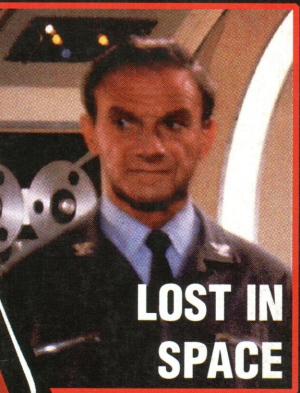


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QUANTUM
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LOST IN
SPACE

LOST VOYAGERS SPECIAL

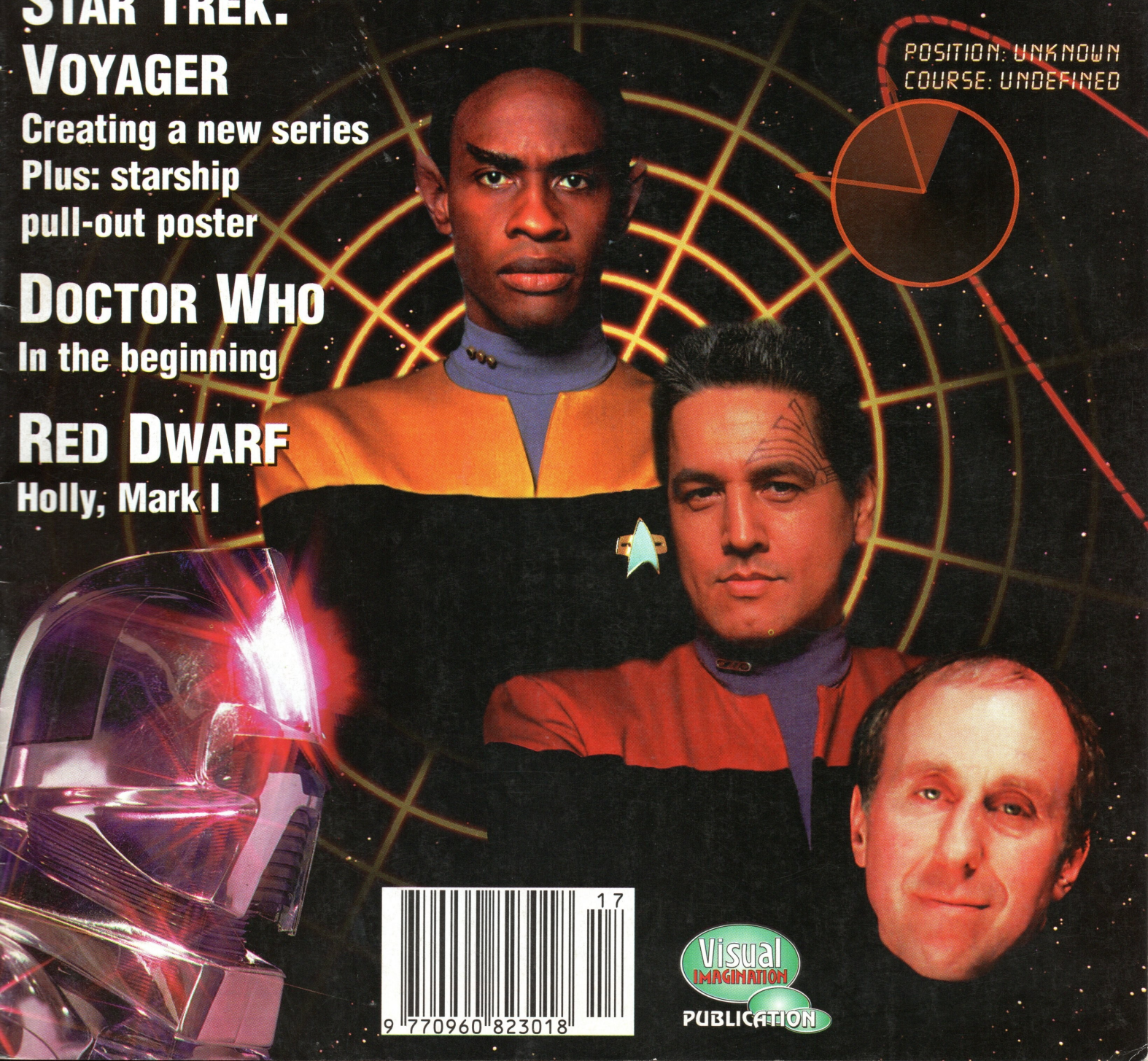
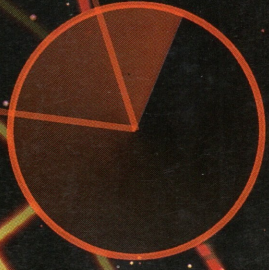
STAR TREK: VOYAGER

Creating a new series
Plus: starship
pull-out poster

DOCTOR WHO In the beginning

RED DWARF Holly, Mark I

POSITION: UNKNOWN
COURSE: UNDEFINED



contents



TV Zone Special #17 (ISSN: 0960-8230)

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EDITORIAL

We may be featuring a whole host of lost travellers, but have no fear, *TV Zone* knows where it is going with this Special.

