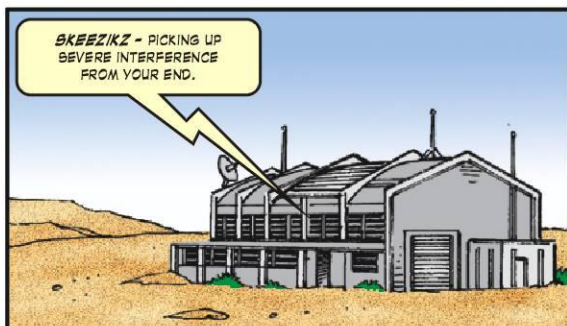




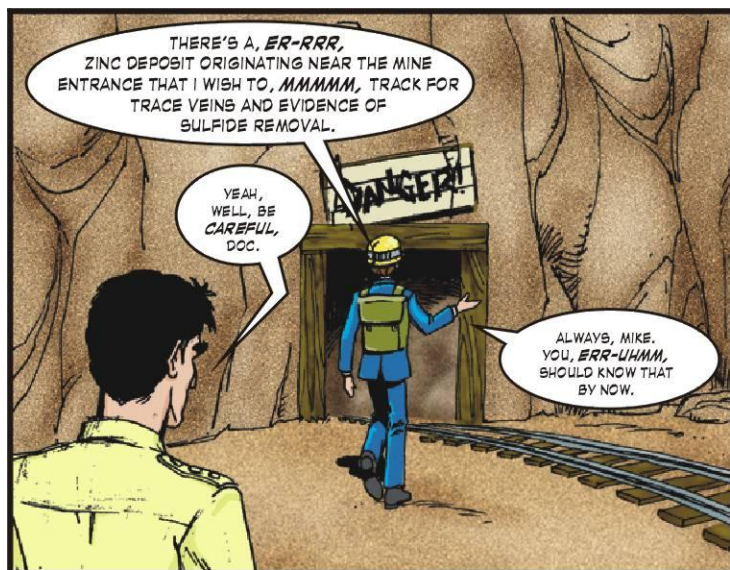




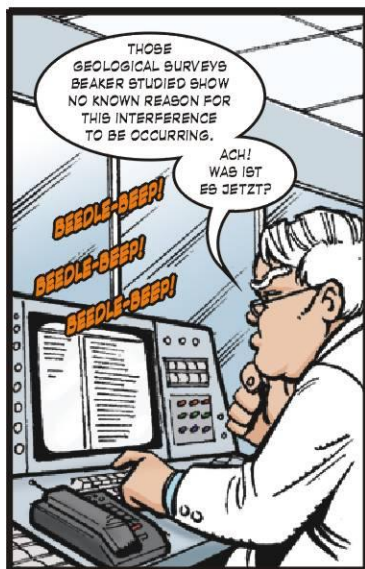




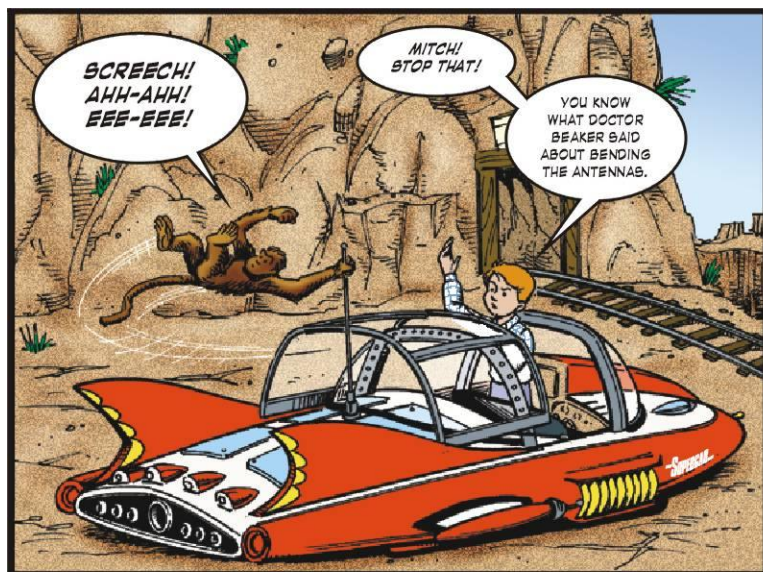




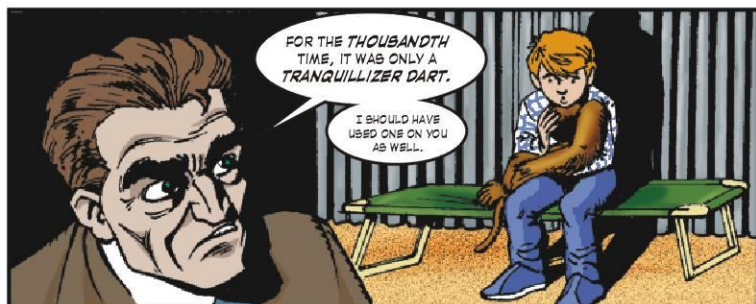
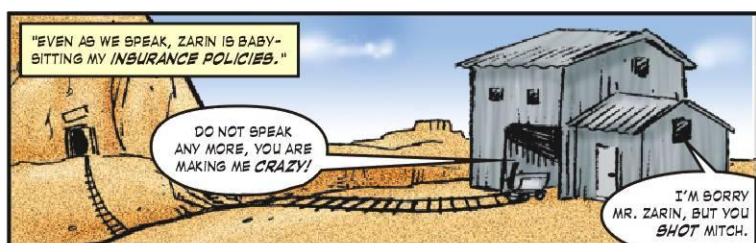
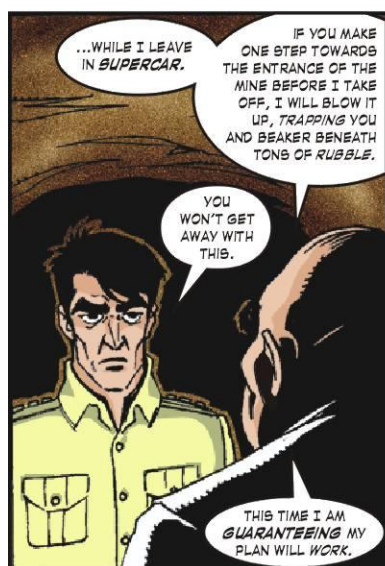
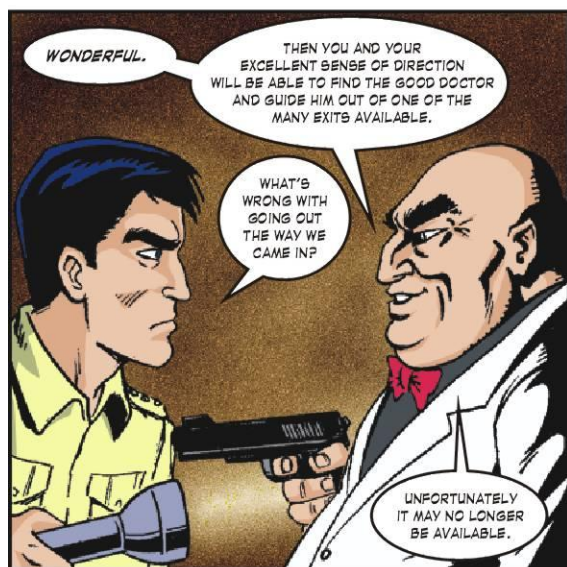
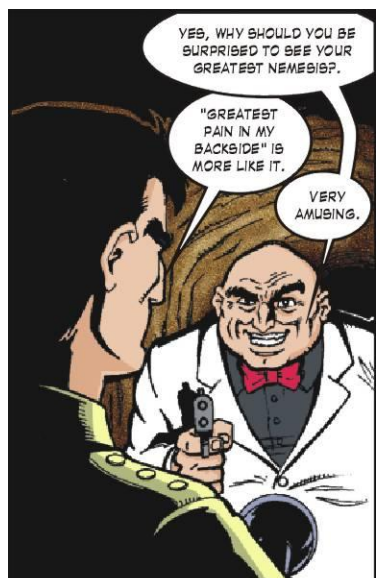




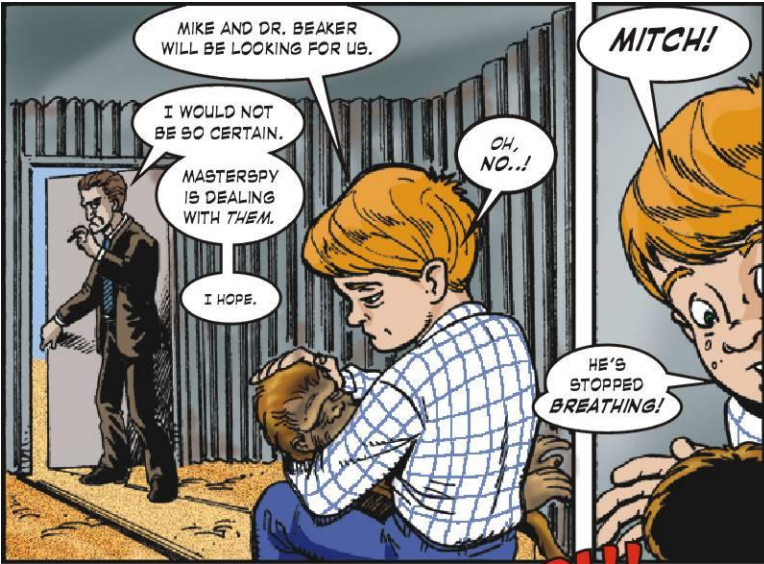








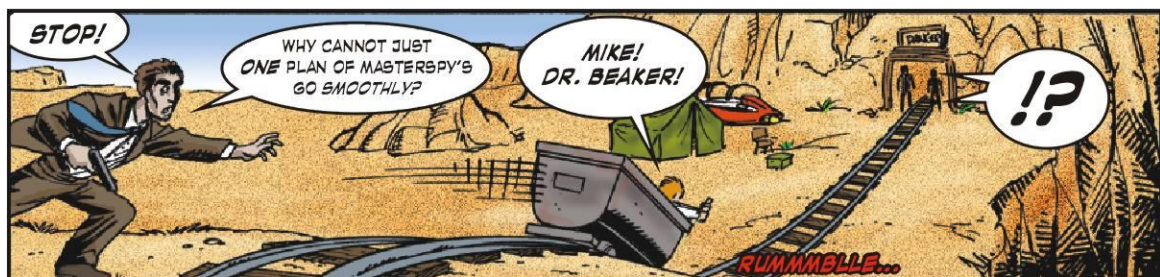
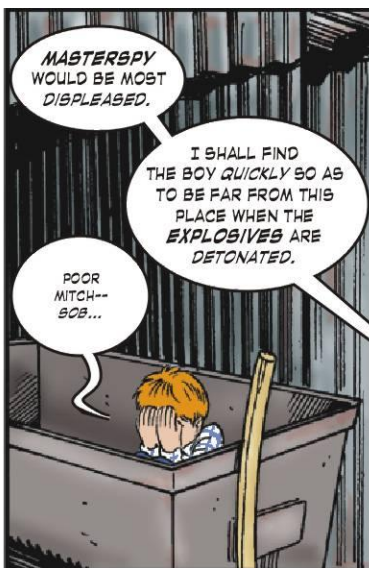
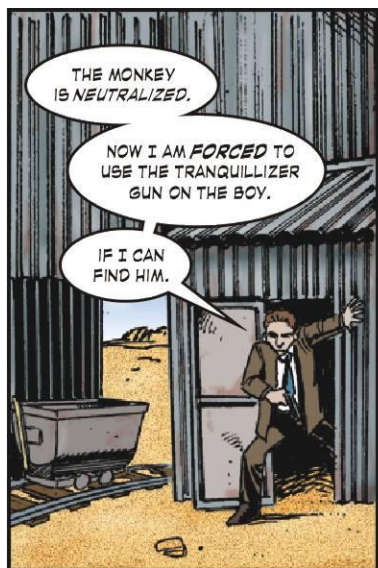




