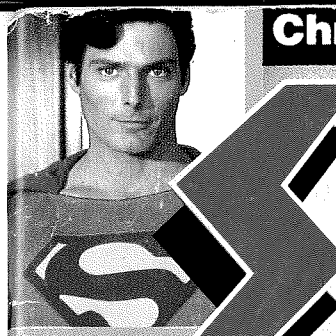

Chris Reeve: "What I'd like Superman to do"

STARLOG

THE SCIENCE FICTION UNIVERSE

SPACEBALLS: The Interview
Mel Brooks speaks

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INNERSPACE

Joe Dante's fantastic voyage with Steven Spielberg

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BROOKS: It seems that in every space movie, they're always in the desert. Don't ask me why, but they spend a great amount of time there.

Anyway, 'cause *they* go there, we go there. Lucas went to Yuma, Arizona for *Return of the Jedi*, and North Africa [where *Star Wars* was partially lensed] was too far away, so *we* went to Yuma.

We went in October or November, figuring it would be a little cooler there. It was the hottest three days America has ever withstood, and we were right there in the middle of it!

It was something like 140 degrees. Cameras were melting. You take an ice cube, you put it on your head, and by the time you get it there, it's just hot water.

STARLOG: Can you compare *Spaceballs* to anything else? There have been other SF spoofs, but mostly low-budget fare.

BROOKS: No, this is big stuff. We've got a weird picture. It's *The Wizard of Oz* in space. It's a bunch of people trying to get back home, and they keep running into bad guys—including a gangster named Pizza the Hut, whom they owe money.

STARLOG: *Spaceballs* co-writer Thomas Meehan said you've written more than 1,000 pages and had enough material to do three or four films. Is this a genre you would come back to parody again?

BROOKS: You never know what the future holds, but I think in this first one, we've really *exhausted* the great space cliches. I don't know if we've overlooked any cliches, but it would be *very* difficult to come back and do a *Spaceballs II*.

STARLOG: Well, when you talk about making movies for 15-year-olds or thereabouts, that speaks to many STARLOG readers.

BROOKS: It's important! Who else will wait in the rain to see a movie? These days, the doctors and dentists who love Mel Brooks wait for the cassette. That's why I've got to corral these youngsters and show them what a big, gleaming, crazy, witty comedy is all about.

STARLOG: Do you have a parting shot? A life's philosophy you would like to share with us?

BROOKS: Yes. My life philosophy is this: If you really want to see *Spaceballs* on the first day, get there the day before. ☆

Gerrold

(continued from page 15)

Andrew Probert, Senior Illustrator

Working as an illustrator, Andy Probert designed the Cylons for *Battlestar Galactica*. He designed the helicopter and flight suits for *Airwolf*, and designed most of the space hardware for *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*. He also designed the outside of the DeLorean time machine for *Back to the Future*.

Rich Sternbach, Illustrator

Rich Sternbach won an Emmy for his work as Assistant Art Director and Special Effects Supervisor on Carl Sagan's *Cosmos* series. He created planet images and storyboarded spacecraft action for *The Last Starfighter*. Rich is no stranger to *Star Trek*, having worked as an illustrator on *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*. Rich has been doing cover art for magazines and books since 1973, including *Analog*, *Science Fiction*, *F & SF*, *Galaxy*, *Astronomy Magazine* and *Sky and Telescope*, as well as special pieces for the National Air and Space Museum.

Michael Okuda, Graphic Artist

Michael Okuda made his graphics debut in *Star Trek IV*, designing many of the readouts and panels for the Klingon *Bird of Prey* and various Starfleet vessels. He is the world's foremost expert on Klingon technical readouts. He has designed all of the signs, lettering, readouts and control panels for the new *Enterprise*.

Corey Allen, Director "Encounter at Farpoint"

As an actor, Corey Allen has appeared in such pictures as *Sweet Bird of Youth*, *The Chapman Report*, *Darby's Rangers* and *Rebel Without a Cause*. (He played Buzz, the gang leader.) He has also appeared in TV series such as *Bonanza*, *Gunsmoke*, and *Have Gun, Will Travel*. He has directed two feature films: *Avalanche* (with Rock Hudson and Mia Farrow), and *Thunder and Lightning* (with David Carradine and Kate Jackson). He also directed the premiere episodes of *Murder, She Wrote*, *Simon and Simon* and *Whiz Kids*. He earned two Emmy nominations for directing episodes of *Hill Street Blues* and won the award once. He has also had two Best Director nominations from the Director's Guild and has been nominated for the Award for Cable Excellence.

Industrial Light & Magic

Industrial Light & Magic was created specifically to visualize the extraordinary special effects in *Star Wars* (and its two sequels, *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Return of the Jedi*). ILM has also performed special FX chores for both Indiana Jones films, *Raiders of the Lost Ark* and *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*, as well as special effects for *Star Trek II*, *Star Trek III*, *Star Trek IV*, *Explorers*, *The Goonies*, *Gremlins*, *Back to the Future* and *Innerspace*. ☆

Column copyright 1987 David Gerrold

Dante

(continued from page 31)

#78] is in the picture and she's very good. William Schallert [STARLOG #85] is in it, along with many other people I've already worked with—Kevin McCarthy [STARLOG #78], Bob Picardo [Wak in *Explorers*], Dick Miller....

STARLOG: You use many of these actors again and again—Joe Dante's Ensemble.

DANTE: Well, I don't keep them eating. These guys eat whether I use them or not, but they're people I like and they know what I'm after. I can communicate with them easily when the parts are right for them. If the parts aren't right, there's no way I can do it. But when the part's right, they're the people I want to work with—that goes for behind the camera, too. It's a nice atmosphere to have a bunch of people who already like each other and already know what you're trying to do because they've already gone through the process.

If you can manage to populate a film with people you know well, so you can give them direction #52 and know it will elicit a certain response, it's much easier.

Sometimes, we don't even talk much, Dick Miller [FANGORIA #61] and I. It just happens. He was very good in *Explorers* and I hardly told him anything about what he should do. We just discussed the character and he gave a performance which I liked. In this picture, he has what I guess you would call a cameo. Try as I did, I couldn't find a real part for him.

STARLOG: You've used many of these actors since the beginning of your feature film career. As if you had that in mind.

DANTE: I like these guys. I had seen them in the movies. I liked them and wanted to meet them.

The people I liked when I was young are now on in years. It's tough to find parts for them—I mean, if I had done the "Kick the Can" segment in *Twilight Zone: The Movie*, you can bet the cast would have been considerably different, but unless I do a film like *Cocoon*, it's going to be hard to find enough roles for these guys. I have enormous respect for them. They were in the business at a time when I think the movies were better.

STARLOG: Movies that influenced you.

DANTE: Yes, but there are people like Bob Picardo, whom I used in *The Howling* [Eddie Quist] as well as *Explorers*—he plays a Libyan cowboy in *Innerspace*. He's a very funny guy. He'll go places if people just get a chance to see what he does. He's terrific in this picture—and he's a friend of mine.

STARLOG: And why not use your friends?

DANTE: Indeed, why not? All these people are talented—there's not a bupke among them. It's not like there's some poor guy who's out of work and needs a job so you give him the lead in your picture—these people are *all* talented.

It's hard making movies and it's nice to make it as easy as possible by having as many nice people around you as possible. ☆

A bionic man, a Supertrooper, a telepath and a computer genius team-up as the extra-powered pioneers of the final frontier, speeding through hyperspace in animated adventures of cowboys & aliens.

