

PRESS
FACT
SHEET

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Beantwoord

GERRY ANDERSON'S
THUNDERBIRD 6

PRODUCED BY SYLVIA ANDERSON
IN TECHNISCOPE® TECHNICOLOR®

FOR



and
UNITED ARTISTS
release

ALL PRESS ENQUIRIES TO

DENNISON THORNTON, 52 SHAFTESBURY AVENUE, LONDON, W.1

Telephone—GERRard 6613

NEWS ABOUT

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WITH THE COMPLIMENTS OF DENNISON THORNTON, 52 SHAFTESBURY AVENUE, LONDON, W.1. TEL: GERRARD 6613

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"THUNDERBIRD SIX"

TOP SECRET!

What is Thunderbird Six?

What is this new flying marvel which makes its debut in the film?

What does it look like? What does it do?

Gerry and Sylvia Anderson, makers of the film, say: "It's top secret. We are keeping this wonder machine under wraps. To find out people will just have to wait and see the picture.

"To disclose the secret now would be an act of spoilsportsmanship!"

(end)

"T H U N D E R B I R D S I X"

A FEATURE FILM IN TECHNISCOPE
AND TECHNICOLOR

BY

GERRY AND SYLVIA ANDERSON

Executive Producer
GERRY ANDERSON

Producer
SYLVIA ANDERSON

Story and screenplay
by
GERRY AND SYLVIA ANDERSON

Directed by
DAVID LANE

A CENTURY 21 PRODUCTION
for world release
by
UNITED ARTISTS

Made at the Studios of
Century 21 Productions
SLOUGH
Buckinghamshire
ENGLAND

"THUNDERBIRDS SIX"FOREWORD

If "Thunderbirds Are Go", the first, full-length, space-age puppet film feature by the brilliant husband-and-wife team of Gerry and Sylvia Anderson, set a new standard of 21st century inventive imagery, its sequel, currently in production at their Slough studios, will make all previous efforts look out-of-date.

Where "Thunderbirds Are Go" dealt with a space-flight to Mars and what happened when the astronauts arrived there, "Thunderbird Six" introduces the maiden voyage of a new flying miracle of the future - Skyship One - and the incredible adventures of its intrepid crew.

It involves a dastardly plot by "The Black Phantom" to ambush its escorting Thunderbirds, kidnap Brains and hold the fabulous Lady Penelope and others as hostage.

What happens when Skyship One becomes impaled on the top of a thousand foot radar tower and the Tracy family's irresistible International Rescue Organisation sweeps into action, forms the seat-clutching climax to another action-packed exposition of these unique examples of motion picture puppetry.

And, amid the stark realism of the flames and smoke, which has by now become expected of these explosive miniature holocausts, yet a now scientific flying marvel is born - "THUNDERBIRD SIX"!

"Thunderbird Six" is produced by Sylvia Anderson and directed by David Lane. Executive producer is Gerry Anderson and the film is made in Techniscope and Technicolor for world release by United Artists.

(end)

"THUNDERBIRD SIX"

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT
A REMARKABLE MULTI-MILLION-
DOLLAR FILM ORGANISATION

Producing puppet films, like any other branch of the motion picture industry, is costly and time consuming.

Below are some facts and figures behind the making of Gerry and Sylvia Anderson's "THUNDERBIRD SIX", currently being shot by Century 21 Productions at their studios in Slough, Buckinghamshire, England, for world release by United Artists.

... GERRY ANDERSON and his wife, SYLVIA, created A.P. Films Ltd. - the forerunner of their present Century 21 Productions - at Islet Park, near Maidenhead, in 1957.

... Their entire initial capital was £500, raised with fellow directors Reg Hill and John Read to form the company.

... Today their multi-million-dollar organisation is the world's largest single producers of puppet films.

... Their films and television series are sold to the United States and dozens of other countries, bringing in over millions of dollars in export orders, and many millions more in character merchandising.

... They employ a technical staff of more than 150 technicians, artists and puppeteers working on a total of 6 separate sound stages.