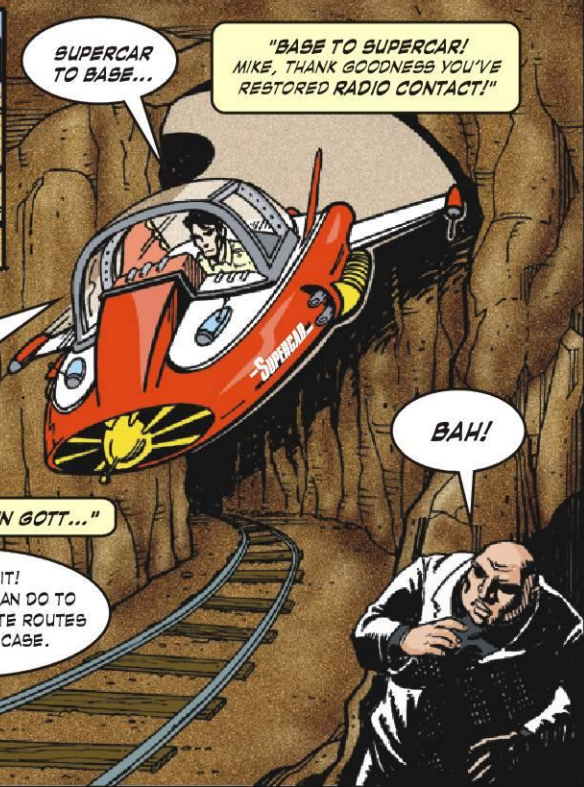








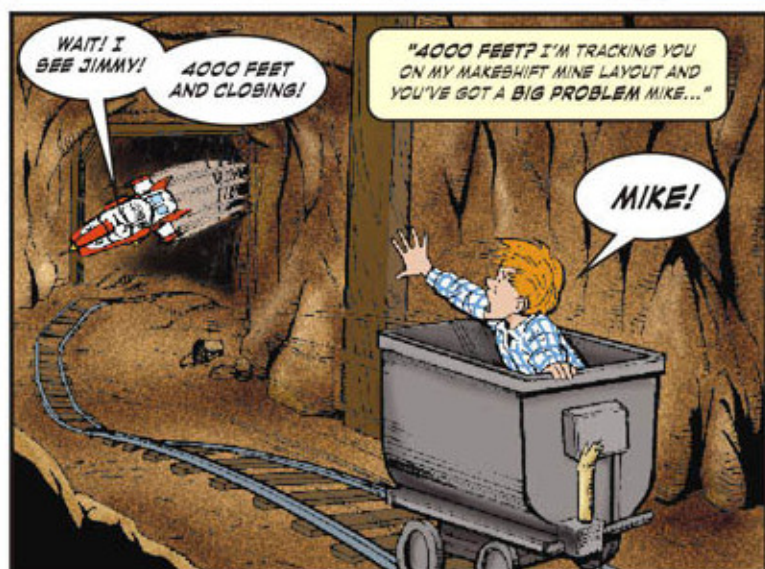
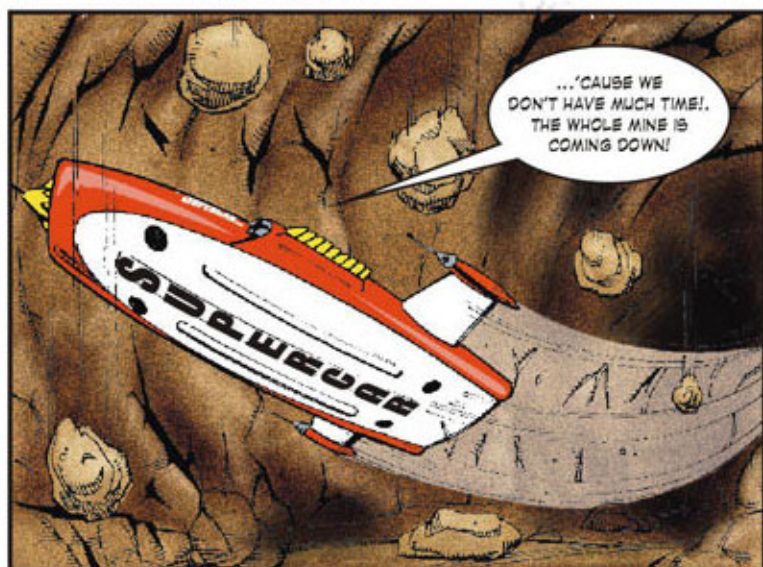
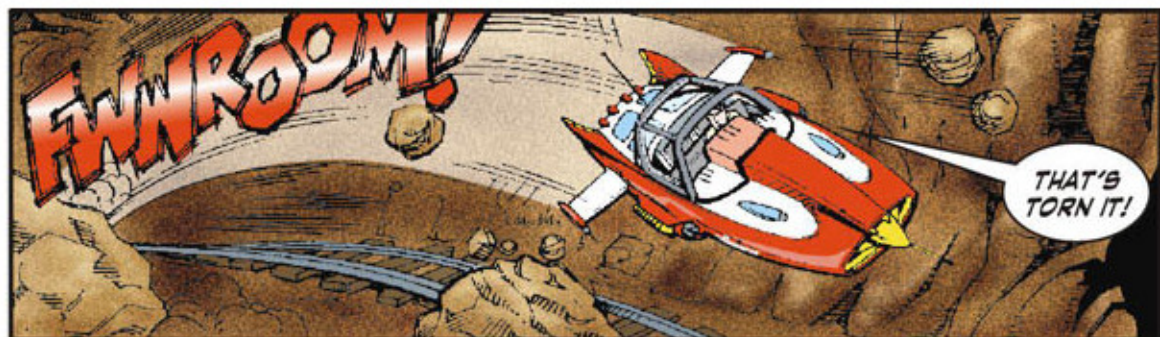




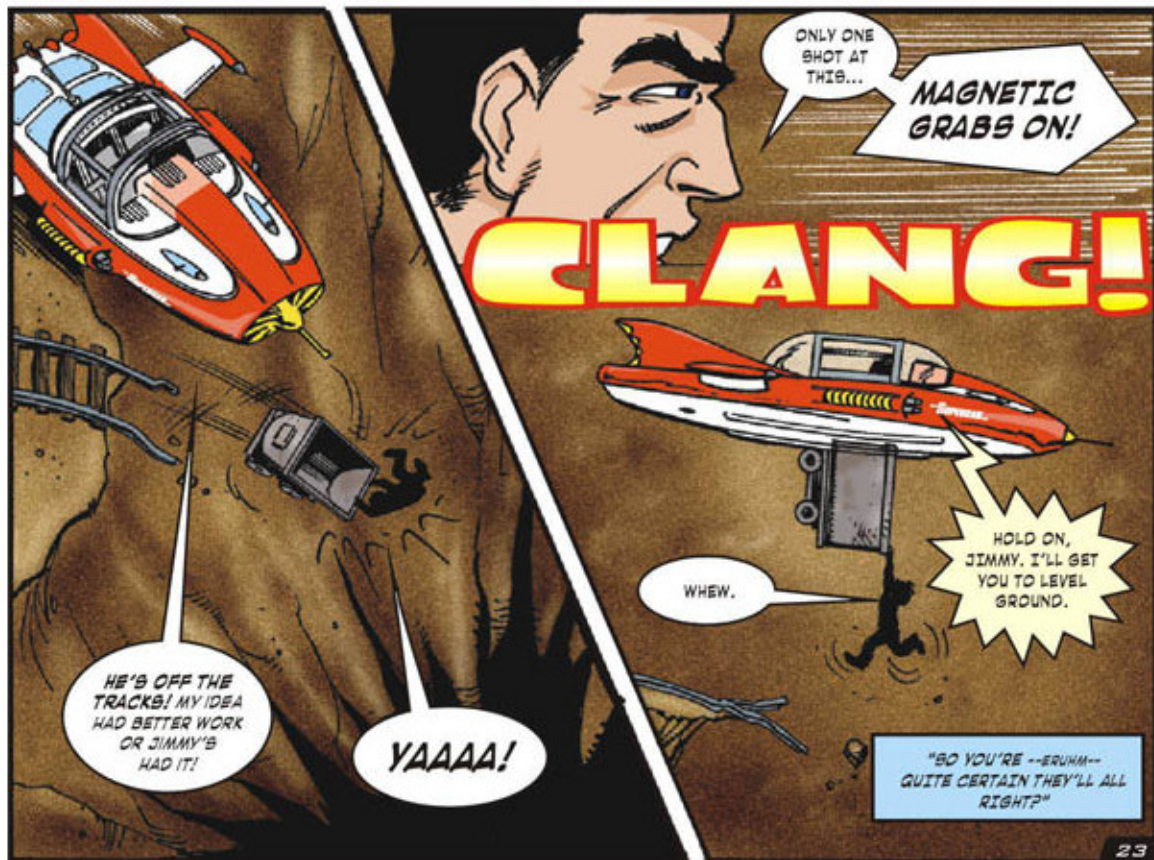
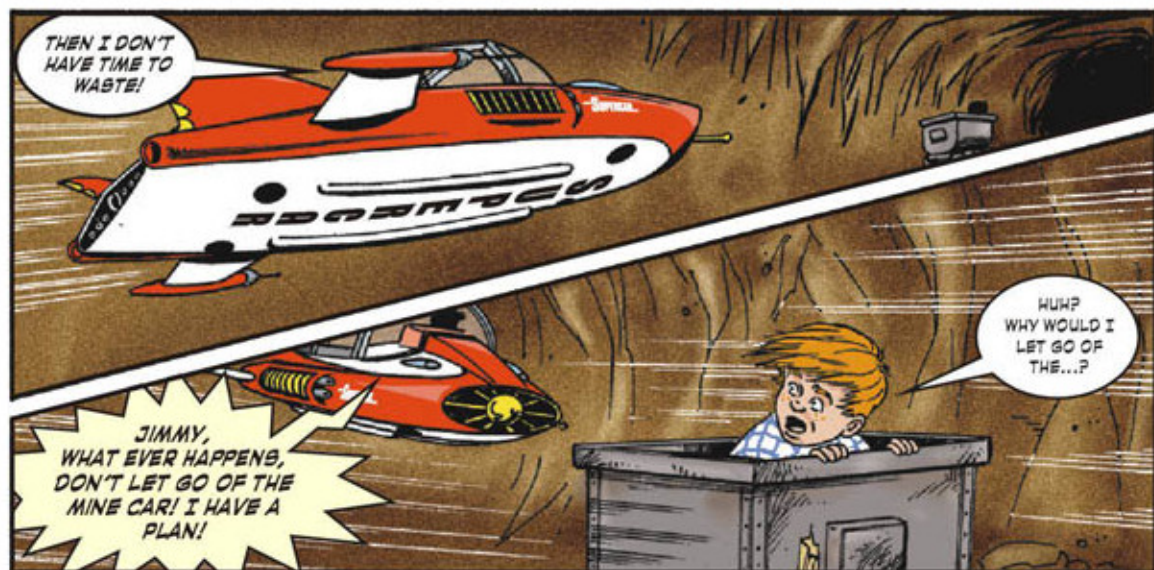




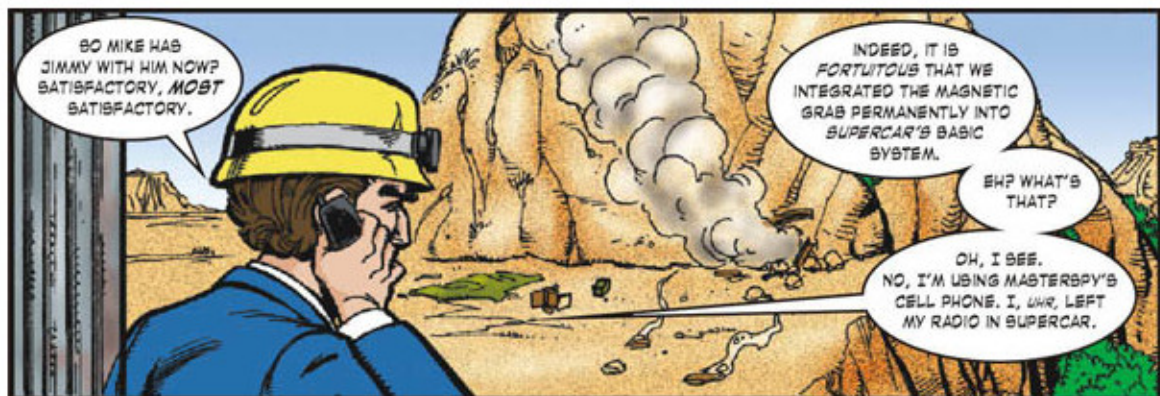












SO MIKE HAS  
JIMMY WITH HIM NOW?  
SATISFACTORY, *MOST*  
SATISFACTORY.

INDEED, IT IS  
FORTUITOUS THAT WE  
INTEGRATED THE MAGNETIC  
GRAB PERMANENTLY INTO  
SUPERCAR'S BASIC  
SYSTEM.

EH? WHAT'S  
THAT?

OH, I SEE.  
NO, I'M USING MASTERBRY'S  
CELL PHONE. I, UMR, LEFT  
MY RADIO IN SUPERCAR.



YOU'D BEST  
GET BACK TO HELPING  
MIKE AND JIMMY ESCAPE  
THE MOUNTAIN.

I'M CURRENTLY  
OUTSIDE A BUILDING  
WHICH IS THE SOURCE OF  
MITCH'S TRACKING  
SIGNAL.

I WILL KEEP  
YOU --ERNGH-- APPRIZED  
OF ANY DEVELOPMENTS.  
BEAKER OUT.



I SAY!  
RELEASE THE  
MONKEY, TOTALLY  
UNHARMED, AND  
I ASSURE YOU  
THERE WILL BE  
NO NEED FOR--

--MMM-AHHH--

--UNNECESSARY  
DISPLAYS OF  
PUGILISM.



NO  
ANSWER.

THEN  
THEY LEAVE  
ME NO OTHER  
CHOICE.



STAND PERFECTLY  
STILL! I HAVE A RATHER  
LARGE FLASHLIGHT!

I DAREBAY I  
CAN PUT IT TO GOOD  
USE, IF NECESSARY.

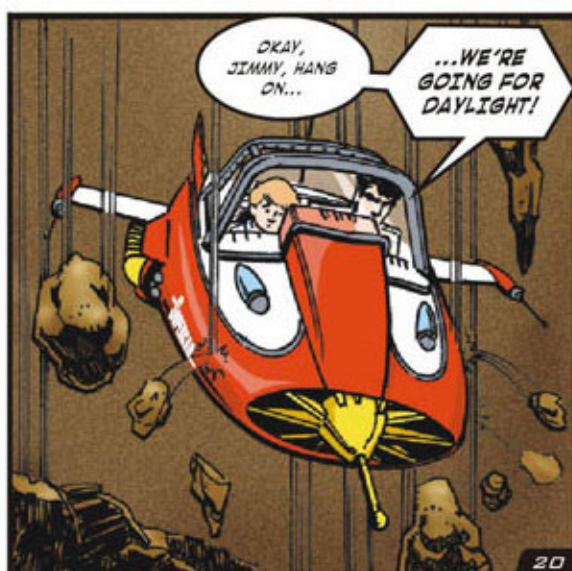
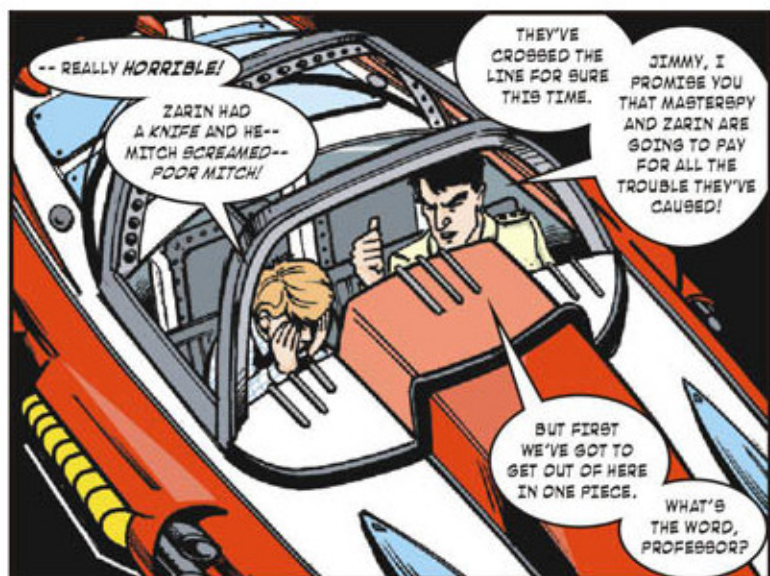
**SMASH!**