By EDDIE BERGANZA

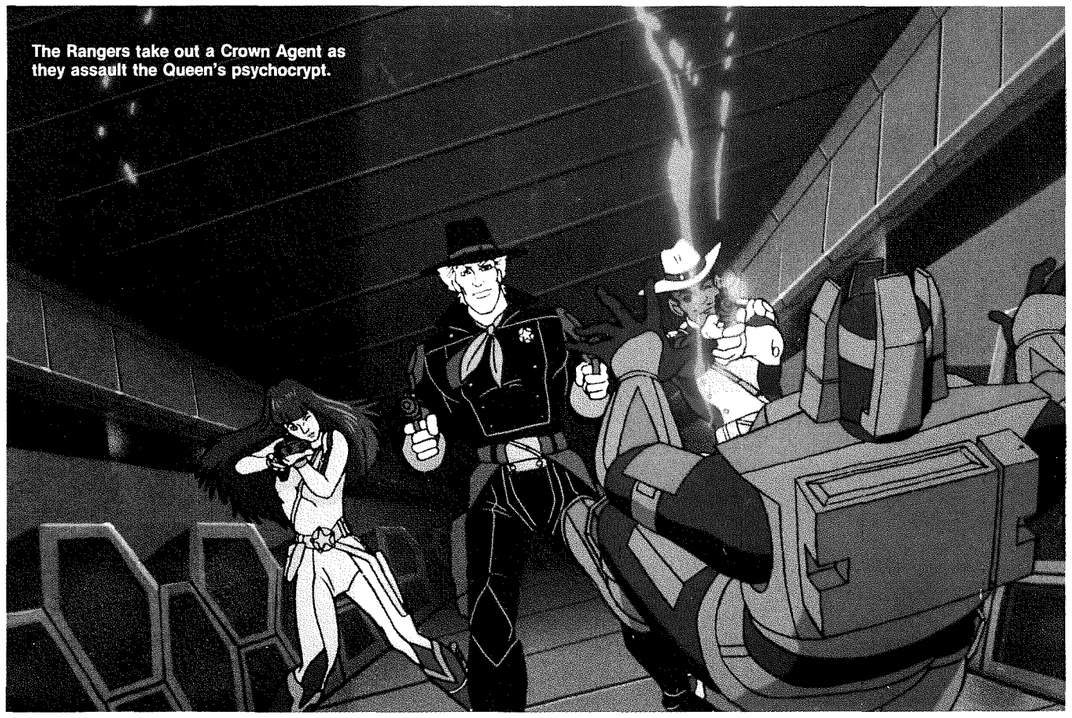
In 2086, two peaceful aliens journey to Earth seeking our help. In return, they gave us the plans for our first hyperdrive, allowing mankind to open the doors to the stars.

We have assembled a team of unique individuals to protect Earth and our allies. Courageous pioneers committed to the highest ideals of justice and dedicated to preserving law and order across the new frontier.

These are the Adventures of the Galaxy Rangers.

"It started out as an SF action-adventure in space about a police force," explains Robert Mandell, the syndicated series' creator/producer and ITC Entertainment vet. "It really evolved because the show needed a handle. The basic story of *Rangers*—the idea of having two aliens coming to Earth looking for help—was always there. And in the back of my mind, I guess, I always knew it was based on *The Magnificent Seven* and *Seven Samurai*, but the obvious never hit me.

"I was very lucky to meet a guy named Bob Chrestani, who was an agent for William Morris," Mandell continues. "I showed him the presentation, which was then called *Beta Force*. He loved it and immediately signed the project representation. It was Bob who brought the obvious to my attention. He said, 'Well, what's your story?' I told him two aliens come to Earth—*Seven Samurai*, *Magnificent Seven*. And he said, 'Well, you're crazy. It's sitting right in front of you. It's a space *Western*. It has all the classic Western themes, the main one being justified violence, which is what all Westerns have been built on—lawlessness, new frontier and pioneers



The Rangers take out a Crown Agent as they assault the Queen's psychocrypt.

exploring unknown territories.' Once we had the space Western hook, things suddenly started to click. We developed the *Galaxy Rangers* name together. The response I began to get from various financing groups was totally different. It was as if I came up with the greatest thing since *Star Trek*."

Like the characters of that *Wagon Train* to the stars, Mandell wanted to make his Rangers as real as possible. "Throughout the series' run, we tried to base an episode on each Ranger to show their background," notes Mandell.

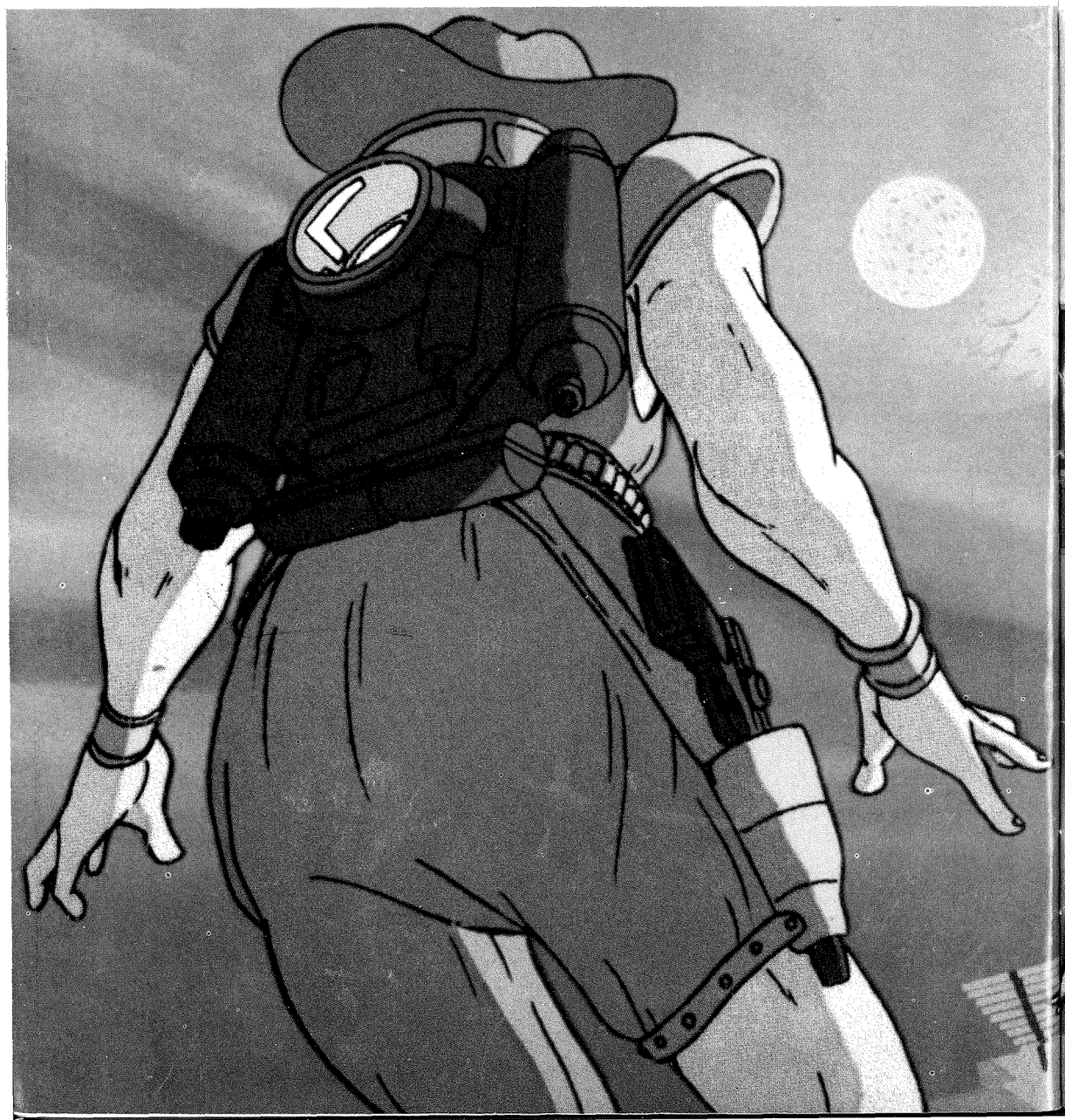
"The leader of the group, Zachary Foxx, was always our straight-ahead West-Point-mentality soldier. He is always doing things by regulations. We designed him to be in direct conflict with Shane Gooseman [the group's shape-changer]," adds Mandell, "who doesn't do anything by the book. He's our Dirty Harry.

