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Bi-monthly magazine of scientific and technical information \* November-December 2021

## THE REALISM OF THE "UFO" TV SERIES half a century later



## SPECIAL ISSUE



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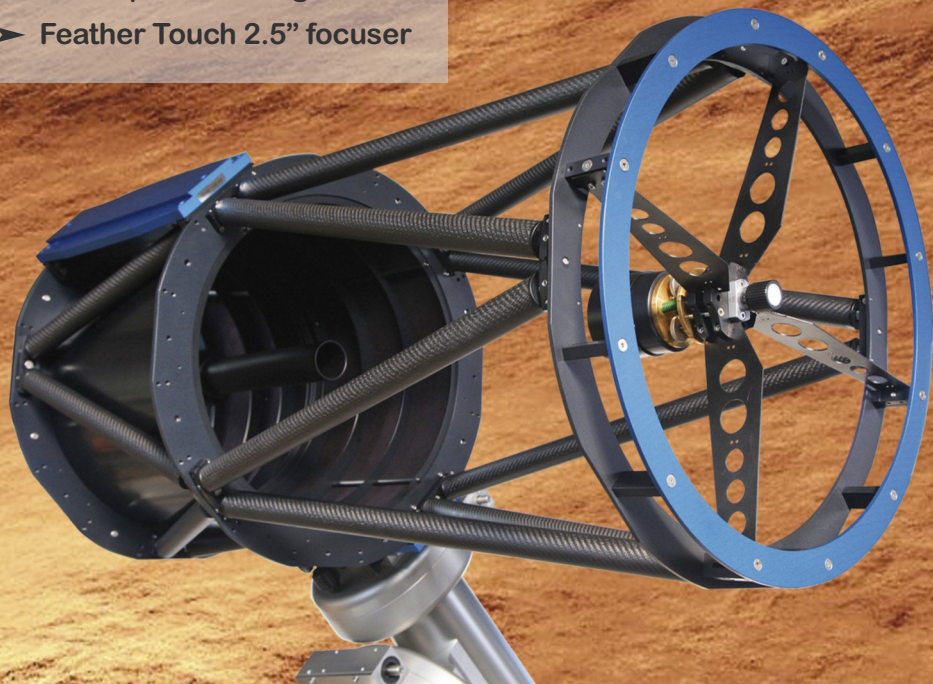
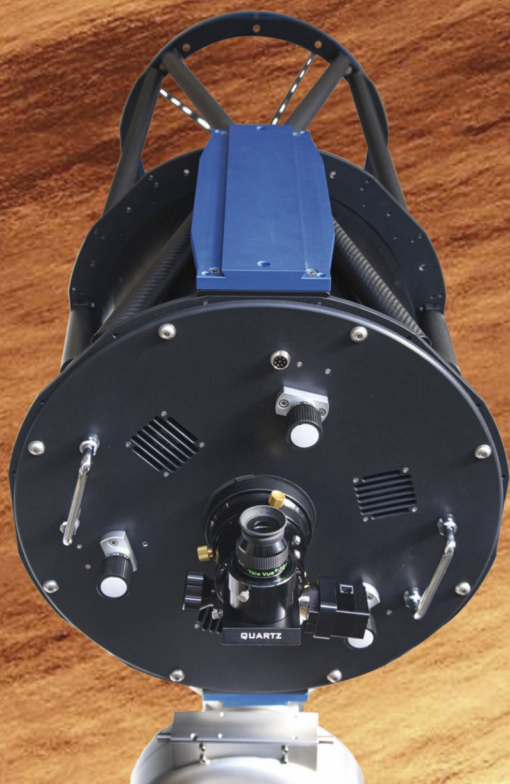
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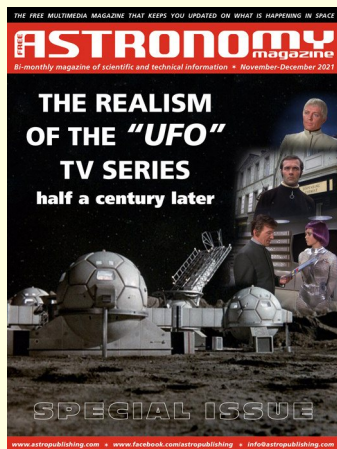






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# THE REALISM OF THE "UFO" TV SERIES half a century later

*by Michele Ferrara*

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*NASA Solar System Ambassador*

Fifty years ago, a TV series of a genre halfway between soft science fiction and space opera reached the pinnacle of its popularity. The title of that TV series was simply "UFO", a somewhat limiting choice if we consider the topics covered by the writers. The reason why that title was chosen, however, is understandable: after the Second World War, spotting unidentified flying objects had become a real mass sport in the so-called Western world, and in the late 1960s, using



the acronym "UFO" for a TV series was itself a valid marketing strategy. More fitting to the contents was the title chosen by Italian-speaking Swiss television when, starting in 1970, it began broadcasting the series with the title "Threat From Space." In fact, that's what we are talking about, with a realism that abundantly compensates for some of the naivety typical of the science fiction screenplays of

the '60s and '70s. By comparison, quite a few episodes of Star Trek filmed in the same period were characterized by decidedly improbable, but not to say grotesque, elements when re-examined in the light of current scientific and technical knowledge. UFO, in contrast and with minimal corrections, would still be credible today, half a century after its last "first visions." In this special issue of the maga-

zine, we will rediscover that TV series, highlighting the scientific aspects and technological anticipations that make it still current.

The UFO series was created in England, starting in April 1969, by the spouses Gerry and Sylvia Anderson, together with Reg Hill, in the MGM-British Studios in Borehamwood, Hertfordshire (about twenty kilometers northwest of London). The first 17 episodes were filmed



there, after which, due to the closure of those studios, the production was moved to just a few kilometers from Heathrow Airport to Iwer Heath, Buckinghamshire, in the facilities of Pinewood Studios - the James Bond "house." Here, starting from June 1970, the other nine episodes that completed the UFO series were shot. In September of the same year, the episodes began to be broadcast by Independent Television (a commercial network, rival of the better-known BBC), with weekly programming (with some breaks) until July 1971. For unclear reasons, the last two episodes were instead broadcast in March 1973. Almost simultaneously, the UFO episodes were also broad-

cast in the US and Canada by ITC Entertainment, the British company that financed and distributed the series.

