

Science-Fiction
TV PREVIEW Pg. 7

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SPECIAL EFFECTS—Part III

MODEL ANIMATION

Behind-the-Scenes
with Ray Harryhausen and
Other Tabletop Gods

THE FLY

1,000 TICKETS TO SPACE

Interview: HARLAN ELLISON

SATURDAY MORNING TV

CHASING HALLEY'S COMET

STAR WARS





Photos: NBC
Saturday morning science fiction has come a long way since the rayguns and rockets of *Flash Gordon*, but it still retains the essence: lots of action and human drama. One of the current successes is *Ark II*, a "post-holocaust" series following the exploits of a group dedicated to re-civilizing what remains of humanity. The late, lamented *Planet of the Apes* (inset) was an animated series based on the movie classic. Captain Marvel is part of the *Shazam/Isis Hour*—a superhero fantasy.



Photo: CBS

Once a week the youth of America join in a massive orgy of imaginative adventures while their parents close the door and (in *most* cases) look the other way . . .

SATURDAY MORNING TV

By JIM BURNS

During the decades of the 30s and 40s and into the 50s, Saturday morning was a special time for children. Unbridled fantasy ran rampant throughout the country on the screens of local movie houses. This phenomena was called "Kiddie Matinee." It was the time when you could see the latest adventures of Flash Gordon, Buck Rogers, Superman, Commando Cody, or even Captain Marvel. It was also the ideal time for parents to catch up on their sleep, clean up the house, chat on the phone, and generally have a rest from the noise and activity that is usually associated with children.

Then, with the development of com-

mercial TV broadcasting in the 50s, kids found that they could stay at home for their weekend treat. Many of the early kid shows stuck with a formula that had already been proven successful—they ran weekly episodes of the movie serials! Many of them were fantasy or science-fiction-oriented, and they set the tone for weekend entertainment in the following decades.

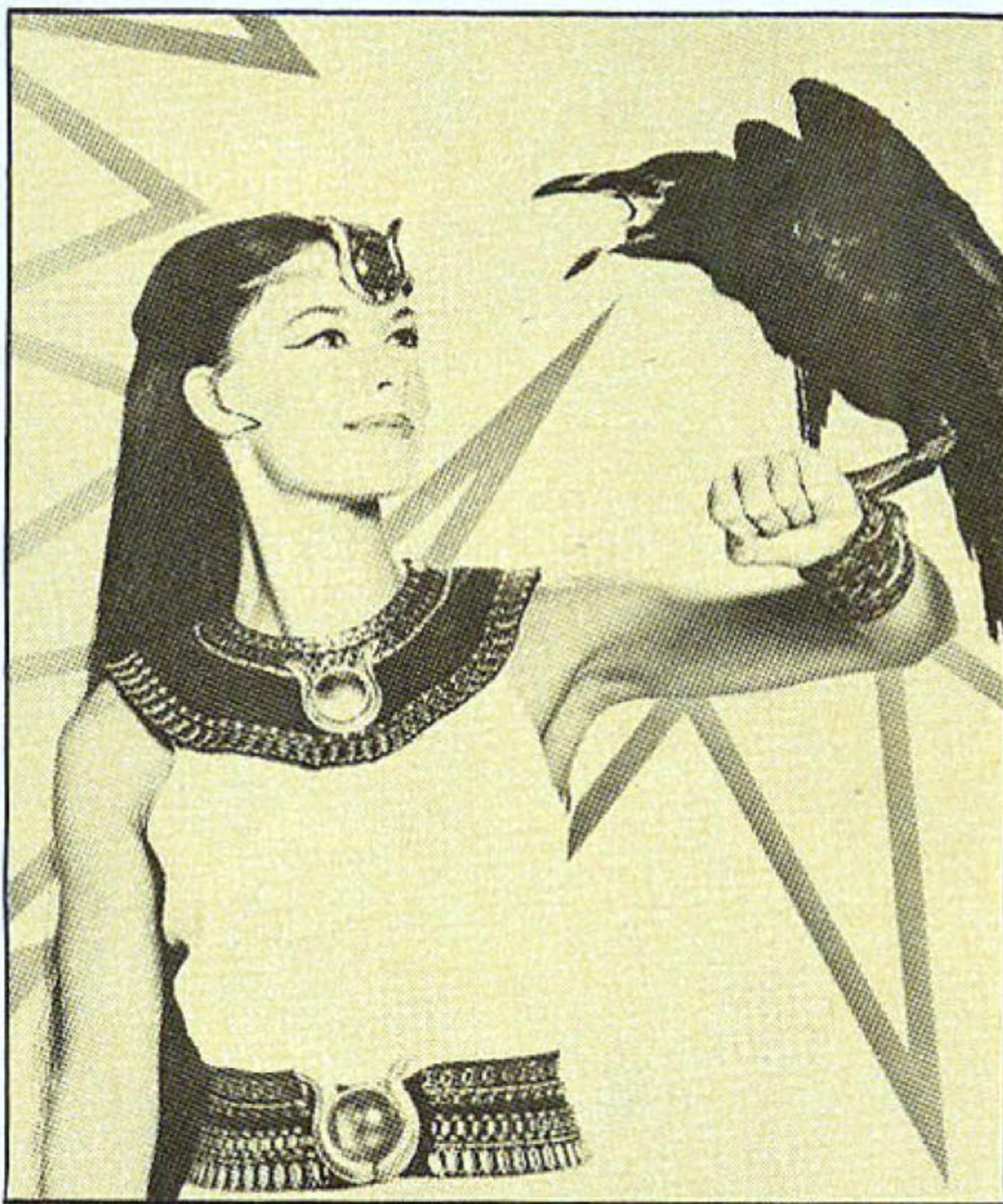
It wasn't until the early 60s that TV networks began producing new fantasy series for Saturday A.M. showing. When they did, they combined the perfect technique for giving the imagination free reign with "space-age" themes, and animated science fantasy came into its own.