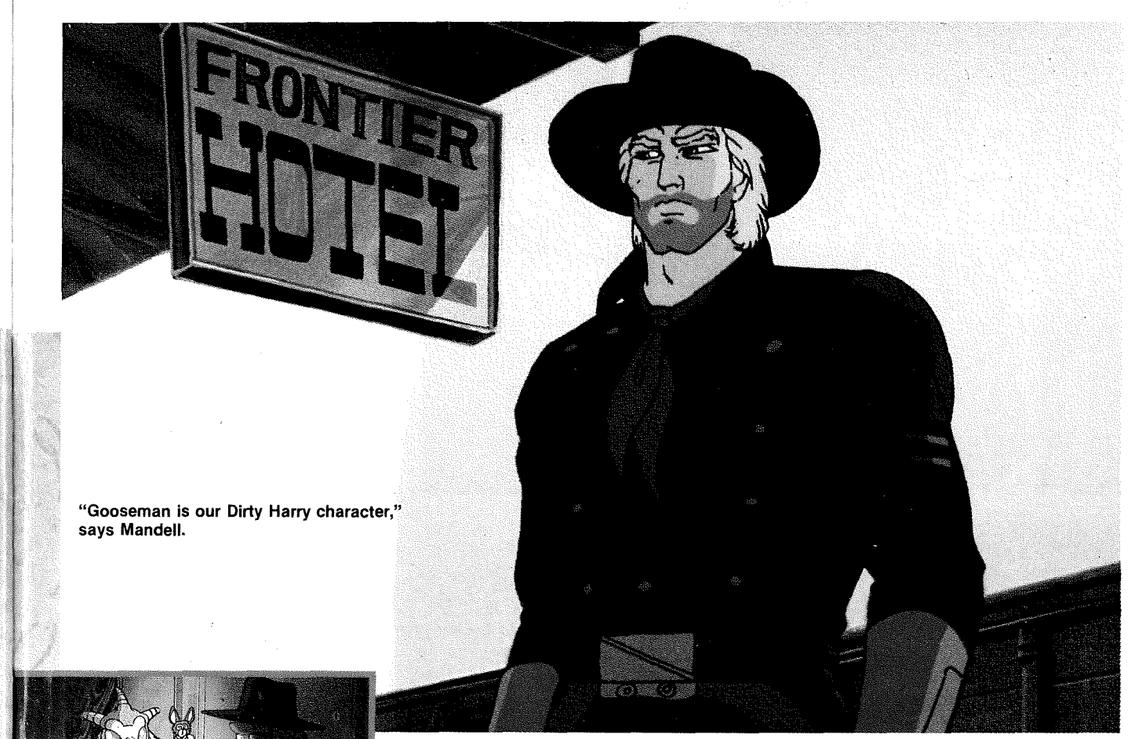
"It was very important for me to set their characters from the beginning so that the interaction between the four Rangers would be very strong and the dialogue could reflect a little bit of the characters' histories and personalities without being obvious. For example, the conflict between Zack and Goose has helped establish their backgrounds.

"Zack was never our most colorful character and we played off that quality. Because he comes from a world of perfect order, he likes to see things in certain ways, but in reality, nothing works that way—especially in the whole new open universe he now can explore."

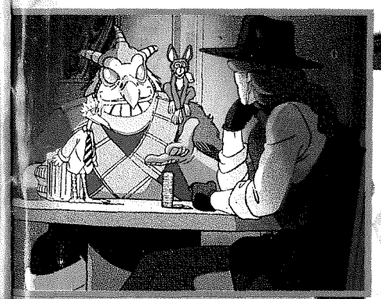
When Rangers Clash

Continuing his conservative characterization, Foxx is the only Ranger who is married with children. Mandell, though, did throw a wrench into the man's seemingly simple life.





"Gooseman is our Dirty Harry character," says Mandell.



Captain Kidd, the space pirate, strikes a deal to sell the Queen's defective Memory Bird, Bubblehead, to renegade Daisy O'Mega in "Birds of a Feather."

The two peaceful aliens, Waldo and Zozo, give Earth the knowledge for its first hyperdrive to help combat galactic menaces.

"We wanted Zack to have his own personal conflict and that turned out to be his bionics," Mandell explains, noting a certain irony. "He never really trusted machinery or hardware, but then he has an accident where suddenly, it is machinery and hardware that saves his life. Now, he has this internal conflict with how to deal with his own bionics.

"We never really got a chance to explore that too much," Mandell says, "because along came Goose. Since he turned out to be such a colorful figure, we started catering more stories toward him. Supertroopers was such a great concept in its own right—the last of the genetically bred soldiers who Goose grew up with in a training camp. He was the one Supertrooper who developed compassion and true human emotions. And due to a bizarre experiment, all the other Supertroopers went crazy, revolted and broke away, forming an evil force. Gooseman stayed on with the Bureau of Extraterrestial Affairs (BETA) and eventually became a Galaxy Ranger.

"Because of his background as a Supertrooper, the Board of Leaders didn't really trust him. The only way they would let him become a Galaxy Ranger was if he became a bounty hunter and went out and brought all the other Supertroopers back in. His conflict then is that he has to capture all his friends—dead or alive. Of course, that fit so well into the Western theme.

"Niko has been kind of a special character for us because we wanted a female lead who would be able to handle herself as well as the men," Mandell remarks. "She has psi powers, her abilities range from telekinesis to constructing force fields. But the concept is still that all the Rangers' powers are based on natural abilities and amplified by a computer implant in their brains. The Series Five Brain Implants are charged by these energy chambers the Rangers stand in. The amplification lasts a certain amount of time depending how powerful the charge is. So, even the Rangers don't really know how far they can push their powers.

"The only Ranger we couldn't cover was Doc," says Mandell. "He turned out to be one of everybody's favorite characters, and

***Galaxy Rangers* answers the question—what would have happened if Sergio Leone was "into" SF?**

Ranger Art: Copyright 1986 Gaylord Production Co., Transcom Media, Inc., ITF Enterprises, Inc.