... Each of their puppet characters costs £300, has between 4 and 6 different heads and expressions, weighs around 3lbs., and is manipulated by 8 foot strings.

... Each character head is moulded in special Silastomer rubber which costs around four dollars a pound. The wigs and hair-pieces, made of finest human hair, cost around 160 dollars each. Clothes and wardrobe also cost a small fortune.

... Five strings control each puppet head - some for the electrical impulses which ensure precise "lip. synch.", others for head and eye movements.

... At least 50 separate sets are designed and built at the studio for a feature length film, each requiring approximately 60,000 watts to light.

Contd...

"THUNDERBIRD SIX"

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT
 A REMARKABLE MULTI-MILLION-
 DOLLAR FILM ORGANISATION (Contd)

... Their 35 m.m. cine. cameras, plus the unique Add-a-Vision System - the first prototype of its kind in the world - each cost approximately £11,000.

... Their feature-length wide-screen and colour films (running time: 90 mins. approx.) cost in the region of £300,000 to produce and take nearly a year to complete.

... The shooting schedule for "THUNDERBIRD SIX", Century 21's second film for world-wide release through United Artists, is around 35 weeks.

... The dialogue takes 6 days to record and it takes 2 to 3 months to complete the physical task of writing the screenplay.

... The studio employs a full team of writers, working under the supervision of a script editor, from the 'pilot' by Gerry and Sylvia Anderson.

... Lady Penelope's unique pink Rolls-Royce, FAB 1, is one-third full size and cost £2,000 to build.

... In excess of 30,000 fan letters are received at Century 21 each week. The average daily total is 5,000 addressed to individual puppets. A regular correspondence with overseas fans can continue for up to 2 years.

... Each puppet character has a complete biography, including birthdates, as detailed as that of any flesh-and-blood star.

... Each feature-length puppet film has upwards of 30 principal speaking characters. Eleven men and 2 women provide the speaking voices.

... Well-known British artistes providing the mainly American speaking voices for the "THUNDERBIRD" characters are: Peter D'Neley; Australian Ray Barrett; Christine Finn; David Graham; Canadian Neil McCallum; Jeremy Wilkin; Shane Rimmer; Australian Charles Tingwell; Matt Zimmerman; Alexander Davion; and Paul Maxwell. The voice of the beautiful English debutante, Lady Penelope, is that of her creator, Sylvia Anderson.

* * * * *

<p>"THUNDERBIRD SIX" is directed by David Lane in Technicolor and Techniscope for producer Sylvia Anderson and Executive Producer Gerry Anderson. The original screenplay is by Gerry and Sylvia Anderson.</p>
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(end)

"THUNDERBIRD SIX"STAR BIOGRAPHIES

To Gerry and Sylvia Anderson, and the technical staff at Century 21 Productions, their puppet character creations are as real as any flesh-and-blood actors. For guidance and reference, here are brief "biographies" of each of the eleven principal 'stars' appearing in "THUNDERBIRD SIX", the second Techniscope and Technicolor feature film for release through United Artists. David Lane directs from an original screenplay by executive producer Gerry Anderson and producer Sylvia Anderson.

JEFF TRACY : Head of International Rescue. A multi-millionaire ex-astronaut who can claim to have been one of the first men to land on the moon. He is father of the five Tracy boys who form International Rescue. Each son is named after a famous American astronaut. Jeff Tracy stars regularly in the "Thunderbird" T.V. series. Made his film debut in "Thunderbirds Are Go" (1966). Currently plays a prominent role in "THUNDERBIRD SIX".

VITAL STATISTICS:

Age: 56
 Birthdate: 2 January
 Hair: Grey.

ALAN TRACY : Son of Jeff Tracy, founder of International Rescue, Alan is pilot of Thunderbird Three. He is named after Astronaut Alan B. Shepard, Jr. He is romantic, impetuous, an expert pilot and racing-driver. Is identified by his blond hair and turquoise blue uniform with off-white flashes. Prominently featured as member of International Rescue team in "Thunderbird" T.V. series. Film debut: "Thunderbirds Are Go" (1966). Now plays male lead in the second feature-length space-age adventure film, "THUNDERBIRD SIX".