1964 saw the release of *Space Angel*,

an intriguing, serialized space opera. Produced by TV Comic Strips, Inc., *Space Angel* utilized Syncro-Vox, a process in which human lips are superimposed over animated characters.

Another 60s Saturday cartoon was Richard Ullman's *Colonel Bleep*, originally produced in 1957. Other similarly syndicated 50s shows included *Johnny Jupiter* and *Captain Z-ro*.

In 1963, Japan's Mushi Productions aired *Astro Boy* on national weekend television in association with NBC. The series detailed the adventures of a robotic boy and in later episodes, his specially-designed robot sister. Mushi Productions was also responsible for many other TV cartoons. They produced *Eighth Man*, *Gigantor*, *Jet Boy*,



Photos: NBC
Above: Three famous horror figures played strictly for laughs on *The Monster Squad*. Top right: Kathy Coleman and Wesley Eure survey their *Land of the Lost*, which features superior special effects. Bottom right: Joanna Cameron as the goddess Isis, as popular a video superheroine as Wonder Woman.

Photo: CBS

THANKS . . .

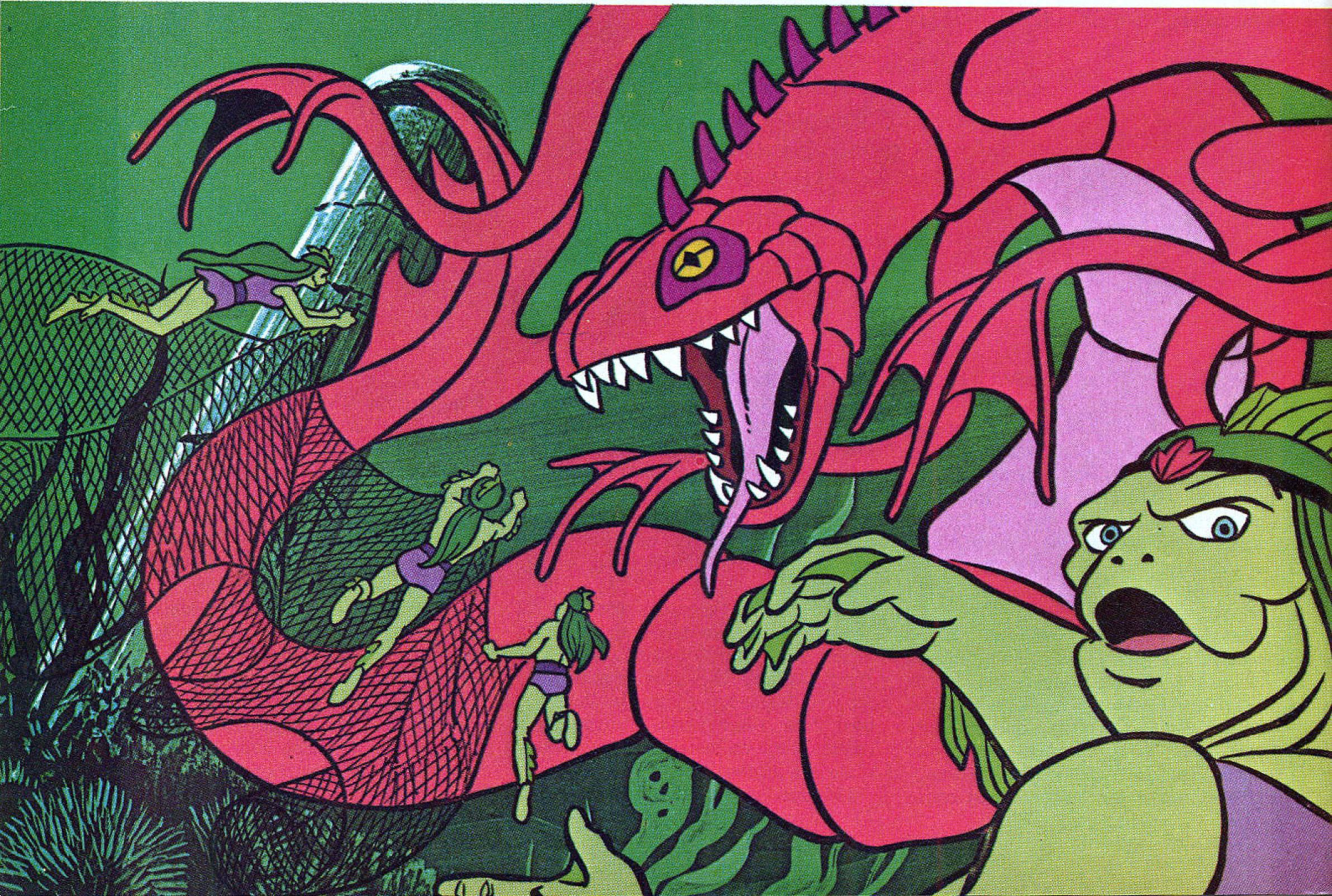
to the following people who supplied information and materials for STARLOG's Show Guide to Saturday Morning TV: Janet Storm and CBS-TV; Dom Giofre' and NBC-TV; Vic Ghidalia and ABC-TV; Malcolm Klein and Filmmation Assoc.; Susan Devaney and Hanna-Barbera Productions; Sid and Marty Krofft Productions; Constance Martel and American International Television; Sibyl Roberts and Solters and Roskin; Independent Television Corporation; and Tom Rogers. The author would like to extend special appreciation to Mr. Jerry Beck whose research assistance was invaluable.