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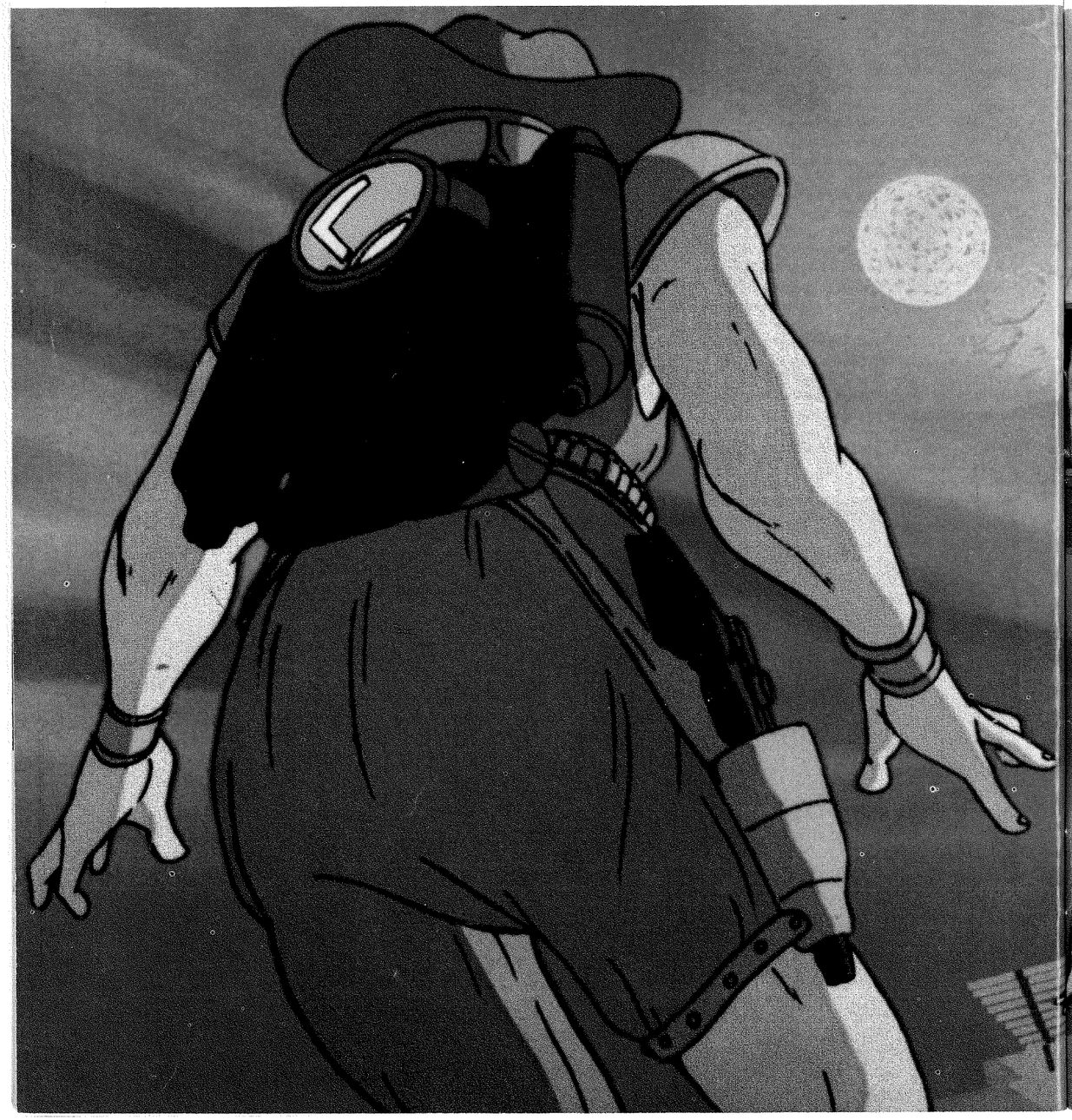

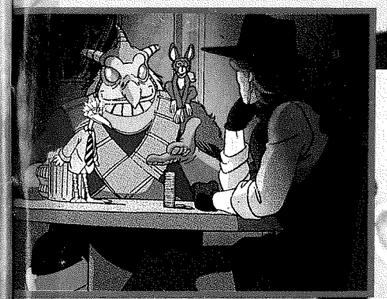

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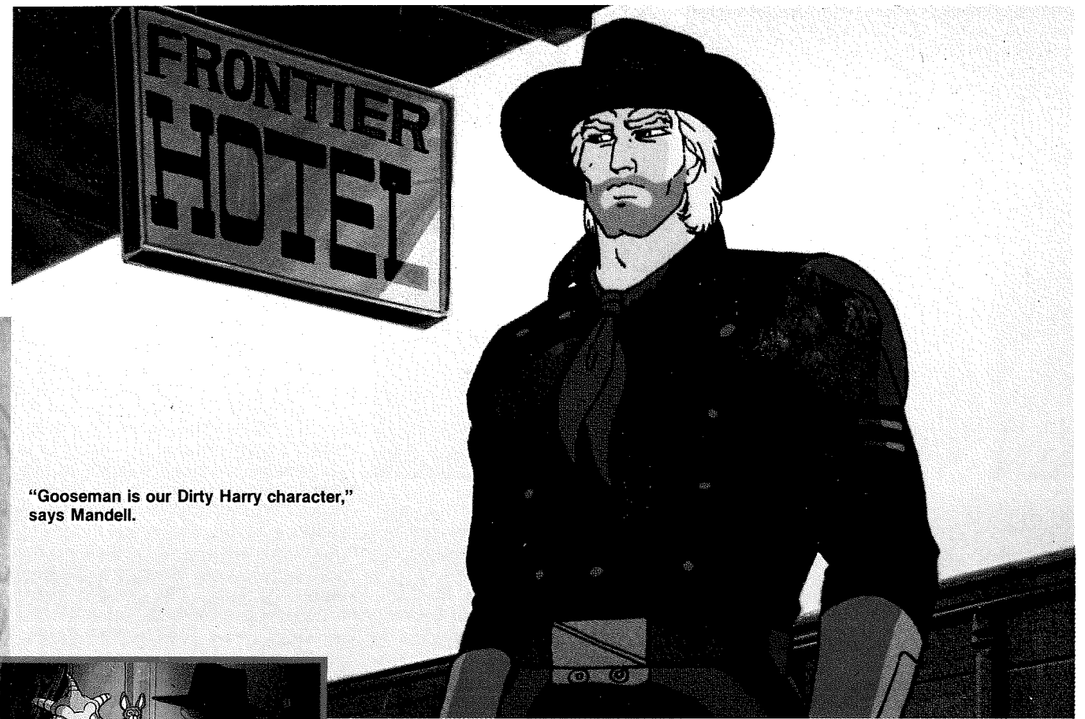