VITAL STATISTICS:

Age: 19
 Birthdate: 12 March
 Hair: Fair.

Contd...

"THUNDERBIRD SIX"STAR BIOGRAPHIES (Contd)

LADY PENELOPE : Full name: Lady Penelope Creighton-Ward. Is elegant, well-groomed at all times, blonde and sophisticated. As British secret agent for International Rescue, is debutante in appearance but devastating in action -- as her enemies discover. Lives in a large country mansion in England and is driven around in a fabulous pink Rolls-Royce, FAB 1. Has a magazine, shoes, dolls, confectionery, cosmetics, Junior Miss fashions and a new colour - Lady Penelope pink - named in her honour. Owns extensive fashion wardrobe. Has a fan mail amounting to thousands of letters per month. Under contract to Century 21 Productions, expects to earn millions of dollars from her film and television career. Is feminine star of "Thunderbirds" T.V. series. Made big-screen debut in 1966 in "Thunderbirds Are Go", and is heroine of her second feature film, "THUNDERBIRD SIX". Lady Penelope speaks with the voice of her creator, Sylvia Anderson.

VITAL STATISTICS

Age:	26
Birthdate:	24 December
Hair:	Blonde.
Eyes:	Blue.

SCOTT TRACY : Son of Jeff Tracy. Pilot of Thunderbird One. Is named after Astronaut Malcolm Scott Carpenter. He is fast-talking and quick-thinking. Is easily identified by turquoise uniform with pale blue sash and band round hat and top of boots. T.V. debut in "Thunderbird" series. Film debut: "Thunderbirds Are Go" (1966). Is largely responsible for saving lives of International Rescue team from disaster aboard doomed Skyship One in their second feature film, "THUNDERBIRD SIX".

VITAL STATISTICS

Age:	30
Birthdate:	4 April
Hair:	Dark Brown

Contd...

"THUNDERBIRD SIX"STAR BIOGRAPHIES (Contd 2)

VIRGIL TRACY : Son of Jeff Tracy. Pilot of Thunderbird Two. Named after Astronaut Virgil Ivan Grissom. Is a steady and reliable character by nature. Wears a turquoise suit with yellow sash and bands. First seen by television viewers in "Thunderbird" T.V. series. Film debut, 1966, in "Thunderbirds Are Go". Accompanies his brother Scott, in daring bid to rescue I.R. team from crashed Skyship One in their second feature-length adventure film, "THUNDERBIRD SIX".

VITAL STATISTICS

Age: 27
 Birthdate: 15 August
 Hair: Mid-Brown.

JOHN TRACY : Son of Jeff Tracy. Takes his name from Astronaut John Herschel Glenn, Jnr. Is Controller of satellite Space Station that monitors the world. John is patient, but rather dour. He wears turquoise uniform adorned with lilac flashes. T.V. debut in "Thunderbird" series. Film debut: "Thunderbirds Are Go" (1966). Makes his second big-screen appearance in "THUNDERBIRD SIX".

VITAL STATISTICS

Age: 35
 Birthdate: 8 October
 Hair: Blond.

GORDON TRACY : Son of Jeff Tracy. Is named after Astronaut Leroy Gordon Cooper. He is pilot of Thunderbird Four, co-pilot of Thunderbird Two, and is also an underwater expert. Is by nature a great practical joker. Gordon wears turquoise uniform with orange flashes. Made T.V. debut in "Thunderbird" series. 1966 - Film debut in "Thunderbirds Are Go". Now plays supporting role in his second feature-length film, "THUNDERBIRD SIX".

VITAL STATISTICS

Age: 22
 Birthdate: 14 February
 Hair: Auburn.