Johnny Sokko and His Flying Robot, Kimba, the White Lion, Prince Planet, Sollan—Boy From Outer Space, and Speed Racer, in association with Osamu Tezuka.

NBC's 1963 schedule also debuted ITC's *Fireball XL-5*. Produced by Gerry and Sylvia Anderson (*U.F.O.*, *Space: 1999*), this Saturday morning show centered around the Galaxy Patrol's "Space City" headquarters where a futuristic police force protected the solar system from enemies trying to destroy the peaceful status quo. *Fireball XL-5* was shot in Supermarionation, a technique pioneered by the Andersons

Below: a scene from the *Star Trek* animated episode, "The Ambergris Element." Although it was produced in "cartoon" form, this series offered some of the most sophisticated science fiction ever put on television. Many of the creative people who worked on the live-action show also worked on this one.

Photo: Filmmation



for working with marionettes. This involves a computer to synchronize the moving mouth of a puppet, plus computer commands to work the strings of the puppet while the humans sit back and watch. Other Supermarionation shows which sometimes appeared during the early weekend hours were *Supercar*, *Stingray*, *Thunderbirds*, and *Captain Scarlet and the Mystereons*.

The mid/late 60s witnessed a boom in superhero cartoons, partially prompted by ABC's successful live-action *Batman* series. Oscar-winners William Hanna and Joseph Barbera led this profitable wave with several sporadically viable science-fiction adventures. Some of their more popular entries included *Atom Ant*, *Birdman*, *Dino Boy*, *The Fantastic Four*, *Frankenstein, Jr. and the Impossibles*, *The Galaxy Trio*, *The Herculoids*, *Johnny Quest*, *The Mighty Mightor*, *Moby Dick*, *Shazam*, *Space Ghost*, and *Space Kiddettes*.

Many other 60s SF-oriented shows enjoyed Saturday morning exposure. They included *The Adventures of Sinbad Jr.*, *The Adventures of Tin Tin*, *Batfink*, *Courageous Cat and Minute Mouse*, *Do Do—The Kid From Outer Space*, *Johnny Cypher in Dimension Zero*, *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, *King Kong*, *Marine Boy*, *Marvel Superheroes*, *The Mighty Heroes*, *Rod*

Rocket, *Roger Ramjet*, *Samson and Goliath*, *Spiderman*, *Super President*, and *Ultraman*.

By 1968, various activist groups were insisting that "excessive violence" pervaded Saturday morning television. This resulted in the 70s plethora of inane A.M. weekend programming, made "safe" for children.