The series takes place in what was then the near future, the '80s, where the Earth had been subjected to occasional raids by alien flying saucers for a decade. Coming from a dying planet, the inhabitants of this civilization are aliens trying to counteract physical deterioration through the transplantation of organs taken from previously abducted terrestrials. To defend humanity from this growing threat, which could have been the prelude to an invasion on a planetary scale, a secret military agency called "SHADO," acronym for Supreme







Headquarters, Alien Defense Organization, is set up by the governments of the United Kingdom, USA, Soviet Union, France and West Germany. The assonance with "shadow" is not accidental. In fact, the agency operates in the shadows, hiding alien raids from ordinary people. SHADO's command is also hidden from the public eye, having been built 30 meters below a seemingly fictional British film production house, the Harlington-Straker Film Studios, which coincided with the

actual recording studios. Placing the SHADO command under the structures of the real production company that made the TV series, as well as shooting many scenes in both environments, allowed a considerable saving of money, a need that arose several times during the making of UFO. From a plot point of view, the Harlington-Straker Film Studios were the ideal cover for SHADO because any strangeness noticed by foreign eyes could be interpreted as an element of the pro-



duction of a film. In no episode is the term "Harlington" associated with characters or locations, while "Straker" stands for Edward Straker, officially CEO of the Studios, but actually SHADO's commander-in-chief.

Played by actor George Victor Bishop (aka Ed Bishop), Commander Edward "Ed" Straker is a former U.S. Air Force colonel, pilot and astronaut, and native of Boston, Massachusetts. It was he who proposed, in the 1970s, the creation of SHADO, following the



**HARLINGTON -**  
**FILM STUDIOS**



**STRAKER**

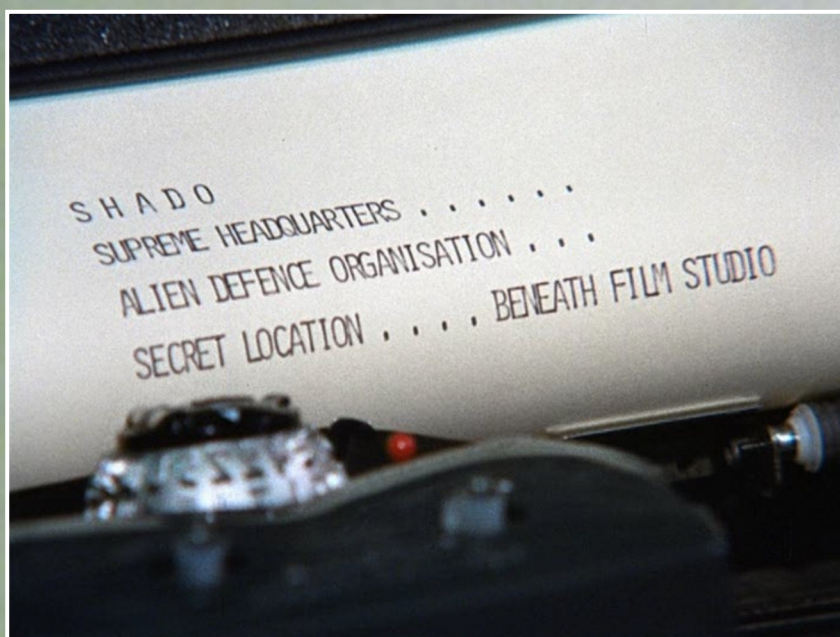
**CAR  
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first alien incursions. SHADO has multiple levels of defense, among which the most spectacular is Moonbase, an outpost that often serves as a front line against attacks from alien-piloted flying saucers. The command of Moonbase is entrusted to Lieutenant Gay Ellis (played by actress Gabrielle Drake), who coordinates the means of defense: three interceptors equipped with a huge bomb and some self-propelled rocket launchers. On Earth, other lines of defense include surface armored vehicles, the SHADO Mobiles, and the SkyDivers submarines, which

serve as a launch pad for interceptors similar to military aircraft. All lines of defense are activated by a radar satellite in Earth orbit, called the Space Intruder Detector (SID), which constantly scans the inner solar system, up to distances of a few tens of millions of kilometers, looking for intruders.

The aliens, for their part, only attack with a single type of flying saucer equipped with laser weapons and a hypnotic light, and when they are face-to-face with earthlings they use conventional weapons similar to submachine guns.



# SUPREME HEADQUARTERS





**A**LIEN **D**EFENCE **O**RGANISATION









Retracing UFO episodes, we will be able to comment on the scientifically valid scenarios and the ethical and social issues faced by the authors and screenwriters.