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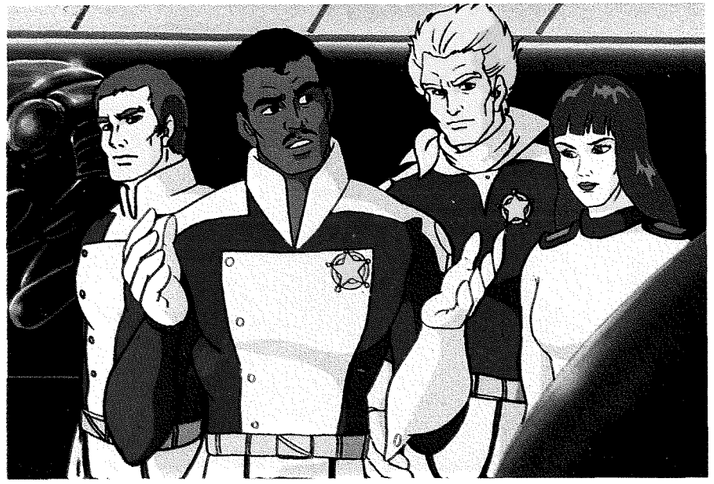
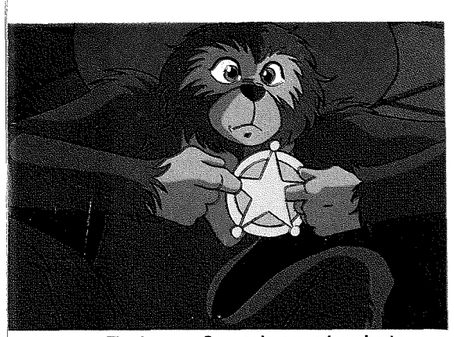


The four unique individuals who comprise the Galaxy Rangers are (left to right) the bionic-powered Zachery Foxx, computer "Doc" Walter Hartford, genetic chameleon Shane Gooseman and the psionic Niko.



The bouncy Squeegie proved easier to characterize for Mandell than the furball's owner, Captain Kidd.

got so much time on his own that we never got a chance to do his origin episode."

Though not an origin, Walter "Doc" Halford (don't call him "Wally") has been showcased in episodes like "Murder on the Andorian Express." A *Galaxy Rangers* version of an Agatha Christie mystery, the story has Doc and fellow Ranger Niko trying to solve the mysterious demise of an ambassador aboard the luxury spaceliner, *S.S. Christie*. Such whimsical tales and their silly predicaments suit the team's computer wizard (who bears a bizarre resemblance to Billy Dee Williams) much more than the other three Rangers.

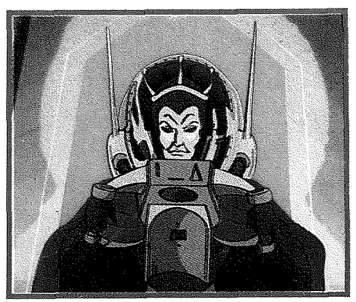
Galaxy Gangs

Drawing their wagons around the Galaxy Rangers are an equally well-developed supporting cast. Most important are the series' two amiable alien instigators. Waldo, an Andorian, is a member of the oldest and most advanced culture in the galaxy, while Zozo is an emotional Kiwi from the underdeveloped farm planet Kirwin. "A very strong underlying theme of *Rangers* is low-tech vs. hi-tech," says Mandell. "We like to expose the Rangers and their hi-tech devices to the low-tech cultures with which they deal."

Other characters that populate the series are Buzzwang, a courageous, break-dancing robot Ranger; Maya, the rebellious Princess of Tarkon, a planet that disdains all technology; Lazarus Slade, a Southern gentleman scientist bent on world domination; Daisy O'Mega, a sweet lass with a thick brogue and a penchant for crime—she leads the villainous Black Hole Gang with a swarthy knave named McCross; and Mogul the space sorcerer, whose evil deeds are thwarted by his incompetent assistant Larry.

Some characters worked better than others and some just didn't work. "I hate to say it, but we had many problems with Captain Kidd," says Mandell of his alien space pirate creation. "We never could find the right place for Kidd. Originally, he was designed as a strong villain and then he turned into our Harry Mudd. We mostly ended up using Kidd in comic relief situations."

The Queen of the Crown, meanwhile, is more like the queen in Disney's *Snow White* gone cosmic. "She is certainly one of the most evil characters in the series," Mandell agrees. "The Queen has this mammoth galactic empire and things aren't going quite well for her. She had her forces spread so thin that if she doesn't act soon, her empire is going to start crumbling. So, she begins to experiment with psycho-crystal technology, which is a great way to take the souls from species and use their life forces to create Slaver Lords. The Queen is able to use these ghost forms as spies. She can see and hear through them. This way, she can stay right in her castle and maintain control.



The vilest villain from the Rangers rogues' gallery is the life force stealing Queen of the Crown.

"Her only problem is that she can't find a life force strong enough to power the Slaver Lords. Most of the aliens she has tried just don't work. Suddenly, some humans show up and their spiritual force is so strong that she finds that she can use one of them to create a very powerful Slaver Lord that will last a long time. She becomes obsessed with hunting humans." The first two episodes of the *Galaxy Rangers* series, "Phoenix" and "New Frontier," recount how Zachary Foxx lost part of his wife's essence to the Queen's psychocrypt.

"I tried to create a very strong universe because I figured up front I was doing 65 episodes," Mandell explains. "I didn't want to do a typical format show where every day the same thing is happening. I knew it was a dangerous approach in dealing with young kids because they like the repetition. I tried to make the stories as diversified as possible. For example, many episodes don't have all four Rangers in them. And that's unheard of in animation strips." Some episodes don't feature any Rangers, spotlighting instead, Foxx's children and the Kiwis.

Among Mandell's writing staff is Brian Daley, who helped embellish the *Star Wars* saga through radio adaptations and Han Solo novels, as well as other noted authors. "The project's story editors, are Owen Locke, head of Del Rey Books, and Chris Rowley. The three of us mapped out the initial elements of the universe. Through Owen, I've met several of the Del Rey writers. We started bringing in other writers, including Brian Daley." Novelist Tom De Haven scripted Goose's bounty-hunting exploits in "Galaxy Stranger" and "One Million Emotions" in which the Rangers chase after an alien sculpture which assaults its bearer with a range of feelings; Lucia Robeson, bestselling author of *Ride of the Wind* contributed "Mistwalker," based on an adventure of the real-life Texas Rangers. Jimmy Lasino, another Del Rey writer, penned the no-holds-barred "Birds of a Feather" that utilized many of the Rangers' rogues' gallery in pursuit of Bubble Head, a Memory Bird in possession of the Supertrooper juice formula.

"In addition to writers who had experience writing books, I also wanted to get new writers involved to infuse the stories with some new ideas and characterizations. I avoided accomplished cartoon writing people as I did the typical actors for cartoons," Mandell explains. "I wanted the natural quality of an actor's voice portraying the character as opposed to the commercial-oriented announcerish style that most producers feel comfortable with just because the audience can understand every word they say." It was this thinking that garnered Jerry (*F/X*) Orbach his first animated role, voicing Zachary Foxx.

Toys Aren't Us

The producer's method of drafting more writers for the series proved a bit unorthodox. "I took ads in the *New York Times*, *The Village Voice*, circulated some flyers and put up some posters in colleges," Mandell says. "At the time, it seemed a bad idea because I was suddenly swamped with thousands and thousands of submissions. Of course, how do you choose writers based on a little sample? It was *almost* impossible."

But Mandell and staff were in a race against time to produce 65 episodes within a one-year time limit and pushed on. "Owen, Chris and I started weeding through the stuff," he recalls. "And we did manage to find a pretty good group. We had to accept many scripts that were not necessarily as polished as we would have liked them to be, but we had the flexibility to modify the script throughout the whole production schedule. So, as long as the plot was there, I could put the script into the storyboarding phase, and then modify it again during the actual recording session." What became advantageous to the producer was his method of recording dialogue—the actors perform the script initially as a guide for the animators in Tokyo, but the final soundtrack is comprised of the actors "looping" their lines along with the finished episode. "It's more expensive and more time consuming," admits Mandell, "but you can't compare the results. It's like apples and oranges. The actors get to see the characters and the situations they're in. The illusion is so far heightened, that it is worth the time and money."