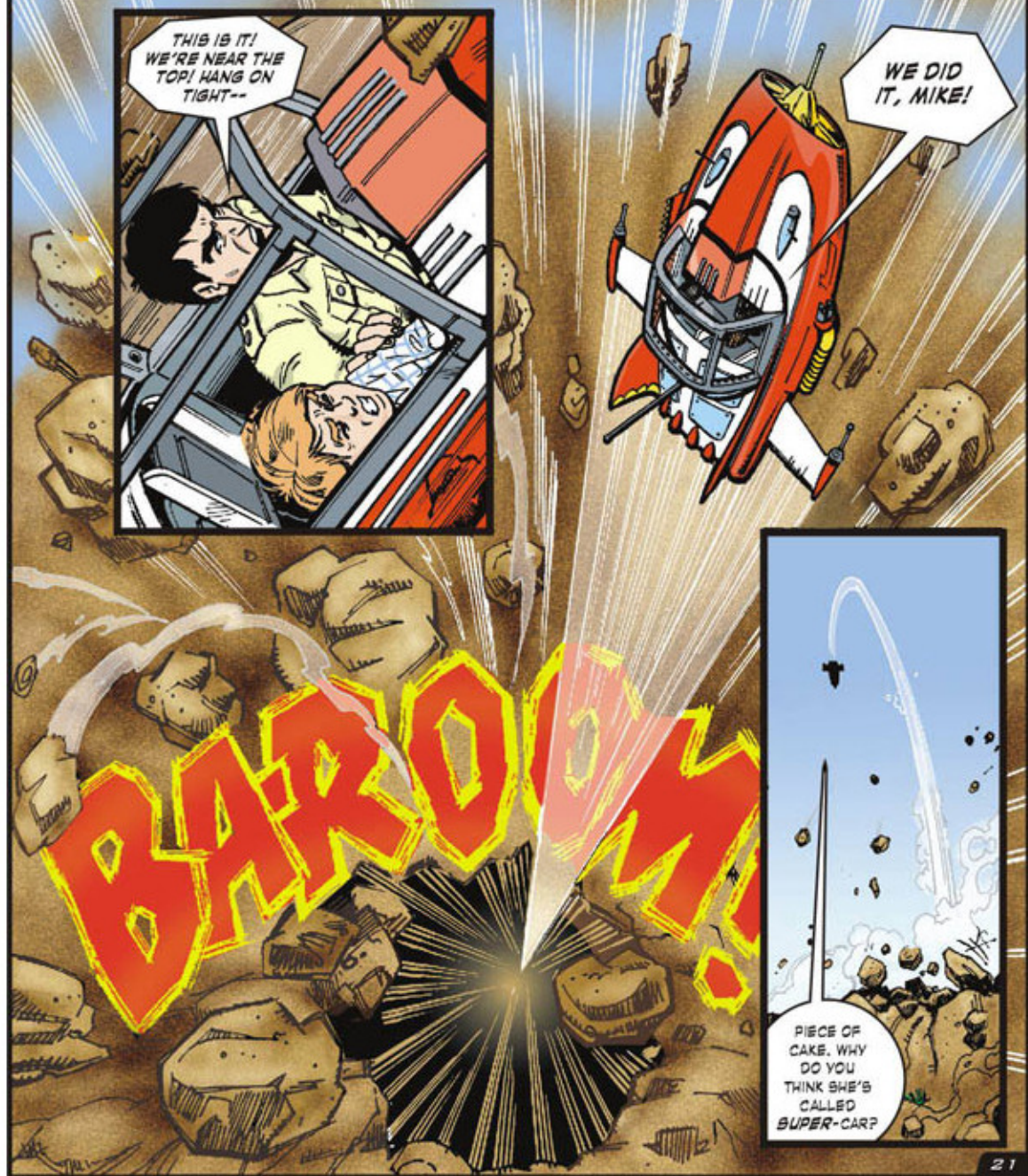
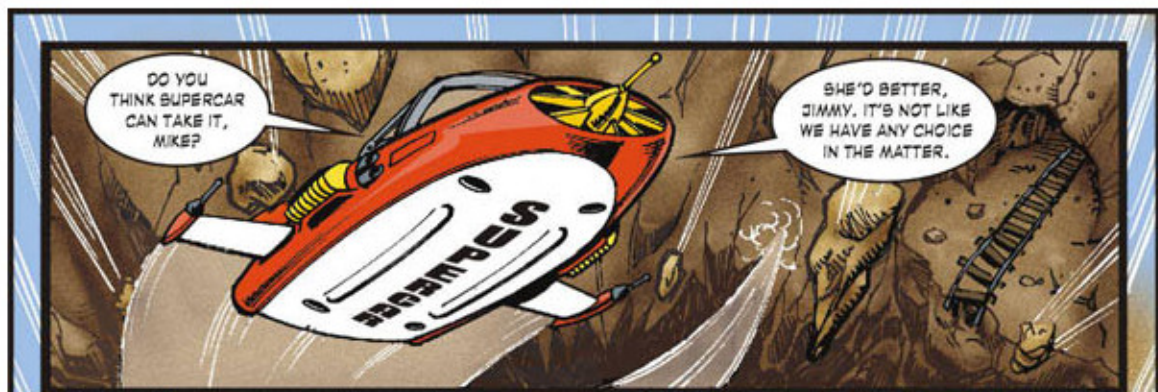
OH,  
DEAR...

"IT WAS HORRIBLE--!"













I'M NOT KIDDING. THAT'S THE SCAREDEST I'VE EVER BEEN.

HEY, ME TOO, JIM. IT'S NOT LIKE I DRIVE THROUGH THE TOP OF A MOUNTAIN EVERY DAY!

"GOOD JOB, MIKE! YOU HANDLED THE SITUATION PERFECTLY."

THANKS, PROFESSOR, BUT I WOULDN'T WANT TO TRY IT AGAIN.

WE COULD HAVE BEEN AT THE BOTTOM OF THE CRATER THAT USED TO BE MOUNT BAHOMET.

MIKE, CAN WE GET BACK TO DR. BEAKER? I'M REAL WORRIED ABOUT MITCH.

SURE, JIMMY. I'M WORRIED ABOUT HIM TOO.

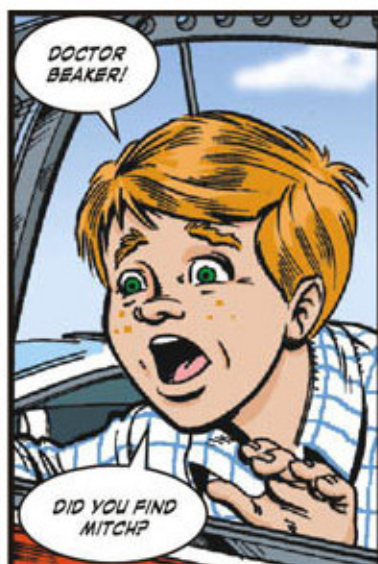
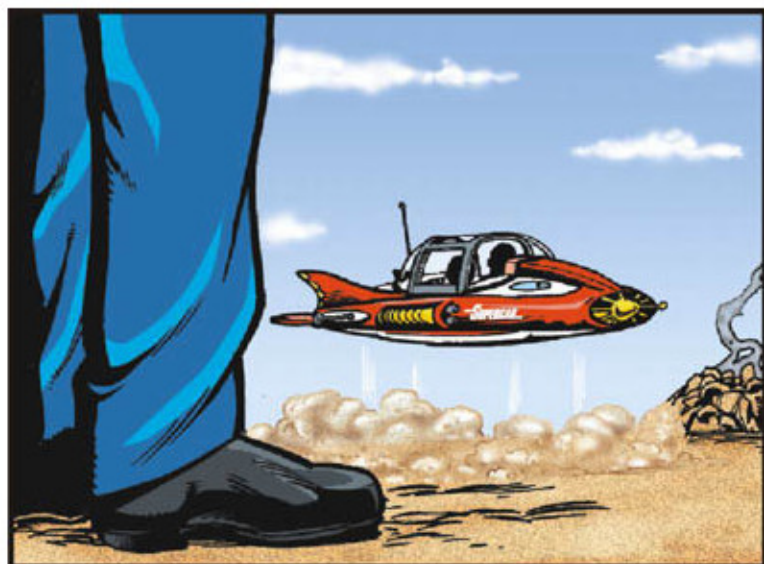
...AND MASTERBLY OBVIOUSLY LEARNED OF THE MINE'S ABILITY TO --AH-HAG-- BLOCK RADIO SIGNALS AND -- PARDON?

--ERSH-- HOW SHOULD I KNOW WHAT HE PAYS PER MINUTE FOR HIS CELLULAR SERVICE. I'D IMAGINE HE'S--

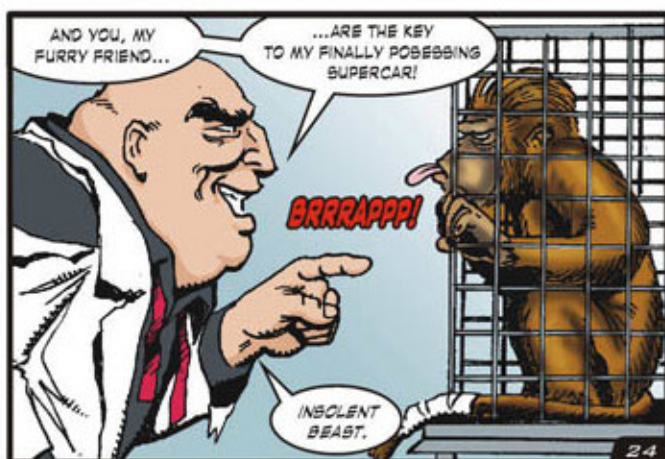
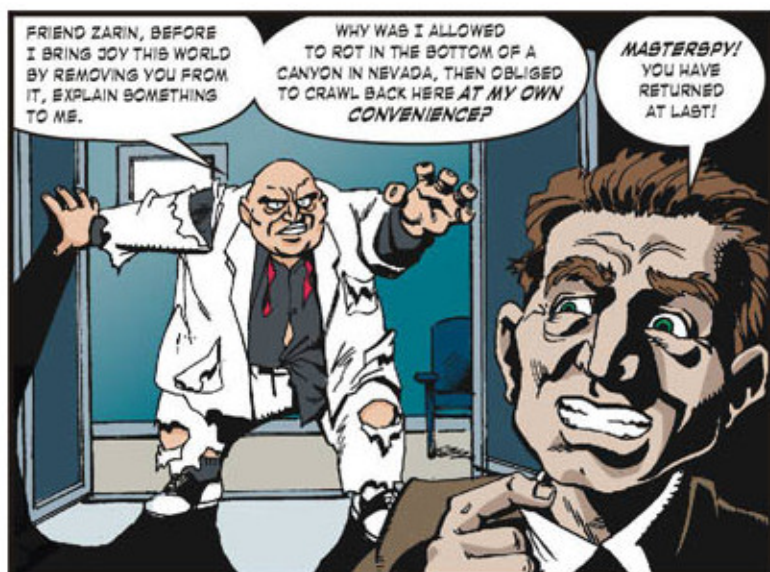
--MMH--  
--STEALING THE SERVICE. HE IS A --NGH-- ROTTER AND A THIEF AFTER ALL.

EH, HERE THEY ARE NOW, PROFESSOR. I'VE GIVE THEM THE BAD NEWS, I'M AFRAID.









**NEXT: MERCURY FALLING!**



# NEXT ISSUE:



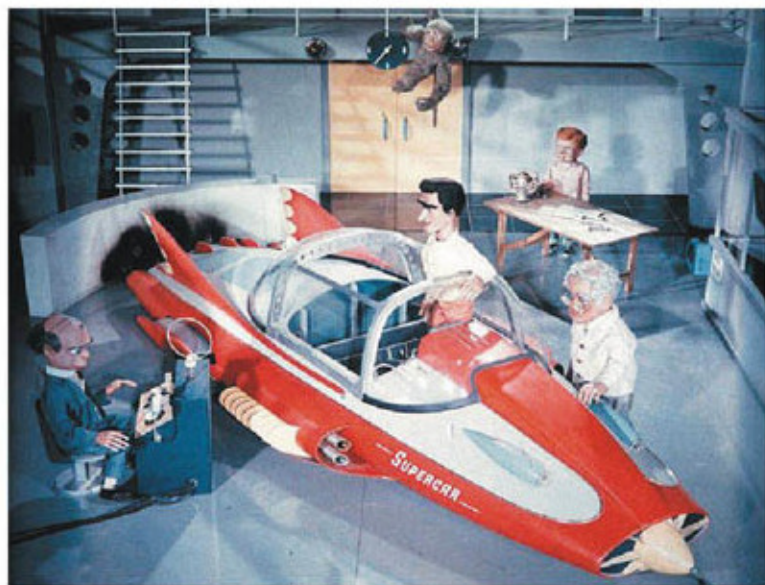
## On Sale April 2003



# A BRIEF HISTORY OF **SUPERCAR**™

By Michael Wolff

*Supercar* was the third original series developed and produced for television by the British film maker Gerry Anderson. When television began appearing in Great Britain, Anderson was one of the new breed of artists determined to succeed in the medium. His first major involvement was with a rather primitive children's puppet series called *The Adventures Of Twizzle*. The experience left Anderson determined to experiment with ways in which the use of puppets for television could be improved. His first two original efforts were the



television programs *Torchy*, *The Battery Boy* and *Four Feather Falls*. With each series Anderson and his technical crew worked to diligently improve their art; reducing the visibility of the strings which operated the puppets, as well as improving their overall look.

One of the seemingly unconquerable drawbacks was in finding a way to make the puppets walk in a realistic manner. Anderson eventually hit upon the notion that, if the characters had a reason to sit for extended lengths of time, the problem would, at least, be radically reduced. This led to the idea of putting the characters at the controls of dramatic and colorful vehicles, with *Supercar* being the initial effort.

The series followed the adventures of Mike Mercury: a resourceful test pilot who operated the title vehicle of the show. *Supercar* was no larger than the average sedan... but it was a sleek and visually exciting piece of machinery which could out fly any fighter jet, travel along the ground faster than a sports car, and operate on or below the water deeply and more swiftly than the most modern of submarines. It was the brain child of Doctor Horatio Beaker and Professor Rudolph Popkiss and was based in a private laboratory in the remote Black Rock region of Nevada. Accompanying them on many of their adventures was Jimmy Gibson, a young boy whose rescue had been Mike Mercury's first mission in *Supercar*... and Mitch, Jimmy's pet monkey whose behavior alternated between mischievous antics and incredible usefulness.

At the controls of *Supercar*, Mike Mercury would find himself facing foreign dictators, smugglers, saboteurs, thieves and natural disasters. A recurring opponent was Masterspy: a Sidney Greenstreet-type who one overwhelming desire was to own *Supercar* by hook or by crook.