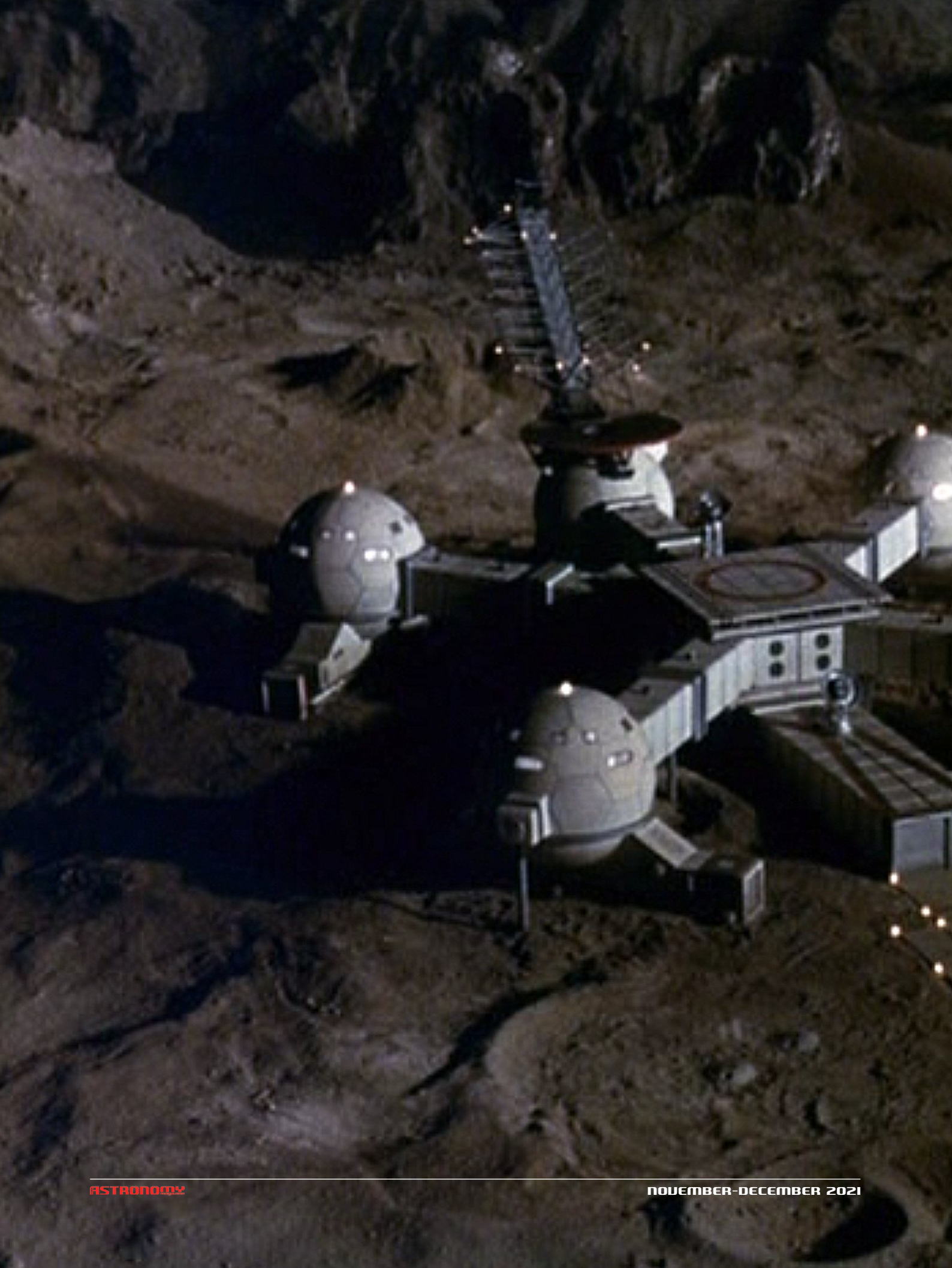
The episode that opens the series, "Identified", was conceived as a pilot episode and as such is not slow to present the leitmotifs of the series: the threat that comes from space, the existence of aliens kept secret, the human events that inter-

twine and sometimes identify with those of the enemy. "Identified" begins with a gory scene against three earthlings who were secretly filming a flying saucer that landed in a woods. The three unfortunates have a bad end, but their footage, recovered by the authorities, gives a significant boost to the creation of SHADO. In this first episode, it is already clear why the aliens have targeted the Earth: they see in our

species a "reservoir" of organs to be transplanted into their battered bodies (for them, we are not much more than laboratory animals, a condition to think about). It is not difficult to recognize in this scenario a reflection of Christiaan Barnard's feats, who carried out the first heart transplants over the years the UFO storyline was drawn up.

Apparently, the writers seem to ignore the problems associated with







organ rejection and all potentially transmissible diseases between beings on different planets. But since the alien civilization is described as much more advanced than ours, it should have been able to solve those problems. However, the same writers find a loophole later in the episodes that makes the transplant scenario less questionable, but by resorting to a gimmick more suited to Star Trek.

Inevitably, even the UFO series is a child of its times, and there is no shortage of errors and naivety. Overall, however, it is also a clear photograph of the current events of the time, superimposed on surprising intuitions and anticipations: from everyday objects to scientific equipment, from settings to fashions, everything is designed for how it may have appeared according to the viewer a decade later - that is, in the period in which the series is set.

The screenwriters do not create a long wait for the viewer curious to discover the faces of the aliens as, in fact, one of them is still alive after the shooting down of his flying saucer. In a low-altitude raid, he had tried to eliminate the leaders of the newly formed SHADO, including Straker. The alien has human features and a greenish color caused by a liquid, to which we will return later. Attempts to keep the alien alive fail because, for unknown reasons, he quickly ages and





dies. The cause seems to be linked to the permanence inside our atmosphere, deleterious not only for the aliens but also for their aircraft, which explode after short stays on our planet. This is why raids are usually very fast.

All this is confirmed in the second episode, "Computer Affair", where

an alien is captured and subjected to an unlikely interrogation, with a truth serum that accelerates his death. However, this fact is marginal compared to other issues addressed in the episode and considered from a future perspective; for example, in several scenes, the question is posed of the weight

that computers will have in the life of human beings, and of how by relying excessively on them one runs the risk of making truly senseless decisions. Although still very far from home environments, computers are a constant presence in UFO episodes, and it could not be otherwise, since in the '60s they brought











humans first into orbit and then to the Moon. The highest expression in terms of computers is SID, the aforementioned radar satellite that launches intrusion alarms. It is a supercomputer that interacts vocally with SHADO personnel, using technology comparable to the voice assistants that would come to be in common use forty years after the setting of UFO.

In the third episode, "Flight Path", it is confirmed that the abductions of human beings are not only aimed at obtaining organs, but also information on SHADO. In fact, a device is implanted in the brain of an agency doctor that makes the doctor controllable by aliens.





Through the "mole," the aliens blackmail a member of Moonbase, who is forced to provide useful coordinates to bring a flying saucer closer to the base itself, with the aim of destroying it. Colonel Alec Freeman (played by actor George Sewell), SHADO's second in command for several episodes, finds out. The "traitor" is rehabilitated by destroying the flying saucer that has come a short distance from the target, but loses his life in the operation.

In this episode, the theme of family affections, recurring in UFO, is very evident and makes the script more typical of a drama than of Sci-Fi. But the scientific aspect also has its





part: the lunar landscapes are so realistic that they seem real, and in a certain sense they are based in reality. When the first two landings of the Apollo missions on the Moon took place in 1969, the production of UFO was already underway and there was no way to draw inspiration from the photographs taken by the astronauts. Nonetheless, scenographers and special effects workers managed to recreate (without computers) absolutely realistic landscapes, drawing inspiration from the images taken during the previous Apollo missions and from the automatic probes landed in different lunar sites. Less credible, con-

versely, is the pace of the characters on the surface of our satellite, who move without consideration of the reduced gravity. This is partly due to tight special effects budgets and partly to the fact that, at least initially, no one had ever seen humans walk on the Moon! The fact that everyone inside Moonbase moves as if they were on Earth can be taken with less criticism: some imaginative device simulates optimal gravity.