It is surprising just how many lost travellers there have been over the past 30 years or so, either trying to find their way back home or to some strange new destination, but we've tracked some of them down to tell you of their extraordinary voyages and adventures.

We also bring you memories of times long gone — and much more recent — and even where more recently lost travellers may be visiting...

And when you've travelled home safely, you can prepare yourself for the next regular issue of *TV Zone* (#67, published 25th May) which will be featuring **The X-Files** and the news series of **The Outer Limits**.

Jan Vincent-Rudzki

POSITION: UNKNOWN
COURSE: UNDEFINED

PLANET TYPE: RT56
GRAVITY: 78%
ATMOSPHERE: +78
LIFEFORMS: UNKNOWN

PLANET TYPE: AB 11
GRAVITY: -110%
ATMOSPHERE: 1101
LIFEFORMS: BINARY

PLANET TYPE: AZ 78
GRAVITY: -60%
ATMOSPHERE: -34
LIFEFORMS: HOSTILE

RON HARPER:
APE MEMORIES

TWO YEARS after the demise of the first run episodes of the **Planet of the Apes** television series, a series of two-hour movies entitled **The New Planet of the Apes** (actually paste-ups of the aforementioned show's 16 one-hour episodes) began airing on television sets worldwide. That did not surprise actor Ron Harper who played as-

tronaut Alan Viridon in the short lived series. What is surprising to Harper, 20 years to the day the first instalment of **Apes** aired, was how well those movies did.

"Those movies were getting ratings that surpassed those of the individual episodes," chuckles Harper at the wonder of it all. "Why? I don't have the slightest idea. Maybe the two shows cut together

offered a bit more variety. All I know is that the response to those movies [which have appeared with surprising regularity along with syndicated runs of the series] has been amazing."

Sounds Good

Harper, a personable actor currently



Galen (Roddy McDowall) and Alan Viridon (Ron Harper)

The producers wanted Harper to "...to play him very strong and macho"



plying his trade on the Hollywood voice-over circuit, came to the attention of **Planet of the Apes** producers Herbert Hirschman and Stan Hough in the Spring of 1974. Acting opposite intelligent simians was the last thing on Harper's mind.

"I was making plans to marry my first wife," chuckles the actor who also starred in another populist favourite, **Garrison's Gorillas**. "We had a June 1 date set and I got a call to fly out to Los Angeles and test for **Planet of the Apes** on May 31 — I went out, tested for the show, flew back to New York, got married and my wife and I went to Spain for our honeymoon. We had not been in Spain very long when I got a call from my agent, telling me they wanted me to come back to Los Angeles and test with other people. I told them I was on my honeymoon and that I had other things on my mind at the moment besides stepping in front of the camera. But they wanted me back so bad that they were willing to pay to fly my wife and I back to L.A. They insisted that it was important so we flew back and I tested again. I went back to New York, my agent called and said, 'Pack your bags. We're starting to shoot right away'."

What Harper was returning to was a version of the highly successful **Planet of the Apes** film series. American astro-

nauts Alan Viridon (Harper) and Pete Burke (James Naughton) stumble into a Time warp and stumble out on Earth 2000 years into the future where they find English-speaking, super intelligent apes lord-ing it over the last remnants of the human race who have become slaves. Making the transition from the films to television was Roddy McDowall as the astronaut's ape friend Galen. Harper was familiar with the **Apes** films and is candid in his assessment of their quality or lack of. "The first film was very interesting. The idea of reversing the roles of apes and humans was a novel one. But beyond that first film, I think they ran out of steam as to what to do with this crazy premise. I thought the series went downhill real fast.

"But the series, based on the fact that the five films made \$100s of millions worldwide, was a direct sale to the network [CBS]. We didn't even have to shoot a pilot."

Character Decisions

James Naughton was subsequently cast in the role of Pete Burke and the pair of human actors reported to production meetings in late June of '74 in preparation for the July 1 beginning of production. "The big thing during our first pro-

duction meeting was trying to decide what the first names of the astronauts should be. I thought that was kind of funny."

Another bone of contention, reports Harper, was the nature of his character and how he should be played

"To a certain extent they modelled my character after Charlton Heston's character in the first **Planet of the Apes** film," he recalls. "The intent was to make Viridon a little bit more human. They gave me a history, a wife and child that were referred to in one or two of the episodes. They tried to fill me out and make me more of a well rounded human being. We were a little at odds at how I should play Viridon. The producers wanted me to play him very strong and macho. I thought I was a pretty good actor and so I had it in mind to play him, in some scenes, more humanly, sensitive and sometimes soft. But, as we developed the fine points of the series, the producers told me to forget all that and to just use my deep chest voice," he laughs.

The first episode of **Planet of the Apes** aired on September 13, 1974. Harper recalls "going in with the idea that it was going to be an action adventure series".