Premiering in January of 1961, *Supercar* ran for 39 episodes and was syndicated in markets around the world. Each episode ran for a half-hour and was filmed in black-and-white. Although established as a "children's" adventure series, the writing for *Supercar* clearly lacked the condescending undercurrent which would later on hallmark so many "modern" and "improved" programs aimed at younger viewers. The stories were first plotted by Anderson and series art director Reg Hill, and then turned over to the writing team of Martin and Hugh Woodhouse for fleshing out and scripting. Between these four men the stories would often crackle with tightly woven adventure, occasional slapstick comedy and character development which still stands over later competition in the field. What's more, in spite of what some might feel was the show's fantastic premise, the episodes more often than not hinged on solid scientific theory. And, despite their low budget, Anderson and his creative people took every advantage to improve the look of the show.

The puppets in the show were operated by the team of Christine Granville, Mary Turner and Roger Woodburn, with character voices provided by David Graham, George Murcell and Graydon Gould. *Supercar* also featured what would soon be recognized as a Gerry Anderson trademark: the distinctive music of Barry Gray. All of these people, as well as the rest of the production team, made the most of what they had, not only producing a science-fiction classic, but gaining experience which would be built upon in later Anderson efforts such as *Fireball XL5*, *Stingray* and *Thunderbirds*.



# COMING SOON FROM **Misc!MAYHEM**:



## 6 ISSUE MINI-SERIES

STORIES BY MICHAEL WOLFF  
AND ROBIN DAY  
ART BY STEVE ERWIN

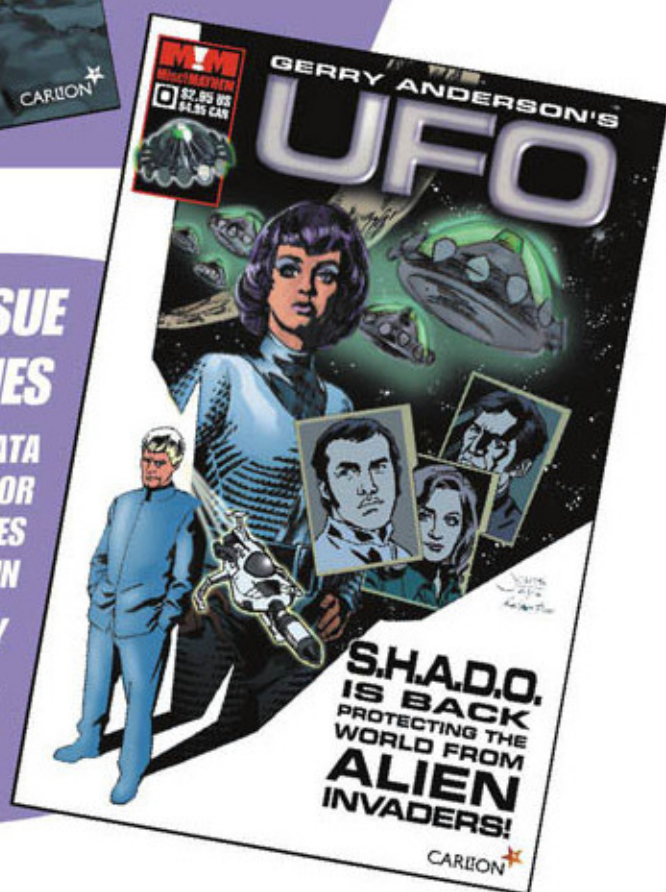
BI-MONTHLY

BEGINNING  
APRIL 2003

## 7 ISSUE MINI-SERIES

STORIES BY DIANE ANNUNZIATA  
AND ANTHONY TAYLOR  
ART BY CHRISTOPHER JONES  
AND JOSEF RUBINSTEIN

BI-MONTHLY  
BEGINNING  
MAY 2003



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# SUPERCAR EPISODE GUIDE, PART 1

## Enlightenment And Commentary On The Classic Tv Series

By Michael Wolff

**General Credits:** Producer - *Gerry Anderson*, Director of Photography - *John Read*, Art Director - *Reg Hill*, Dialogue Direction - *Sylvia Thamm*, Story - *Martin & Hugh Woodhouse* (from an original idea by *Gerry Anderson & Reg Hill*), Music - *Barry Gray*, Editor - *Gordon Dawie*, Sound Editor - *Archie Ludski*, Camera Operator - *Julien Lugrin*, Character Voices - *David Graham*, *George Murcell*, *Graydon Gould*, Aviation Facilities - *Film Aviation Services LTD*, Puppets made and operated by *Cristine Gamille*, *Mary Turner*, *Roger Woodburn*, Second Unit Operator - *Cecil Stancule*.



### 1.1 Rescue

**Director:** *David Elliott* **Plot:** *Bill and Jimmy Gibson (with Mitch the Monkey have to ditch in the ocean, leaving them stranded in the ocean with little hope of rescue because of poor visibility. Enter Mike Mercury, Prof. Rudolph Popkiss and Doctor Horatio Beaker, creators of the fantastic vehicle Supercar. Mike is hot to rescue the Gibsons with Supercar, but Popkiss is reluctant. Supercar has not been fully tested yet. Finally he relents and Mike takes off, and using Dr. Beaker's new ClearVu device, is able to make the rescue. Jimmy wakes up to find he was not dreaming about fantastic aircrafts rescuing him, and never leaves the show. Mitch wreaks havoc.*

**Comments:** Any beginning of a new television series involves risk. The producers want to hook new viewers while simultaneously spending time introducing the characters, settings and situations. It's a gamble that only works at best on an occasional basis. If luck is with a series the viewers will be convinced to stay for at least a few more episodes and become involved in the story. At worst the series will join the graveyard littered with good intentioned efforts.

For the debut of Supercar, writers Martin and Hugh Woodhouse took an idea from Gerry Anderson and Reg Hill and provided the new viewer with a taste of the direction the series would travel. Early on we meet Mike Mercury, Doctor Beaker and Professor Popkiss and, within five minutes, their basic characteristics are established. Popkiss is the cautious yet sympathetic engineer, Mike is the eager yet sensible test pilot, and Beaker the occasionally befuddled yet wholly brilliant scientist. Our heroes are introduced to what will soon become a standard element: someone in trouble and requiring help which only Supercar can provide. Not to mention, for this debut, the initial flight of the title vehicle itself.

In this day of over-loaded hour-long dramatic television episodes it becomes easy to

forget that, once upon a time, the medium was the home to finely crafted twenty-minute stories. Not that every episode of Supercar would prove to be an example of excellence, but the series would start with a simple yet effective adventure that would easily set the stage for the following stories. A situation would arise . . . the characters would climb into the titular vehicle and, after a narrow escape or two, the day would be saved. The work performed in producing this and other episodes of Supercar would provide the Anderson team with the experience needed on later efforts such as *Thunderbirds* and *Space: 1999*.

Credit must be given to episode director David Elliott for managing to lighten the episode with well-timed bits of mild humor. A laboratory test of a ceramic sample becomes an opportunity to demonstrate the sort of low-keyed comedy possible with puppet actors (and showed how useful Mike Mercury could be as a straight man to Beaker). In the midst of a tense rescue situation Popkiss and Beaker engage in an argument concerning gyro-stabilization . . . not only defusing what might've turned into an overly-dramatic weighted moment, but also allowing the rescue to take place "offscreen" (and avoiding a realization of how limited the puppet actors were in their movement). All of this taking place among Reg Hill's clever set design and prop placement. The episode also brings in the distinctive music of Barry Gray; providing opportunities for all the leit-motifs which would come to signify the series. Not that the episode entirely lacks problems. The pilot of a rescue helicopter seems incapable of moving his lips. And the ending scene was part *Wizard Of Oz* denouement, part tacked-on "didn't know how to end the story" shtick. But the viewer who made it all the way to the ending was, by this time, probably convinced that future episodes of Supercar would be worth following. The future of Anderson and his team was established with this and, after the work done on *Torchy* and *Four Feather Falls*, the distinctive "Anderson style" would be firmly carved in stone with the debut tale of "the marvel of the age".



### 1.2 Amazonian Adventure

**Director:** *Alan Patillo* **Plot:** *Mitch the monkey falls deathly ill, and the irrepressible Dr. Beaker determines that Mitch has contracted a rare disease that can only be cured by a rare plant from the Amazon jungle. So he and Mike Mercury take off in Supercar to retrieve the miracle plant despite the interference of a tribe of two bead hunters. Mitch is saved.*

**Comments:** With the premise of the series firmly launched, the idea was now to keep the ball rolling. Unfortunately, at this point, Martin and

Hugh Woodhouse almost lose the game with perhaps the weakest story in the chain (exceeded, perhaps, only by "The Dragon Of Ho Meng" later on). Mitch the monkey falls ill to a disease described by Beaker as "He-Who-Sleeps". The only known cure are the leaves of the TLogi plant which is found deep within the Amazon jungle (no one seems unduly bothered by the fact that Mitch . . . continually referred to as a chimpanzee by Beaker and others . . . is suffering from a New World disease and requires a wholly un-native cure in order to survive). There's nothing to it but to bundle Mike and Beaker in Supercar and travel down to the Amazon.

Alan Patillo handles the direction on this episode, and he at least possessed the sense of mind to play on what little available strengths there were in the story. It had already been established how good a straight man Mike could be for Beaker's antics, and fans of these two characters have a lot to enjoy here as the lines are nimbly tossed back and forth, providing the strongest scenes. Contrast with the scenes of



Jimmy hovering anxiously over the ailing Mitch (with a goodly part of the audience no doubt secretly wishing Mike and Beaker would return too late).

This is the episode which demonstrates why the Supermarionation programs relied so heavily upon the use of vehicles for moving the characters around. A good deal of walking occurs here, and Beaker especially comes off looking as if he's auditioning for *Planet Of The Apes*. It's probably no accident that, from this point on, further "walking shots" are either limited in length or taken from the waist up (while Supermarionation technology struggles to improve the illusion).

A more impressive threat could have also saved the day. Here we see where budgetary restrictions played Hob with production as the "Tuaca tribe" of headhunters is depicted by two puppets whose idea of being threatening consists of bobbing in place. The production crew does try its best, though, and a brief blowgun dart attack is well staged (a few more like it might have added to whatever sense of drama the episode was hoping to achieve).

The "white man pretends to have supernatural powers in order to frighten the natives" routine was already old by the time this story came along, but the Woodhouse brothers managed to at least try and give it a distinctive Supercar flavor. Once again, though, the demands of the story were too much for the budgetary and production limitations and, as with most of the episode, it falls a little flat (by comparison, a few years down the line, the writers for Hanna-Barbara's *Jonny Quest* would



not only manage to make the trick work, but in more than one episode).

A nice try, but one for the most die-hard of the series fans.



### 1.3 Talisman of Sargon

**Director:** David Elliot **Plot:** *Masterspy hopes to acquire the Talisman of Sargon in order to gain control over a Middle Eastern country, and he tricks Doctor Beaker into translating a cuneiform tablet which will reveal the talisman's location. Determined to stop him, Mike, Beaker, Jimmy and Mitch follow in Supercar and end up trapped inside Sargon's tomb. With the help of Beaker's knowledge of the Sumerian language (as well as an ancient speaking tube), Mitch frees the others and Masterspy's plot is foiled.*

**Comments:** The first appearance of Masterspy, and a small quandary for series historians. There seems to have never been an official "first encounter with Masterspy" story. "Talisman Of Sargon" was the first appearance of the character produced (and the second one broadcast after "False Alarm") and both he and Zarin simply appear with an already established history of being at odds against our heroes.

Most of the reasoning could, of course, be attributed to the limitations imposed by the half-hour episode format. Supercar episodes were, for the most part, simple formula adventures, and as little time as possible was turned over to character development and background. To give the Woodhouse Brothers credit, though, "Talisman Of Sargon" is a smooth little roller-coaster ride of an episode; neatly established and easily followed. There's no deep thinking required with this one, which is good because serious thought would uncover several problems. In the first place: Masterspy's idea of a perfect disguise involves nothing more complicated than an eyepatch, a bat-wing moustache and a fez. Obviously another proud graduate of the Boris Badenov School Of Camouflage, but it apparently does the job well enough to fool Beaker (who'll fall again for practically the same routine later on in "High Tension"). Careful thinking would also cause one to wonder how it was possible for an animal the size of Mitch to successfully stowaway unnoticed inside Supercar (which, it must be observed, possesses slightly less interior room than the Volkswagen Beetle). But stories like this were common to the televised adventures of this period (e.g. The Lone Ranger, The Adventures Of Superman, etc.) and Supercar was simply following the established trend. Not until later would Anderson... as well as other television producers... demand more of his writers.

"Talisman Of Sargon" does stand as a showcase for David Elliot's abilities as a director working under the conditions imposed by Supermarionation. As with most episodes, a minimum of sets are involved here. There are no stock shots of pyramids or oases to tell the viewer

that the story takes place somewhere in the Middle East. Rather, we get "Mustapha Bey" in his tent, as well as the two sets comprising Sargon's Tomb, to rapidly (and inexpensively) establish where the story is taking place. There are also no long or establishing shots of characters. Instead, everything (including Mike's apparently bushier eyebrows) is close up and personal. As with many of the videotaped adventures of the time common to British television (e.g. the pre-Emma Peel episodes of The Avengers), Supercar served as an example of action provided in an intimate format. The viewer was always where things are happening.

Elliott and Hill and the rest of the production staff never seemed to get the credit they properly deserved for working with what must have seemed to have been only a handful of tools and promise. Episodes such as this one demonstrated that, while they were incapable of producing grand epics, they could still work out serviceable small-scale adventures.



### 1.4 False Alarm

**Director:** David Elliot **Plot:** *Masterspy is at it again. This time he uses a false distress call to lure Mike and Beaker out into the Sierra Nevada Mountains in order to acquire Supercar. Unfortunately for him, Supercar has recently been fitted with a remote control device which allows it to be flown from the Black Rock laboratory. Even more unfortunate, Mitch figures out how to operate the device. Masterspy and Zarin receive an impromptu introduction to aerobatics before Supercar is returned to where our heroes have been abandoned.*

**Comments:** The utter simplicity of the Supercar plots stand as a prime example of how the half-hour television format was approached back in those days.

The script for this particular episode couldn't have used up more than four or five pages, and doubtless the story conference took up less than the average lunch hour.

The episode is easily broken up:

1. Masterspy and Zarin discuss plot while Our Heroes discuss remote control device.
2. Masterspy lures Supercar out into the mountains.
3. Masterspy and Zarin steal Supercar.
4. Mitch foils the getaway by using the remote control device.
5. Masterspy and Zarin return Supercar to where they found it.

It's the sort of plotting which any grade-schooler (or at least those that existed before Educational Reform) could easily produce. But noses shouldn't be turned up at the efforts of the Brothers Woodhouse. For example, compare the paucity of the episode synopsis to something from, say, I Love Lucy: "Lucy and Ethel purchase a huge deep freeze, and Lucy accidentally gets

locked into it". What more do you need?