"THUNDERBIRD SIX"STAR BIOGRAPHIES (Contd 3)

'BRAINS' : True name: Hiram Hackenbacker. Bespectacled, technical genius responsible for inventing all International Rescue's machines and space craft. An egg-head, he is regarded by his colleagues as rather an underestimated boffin. Because of the urgent need for a "Thunderbird Six", 'Brains' is not included with International Rescue's team aboard the maiden flight of his latest invention, Skyship One, for the New World Aircraft Corporation. Made T.V. debut with rest of team in "Thunderbird" series. Film debut: "Thunderbirds Are Go" (1966). Now plays major part in rescue bid at gripping climax of second feature film, "THUNDERBIRD SIX".

VITAL STATISTICS

Age: 25
 Birthdate: 14 November
 Hair: Brown.

PARKER : Lady Penelope's faithful butler and chauffeur. Born London. Identified by chauffeur's cap and uniform. Still retains strong Cockney accent. Is an ex-safe breaker, but now a completely reformed character. His skills are put to excellent professional use in Lady Penelope's service. He drives her ladyship in unique, fully-armoured and bullet-proof pink Rolls-Royce, FAB 1. Made T.V. debut in "Thunderbird" series. Film debut: "Thunderbirds Are Go" (1966). "THUNDERBIRD SIX" is his second feature film appearance.

VITAL STATISTICS

Age: 52
 Birthplace: London
 Birthdate: 30 May
 Hair: Grey.

KYRANO : Close ally of International Rescue Team. Good servant to the Tracy family on their lush island home somewhere in the Pacific. Is half-brother to I.R.'s arch-enemy, The Hood. Kyrano's birth certificate was lost in Malaya, and therefore age and other details are not positively known. T.V. debut in "Thunderbird" series. Plays minor role in two feature-length films, "Thunderbirds Are Go" (1966) and "THUNDERBIRD SIX" (1967).

Contd...

"THUNDERBIRD SIX"STAR BIOGRAPHIES (Contd 4)TIN-TIN :

Attractive girl assistant to 'Brains' and daughter of Kyrano. Is artistic, ultra-feminine and fashion-conscious. Strictly 'with-it'. Made her television debut with Tracy family in popular "Thunderbird" series. First film: "Thunderbirds Are Go" (1966). Now plays featured role as member of International Rescue party for maiden flight of Skyship One with Alan Tracy, Lady Penelope and Parker in "THUNDERBIRD SIX", her second major motion picture.

VITAL STATISTICS

Age:	22
Birthdate:	20 June
Eyes:	Brown
Hair:	Black.

(end)

"THUNDERBIRD SIX"BiographicalPRODUCTION TEAM

GERRY ANDERSON - Executive Producer

Gerry Anderson was born 38 years ago in the West Hampstead district of London, and educated at nearby Kingsgate Primary School.

He still has vivid memories of his home, which was finally destroyed by an enemy bomb during World War II.

Gerry was a film fan from an early age. He recalls queueing for four hours to see Shirley Temple and other stars of the period at neighbourhood theatres. From this sprang an avid interest in film-going, even more important, film making.

Starting with photography, Gerry began his apprenticeship for a career where the sky was the limit. He worked as a projectionist, cutting-room assistant, editor and dubbing editor. His training was a hard one but the best schooling for a future producer and director of a unique type of film-making.

When he first met his future wife, Sylvia, both were working in a small company making television commercials and documentaries -- Gerry being one of the directors. It was during this period that his idea of making puppet films was born.

In 1957 with fellow technicians Reg Hill and John Read, the young couple sank their last £500 in setting up their own studio A.P. Films -- at Islet Park, Maidenhead, an old mansion by the River Thames. Bedrooms and a ballroom were converted into workshops and production offices. It was all very primitive compared with their present ultra-modern studio at Stirling Road, Slough, Buckinghamshire.

The Anderson's first puppet series was called "Four Feather Falls", which was bought by Granada Television for screening in Britain. However, their next series, "Supercar", was rejected outright. At this point British TV tycoon Lew Grade stepped in and ordered a series of 39 episodes for the powerful A.T.V. company.

After that came "Fireball XL5" and "Stingray". Then the mighty "Thunderbirds". Says Gerry: "Next year we plan to break into the field of live action film-making".

Contd...