"But it became more obvious that was the case as the season progressed. The scripts were emphasizing action and interaction with the apes rather than deep



Some Simians did help the astronauts



Geoffrey Deuel as an ape on set with Ron Harper and James Naughton

storylines. The producers would get awfully upset if we didn't have some kind of action going in the first five pages of a script."

What also came to Harper's attention from the word go was that the **Planet of the Apes** television series was essentially one trick pony.

One Idea Show

"It was a one idea show," sighs the actor. "And once we got past that one idea, the actors and, more importantly, the audience had seen it all. Our story was one of us would get captured by the apes and the other two would have to rescue him. It got to the point where Jim and I would pick up a script each week and the first words out of our mouth would be 'whose turn is it to be rescued this week...?'"

Churning out an **Apes** episode under seemingly formula limitations was, nevertheless, a lot of hard work and, says Harper, worthy of a few well placed anecdotes.

"This was a very difficult show to make," he reflects. "We were given seven days to do an episode but, I swear, some weeks it felt like we were knocking them out in five days or less. The human beings in this show never rode horses and so we were always running and always being chased by the apes. Some directors, particularly if a script was a little thin, would say, 'Okay, go out there about 2-300 yards and run into the camera'.

"We had an episode [*Tomorrow's Tide*] where Jim and I had to be filmed underwater being menaced by a shark. We had to go down 35 feet into the ocean, with lead weights tied to our rags, wearing a mask and a breathing device. They brought in the cameras and a mechanical shark. At the director's signal we had to take off the mask and swim around and try to act. They figured they would save air by starting us at the bottom rather than having us free dive into the water first. But it was real cold and, after a couple of hours, they basically had to haul us out because we were close to getting hypothermia," moans the actor.

Notables

The actor concedes that much of his **Planet of the Apes** journey "is a blur" but recalls a couple of episodes where he felt he shined.

"*The Horse Race* was a wonderful sat-

ire and, by comparison to other episodes, it had some bulk to it. Humans were not able to ride horses but Virdon could and so the apes were trying all sorts of tricks to keep him from winning the race. But of course none of it worked. I also liked *The Legacy* because I got to be more diverse in my acting style. I was able to show some of my humanity. That was a welcome break from the usual requirements of the scripts we got."

Harper recalls "admiring the stamina of the actors playing the apes".

"The make-up and costumes were really hot. Jim and I were running around in next to nothing and we were uncomfortable so you can only imagine what Roddy and Mark were going through. But Roddy had been through this ape stuff before so it didn't really surprise him."

Co-Star

The actor, in a surprising bit of candour, reports that he and his human co-star "did not become very close during the making of the show".

"I think a big part of that was the result of us not being together very long. We respected each other as actors but, away from the set, he was a little cool. Jim's part was originally intended to be funnier than what he turned it into. The producers conceived of the role of Pete as a comedic foil for my character since they didn't really need two heroes in the show. But I don't think Jim was interested in playing the comic guy which had to make his stay on the show a little uncomfortable."

Planet of the Apes's early ratings were what Harper describes as "respectable". But four episodes into the first run, it became evident that audiences were getting tired of the routine and leaving in droves.

"The reason that happened is that we kept doing the same story over and over again," the actor laments. "You need a lot of imagination to keep Science Fiction going and our writers only seemed to be able to come up with the same storyline over and over again."

"After a while there was a real sense on the set that this show was not long for this world. There was shock and despair and I think that came with much reluctance because everybody had such high hopes for the series. The feeling on the set was 'What happened here? This was supposed to have been an automatic three-year run.'"

The last first run episode of **Planet of**



Naughton and Harper

the Apes aired on December 27, 1974. But that was not the end of the apes. "After the original run somebody came up with the idea of putting two episodes together into a series of movies and calling them 'The New Planet of the Apes'. The films have aired pretty regularly over the years and the ratings have continued to be quite good."

Years before Ron Harper went Apes, he was at the head of another favourite, the WWII **Dirty Dozen** clone **Garrison's Gorillas**, which was yet another one season wonder (Sept 5, 1967 to Sept 17, 1968). Harper, who played Lieutenant Craig Garrison in the series, claims that show had a different problem

"The scripts were quite good and the ratings were very good," reports the actor. "The reason the show was cancelled was because it was perceived as being too violent. There were a group of senators

in the US Congress who were raising a stink. We were surprised when they took us off. Unfortunately there was this pocketful of people who said the show was too violent and that it had to go."

Harper, concluding his **Apes** odyssey, is surprised that 1994 was, in fact, the 20th Anniversary of the premiere of the series. He looks back at the show with a sense of whimsy and melancholy.

"It was a good idea that, unfortunately, was not properly executed. If we had imaginative writers, we could have stretched out the stories we had and really created something interesting. I'm not saying they weren't talented. I'm just saying that they didn't have what it took to make the series work. Everyone always seems to blame the failure of a series on the writers. I know they weren't blaming me."

"At least I don't think so."

Marc Shapiro