The forerunner of these series, 1969's *H.R. Pufnstuf*, was actually quite good. Produced by master showmen Sid and Marty Krofft, *Pufnstuf* lasted three years. Its success spawned the Krofft's other children's vehicles: *The Bugaloos*, *Lidsville*, and *Sigmund and the Sea Monsters*.

Filmation Associates also provided pleasant weekend fantasies. Headed by Emmy Award-winners Norm Prescott and Lou Scheimer, they produced the 60s' *Fantastic Voyage*, *Aquaman*, *Batman*, and *Superman* cartoons. More recently, they were responsible for the animated *Star Trek* (see STARLOG No. 6) and *My Favorite Martian*.

The 70s have already seen an abundance of Saturday morning science fiction. The networks have given us *The Addams Family* (cartoon), *Ghost Busters*, *Josie and the Pussycats in Outer Space*, *Korg: 70,000 B.C.*, an animated *Lost in Space* film, *Mission: Magic*, *Partridge Family 2200 A.D.*,

Speed Buggy, *Valley of the Dinosaurs*, and *Return to the Planet of the Apes*.

Science-fiction-oriented live-action and animated shows now dominate Saturday morning TV viewing. Here is a typical listing, taken from *TV Guide*, for the morning of April 30th, a Saturday:

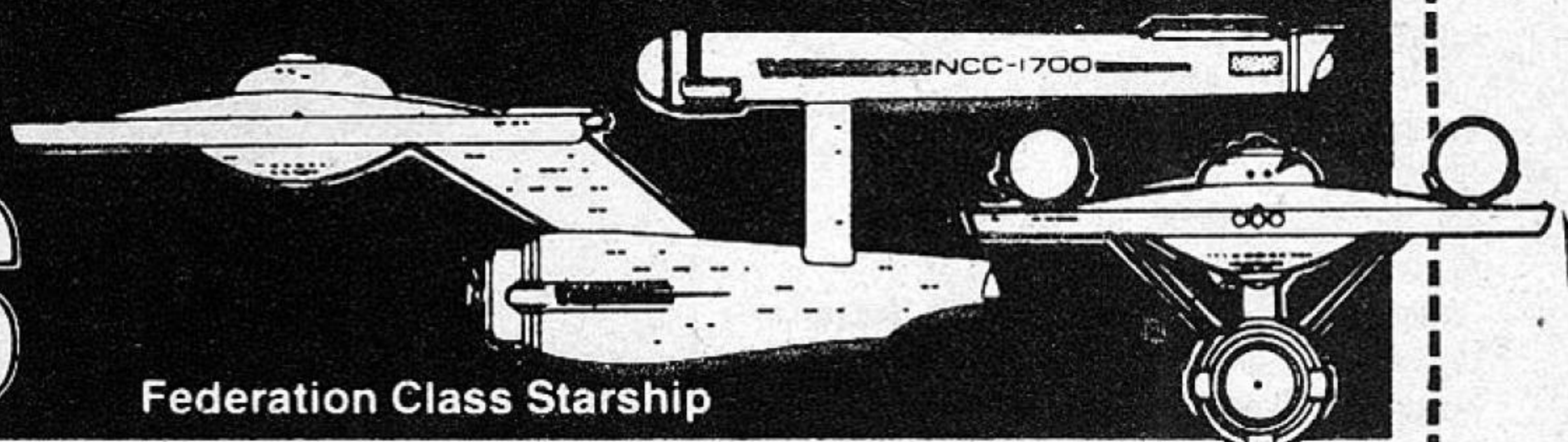
9:00—Channel 2 has *Scooby-Doo* and *Dynomutt*; Channel 11 has *Star Trek* (animated). 10:00—Channel 2 has *Tarzan* (animated), Channel 9 has *The Invisible Man Returns* (film), Channel 11 has *Batman* (live-action). 10:30—Channel 2 has *Batman* (animated), Channel 4 has *Monster Squad*, Channel 7 has *Krofft Supershow*. 11:00—Channel 2 has *Shazam/Isis*, Channel 4 has *Space Ghost*, *Frankenstein, Jr.* 11:30—Channel 4 has *Big John*, *Little John*. 12:00—Channel 4 has *Land of the Lost*. 12:30—Channel 2 has *Ark II*.

The science-fiction/fantasy programming doesn't stop there, but the morning does.

Saturdays are again the home of unbridled fantasy entertainment. The only difference is that now some parents who grew up on Kiddie Matinees have become early risers, too, knowing that even in adulthood they can follow the latest adventures of their favorite heroes—from the comfort of their own beds.



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