Though Mandell earned the luxuries of time and money, he still lacked the one thing that would have made producing *Galaxy Rangers* simpler—a toy deal. "The most unusual thing about *Rangers* is that it is the only daily strip [airing once a day for a five-day period] to get produced without the major support of a toy company," he says. "There are now toys, but the licensing came *after* the show went into production. When I put the concept together in January 1984, the idea of strip production was just becoming very big.

"The syndication marketplace was just starting to explode in '84 because of the success of *He-Man & The Masters of the Universe*. *He-Man* really set the trend for producing animation with heavy toy company involvement. Toy companies have always been involved in Saturday morning animation, but never to the extent that they were producing 65 half hours of animation. It's an extremely expensive endeavor. The average cost per strip has been somewhere near $15 million, which is a phenomenal amount of money—it's like the budget for a major motion picture. Most companies that get involved are really looking for the big toy hit, because it's the only way a financier can expect a return."

Mandell admits there are some advantages when a producer has a toy company backing his project. "Toy companies commit a certain amount to advertising and that whole media support of a product. That media awareness can make or break a show. It has hurt *Galaxy Rangers* to a certain degree because we went on the air without any of the media hype that shows like *Thundercats* or *Brave Starr* have gotten."

Eventually, Tom Battista of ITF Enterprises, who had Americanized *Voltron*, put Mandell in touch with the Gaylord Production Company. "The Gaylord people got involved not because there was a toy company behind it—they hoped to get a toy company—but because they liked the show's feel. They thought it was going to be an exciting adventure show for kids."

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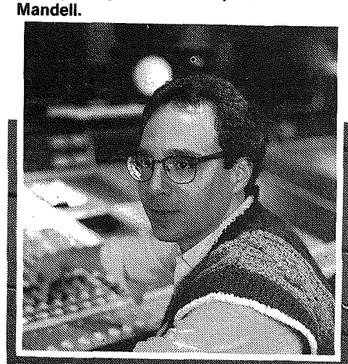

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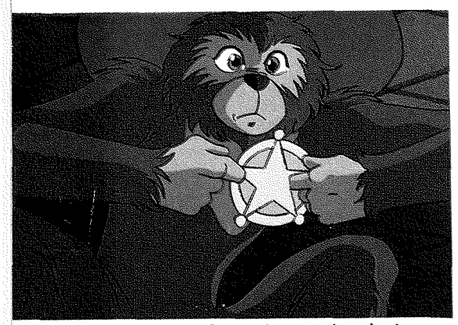
The four unique individuals who comprise the Galaxy Rangers are (left to right) the bionic-powered Zachery Foxx, computer "Doc" Walter Hartford, genetic chameleon Shane Gooseman and the psionic Niko.



The bouncy Squeegie proved easier to characterize for Mandell than the furball's owner, Captain Kidd.

got so much time on his own that we never got a chance to do his origin episode."

Though not an origin, Walter "Doc" Halford (don't call him "Wally") has been showcased in episodes like "Murder on the Andorian Express." A *Galaxy Rangers* version of an Agatha Christie mystery, the story has Doc and fellow Ranger Niko trying to solve the mysterious demise of an ambassador aboard the luxury spaceliner, *S.S. Christie*. Such whimsical tales and their silly predicaments suit the team's computer wizard (who bears a bizarre resemblance to Billy Dee Williams) much more than the other three Rangers.

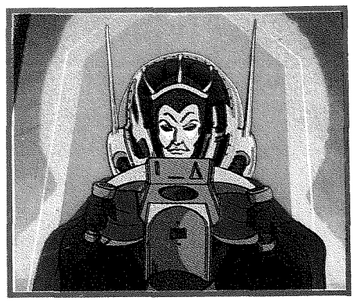
Galaxy Gangs

Drawing their wagons around the Galaxy Rangers are an equally well-developed supporting cast. Most important are the series' two amiable alien instigators. Waldo, an Andorian, is a member of the oldest and most advanced culture in the galaxy, while Zozo is an emotional Kiwi from the underdeveloped farm planet Kirwin. "A very strong underlying theme of *Rangers* is low-tech vs. hi-tech," says Mandell. "We like to expose the Rangers and their hi-tech devices to the low-tech cultures with which they deal."

Other characters that populate the series are Buzzwang, a courageous, break-dancing robot Ranger; Maya, the rebellious Princess of Tarkon, a planet that disdains all technology; Lazarus Slade, a Southern gentleman scientist bent on world domination; Daisy O'Mega, a sweet lass with a thick brogue and a penchant for crime—she leads the villainous Black Hole Gang with a swarthy knave named McCross; and Mogul the space sorcerer, whose evil deeds are thwarted by his incompetent assistant Larry.

Some characters worked better than others and some just didn't work. "I hate to say it, but we had many problems with Captain Kidd," says Mandell of his alien space pirate creation. "We never could find the right place for Kidd. Originally, he was designed as a strong villain and then he turned into our Harry Mudd. We mostly ended up using Kidd in comic relief situations."

The Queen of the Crown, meanwhile, is more like the queen in Disney's *Snow White* gone cosmic. "She is certainly one of the most evil characters in the series," Mandell agrees. "The Queen has this mammoth galactic empire and things aren't going quite well for her. She had her forces spread so thin that if she doesn't act soon, her empire is going to start crumbling. So, she begins to experiment with psycho-crystal technology, which is a great way to take the souls from species and use their life forces to create Slaver Lords. The Queen is able to use these ghost forms as spies. She can see and hear through them. This way, she can stay right in her castle and maintain control.



The vilest villain from the Rangers rogues' gallery is the life force stealing Queen of the Crown.

"Her only problem is that she can't find a life force strong enough to power the Slaver Lords. Most of the aliens she has tried just don't work. Suddenly, some humans show up and their spiritual force is so strong that she finds that she can use one of them to create a very powerful Slaver Lord that will last a long time. She becomes obsessed with hunting humans." The first two episodes of the *Galaxy Rangers* series, "Phoenix" and "New Frontier," recount how Zachary Foxx lost part of his wife's essence to the Queen's psychocrypt.

"I tried to create a very strong universe because I figured up front I was doing 65 episodes," Mandell explains. "I didn't want to do a typical format show where every day the same thing is happening. I knew it was a dangerous approach in dealing with young kids because they like the repetition. I tried to make the stories as diversified as possible. For example, many episodes don't have all four Rangers in them. And that's unheard of in animation strips." Some episodes don't feature any Rangers, spotlighting instead, Foxx's children and the Kiwis.

Among Mandell's writing staff is Brian Daley, who helped embellish the *Star Wars* saga through radio adaptations and Han Solo novels, as well as other noted authors. "The project's story editors, are Owen Locke, head of Del Rey Books, and Chris Rowley. The three of us mapped out the initial elements of the universe. Through Owen, I've met several of the Del Rey writers. We started bringing in other writers, including Brian Daley." Novelist Tom De Haven scripted Goose's bounty-hunting exploits in "Galaxy Stranger" and "One Million Emotions" in which the Rangers chase after an alien sculpture which assaults its bearer with a range of feelings; Lucia Robeson, bestselling author of *Ride of the Wind* contributed "Mistwalker," based on an adventure of the real-life Texas Rangers. Jimmy Lasino, another Del Rey writer, penned the no-holds-barred "Birds of a Feather" that utilized many of the Rangers' rogues' gallery in pursuit of Bubble Head, a Memory Bird in possession of the Supertrooper juice formula.