The fourth episode (fifth for production), "Exposed", is essentially dedicated to the recruitment of Colonel Paul Foster (played by actor Michael Billington), who in his pre-









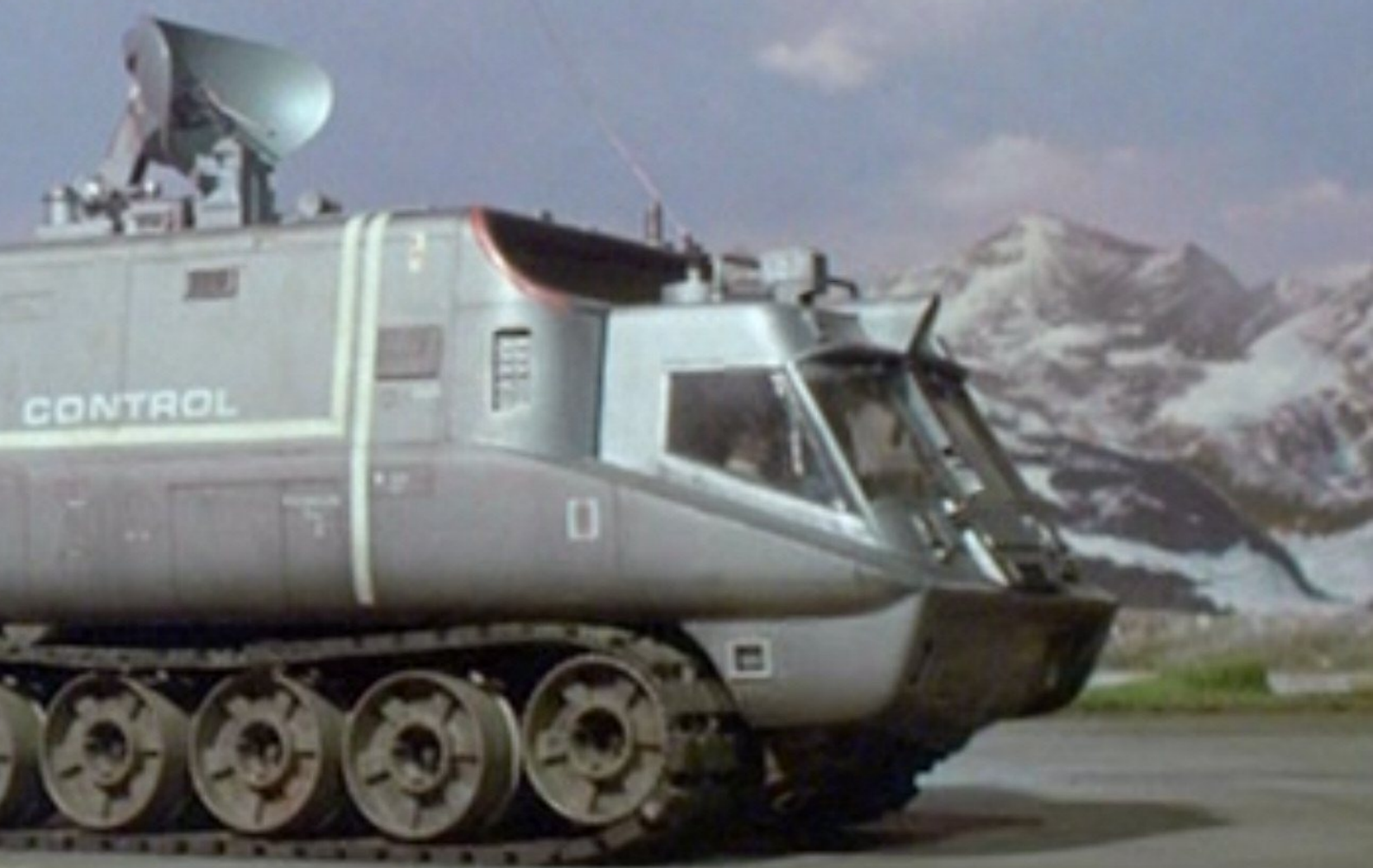




vious capacity as a commercial airplane test pilot had dramatically stumbled upon a flying saucer and tried to gather evidence of what had happened. Cornered by Straker, Foster agrees to join SHADO, becoming its second most important figure. Although this episode does

not seem to offer particular food for thought, in the first scenes SID signals the approach of flying objects and estimates their speed at SOL 8, a value already mentioned in previous episodes. In the UFO series, SOL stands for "speed of light," and the number indicates how many

times the speed of light the aircraft is traveling. In science fiction that contemplates interstellar travel, exceeding the speed of light is indispensable – below that threshold (~300,000 km/s), any interaction between civilizations of different planetary systems would take cen-





turies if not millennia, making the scripts unsustainable. Unlike other TV series, the exceeding of that limit in UFO is not abused, and it is suggested that the planet is still relatively close to our solar system, so much so that, as we will see later, the authors could also have done without resorting to that trick. If it had not been deemed necessary to make aliens travel at superluminal speeds, the UFO plot would appear surprisingly credible today, since almost everything else is not a priori impossible.





The reason why no mass-endowed body, from the lightest subatomic particle to the largest of stars, cannot exceed nor even reach the speed of light was explained over a century ago by Albert Einstein in his Theory of Relativity. The more the speed of a body increases, the more energy it takes to accelerate it further. As it approaches the speed of light, the mass tends to infinity and requires almost infinite energy to increase the speed by an infinitesimal amount. Even the smallest mass existing would need more energy

than is available in the entire universe to reach the speed of light. Conversely, all massless particles, such as photons, are forced to travel at the speed of light. This fact makes some scenes from other TV series bizarre, where humans are seen interacting with entities made up of pure energy that remain essentially stationary in space. The reason why massless particles themselves cannot exceed the speed of light is also explained by the Theory of Relativity: the more its speed increases, the more time slows down

(said in a nutshell) and, at the speed of light, time stops. For the photon and other massless particles, time does not flow – everything happens instantaneously. To overcome the speed of light, time would have to slow down even further, but being already stationary at this point it cannot do so any further and cannot begin to flow backwards.

Over the last century, the Theory of Relativity has received hundreds of experimental confirmations relating to dozens of different physical phenomena. If it were possible for







a mass-endowed body to reach or, worse, exceed the speed of light, it would mean that Einstein's equations failed to explain or predict those phenomena and that the theory itself was fundamentally flawed. Even assuming that with an unlimited amount of energy a spaceship could travel at a speed close to the

speed of light, the passage of time aboard the spaceship and on the mother planet would be so different that a journey of 10 Earth-years for the crew would correspond to tens of thousands of Earth-years for their fellows remaining at home. What would the crew find upon their return?