It has to be remembered that Supercar was not designed to be a gritty action-adventure drama, but something considerably more light-hearted. Especially in the early episodes. The audience is expected to gasp and marvel at the adventures, but also smile on occasion. It would be difficult to imagine that Mike and Doctor Beaker were in any real danger at any time during the story. Much more interesting is the continuation of the Mike/Beaker Comedy Roadshow (especially during Beaker's attempts at starting a campfire), the awesome sight of Masterspy actually managing to fit his bulk into the control seat of Supercar (I suspect money changed hands among the cognoscenti when this scene was first aired) and a few nice minutes of watching the Supercar model whirl drunkenly through the sky.

It is the very nature of a program like Supercar which allowed plots like these to become much more memorable than similar efforts of the time, or those made since. Obviously the characters in the show were puppets on strings (and the lighting for this particular episode made that fact extremely evident). But if the viewer had the ability to look beyond then practically anything could be accepted. Other shows could demand similar leaps of faith on behalf of the audience... but Supercar (and subsequent Supermarionation efforts) required such a leap at the very outset: the acceptance of puppets as genuine characters that one could care about or identify with. Once the mind has made peace with that then the idea that Mike could fly Supercar and never notice that he was being secretly filmed on Masterspy's behalf becomes perfectly logical... just like the notion that a monkey would be allowed to run unsupervised around a complex laboratory late at night, or that Masterspy and Zarin wouldn't take the obvious opportunity to shoot Mike and Beaker (rather than TP them in their tent).

Mention here must be made of Barry Gray's music which, as the series progressed, continued to evolve. Once again we have the "Masterspy Fanfare" which blares every time Masterspy appears, or some aspect of his plot comes to light. For this episode Gray also adds a lightly ominous harmonic leitmotif to announce that Something Sinister Was Happening. Gray's repertoire was growing along with the other production aspects of the series; his work eventually securing him as part of the Anderson team as necessary and as recognizable as Reg Hill's and Derek Meddings' model work, or Sylvia Anderson's voice work.

A very simple episode. As simple, in its way, as a smile.



### 1.5 What Goes Up

**Director:** David Elliot **Plot:** *Colonel Lewts of the USAF has asked the Supercar team for help in Project Fourth Of July: the high-altitude testing of a new rocket fuel. After the test is*



concluded, though, the balloon capsule carrying the fuel fails to explode on schedule, and Mike is obliged to take Supercar up into the stratosphere and blow up the capsule directly with the aid of a rocket launcher. Problems arise in the form of a cabin leak, as well as increasing trouble in maneuvering, but Mike presses on and, after a few close calls, perseveres.

**Comments:** With this episode the series hits its stride and presents the viewer with a neatly-wrapped and rather adventure-filled diversion. Gone for the moment are the bumbling villains and bumbling cannibals, and our heroes (including Mike with his increasingly bushy eyebrows) are having to fend for themselves aided only by their wits.

In many ways this episode stands as a sort of dry run for what would later on become standard viewing on Thunderbirds. Our heroes, aided by technological wizardry, take off to affect a rescue against difficult odds. In the course of the story problems arise, and new solutions must be quickly found.

There is, as usual, some give and take. It's never clearly defined why the Air Force requires the help of the Supercar team in the first place... especially as the episode later shows that the Air Force (or at least Colonel Lewis) was unaware of Supercar's existence. And the more technically oriented in the audience has to wonder exactly why a rocket fuel must be tested at extreme high altitudes. Of course it could be argued that, if strict scientific accuracy was the rule among the Anderson shows, then a good many episodes (not to mention the entire *Space: 1999* series) would never have been made in the first place. And it could also be argued that Supercar was hardly alone among television series in throwing logic out the window. The entire business of the test balloon was simply an excuse to provide a menace for the heroes to react against.

On the plus side we see the Mike Mercury character develop further as someone who jumps for the chance to face a real challenge. With such a small cast to work with, Supercar eventually had to devote time to establish nuance and traits amongst its characters. With Popkiss and Beaker as the thinkers, Jimmy as the audience-identification and Mitch as comedy relief, it's left up to Mike to become the doer, and here he fills the bill as he gently but firmly directs the team to action (forming the example for later Anderson heroes such as Steve Zodiac, Troy Tempest and Scott Tracy). This comes to a climax as he flies Supercar closer and closer to the deadly test balloon and, against all objections from the ground, decides to take a genuine risk to save the day. In episodes such as "False Alarm" and "Amazonian Adventure" there was never any clear sense of risk. Here, on the other hand, the character actually has his life on the line (or strings as it were), and the viewer cannot help but be more attentive.

Other assets include the first arming of Supercar (pleasing the weapons junkies in the

audience no end) and some striking camera work depicting Supercar traveling at high altitudes, climaxing in a rather nicely filmed aerial explosion sequence. With the exception of some (possibly unavoidable) obvious shots of the wires supporting the Supercar model, Reg Hill and Julien Lugrin earned their pay with this episode.



## 1.6 Keep It Cool

**Director:** Alan Pattillo **Plot:** *Masterspy and Zarin are at it again, this time arranging to steal a sample of a new fuel which Doctor Beaker has developed. They accomplish this by causing the wreck of the truck which Beaker and Bill Gibson are using to take the fuel back to the lab. Little do they know, however, that the fuel is highly unstable and will explode when its temperature rises above freezing. Beaker and Gibson are fully aware of this, though, and they make use of the knowledge to create a convenient signal that Mike can use to locate them with Supercar. Once again the dastardly villains are thoroughly foiled.*

**Comments:** Appearing so closely to "What Goes Up", the casual viewer could probably be forgiven for thinking that the characters in Supercar seem to spend an awful lot of time fooling around with dangerous fuels. Fortunately, however, this particular plot element takes a holiday, and it wouldn't be until "The Tracking Of Masterspy" much later on that fuel would again play a part in an episode.

Speaking of Masterspy we have the third appearance by the character and, by now, the audience knows pretty much what to expect. Especially seeing as how, within the first five minutes of the episode, the entire situation involving the unstable fuel sample is neatly laid out. On the one hand, this episode does an impressive job of smoothly opening the plot and moving it along. On the other hand, however, the viewer could write the remainder of the episode after ten minutes. Once the business of the fuel is described... and Masterspy shows up... it takes hardly any imagination at all to figure out that the fuel will eventually explode, and that both Masterspy and Zarin will be caught in the (predictably non-lethal) blast. There is absolutely no tension or sense of genuine threat to build on here.

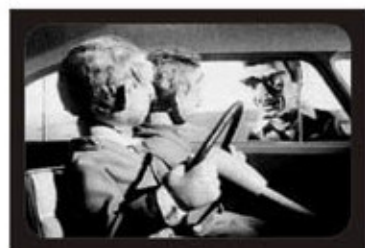
Of course Supercar was never meant to be a truly dramatic series, but more in the tradition of the classic melodrama where Evil is personified in a broad, burlesque form. And Masterspy was about as broad a burlesque form as you could want on television. The notion that this character could provide any sort of genuine menace was clearly beyond the reach of even the most rabid fan. Masterspy was more of a caricature than a genuine attempt at a character, and the fact that he nonetheless manages to acquire some uniqueness says more for the way he was handled in the episodes than in the initial planning.

(In the later Thunderbirds series the lessons would have apparently been learned, and The Hood... what some have described as "Masterspy Model-2" ... would be a bit more convincing. But only a bit. We are, after all, discussing someone who would attempt taking secret pictures of a space vehicle while said vehicle was on its way to Mars. But I digress.)

Being classic melodrama means episodes such as this keep from being labeled as a complete failure because plotting was never meant to be Supercar's strong point. Supercar's strength lay in its development as an "ensemble" program, with the viewer becoming more interested in how the characters acted than in how the plot would be resolved. No one tuned into M\*A\*S\*H wondering if the Korean War was going to end that evening... and few long-term fans would watch Supercar worrying if Masterspy would win, or if Mitch would be sold to the circus. Instead we were there for the characters (of which Supercar itself must be numbered), and the occasional dramatic success (e.g. "What Goes Up", "Pirate Plunder") comes as icing on the cake.

So it is here that the viewer smiles at the initial shot of Mike, Popkiss, Jimmy and Mitch quietly waiting around the hangar bay table for Beaker and Bill Gibson to return. It's the reason that a crooked smile appears on our faces as we hear the canister of unstable fuel bubble ominously while it sits in Zarin's lap. It's the little touches... such as the "Cactus Exterminators" sign on the truck Masterspy drives... that make the viewer appreciate the episode more than the plot which only serves as an excuse to bring these characters together.

Speaking of characters, the episode marks the return of Bill Gibson to the series after his appearance in "Rescue", and he's given considerably more to do. It's interesting to note that he and Beaker spend quite a bit of time out in the desert together in what is almost a letter perfect repeat of the situation with Mike and Beaker in "False Alarm". But the dialogue between Gibson and Beaker, although lively at times, lacks the sharp wryness which underlined most of the Mike/Beaker byplay from the earlier story. An interesting proof that these "puppet people" were capable of projecting individual styles.



## 1.7 Grounded

**Director:** David Elliott **Plot:** *The Supercar team is in England where electronic work is being performed at a British company. But Harper, a disgruntled employee, has arranged to steal the new circuits with the assistance of Judd, a safecracker. To insure a successful getaway Harper also sabotages Supercar, succeeding in rendering it incapable of flight. But Mike decides to pilot Supercar at high speed down the highways and manages to intercept the crooks at the airfield before they can leave the ground.*





**Comments:** A rather interesting episode and one of the best premises to come from the writing team, as well as a better-than-average effort from director David Elliott. In one simple story the viewer is not only reminded of how necessary Supercar is to our heroes, but also how ingenious our heroes can be when faced with an unexpected problem. For the fan who enjoys having the good guys win, few other stories in the series bring about such roundabout satisfaction.

This is the episode which also marked the debut of the characters of Harper and Judd: a pair of villains who were, sadly enough, used too little. When one considers the knockabout clown antics of Masterspy and Zarin, Harper and Judd must have sometimes seemed like a breath of fresh air. Especially with Harper, who was perhaps consciously designed to possess a cool, reptilian demeanor. Along with Black Morgan of "Pirate Plunder" he makes one of the more interesting opponents faced by our heroes. The only flaw to crop up in the execution here was in the chain-smoking habits of his partner Judd. Various attempts were made by the Anderson crew to try and impart their puppet characters with as much realism as possible...but smoking was an accomplishment never effectively realized in any of the series.

The simplicity of the plot for this episode provides an opportunity to focus on the technical aspects of the production and, once again, the viewer can appreciate just what was managed with what must have seemed very little in regards to resources. In Supercar a great deal of realistic background footage was applied to bring about more of a sense of "reality". This usually occurred with the flying scenes, when the Supercar model would be mixed with real shots of clouds and terrain. Given the black-and-white photography of the series, the resulting effect was actually quite convincing on occasion (and would sometimes raise nostalgic impulses when watching the studio-designed skies of later episodes of Thunderbirds and Captain Scarlet). The use of background footage also helped in

inadvertently) added another scoop of realism in illustrating that Supercar was indeed a complex machine not to be trifled with. Later on...when the characters of Thunderbirds, UFO and Space: 1999 would simply slide into their vehicles and effortlessly take off...the seasoned viewer might be forgiven for letting loose with yet another sigh of nostalgia. Among its other accomplishments, "Grounded" would once again demonstrate that the half-hour adventure format could still be packed with sufficient story if left in the hands of competent people (in British televised SF...indeed, in the entire genre itself, this feat would not be easily matched until the advent of Red Dwarf a few decades later).



## 1.8 Jungle Hazard

**Director:** Alan Patillo **Plot:** This time it seems as if Masterspy and Zarin have worked out the perfect crime. Their scheme is to swindle Miss Felicity Farnsworth out of the potentially lucrative plantation she inherited in Malaya. Unfortunately for our antagonists (and typical for series television), Miss Farnsworth's cousin is none other than Doctor Beaker. He and Mike race off for Malaya in Supercar to find Felicity sinking into a swamp courtesy of Masterspy. But Beaker delivers a jolly good thrashing with his umbrella (wo?) and Mike uses Supercar to pull Felicity out of the muck.

**Comments:** Proof once again that the premise of Supercar did not depend exclusively upon drama, as well as illustrating that adventure could be delivered with a chuckle. Few if any viewers would see this as anything other than a comedy episode, and an enjoyable one at that.

This is the episode that introduced Felicity Farnsworth (she would show up once again in "Phantom Piper"). One of the more interesting "second tier" characters (e.g. Zizi, Black Morgan, the Judd/Harper team, etc.), Felicity was essentially Doctor Beaker in drag (an interesting cost-effective maneuver). Credit must be given, however, to the voice and puppet team, as well as to the Woodhouse Brothers for working to add some minor character differences between Felicity and the good Doctor. The character is used to good effect and provides an excellent counter-foil to the antics of both Masterspy and Zarin (the latter noticeably sporting, in this episode, hands the size of catcher's mitts). Without trying hard she manages to artlessly work her way around the faux threats presented by the villains, continuing the tradition of showing up Masterspy and Zarin for the knockabout clowns they were. The interaction between all three subtly works to turn the episode into a Supercar version of O'Henry's classic "The Ransom of Red Chief". So well, in fact, do the three characters work that it gets to the point where the viewer might almost wish the Supercar team wouldn't show up and ruin the fun.

In fact, "Jungle Hazard" ranks as a very light episode as far as Supercar is concerned, compared to the earlier "Grounded" where

Supercar practically dominated most of the scenes. Here it's simply employed as a means for Mike and Beaker to arrive in Malaya in time to make a rescue. With the title vehicle assuming a background role, this episode becomes very character-intensive, and especially where Doctor Beaker is concerned. Besides seeing his "female cousin" take center stage, this episode features a nice routine of Beaker in a rare high panic, as well as throwing in a mildly humorous early bit where Beaker cooks up a curry in the laboratory. The viewer is also treated to the sight of Beaker as full-blown action hero: wielding the most lethal umbrella this side of John Steed in The Avengers.

The episode even manages the near-impossible of using Mitch to good advantage as wide-eyed prop and occasional sound effect, as opposed to actually trying to force the monkey into a major role. In fact, as far as character use is concerned, the only false note in "Jungle Hazard" is with Jimmy, whose apparent purpose here is simply to state the incredibly obvious for the benefit of the mentally defective in the viewing audience.