"THUNDERBIRD SIX"Biographical (Contd)SYLVIA ANDERSON - The Producer

Like her husband, beautiful, 37-year-old blonde Sylvia Anderson is a Londoner. She attended London University, reading Psychology and Political Science, although always having a great interest in acting. However, she entered the film business on the production side and was a continuity girl when she first met Gerry.

Today, at Century Twenty-One Productions, (Formerly A.P. Films), she is a driving force behind their million-dollar puppet kingdom. She personally designs and supervises many of the costumes worn by their main characters, attends to the daily routine of the studio, views the daily 'rushes' and makes frequent business trips to London.

With her husband, she has written the scripts for their two full-length features, "Thunderbirds Are Go" and now "THUNDERBIRD SIX". She also provides the voice for their leading female puppet character, 'Lady Penelope', blonde and devastating British agent of International Rescue.

Sylvia shoulders heavy responsibilities as producer of their feature-length films. Despite the demands of this heavy working schedule, the Andersons always try to keep their week-ends free for family activities. Sylvia has one daughter, Dee, by a previous marriage, and Gerry has two daughters, Linda and Joy.

For the future, Gerry and Sylvia Anderson intend to break into the highly competitive field of live-action production. Ideas are never the problem. Gerry has more than he knows how to cope with. Just finding time to fit them all into an already crowded programme is the problem.

Their first live-action movie promises to be one of the most exciting projects to come out of Britain for a long time.

While Gerry aspires to the Science Fiction side of things, Sylvia personally has ambitions to produce a human drama based more on characterisation than action. For this she has several subjects in mind.

For the moment, however, both have their hands full with the production of "THUNDERBIRD SIX", which is being made in Techniscope and Technicolor for world release by United Artists.

(end)

"THUNDERBIRD SIX"

THE ANDERSONS ARE
BORN STORY-TELLERS

The Andersons, Gerry and Sylvia, are the modern counterparts of Hans Christian Anderson, famed 19th-century Danish story-teller.

"I was brought up on Hans Anderson as a child", says Sylvia. "I used to love having his stories read to me".

Gerry and Sylvia are the youthful husband-and-wife creative team responsible for the famous "Thunderbirds" motion picture and TV puppet films, relating space-age adventure stories of the next century for the youngsters of today.

Their British company, Century 21 Productions, at Slough, near London, is currently working on "THUNDERBIRD SIX", their second feature-length Techniscope and Technicolor film. It has Sylvia Anderson as producer and Gerry Anderson as executive producer. United Artists will release world-wide.

"There are two schools of thought on our puppet characters", Sylvia Anderson revealed. "Some people think we are exploiting an age-old art. They believe they should look like puppets with grotesque caricatures and obviously hinged chins and joints, with the strings clearly visible. But Gerry and I are always trying to make our characters as life-like as possible.

"We also get a tremendous amount of fan mail", she continued. "They pour into our London offices at the rate of around 30,000 a month. Once we had a character in a T.V. series whose name was Venus. I supplied her screen voice for each episode. Then I got a letter from a girl in America who signed herself Venus. Some of her letters were very intelligent. We corresponded for nearly two years. Then I discovered that her name wasn't really Venus at all. I know this sounds cruel, but I had to stop writing or otherwise it might have gone on for ever".

Gerry and Sylvia Anderson write the script for their films together. Both contribute to the general theme, Gerry concentrating on the technical side while Sylvia complements his ideas from the feminine view-point.

Says Gerry: "We spend between two and three months on the physical task of actually writing the screenplay. We went to Portugal when we were doing 'THUNDERBIRD SIX'".

"At other times we work at home", adds Sylvia. "There are too many distractions in the office. At such times, we ask our staff that only the most urgent telephone calls are put through to us.

"But, unfortunately, people often have different ideas on what they consider to be urgent", she laughs.

David Lane directs "THUNDERBIRD SIX" from an original screenplay by Gerry and Sylvia Anderson.

(end)

"THUNDERBIRD SIX"MOTION PICTURE-MAKING --
BY REMOTE CONTROL

Everything about the Century 21 film studios at Slough, Buckinghamshire, has a futuristic look.