But let's get back to the UFO episodes now. In the fifth (fourth for production), "Survival", a flying saucer takes advantage of a disturbance to SHADO's surveillance equipment to land near Moonbase. An alien descends onto the surface and shoots a base porthole, causing the decompression of an environ-





ment and the consequent death of a pilot. In fiction, this happens on April 12, 1981, the day on which the first launch of the Space Shuttle takes place on Earth, with Commander John Young on board, former Commander of Apollo 16 and the ninth human being to step on the Moon. This coincidence gives us

the opportunity to introduce other, less trivial, plot features which in some cases are real technological anticipations present in the UFO series. One of these is the aircraft that transports the Lunar Module rocket shuttle from the Earth's surface to the atmosphere, which shuttles between our planet and the Moon.

The shape and function of this fictional aircraft are reminiscent of Richard Branson's Virgin Galactic White Knight biplane, which brings the SpaceShip suborbital rocket plane into the atmosphere. UFO writers envisioned that aerospace solution over 30 years before it was put into practice.





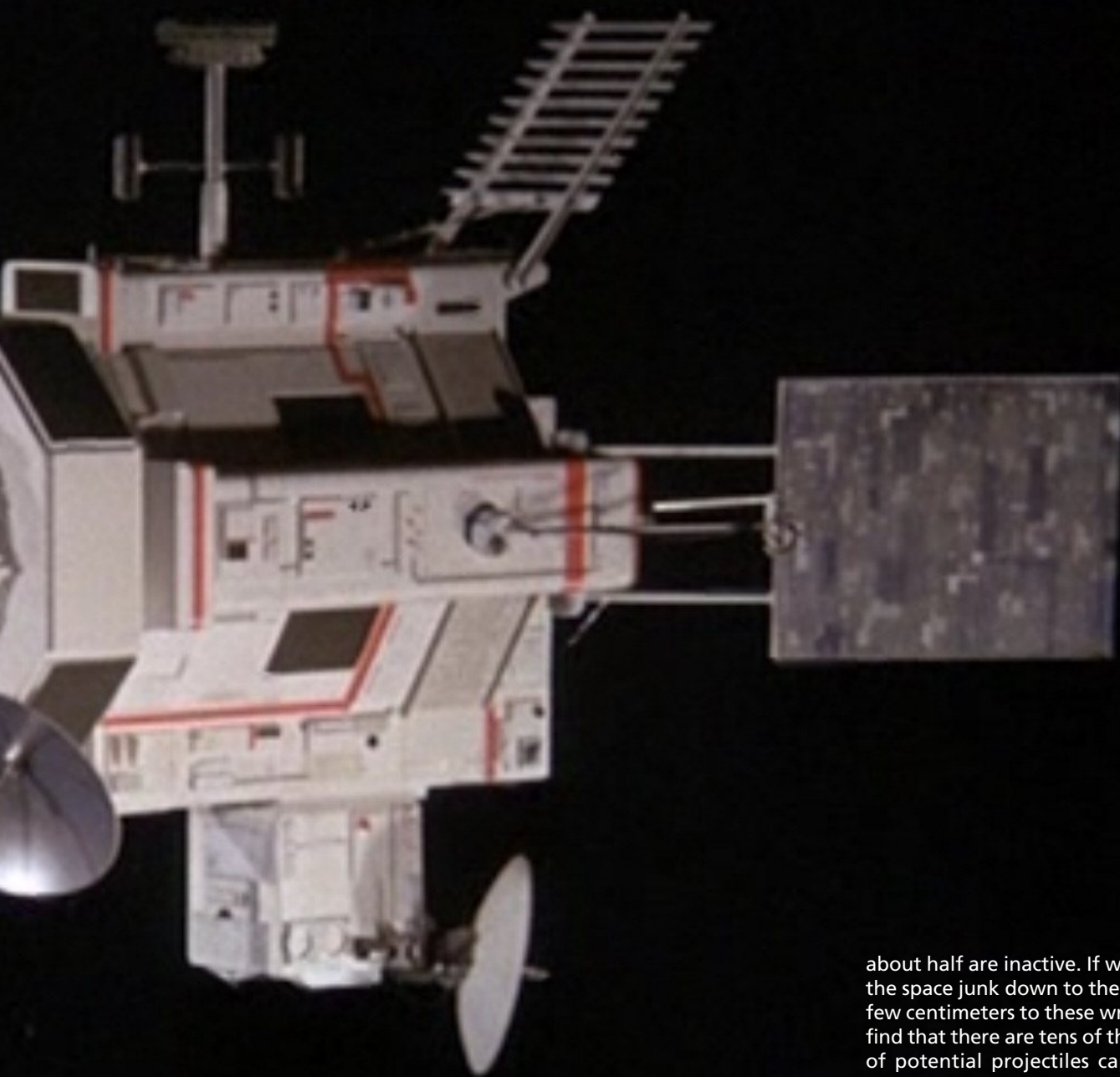
But how does the fifth episode end? With a couple of Moon Mobiles, Foster and others go searching for the alien; they find it and are attacked. Due to a broken radio, Foster is left alone and runs into the alien. Both of them, running out of oxygen and in trouble, help each other. When they are found by Moonbase personnel, the alien is killed due to a misunderstanding, a bit like what has always happened on Earth between different civilizations speaking different languages. An anti-racist message

can be read between the lines, which is clearer in another scene, where Straker appoints a new (black) commander for Moonbase, believing Foster missing.

The sixth episode, "Conflict", focuses on a very current theme today, that of space junk – that set of inactive satellites, stages of rockets, debris, scattered equipment and more, which revolve around the Earth, representing a danger to all astronautical activities.

There are currently well over 7,000 satellites in Earth orbit, of which





about half are inactive. If we add all the space junk down to the size of a few centimeters to these wrecks, we find that there are tens of thousands of potential projectiles capable of seriously compromising any type of space mission. In the '60s, space junk was not yet an obvious problem, but it becomes one in the plot of "Conflict" when Straker realizes that aliens could use the wrecks to hide hostile devices, which they do in the episode. To avert the threat, a SHADO scout begins destroying the wrecks by blowing them up (naive



solution, seen with today's eyes). The only wreck seen destroyed in the episode is an unlikely Vostok 2. Straker intends to remove all wrecks from Earth's orbit, a purpose that clashes with the authoritarianism of General James Henderson (played by actor Ronald Grant Taylor), President of the International Astrophysical Commission, on which SHADO depends. The basic problem is the difficulty of obtaining the necessary funds to

implement the project, a bit like what still happens today for similar initiatives.