Technically this episode serves as one of the occasional illustrations of the frugal ingenuity of Reg Hill and his people. More expensive programs of a similar nature (e.g. those of the Star Trek franchise) would continually depend upon a large library of stock footage. While stock footage is highly evident in episodes of Supercar, the obvious use of only a small number of sets and characters enabled the production crew to occasionally provide fresh new footage. In "Grounded" it was the shots of Supercar skimming along the highway. In "Jungle Hazard" the viewer gets a new long shot of Mike charging the engines in preparation for takeoff. Regrettably, as the Anderson shows would become more and more complex, the use of stock footage would become commonplace, and the viewer would see the same shot of Thunderbird-1 taking off, or Moonbase Interceptors leaving their launch pads. With Supercar it seemed as if the production staff recognized the imperative of occasionally presenting the viewer with different perspectives. Working with an obviously patchwork budget at times, the production staff would fall back on good old fashioned imagination, providing results which, every so often, seemed more expensively mounted than they probably were.



## NEXT ISSUE:

Mr. Wolff continues his explorations with reviews of:

**High Tension, A Little Art, Island Incident, Ice-Fall, The Tracking of Masterspy Phantom Piper, Deep Seven, and Pirate Plunder**



applying small yet useful details which a full studio job might've overlooked. For instance, in this episode, the viewer occasionally sees trees and bushes in the background blowing with the local breezes. A nice touch.

The practice especially reaches its apogee here with the scenes of Mike casually piloting Supercar down the highway...providing memorable shots of the sleek machine effortlessly cruising past lorries and cars. A pity the technical wherewithal didn't allow for wider shots of Supercar whizzing along the road (or recording the reaction of other drivers as they were passed). But, as it was, the concept was fairly executed and, finally, the opening theme line of "it travels on land" was fully justified.

The plot also allowed for some interesting scenes depicting our heroes preparing Supercar for flight without the benefit of its usual laboratory backup. Designed mainly as a means to heighten tension (allowing the crooks to gain more of a head start), the scenes also (perhaps



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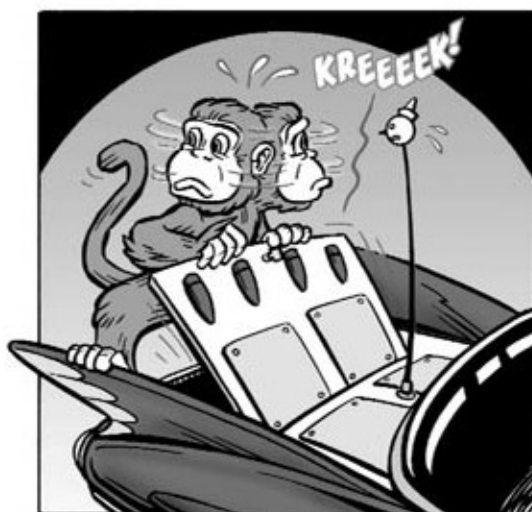
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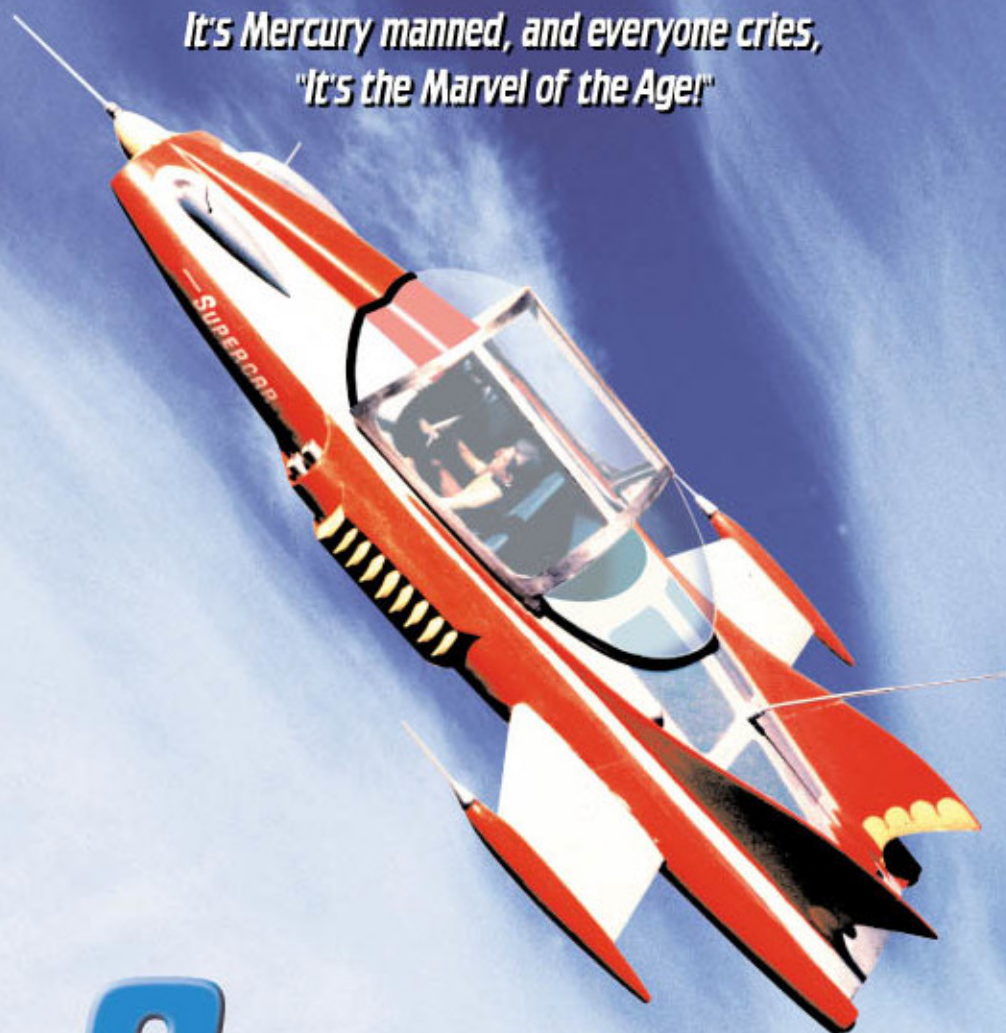


*With beauty and grace, as swift as can be,  
Watch it flying through the air.*

*It travels in space, or under the sea,  
And it can journey anywhere.*

*It travels on land or roams the skies,  
Through the heaven's stormy rage.*

*It's Mercury manned, and everyone cries,  
"It's the Marvel of the Age!"*



**-SUPERCAR™**

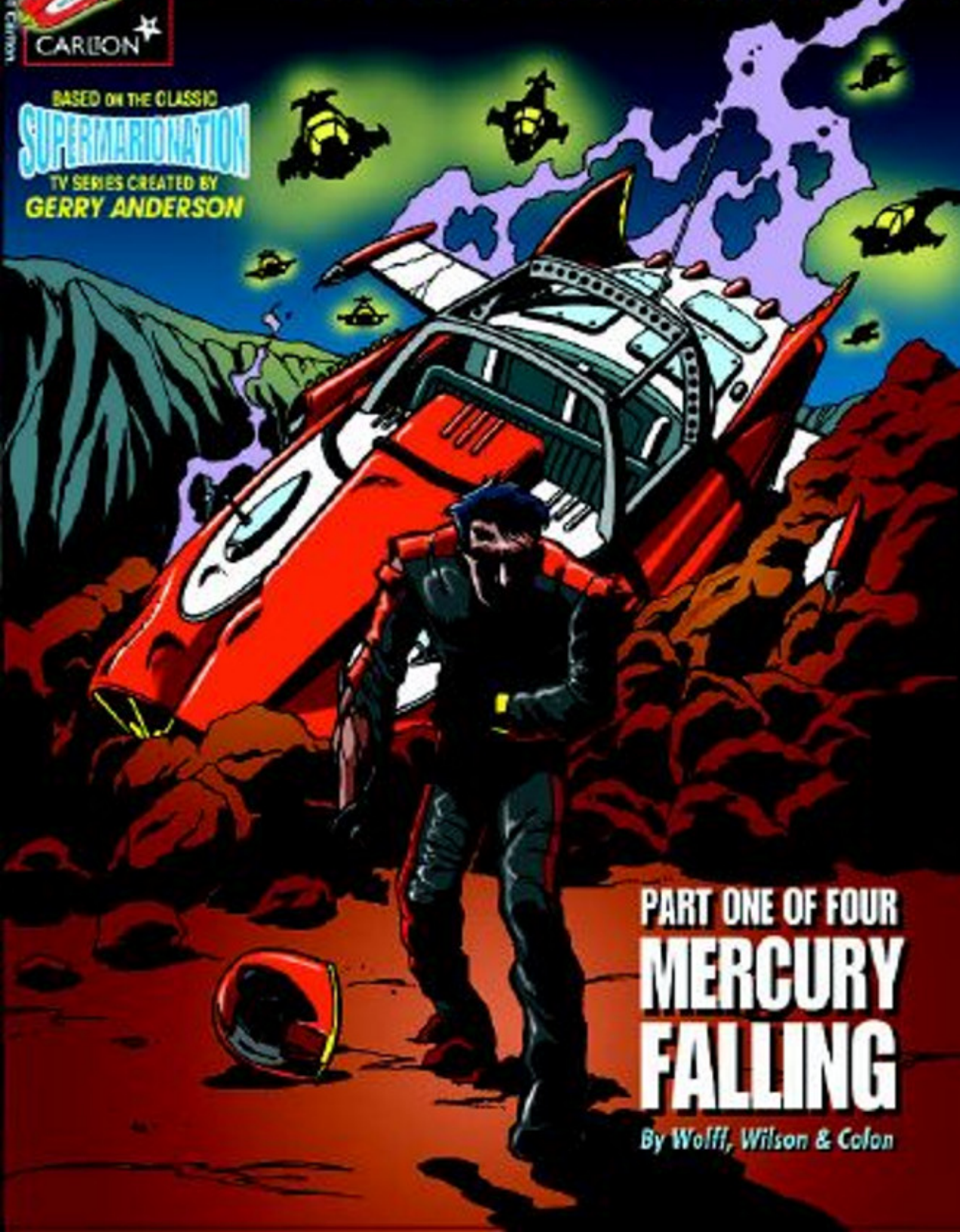


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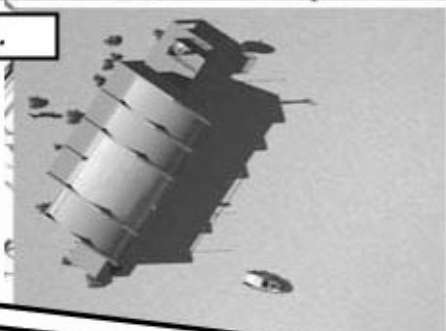


PART ONE OF FOUR  
**MERCURY  
FALLING**

By Wolff, Wilson & Colon



EIGHT YEARS AGO....



...BLACK ROCK  
REGION OF NEVADA.

NINETY-EIGHT MILES  
NORTH OF CARBON CITY.

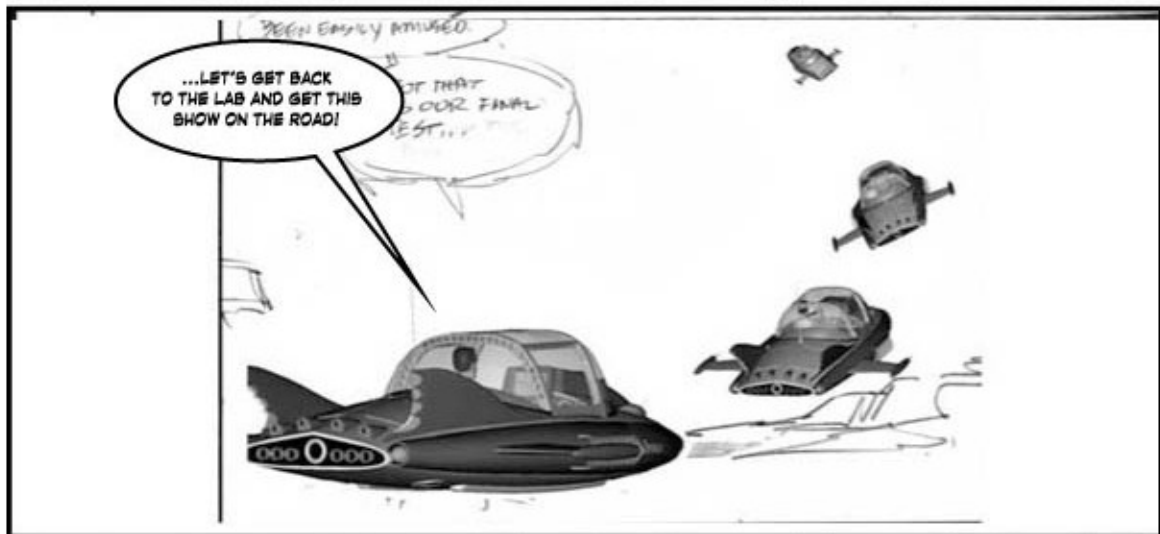
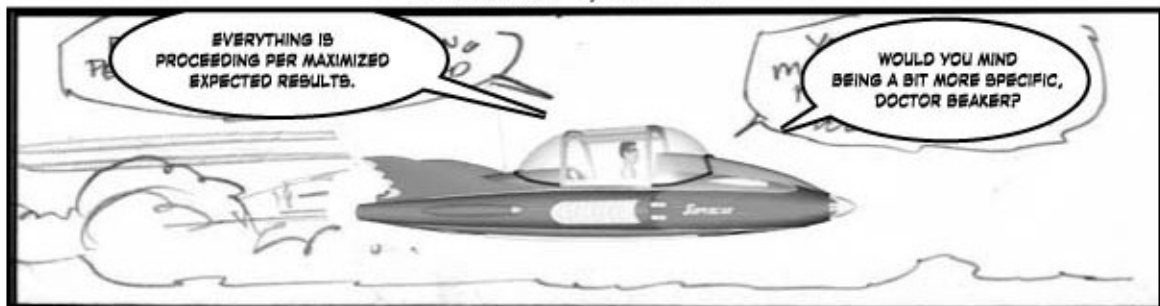