"In addition to writers who had experience writing books, I also wanted to get new writers involved to infuse the stories with some new ideas and characterizations. I avoided accomplished cartoon writing people as I did the typical actors for cartoons," Mandell explains. "I wanted the natural quality of an actor's voice portraying the character as opposed to the commercial-oriented announcerish style that most producers feel comfortable with just because the audience can understand every word they say." It was this thinking that garnered Jerry (*F/X*) Orbach his first animated role, voicing Zachary Foxx.

Toys Aren't Us

The producer's method of drafting more writers for the series proved a bit unorthodox. "I took ads in the *New York Times*, *The Village Voice*, circulated some flyers and put up some posters in colleges," Mandell says. "At the time, it seemed a bad idea because I was suddenly swamped with thousands and thousands of submissions. Of course, how do you choose writers based on a little sample? It was *almost* impossible."

But Mandell and staff were in a race against time to produce 65 episodes within a one-year time limit and pushed on. "Owen, Chris and I started weeding through the stuff," he recalls. "And we did manage to find a pretty good group. We had to accept many scripts that were not necessarily as polished as we would have liked them to be, but we had the flexibility to modify the script throughout the whole production schedule. So, as long as the plot was there, I could put the script into the storyboarding phase, and then modify it again during the actual recording session." What became advantageous to the producer was his method of recording dialogue—the actors perform the script initially as a guide for the animators in Tokyo, but the final soundtrack is comprised of the actors "looping" their lines along with the finished episode. "It's more expensive and more time consuming," admits Mandell, "but you can't compare the results. It's like apples and oranges. The actors get to see the characters and the situations they're in. The illusion is so far heightened, that it is worth the time and money."

Though Mandell earned the luxuries of time and money, he still lacked the one thing that would have made producing *Galaxy Rangers* simpler—a toy deal. "The most unusual thing about *Rangers* is that it is the only daily strip [airing once a day for a five-day period] to get produced without the major support of a toy company," he says. "There are now toys, but the licensing came *after* the show went into production. When I put the concept together in January 1984, the idea of strip production was just becoming very big.

"The syndication marketplace was just starting to explode in '84 because of the success of *He-Man & The Masters of the Universe*. *He-Man* really set the trend for producing animation with heavy toy company involvement. Toy companies have always been involved in Saturday morning animation, but never to the extent that they were producing 65 half hours of animation. It's an extremely expensive endeavor. The average cost per strip has been somewhere near $15 million, which is a phenomenal amount of money—it's like the budget for a major motion picture. Most companies that get involved are really looking for the big toy hit, because it's the only way a financier can expect a return."

Mandell admits there are some advantages when a producer has a toy company backing his project. "Toy companies commit a certain amount to advertising and that whole media support of a product. That media awareness can make or break a show. It has hurt *Galaxy Rangers* to a certain degree because we went on the air without any of the media hype that shows like *Thundercats* or *Brave Starr* have gotten."

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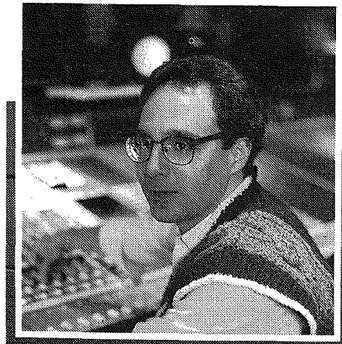

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this late-night HBO offering about the hellspawn to tell audience members to dim their lights. Really, it wasn't needed. The show, which followed the same basic premise and plot as the Image comic book, was dark enough with blood, murder, nudity and everything else that cable's good for.

47. THUNDARR THE BARBARIAN
(Ruby-Spears Enterprises)
Here's a cartoon with a royal pedigree. Jack "King" Kirby contributed character designs to this post-apocalyptic tale of a barbarian, his magic sword, his sorceress companion and his hairy sidekick, Ookla the Mok. Surprisingly mature, it was one cartoon that never talked down to its audience.

46. DEFENDERS OF THE EARTH
(King Features Syndicate)
Talk about your family values. This syndicated '80s cartoon hooked up classic comic-strip heroes (Flash Gordon, the Phantom, Lothar and Mandrake the Magician) with their descendants in an action-packed effort to save the Earth from evil dictator Ming the Merciless. And in a blatant case of ageism, it was usually the young'uns who saved the day.

45. THE HERCULOIDS (Hanna-Barbera)
The Herculoids were cosmic dinosaurs who battled alongside King Zandor and his family as they protected their planet against alien invaders (which seemed to happen almost every week–what was on that planet anyway?). Featuring creatures like a 10-legged Triceratops that can shoot exploding rocks from its head, this series was original and imaginative.

44. FREAKAZOID! (Warner Bros. Animation)
Imagine Superman but with red tights and the zaniness of classic Daffy Duck. That was Freakazoid. The show took intelligent, referential humor and pop-culture relevance and put it in a superhero setting. Here's an interesting note: Freakazoid got his powers from the Internet.

43. SPACE GHOST
See above.

42. X-MEN (Saban/Fox)
The '90s X-Men cartoon stayed fairly true to the comic, slightly altering popular storylines (like "The Phoenix Saga") in order to make them viewer-friendly. With a core cast made up of Wolverine, Cyclops, Rogue and more, and with guest appearances by Forge, Iceman, Nightcrawler and others, the 'toon was enjoyable for comic readers and TV viewers alike.

41. DUNGEONS & DRAGONS
(Marvel, D&D Entertainment)
The biggest appeal of "Dungeons & Dragons" was the dark subject matter, the violence that threatened our heroes and the frightening aspects of the villains, like the Satan-esque Venger and the multi-headed dragon called Tiamat. Based on the hit role-playing game from TSR, "D&D" actually incurred the wrath of the National Coalition of Television Violence at one point.

40. DR. KATZ, PROFESSIONAL THERAPIST (Tom Snyder Productions)
If anyone needs a shrink, it's stand-up comedians–you've gotta be nuts to stand in front of an audience to try and make them laugh. That's where Dr. Katz comes in, who has examined the psyches of such funny people as Stephen Wright, Janeane Garofolo and Denis Leary, who provided their own voices! Star quality and witty banter–fabulous!

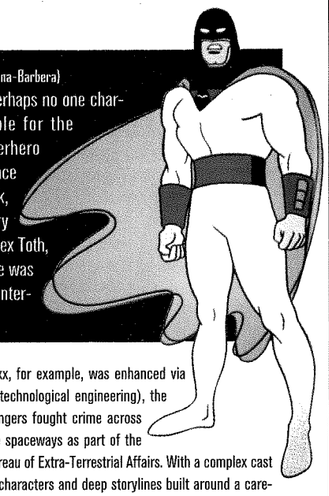
39. SCOOBY-DOO (Hanna-Barbera)
See right.

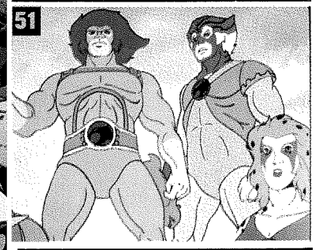
38. THE ADVENTURES OF THE GALAXY RANGERS
(Transcom Media)
Heroes with extraordinary powers (team leader Zachary Foxx, for example, was enhanced via biotechnological engineering), the Rangers fought crime across the spaceways as part of the Bureau of Extra-Terrestrial Affairs. With a complex cast of characters and deep storylines built around a carefully maintained continuity, "Rangers" is as close to anime as a syndicated show has ever come.