In the seventh episode, "The Dalotek Affair", SHADO's telecommunications are disturbed by an alien device landed on the Moon inside a meteorite. The interference is initially attributed to a private company, which has a small lunar base where research related to the mining exploitation of the Moon is carried out. This is also a





very topical issue, with numerous projects already sketched out by the mining industry.

In the eighth episode, "A Question of Priorities", a deserter alien reaches Earth (which is almost always represented by Great Britain in UFO) and attempts to contact the SHADO command from the home of an old blind woman. Meanwhile, Straker is grappling with a family drama, an accident to his only child, born of a failed marriage, which

will have a tragic ending. The absence of a happy ending is recurrent and this choice of the writers, combined with that of not exceeding the scenes of pure action, did not meet the tastes of a certain type of public, especially North American, who even in science fiction loves happy endings, fights and shootings. In short, Star Trek. In truth, the transmission of the UFO episodes initially had a favorable response also in North Amer-





ica, so much so that ITC decided to commission a second series, which should have been called first "UFO 2" then "UFO: 1999", to highlight the year in which the events would take place. Since UFO episodes mostly set on the Moon had been more successful than the others, ITC decided that the new series should be set entirely on the Moon. The Andersons proposed a much larger lunar base, where SHADO's headquarters would also be located, and with this guideline, pre-production began to do research and projects. But things did not go as planned because, while in Europe and Japan the whole UFO series was a success, in North America the initial enthusiasm faded as the programming proceeded, and when towards the last episodes the ratings collapsed (as much as the interest in the Apollo missions), ITC decided to cancel the production of the second series. Not wanting to throw away all the pre-production work, in '72









the Andersons continued to develop the project to turn it into an original series. "UFO: 1999" was to begin with a massive alien attack, capable of destroying part of the Moon, hurling a large fragment that housed the new SHADO base into space. But then the authors decided that the entire Moon would be lost in space after an irreversible exit from Earth's orbit caused by a nuclear explosion. Thus was born the TV series "Space: 1999", pure and simple science fiction, which transcends science and technology far too much. Who knows what constantly illuminates the surface of a Moon that wanders aimlessly in the cosmic darkness...





Let's go back to the original, more precisely to the ninth episode, "Ordeal", all based on a nightmare of Foster who sees himself kidnapped by aliens, dressed in their spacesuit and subjected to their breathing technique, which involves filling helmets and lungs with an oxygenated green liquid.

Although the plot of the episode is not that great, the function of that liquid offers an opportunity to hint at the consequences on the physical that the impressive accelerations typical of science fiction spacecraft would entail.


On Earth, we daily experience acceleration due to gravity, but we often don't realize it. We are all attracted












to the center of the planet, but we don't fall into it because, for example, the chair we are on exerts an equal pressure on our backside in the opposite direction; the same that the floor of the house exerts on the chair; the same that the Earth's surface exerts on the home. Apart from a little back, buttocks, or foot pain, any fall can't happen to us any worse in the range of domestic accelerations, unless you fall from a balcony, window or into a stairwell. If we leave our house, we can begin to experience different types of acceleration, such as the one that glues us to the back of the seat of an

airplane during take-off. The seat pushes us forward because it is integrated with the rest of the airplane, which in turn is pushed forward by the air violently expelled by the engines in the opposite direction.

On scheduled flights, acceleration is a negligible factor, but if we transfer the discussion to military supersonic jets, the force exerted on the pilot's body during sudden accelerations begins to be a factor to be definitely taken into consideration. That factor, called "g-force", is generally quantified with a multiple of 1, where 1 is the acceleration value that the Earth's gravitational field





# INTERNATIONAL ASTROPH

exerts on bodies at the surface of our planet ( $9.8 \text{ ms}^{-2}$ ). (Attention here: "g", constant defined specific to the Earth, should not be confused with "G", universal gravitational constant)

The acceleration to which a military pilot can be subjected can exceed 10 g. For an astronaut at vertical take-off with a rocket, the acceleration can reach 16 g, a force that is bearable only if it is suffered along the transverse axis, which is why the astronauts are lying down during launch.

The main harmful effects of a violent acceleration are the so-called "black outs" or "black visions," and the loss of consciousness caused by the accumulation of blood in the lower part of the body, which deprives the brain of blood and there-



# PHYSICAL Commission

fore of oxygen. To remedy these dangerous inconveniences, military pilots and astronauts wear a special anti-g suit (or simply "g-suit"). However, even this solution has its limits, and nothing would be able to protect a living being aboard a spaceship suddenly launched at science fiction speeds. All the passengers of that spaceship would be instantly reduced to mush by the irrepressible thrust of their seats. This is the case of the starships of the Star Trek saga, launched at "warp speed" of billions of km/s instantly. To get around this problem, the authors of Star Trek invented the "inertial







shock absorbers", devices never fully explained (after all, they do not exist!), whose task would be, in short, to generate a magnetic field with a force equal to and opposite to that generated by the thrust of the warp propulsion.