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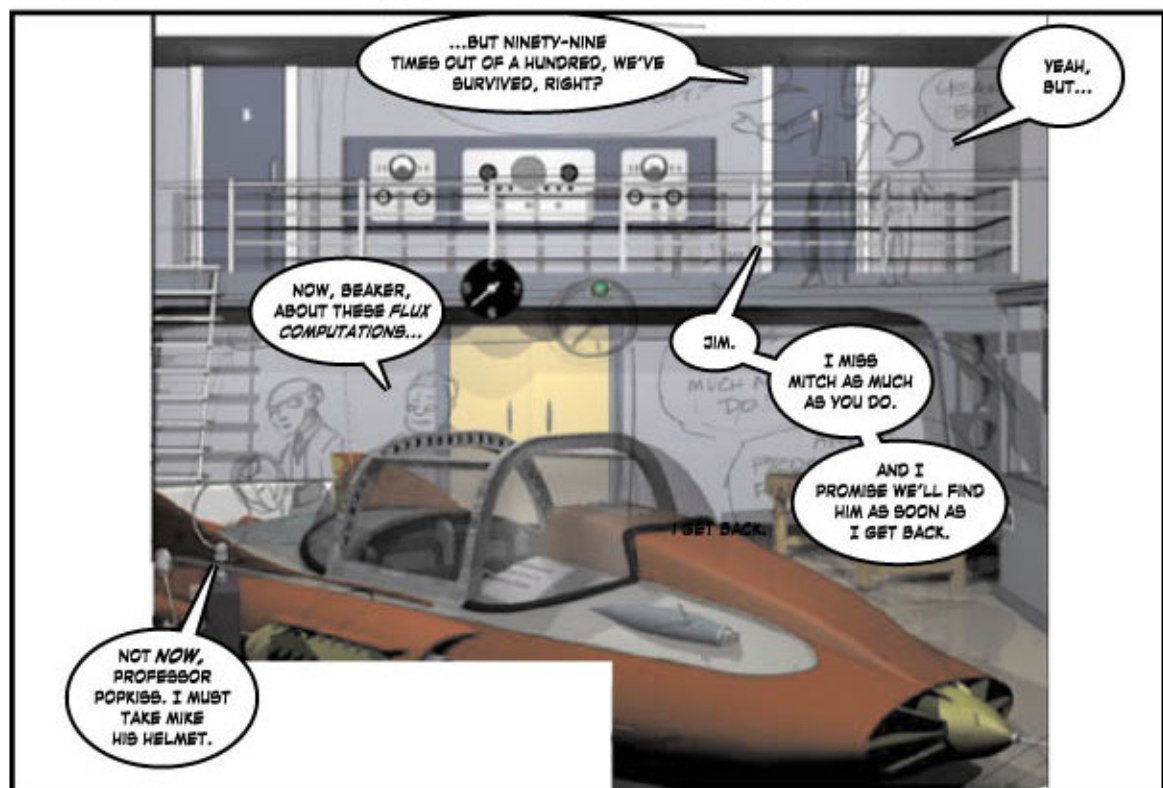
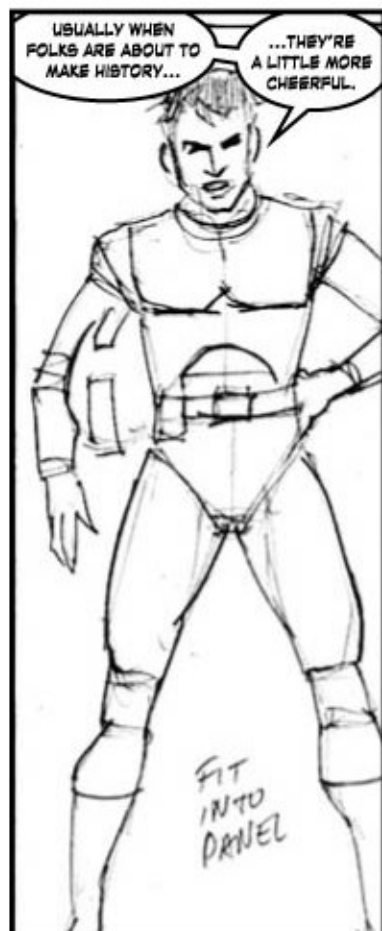
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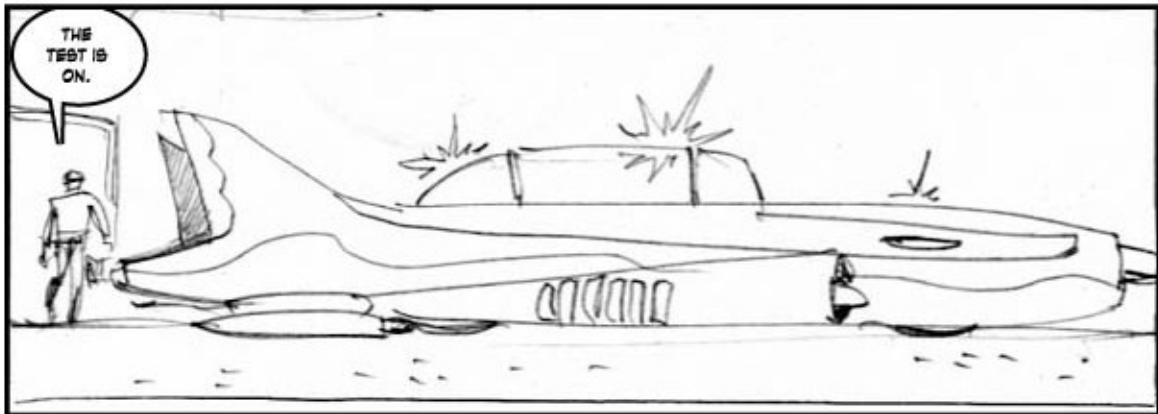




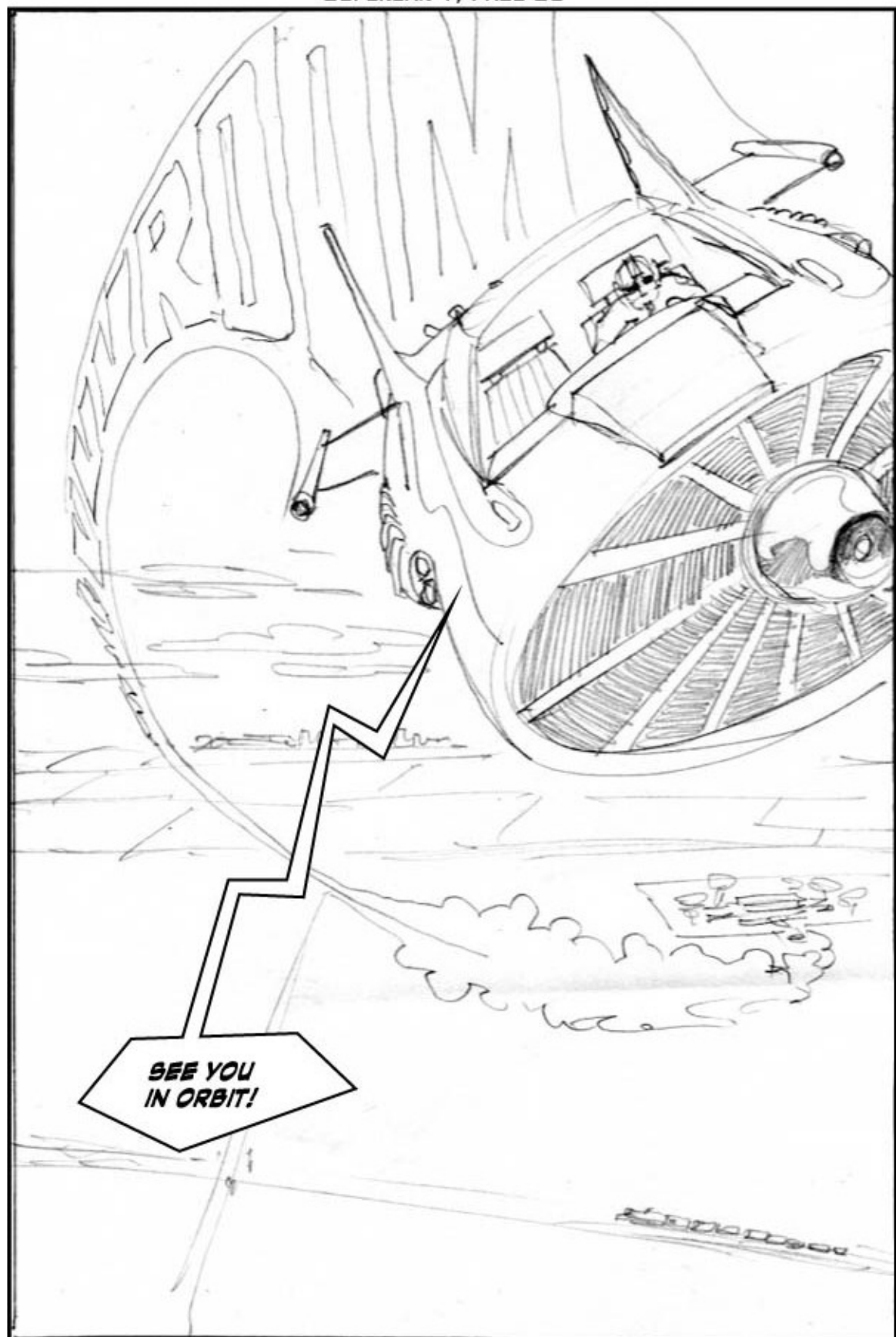




















PILOT TO CONSOLE.  
I WISH YOU COULD SEE  
THE SHOW FROM MY  
SEAT, DOC.

MIGHTY  
IMPRESSIVE.

BEAKER, I'M  
NOT SATISFIED WE'VE  
WORKED OUT THE FLUX  
COMPUTATIONS  
COMPLETELY.

THE MAGNETIC  
BULGE IS....

POPPYCOCK!

BILL!  
I'VE NEVER HEARD  
PROFESSOR POPKISS  
SOUND SO NERVOUS  
BEFORE.

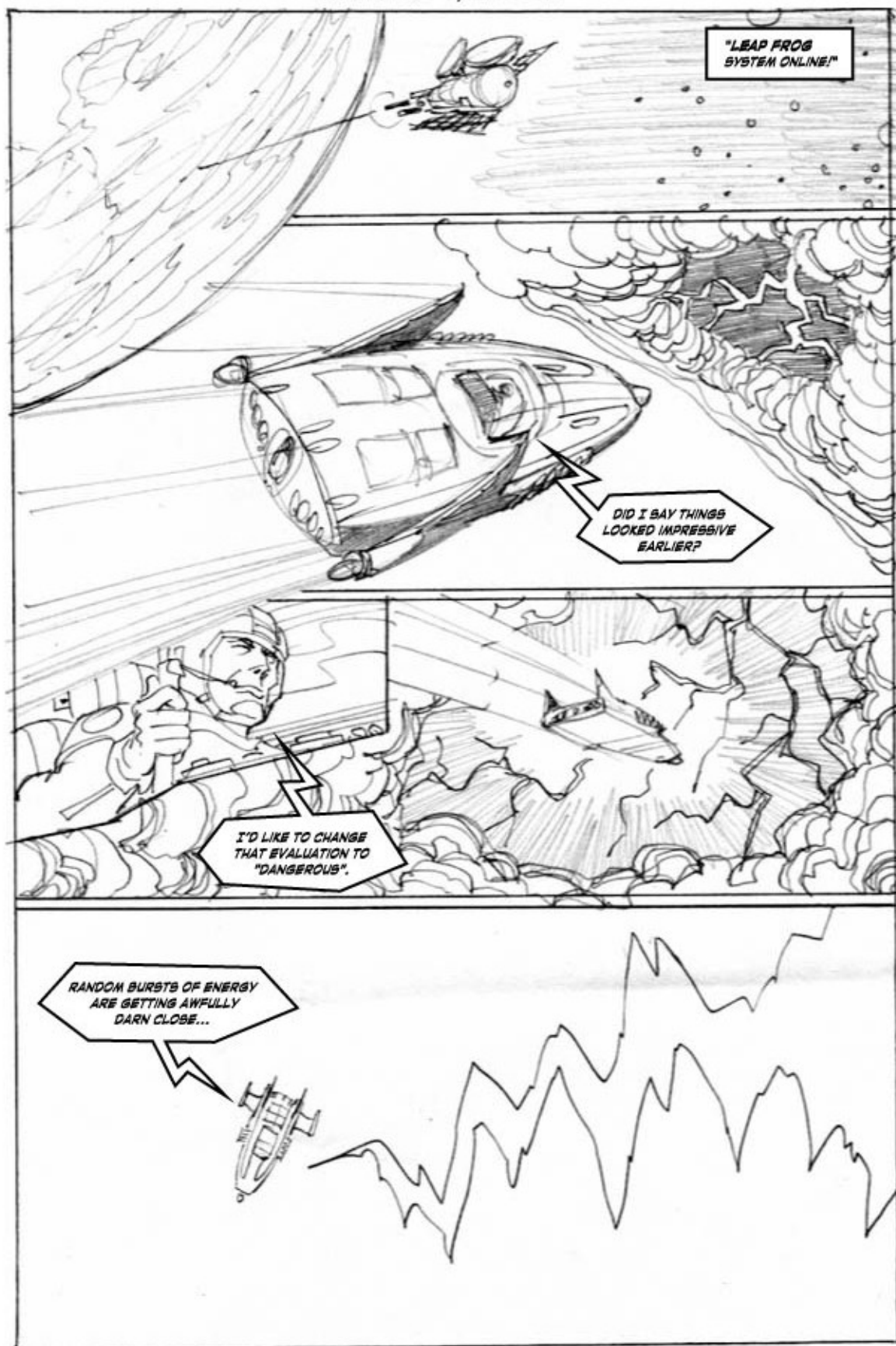
MY CALCULATIONS  
HAVE TAKEN THE  
MAGNETIC BULGE  
INTO ACCOUNT.  
WE FACE A  
MAXIMUM FAILURE  
RISK OF --SNRR--  
THREE PER CENT.  
RISK TO THE PILOT  
AND VEHICLE IS  
NEGLIGIBLE.

I KNOW  
WHAT YOU MEAN,  
LITTLE BROTHER.