Not least, the closed-circuit monitor television screens which connect the front offices of executive producer Gerry Anderson and his producer-wife Sylvia with all units filming on different stages.

Century 21 is the multi-million-dollar organisation which is the world's largest producing centre for feature-length puppet films and TV series.

The staff of 150 skilled puppeteers and technicians is currently making the company's second Techniscope and Technicolor feature, "THUNDERBIRD SIX", for world release by United Artists.

At the flick of a switch, the Andersons can correct and prevent errors on any of the sound stages without leaving their office chairs.

"You could call it movie-making by remote-control", says Sylvia Anderson. Apart from producing "THUNDERBIRD SIX", she also helps design the puppet characters and supervise their wigs and wardrobes.

If she or Gerry spot an inaccuracy on their monitor screens, a pressed button will enable them to speak to the director on the set while the scene is still in preparation.

"The helmet on that second character worries me", Sylvia will tell director David Lane. "It looks more like a white halo than a helmet. You can see the material on his jacket, but the helmet doesn't look real".

Acting on her orders, a girl assistant sprays the offending helmet until its appearance on the screen is as sharp and clear as the coat.

"Our wigs are made from the finest human hair", Sylvia Anderson explains. "But a hair out of place on one of the puppet's wigs can have a disastrous effect. It may be only a strand, but when seen on the screen it can look as thick as a tree trunk".

INSTANT RUSHES

This monitoring system is made possible by the use of an important addition to the cameras used at the Century 21 studios.

It is known as Add-a-Vision, the first commercial prototype of its kind in the world.

Contd...

"THUNDERBIRD SIX"MOTION PICTURE-MAKING --
BY REMOTE CONTROL (Contd)INSTANT RUSHES (Contd)

Based on a system developed by Century 21, this consists of a small TV camera set at the back of the film camera so that the operator and director can see 'instant rushes' of how the sequence being photographed will look on the screen.

An extra advantage is that the puppeteers and the continuity girl, working on a gantry above the set, can look down and see exactly how their work is progressing.

Assistant directors and other key technicians can also view their efforts on monitor screens placed around the sound stage.

This system has already attracted the attention of 'live action' movie-makers in Britain and America who have sent representatives to Slough to report on how Add-a-Vision could be adapted to their own requirements.

(end)

"THUNDERBIRD SIX"

"THUNDERBIRD" SPACE-SHIPS NOT
YET IN SECURITY BREACH!

Do British, American or Russian security chiefs watch "Thunderbirds" on film or television? If so, how thoroughly are they scrutinised and noted for possible future transformation into reality?

These technically ingenious, highly-imaginative, space-age puppet films, the brainchild of youthful husband-and-wife team, Gerry and Sylvia Anderson, are released through United Artists all over the world. Millions more watch the TV series which has been sold to virtually every country where television exists.

So the questions are not without pertinence. Some of the Anderson's technically-accurate, mechanised flying marvels have come very close to being imitated in real life. Such as the recent report of a Russian launching from a haystack, which swung back to reveal a full-scale space-ship. This could have been based on International Rescue's tropical swimming-pool, on Tracy Island, which slides aside to reveal the launching pad of their fantastic Thunderbird machines.

Now, at their Slough Studios, the Anderson's Century 21 Productions are at work on more startling mechanical contrivances for their second Technicolor and Techniscope feature-length film, "THUNDERBIRD SIX".

As one studio technician put it: "There is often only a hair's breadth between today's fictional fantasy and tomorrow's scientific fact. I think it is fair to say that the world's major powers keep a close watch on the latest aerial innovations we come up with in the 'Thunderbird' films".

So far, however, the Anderson's report that they have not been accused of any breach of the Official Secrets Act!

"THUNDERBIRD SIX" is directed by David Lane, for producer Sylvia Anderson and executive producer Gerry Anderson, who also wrote the original screenplay together.

(end)

"THUNDERBIRD SIX"SHORT SYNOPSIS

In the 21st., Century on Tracy Island, secret headquarters of International Rescue, located "somewhere in the Pacific", Jeff Tracy, multi-millionaire ex-astronaut who heads I.R., declares there is an urgent demand to add a new space ship to their five existing international rescue craft.