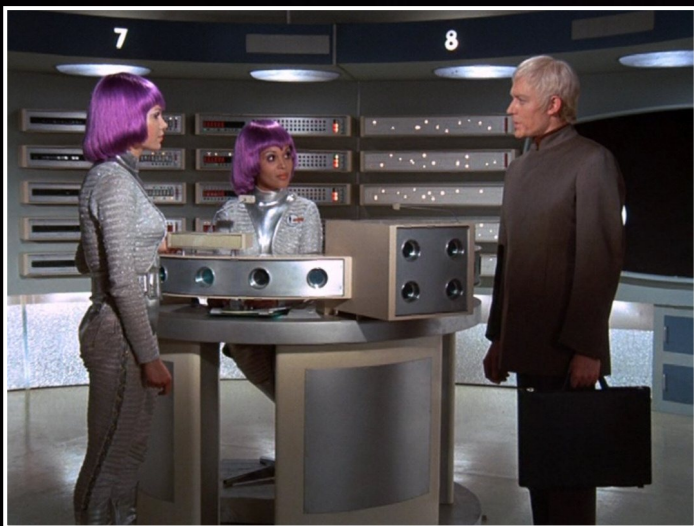
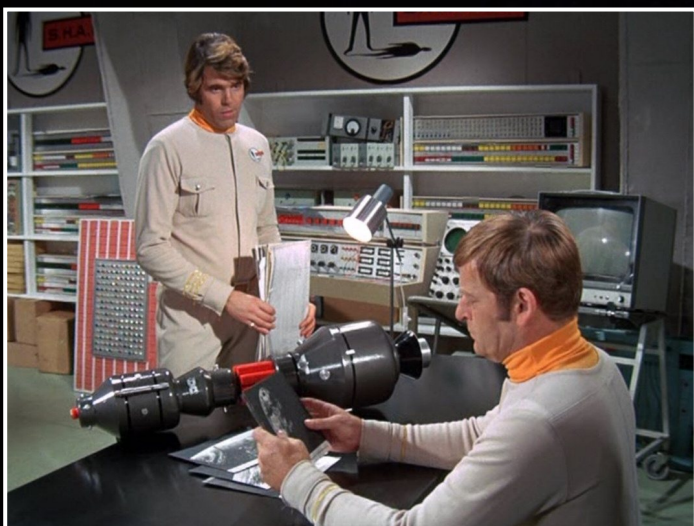
The authors of UFO, having to do with admittedly superluminal speeds, but not necessarily with the burning starts of the Enterprise, found the solution of the green liquid more "credible," whose task is simply to contain the pressure generated on the respiratory and circulatory systems by the progressive acceleration of the alien flying saucers. We will see later that this is an unnecessary complication, which the writers could have done without. The plots of episodes 10, "The Responsibility Seat", and 11, "The





Square Triangle", we can safely overlook. These two episodes, nevertheless, contain some elements, also present in other episodes, which give an idea of how the Andersons and their collaborators imagined the uses, customs and technologies of the '80s. The habit of smoking cigarettes and cigars, as well as the consumption of alcohol, was given for certain even in the future, and so it was, even if in many UFO scenes it is exaggerated. In the '60s, the fashion of the miniskirt exploded, omnipresent in this TV series and therefore hoped by the screenwriters as being fashionable even a decade later. We know it will









go far beyond, as well as the Beatles music, featured in an episode with "Get Back." In some episodes, vertical take-off airplanes are seen, with a design rather similar to that of the Bell Boeing V-22 Osprey convertiplane, released in 1989.

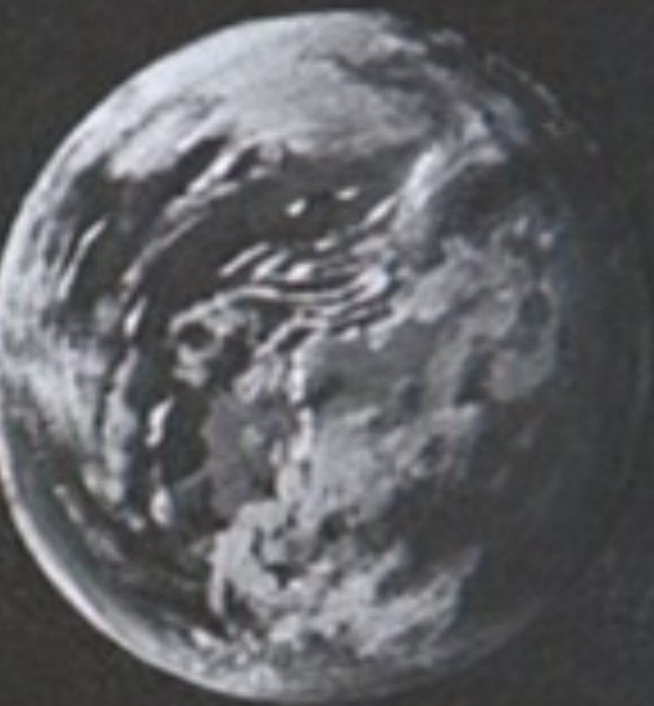
SHADO's staff make extensive use of futuristic wireless phones, another right anticipation. In fact, although the prototype of the first cordless phone was patented in 1966, it was only in the '70s that models similar to those used in SHADO were patented, which then arrived on the market in the '80s. Access to the command of SHADO and other operational structures of the agency is via voice recognition and fingerprint scanning, technologies already sketched in the '50s, but which only long after the creation of UFO were applied as shown in the TV series. Finally, a couple of curiosities with a typically English flavor. The first: in the road scenes, recurring in various episodes, the right-hand drive (steering wheel on the left) is evident because the writers had imagined that within a decade even Great Britain would have adapted to the European and American driving standard; one of the few predictions that did not come true. The second: Moonbase's housing structures are shaped like soccer balls, with hexagons and pentagons, an architectural choice perhaps influenced by the world championship won by England in 1966, thanks to a famous nonexistent goal.

Episode 12, "Court Martial", is a true science fiction anomaly, as it does not include any reference to that genre – an episode with a plot and a screenplay more typical of the Spy Story genre than the Sci-Fi one. Much less "terrestrial" is episode 13, "Close Up", in which SHADO develops a spacecraft equipped with a sort of space telescope, whose task is to chase the aliens to their planet, to photograph it, and to send the images to Earth. The launch is carried out by NASA, and the installation of the photographic instrument on the spacecraft takes place in lunar orbit. In this case too, we