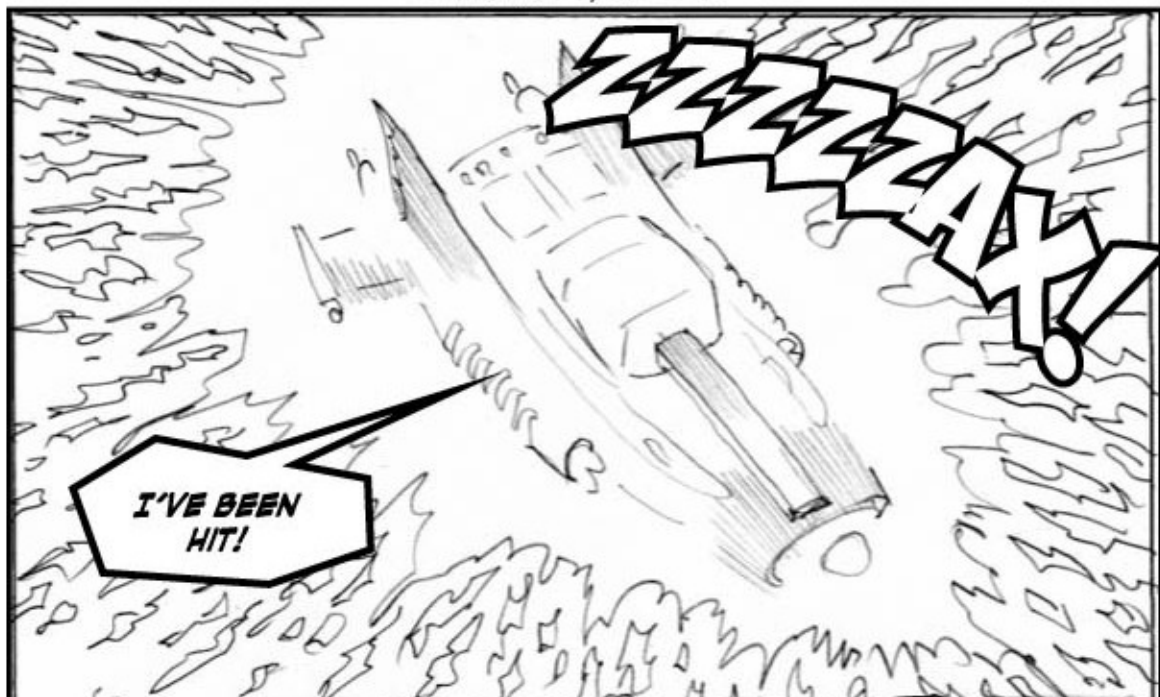
I'M ON  
EDGE TOO.

CONDUIT  
ESTABLISHED!





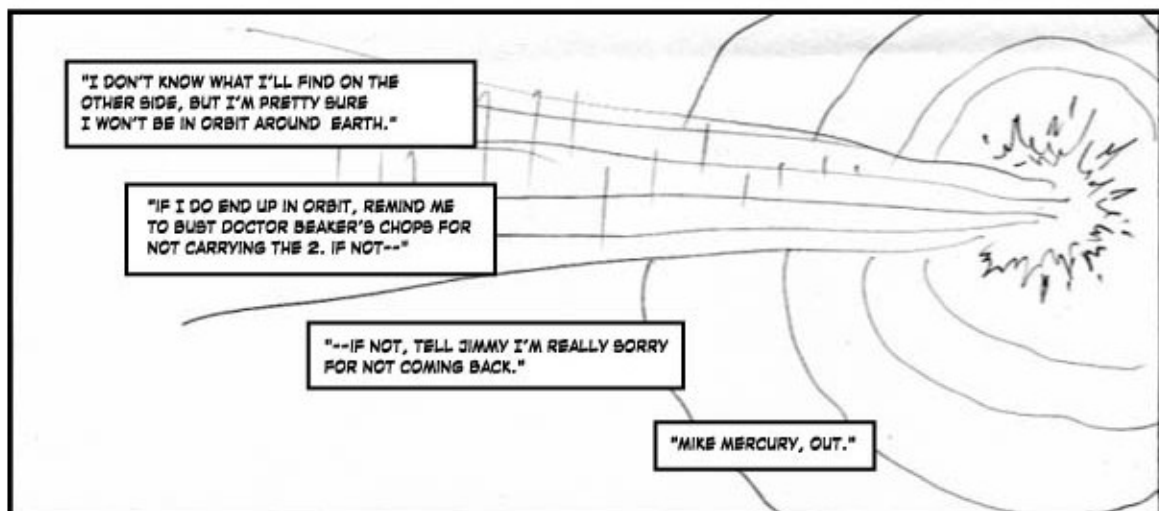
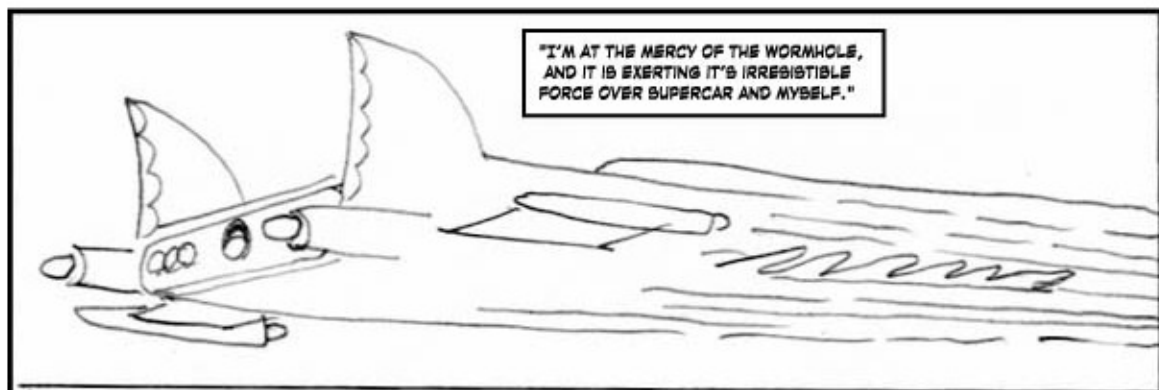
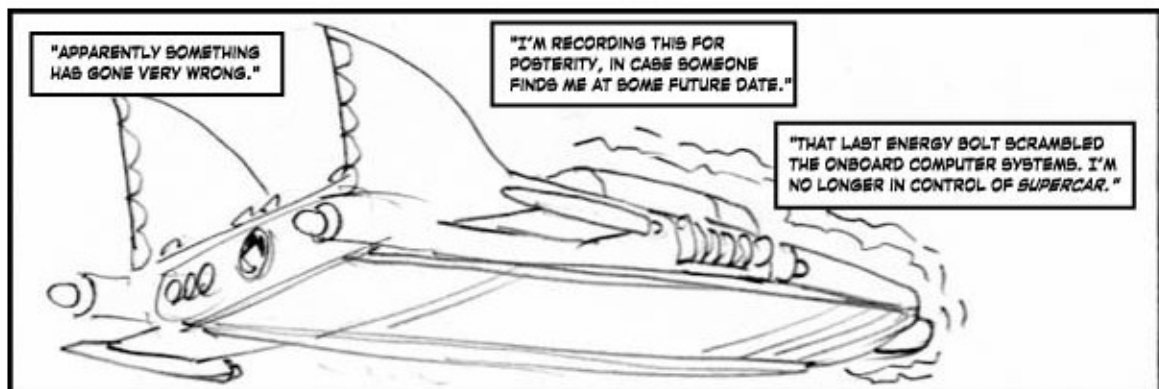
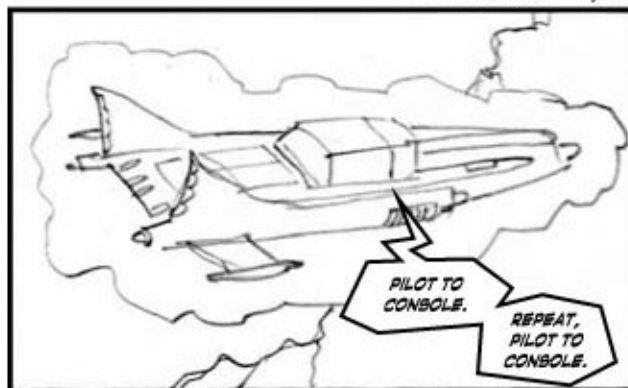




**I'VE BEEN HIT!**









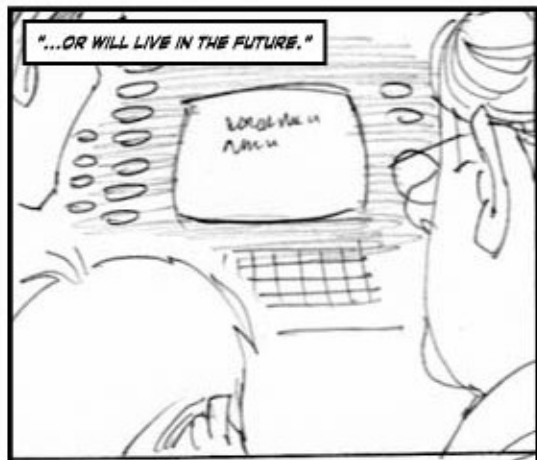
"IN LIFE ONE CAN ONLY LIVE IN THE PRESENT."



"NO ONE'S LIVED IN THE PAST..."



"...OR WILL LIVE IN THE FUTURE."



WORMHOLE STATUS:  
COLLAPSED  
SUPERCAR/PILOT STATUS:  
NO LONGER REGISTERS.



"THANKS FOR THE LIFT, ANYWAY."  
JEAN-LUC GODARD, ALPHAVILLE.



"...MEMORIES OF A MAN WHO EPITOMIZED THE BEST OF THE 'OLD SCHOOL' TEST PILOT IMAGE, EXPERTLY MIXING IT WITH THE COOL DETERMINATION AND SKILLS OF A MODERN EXPLORER."



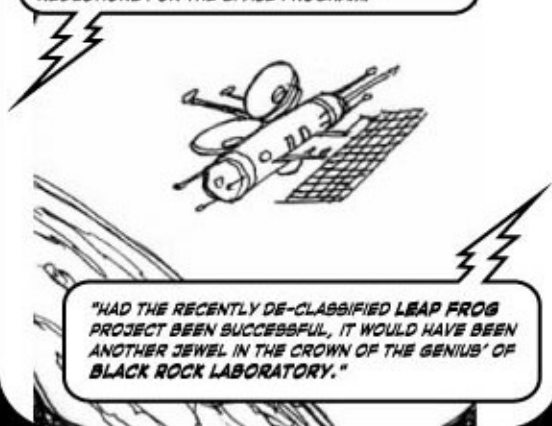
"HOLDER OF SEVERAL PILOTING RECORDS, HE WAS PERHAPS BEST KNOWN AS THE GUIDING HAND OF THE LEGENDARY MERCURY-MANNED TRIPHIBIOUS VEHICLE: SUPERCAR, THE MARVEL OF THE AGE."



"IN THIS EXCLUSIVE RECENTLY RELEASED FOOTAGE WE SEE THE YOUNG TEST-PILOT WITH DOCTOR HORATIO BEAKER AND PROFESSOR RUDOLPH POPKIBB IN THE LAST DAYS BEFORE THE ILL-FATED LEAP FROG PROJECT, MORE THAN 8 YEARS AGO.."



"'LEAP FROG' WAS AN AMBITIOUS PROJECT. BY USING WORMHOLE PHYSICS, IT WAS THEORIZED THAT AIRCRAFT COULD ACHIEVE ORBIT WITHOUT USING ROCKETS, THUS CREATING MASSIVE COST REDUCTIONS FOR THE SPACE PROGRAM."



"HAD THE RECENTLY DE-CLASSIFIED LEAP FROG PROJECT BEEN SUCCESSFUL, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN ANOTHER JEWEL IN THE CROWN OF THE GENIUS OF BLACK ROCK LABORATORY."



"INSTEAD, IT CONTRIBUTED TO THE UNTIMELY DEATH OF A MAN WHO MANY BELIEVED REPRESENTED THE SPIRIT OF EXPLORATION FOR THE NEW CENTURY."















AUNT FELICITY, I  
WANT TODAY TO BE A  
DAY OF SURPRISES.



THAT  
WAS CERTAINLY  
SURPRISING.



WERE  
WE STRUCK BY  
LIGHTNING?

THERE'S  
NOT A CLOUD IN  
THE SKY!





CAN YOU SEE  
WHERE IT MIGHT HAVE  
COME FROM?

THERE IS  
AN ODD PATTERN  
IN THE SKY.



THERE'S ALSO  
SOMETHING ELSE. I CAN'T  
QUITE MAKE IT OUT.



DO YOU MEAN  
THAT LITTLE DOT THAT'S  
GETTING BIGGER?

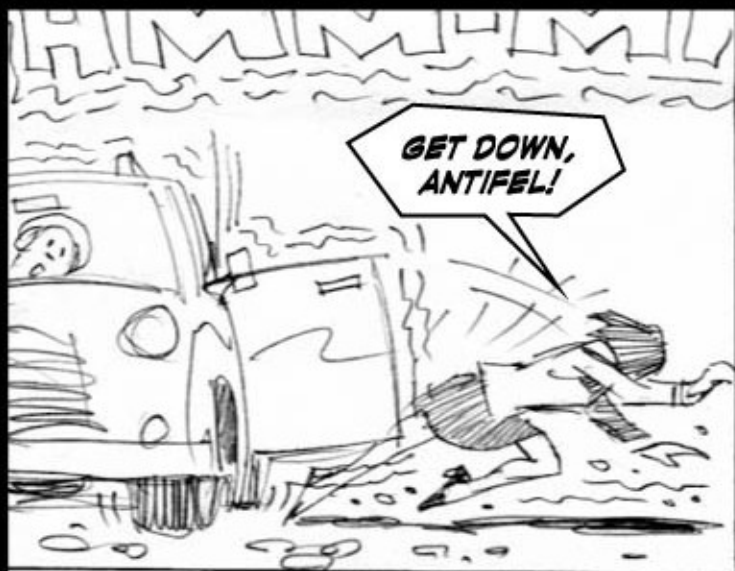
YES, THAT  
LITTLE DOT THAT'S  
GETTING...



...BIGGER.



**GET DOWN,  
ANTIFEL!**













PLEASE,  
AUNTIFEL...



MY GOODNESS.  
IT IS FORTUNATE THAT  
THIS IS A...

NEUTRAL  
EXERCISE  
FOR THE  
ACTOR



...RENTAL!



WAWUMEL!



OH MY GOD!

OH, QUITE!  
NO WONDER THE  
NOISE WAS SO  
FAMILIAR!











PLEASE  
STEP AWAY FROM THE  
VEHICLE, AND KEEP  
YOUR HANDS WHERE WE  
CAN SEE THEM.

YOUR  
COOPERATION WILL  
BE APPRECIATED, AND WILL  
INSURE THAT NO ONE  
GETS HURT.



I DARE SAY  
WE'VE REACHED OUR  
QUOTA ON SURPRISES  
FOR ONE DAY.

**NEXT: DUEL IN THE DESERT!**





# -SUPERCAR™-

## BAD DAY at BLACK ROCK

BASED ON THE CLASSIC  
**SUPERMARIONATION**  
TV SERIES CREATED BY  
**GERRY ANDERSON**

THROUGH A HEAVEN'S  
STORMY RAGE  
PART TWO OF FOUR

By Wolff, Wilson & Colon

CARLTON 