Brains, the technical genius responsible for these flying marvels of the future, has just designed Skyship One for the New World Aircraft Corporation. Because of the need of a "THUNDERBIRD SIX", he is prevented from going on the maiden voyage himself, but is well represented by his assistant, Tin-Tin, Alan Tracy and the beautiful Lady Penelope, I.R.'s devastating British agent. The round-the-world flight will start from Britain, where they will be met by Penelope and her faithful Cockney chauffeur, Parker.

Alan, dressed in old-fashioned helmet and goggles, makes the journey to England in an ancient Tiger Moth, garishly painted in "pop art" style, which he has unearthed. As he waves goodbye to the assembled Tracy family, he discovers that Tin-Tin has stowed away in the 'plane with him.

After an eventful arrival, Lady Penelope's fantastic pink Rolls Royce, FAB 1, with Parker at the wheel, sets off for the Holidayair Terminal, with Alan and Tin-Tin flying overhead in the Tiger. Meanwhile, Alan's brothers - Scott and Virgil - arrive in Thunderbirds One and Two.

Aboard Skyship One, Captain Foster is checking last-minute flight details with his crew when a stranger appears and callously mows them down with a ray gun. More masked strangers slip in to take their places. When Penelope, Alan, Tin-Tin, Scott, Virgil and Parker arrive, the bogus Captain Foster explains that the Skyship is fully automated, pre-programmed for height, speed and course. After count-down, they take off, heading towards the Atlantic with Thunderbirds One and Two as escort for the first few hundred miles.

At dusk, the bodies of the murdered crew are dropped into the sea and a message is sent to the mysterious Black Phantom, at a deserted airfield near Casablanca to say that "Operation Ambush" has succeeded.

After a stop-over in Africa, Parker tells Lady Penelope that the crew of Skyship One has been making suspicious attempts to pump him about the operations of International Rescue. When bugging devices are found all over the ship, their suspicions are confirmed and Lady Penelope manages to send a scrambled message to John Tracy, Controller of the Space Station, alerting I.R.

Contd...

"THUNDERBIRD SIX"SHORT SYNOPSIS (Contd)

Meanwhile, the bogus Captain Foster has also sent out a message ostensibly from Penelope, asking Jeff to send THUNDERBIRDS ONE and TWO to the disused airfield at Casablanca, making sure that Brains is aboard. His plan is to have the Black Phantom ambush the Thunderbirds on arrival, kidnap Brains and hold Penelope and the others as hostages.

Jeff picks up both messages and warns Scott and Virgil to expect trouble on arrival at Casablanca. Thus warned, they blast off with their guns at the first sight of the Black Phantom and his men, completely destroying the buildings which house them.

Back in Skyship One, an armed Alan confronts the bogus Foster but, after a running gun-battle, he is overpowered. Foster realises that, unknown to him, Penelope has also managed to get off a message. He turns back towards Britain, with the Thunderbirds giving chase.

Having lost height to a dangerous level, Skyship One crashes into the top of an Early Warning Tower standing over a thousand feet above a missile site near Dover. With Thunderbird Two poised above the delicately-balanced Skyship, Brains tries to lower an escape unit. But its weight is too great and threatens to collapse everything on to the buildings below. Thunderbird Two returns to the Holiday Terminal and returns with a light, highly manoeuvrable craft - The Tiger Moth.

At his second perilous attempt, Brains succeeds in landing on the deck of the Skyship, where everyone is assembled on the top platform. Foster makes a dash to attempt a solo getaway in the Tiger but Alan shoots him dead. The survivors manage to escape aboard the Tiger - just as the tower, with the Skyship begins to crash. The Base below having been evacuated, the whole mass of wreckage collapses spectacularly in an eruption of flame on to the empty buildings. The little Tiger, with its heavy load, makes an emergency forced landing not far away.