37. SPIDER-MAN AND HIS AMAZING FRIENDS
(Marvel)
This classic teamed Spider-Man with his superhero buds, Iceman and Firestar, while their alter egos attended school at Empire State University. With good-hearted teasing, funny hero-villain banter and witty repartee, the series had the most decidedly carefree tone of any Spidey cartoon to date.

36. THE REAL GHOSTBUSTERS (DiC)
Chock full of one-liners and occult references, this groundbreaking series (based on the blockbuster film) took animation to new comedic heights as the fab four (with a little help from their buddy, Slimer) duked it out with everything from trolls under the Brooklyn Bridge to demonic chickens in the Big Apple.

43 SPACE GHOST (Hanna-Barbera)
In animation history, perhaps no one character was responsible for the popularity of the superhero cartoon more than Space Ghost. His classic look, designed by legendary animator/comic artist Alex Toth, still inspires folks today. Thirty-five years after he was created, he still holds up, whether he's blasting intergalactic baddies *or* interviewing celebs.





'TOON IN And the list goes on: (42) X-Men, (45) The Herculoids, (48) Spawn, (51) Thundercats and (35) Rugrats.

35. RUGRATS (Klasky-Csupo)
Tommy Pickles and his peers can only converse among themselves, and their naive sweetness and less-nuanced understandings of adult jargon (literal takes on "pushing paper all day") lead to imaginative sequences as well as well-placed pop-culture references. The show at least reminds older audiences of better days when the biggest worry was a wet diaper.

34. MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM WING (Sunrise)
The adventures of five young rebels piloting Gundanium mobile suits in an attempt to overthrow an oppressive Earth government sliced through the competition like Deathscythe's energy blade through warm butter. This Japanese juggernaut conquered the ratings and left none to question anime's popularity here in the States.

33. ROBOTECH (Tatsunoko)
More addictive than crack, this classic series introduced an entire generation not only to anime but to a deep, involving storyline that had kids running home every afternoon to catch the latest installment in the soap opera of Rick Hunter, Lin Min May, the vengeful Zentraedi and those kick-ass Veritech fighter planes!

32. FAMILY GUY (Film Roman)
The greatest cartoon ever set in Quahog, Rhode Island, this hilarious Fox sitcom follows the trials and tribulations (and some more trials) of the Griffin family. There's Peter, a wannabe toy designer; Brian, the hard-drinking, talking family dog; and Stewie, a one-year old who sees defeating his mother's matriarchal tyranny as his first step toward ruling the world!

31. STAR BLAZERS (Office Academy/Sunwagon Productions)
Adapted from three different Japanese cartoons, "Star Blazers" stood out among other 'toons with its complex character relationships (friends Derek and Mark regularly clashed over Nova's affections), fast-paced battle sequences that impressed a post-Star Wars generation…and people died!

30. VOLTRON: DEFENDER OF THE UNIVERSE
(World Events Productions)
Five fantastic, lion-shaped robots piloted by teens fly together in a choreographed routine to form a single, giant sword-wielding robot named Voltron which proceeded to heartily pummel the menace *du jour*. That happened almost every episode, but you know what? We didn't care.

29. GARGOYLES (Disney)
Goliath and his crew were cursed mythical creatures who were resurrected in New York City after 1,000 years of imprisonment. Now, they fight evil by night and become stone fixtures by day. Slick animation and moody atmospherics highlighted this un-Disneylike Disney 'toon, which also featured dark symbolism that may have gone over the kiddies' heads.

28. SPIDER-MAN: THE ANIMATED SERIES (Marvel)
This was the thinking person's Spider-Man show, with plot twists, complex storylines and issues left unresolved for two or three seasons. Based more directly on the comic book than ever before, the animated show's '90s incarnation featured Venom, a retelling of the clone saga with a happier end and an ambiguous marriage to Mary Jane.

27. FUTURAMA
See next page.

26. DUCKTALES (Disney)
"DuckTales" married classic characters Scrooge McDuck and his nephews Huey, Dewey and Louie with cool-as-hell "Indiana Jones"-style adventure. Millionaire miser Scrooge and crew traveled the globe in search of lost treasures, usually foiled at every turn by archenemies the Beagle Boys or the sorceress Magica de Spell. Talk about quacking under pressure.

25. FANTASTIC FOUR (Hanna-Barbera)
The plots were adapted from Marvel's *Fantastic Four* comic book, which meant not only did you get the classic FF char-

39 SCOOBY-DOO (Hanna-Barbera)
Take four teenagers, a fraidy-cat great dane, a groovy van and some crazy mysteries and you've got one of the most popular cartoons of all time. Scooby, the most recognizable talking dog in the world, has survived the test of time and is still a favorite for all ages, but will next year's live-action flick do him justice?

VOICE OF THE PEOPLE
The 10 BEST characters voiced by Casey Kasem

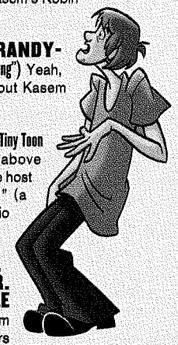
Next to Mel Blanc, 69-year-old Casey Kasem has lent his recognizable voice to some of the greatest characters in cartoondom. Get nostalgic about a 'toon, and the odds are pretty good that Kasem had something to do with it. Here are his best:

10. ANNOUNCER ("The Gary Coleman Show") Kasem's announcing for the series is not included in the Cartoon Network broadcast versions. He's probably pretty darn thankful.

9. TROUBALERT COMPUTER ("Super Friends") How hard could it be to perform a computer's monotone voice? Not too hard, but man, it was Kasem!

8. TANK MALLORY, DEXTER CARTER ("Hot Wheels") In this series inspired by the die-cast toys, Kasem voiced both a good guy and a baddie. See if you can listen for the nuances between the two.

7. ROBIN ("The Batman/Superman Hour," all of the different "Super Friends" shows) Though Burt Ward (from the live-action "Batman" show) would have been a better choice, Kasem's Robin was a worthy substitute.



6. MERRIADOC BRANDYBUCK ("The Return of the King") Yeah, we know this is a film but Kasem voiced a cool hobbit!

5. FLAKY FAKEM ("Tiny Toon Adventures") Kasem isn't above goofing on his role as the host of "American Top 40" (a nationally syndicated radio show), as he did here.

4. BLUESTREAK, CLIFFJUMPER, DR. MARCO ARCHEVILLE ("Transformers") Kasem voiced multiple characters in this popular '80s 'toon, though he didn't do quite a good job in making each one different. There were so many characters, though, that it didn't matter.

3. ALEXANDER CABOT III ("Josie and the Pussycats") The Pussycats' manager is the biggest cartoon coward this side of…well, "Scooby-Doo"'s Shaggy.

2. MARK VENTURE ("Battle of the Planets") For many, this version of the "Gatchaman" cartoons from Japan was the best, and Kasem's voicing of the strong-willed leader of G-Force was dead-on.

1. NORVILLE "SHAGGY" ROGERS (above) ("Scooby-Doo") Perhaps the most recognizable Kasem-voiced character, Shaggy's exclamation of "Zoinks!" is permanently etched in our memories. ■ **CHRISTOPHER LAWRENCE**