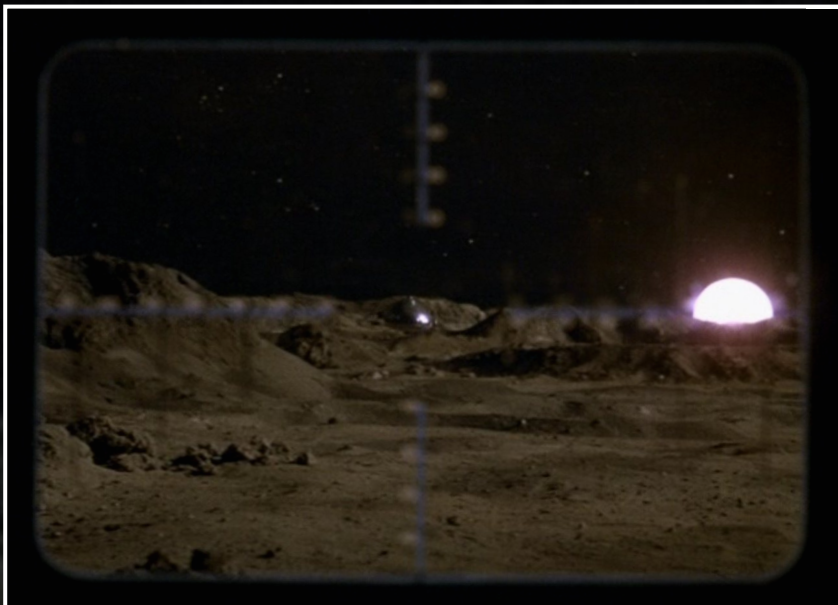
can recognize some similarities with real space exploration projects. Beyond some inconsistencies between the appearances of the alien planet "live" and in photography, "Close Up" offers a starting point for reflection on the hypothetical location of that planet. In fiction, the images take about four months to reach Earth, which means that the planet of the aliens is four light months away, in this case not being able to hypothesize accelerating technologies. Four light months is equivalent to almost 8% of the distance between the Sun and the nearest star, Proxima Centauri. This means that the alien planet can be considered gravitationally linked to the Sun, or at least in slow transit to the extreme periphery of our solar system. When the UFO storyline was set, the outer planets of our system were poorly understood. Pluto, in particular, was completely unfathomable, presenting itself as a speck without detail even in the most powerful telescopes. Imagining a habitable planet far beyond Pluto, but still in the Sun's field of influence, must have seemed too much even to the Andersons, and therefore they chose not to precisely place the mysterious planet in the sky, which then





generated some avoidable discrepancies in the scripts.

Today, we know that there are probably hundreds of billions of wandering planets, whizzing freely around our galaxy. Some of them may have the right size and an adequate source of internal heat to generate a habitat suitable for the emergence and development of life. Even Earth-sized moons, orbiting gas giants, could offer conditions suitable for life. If the Andersons had imagined this scenario, they could have created an even more realistic plot, avoiding resorting to the expedient of exceeding the speed of light, an expedient that Star Trek could not do without, having the Enterprise dart to every corner of the galaxy and beyond.



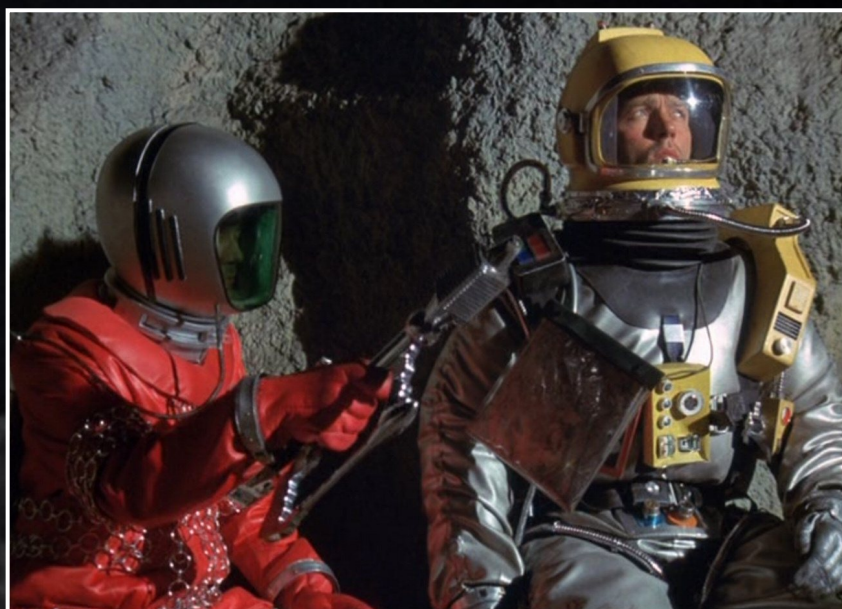




Going back to the UFO episodes, the 14<sup>th</sup>, "Confetti Check A-O.K.", is chock-full of flashbacks of Straker's family life, with no reference to aliens. Not even episode 15, "E.S.P." is particularly compelling: the secrets of SHADO are put at risk by a dude who can read minds, and who is subjugated by aliens.

More action in episode 16, "Kill Straker!", in which the aliens induce some members of SHADO, including Foster, to kill Straker, but fail to do so. In this episode, the severity but also the humanity of the commander-in-chief are highlighted.

A curiosity: in one scene we see an electric toothbrush (patented in the '50s) being used, trusting that it would be in common use in the '80s; in reality, it will take a little longer.





In episode 17, "Sub-Smash", we find Straker trapped in a SkyDiver damaged by a submarine attack. In the 18<sup>th</sup>, "The Sound of Silence", the abduction of a terrestrial confirms the fact that aliens prefer to hide their aircraft underwater, where they last longer than the two days typically endured in the atmosphere before exploding (it is not said why this happens).

In episode 19, "The Cat with Ten Lives", the theme of the true nature of the aliens returns to the center, up to that point described as humanoids

that have only some organs explanted from unfortunate earthlings (note that aliens never get given a common name: they are simply "aliens"). A new autopsy on an alien reveals that in reality the whole body is human and that the only anomaly is represented by the brain, from which the areas dedicated to emotions and creativity are removed, while the analytic and logic areas remain. According to a bold hypothesis by Dr. Douglas Jackson (played by actor Vladek Sheybal), medical officer of SHADO, aliens are incorporeal







entities that use the bodies of others to move in space, in which they transfer their intelligence and their thoughts. As the feline protagonist of this episode demonstrates, alien

entities can also move into non-human organisms. In short, a subject worthy of Star Trek. In episode 20, "Destruction", the viewer returns with his feet on the



ground, even if the plot takes place mainly at sea. The main theme is the disposal of highly toxic waste, in this case a very aggressive nerve gas, contained in several barrels. The

only way to get rid of them seems to be to sink them in a sea trench, an operation that is countered by the laser lines of a flying saucer, the intention of which is to tear apart

the barrels and release the gas into the air. According to the dialogues, this would erase humanity from the face of the Earth, a scenario in stark contrast to the "organic needs" of the aliens.

We leave the remaining six episodes to discover those readers who, having reached this point, will want to continue their knowledge of the UFO TV series directly on the DVDs that can still be purchased online.

In his book *"The Physics of Star Trek"*, Lawrence Krauss (American theoretical physicist and cosmologist) states that *"What makes Star Trek so fascinating is that it allows the human drama to extend far beyond the human realm."* Well, what makes UFO so fascinating is the fact that, to recognize the human drama, it is not essential to go that far. ■



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