Back at Tracy Island all the Members of International Rescue assemble to watch the unveiling by Brains of his latest flying marvel. He tells them that it has already been tested and approved. All heads turn skywards and, as it dives from the clouds, there is a gasp of amazement....

(end)

"THUNDERBIRD SIX""WIRES AND FEET WERE OUR
TRICKIEST PROBLEMS"

-- says GERRY and SYLVIA ANDERSON

Making their lilliputian-sized puppet characters as life-like and realistic as possible has been the biggest problem facing Gerry and Sylvia Anderson, the British husband-and-wife creative team responsible for the "Thunderbird" motion picture and TV productions.

Last year, at their ultra-modern studios at Slough, Buckinghamshire, England, the Anderson's multi-million-dollar organisation made their first full-length film, "Thunderbirds Are Go".

A companion-piece, "Thunderbird Six", in Techniscope and Technicolor, is now in production for world release by United Artists.

"When we started making our puppet series for television in 1957", explained executive producer Gerry Anderson, "most people regarded puppets as jerky marionettes with strings attached. They bore little resemblance to real-life either in looks or movements. Sylvia and I decided that if we were going to make puppet films, we must make them really life-like and realistic.

"Our first puppet characters were made from papier-mâché and were operated with thread - a far cry from the electronically-controlled figures we are using in 'THUNDERBIRD SIX'. There followed a long period of experimentation before we hit on our present formula.

"George Pal had pioneered his own method of stop-camera animation in the 'forties, but that was all. On British T.V., they had hand-held puppets like Andy Pandy, Prudence Kitten and Muffin the Mule. We tried to make our characters more interesting, more sophisticated.

"Then we hit on the idea of using electronic puppets. It hadn't been done before, so there wasn't anyone around we could ask for advice. Each puppet head contains an electronic impulse which enables the character to speak in perfect lip synchronisation with the dialogue which has been pre-recorded".

Producer Sylvia Anderson took up the story.

"Robot puppets would have been out of the question", she said. "Their movements would have been too jerky and unnatural for film purposes. Gerry is the electronics wizard in the family. We just wanted to make our puppets move and talk as realistically as possible.

Contd...

"THUNDERBIRD SIX""WIRES AND FEET WERE OUR
TRICKIEST PROBLEMS" (Contd)

"One of the biggest headaches in the early days was concealing the tungsten wires which suspended each puppet character. We devised a cover-up method of hiding the wires by spraying non-shiny coloured powder prepared to match the background tones.

"Coloured lighting did the rest".

The Andersons photograph their puppets mainly from the waist up, because showing them walking realistically still presents tricky technical problems. Hands are also difficult to manipulate in convincing fashion. So human hands are often inserted in close-ups, such as when a character lights up a cigarette or presses a button.

Nevertheless, the Andersons have achieved miracles with their mini-sized characters. Their puppeteers may still pull the strings, technically speaking, but to millions of movie and TV viewers the world over, each character has a life and distinctive personality of its own. A personality as strong as any of Hollywood's reigning flesh-and-blood stars.

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"THUNDERBIRD SIX"HOW THE TRACY BOYS
GOT THEIR NAMES

Parents have been known to bestow strange things on their children. Like naming them after every member of a victorious football team.

So why shouldn't one of the first men to set foot on the moon in the twenty-first century name his five sons in memory of early American astronauts?

That's what ex-astronaut Jeff Tracy did for his sons who form the nucleus of International Rescue in the "Thunderbirds" motion picture and TV series.

Their names are Alan, Scott, Virgil, Gordon and John, so-called after U.S. space-flight heroes Alan B. Shepard, Jr., Malcolm Scott Carpenter, Virgil Ivan Grissom, Leroy Gordon Cooper and John Herschel Glenn, Jr.

The Tracy boys make their second feature-length motion picture appearance in "Thunderbird Six". They are supported by their father, British secret agent Lady Penelope, Brains the Boffin, and other International Rescue celebrities.

"Thunderbird Six", in Techniscope and Technicolor, is produced by Sylvia Anderson with Gerry Anderson as executive producer. It is directed by David Lane from a screenplay by the Andersons. United Artists release world-wide.

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