



Episode 2: “The Derelict”

Teleplay by Peter Packer; story by Shimon Wincelberg
(with script polishing by Anthony Wilson)

Directed by Alexander Singer

Produced by Buck Houghton (uncredited), with Jerry Briskin

Executive Producer: Irwin Allen

From the *Lost in Space* show files (Irwin Allen Papers collection):

Robinson, outside the spaceship when the tether broke, is rescued by his wife. Next, they see an enormously large alien spaceship, seemingly adrift. It bears down on them and engulfs their whole vessel inside it. While John and Don are studying its navigational system for clues to their whereabouts, Will, exploring, finds a huge chamber full of strange, frozen forms. Unwittingly he presses the button that defrosts them. Smith, finding Will and terrified by these strange-looking creatures, fires at them. The angry aliens mass to attack...

From the Script:

(Shooting Final teleplay, July 29 draft)

– *Maureen (into mike)*: “Don’s suiting up now. He’s going to shoot another line out with the rocket gun...” *Robinson’s Voice (urgent)*: “No! Not Don! He’s got to stay with the ship!” *Smith*: “A brave man. Words like that are worthy of an epitaph.” *Don*: “There is something useful you can do, Doctor. Suit up!” *Smith*: “I? In the airlock? My dear man, in the first place, I am not an official member of this expedition, and, in the second, I’m simply not conditioned for it – the heart ... at my age ... *(snaps his fingers)* ... out like a light!”

– *Robinson (to Smith)*: “You realize, of course, that we seem to be imprisoned here.” *Smith (with mock concern)*: “Yes, yes, quite a predicament. Have they, uh – communicated with you yet?” *Don*: “Not by any signal we can read.” *Smith (sure that the unseen occupants are his friends)*: “Well – they’re not in any hurry – I don’t suppose.” *Maureen*: “How can you possibly know that, Dr. Smith – when we’re almost certain this ship can’t be from our planet.” *Smith*: “Is that what you think?” *Don*: “Don’t you?” *Smith*: “Well – uh – if you’re all agreed, I – guess I must go along with you.”

Assessment:

“The Reluctant Stowaway” had been a thrill ride hard to beat, but “The Derelict” seemed to top it. Over a year before a television audience would see the U.S.S. Enterprise encounter the giant spaceship Fesarius in the first-season *Star Trek* episode “The Corbomite Maneuver,” we were treated to the sight of the Jupiter 2 encountering a ship better than ten times its own size. And then Goliath actually swallowed David! As the hangar doors closed, the mouths of the kids watching from home dropped open. We in the viewing audience sat in awe as John and Don, with the not-to-be-trusted Dr. Smith tagging along, left the ship and journeyed into the dark and eerily alien surroundings of the gargantuan spaceship. With crystalline elements hanging like cobwebs, and the membrane-like material on walls and sometimes even floors, the sights and sounds were truly out-of-this-world. Next came the bubble creatures, crackling and buzzing, seeming to speak with electrical charges.

The FX are the guest stars of this episode – that giant alien spaceship, the miniature Jupiter 2 moving through the interior of the ship, then rotating and landing, and those curious bubble creatures. Kudos to the seven principal actors; writers Peter Packer and Tony Wilson; director Alexander Singer; wardrobe designer and all-around helper Paul Zastupnevich; art director Robert Kinoshita; set decorators Walter M. Scott and Sven Wickman; photographic effects wizards L.B. Abbott and Howard Lydecker; special effects supervisor Johnny Borgese; composer Herman Stein; and producers Houghton, Briskin and Allen. Their combined talents made for a very memorable adventure.

Script:

Story Assignment 8542 (Production #8502)

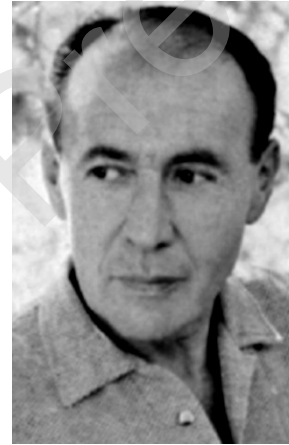
Story outline by Peter Packer received May 25, 1965.

Peter Packer 1st draft teleplay, also delivered on May 25, 1965.

Packer's 2nd draft teleplay: Early June 1965.
Reformatted Mimeo Department Shooting Final teleplay: Early June 1965.
Tony Wilson's script polish (Revised Shooting Final teleplay): July 1965.
Wilson's additional polishing (2nd Rev. Shooting Final teleplay, with beige page inserts):
July 27, 1965.
Page revisions by Wilson (blue insert pages): July 28.
Additional revisions by Wilson (pink insert pages): July 29.

Tony Wilson brought Peter Packer to *Lost in Space*. They knew one another from *Bonanza*, where Wilson had worked as a story consultant, and consulted on a scripts written by Packer.

Packer was 59. Despite being born in London, England, he loved westerns and mostly stayed with that genre in a screenwriting career that began in 1955. Prior to that, he wrote novels, such as *White Crocus* and *The Love Thieves*. Later, he wrote the screenplay to the 1956 western, *7th Cavalry*, with Randolph Scott as one of the few survivors of the Battle of Little Big Horn, sent to bring back the body of General Custer. On TV, Packer had multiple script assignments for *Bonanza* and *The Big Valley*, and also wrote one script each for other TV westerns, such as *Stoney Burke* and *The Virginian*. He created *Man Without a Gun*, a half-hour western series in the late 1950s, which ran for one season. He produced *Law of the Plainsman*, another western series, which also ran for only one season (1959-1960). It starred Michael Ansara, who would later be a *Lost in Space* guest star in "The Challenge." In addition, Packer served as a producer on two other series: *My Friend Flicka* and *The 20th Century-Fox Hour*. After meeting Irwin Allen, he wrote one script for *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea*, and would later contribute one to *Land of the Giants*. But his real claim to fame was for writing 25 episodes for *Lost in Space* – more than any other writer. This was his first.



Writer Peter Packer.

Peter Packer turned in his first draft teleplay on May 25, 1965. Included in the script:

194. INT. PASSAGEWAY VAULT – NIGHT

MED. SHOT

ON Will and Smith – staring apprehensively toward the o.s. bubble creatures – backing away – searching for the exit as a membrane-like section appears to block their progress.

195. THE BUBBLE CREATURES

Buzzing and crackling angrily. There is a general stirring among them as though they are preparing to advance.

196. CLOSE – SMITH

desperate now – he raises his gun – discharges it again.

197. THE BUBBLE CREATURES

as one of them bursts apart in a vivid explosion of light – and the crackling and buzzing of the others goes to a crescendo. They begin to advance.

Up to this point in the development of Packer's script, Smith was seen blasting a couple of the bubble creatures out of existence with a laser gun, and John and Don had to destroy the alien spaceship in order for the Jupiter 2 to escape.

Three days after receiving the script, Sam Taylor, Jr., of CBS Program Practices, Hollywood, sent request for changes, including:

Page 14: As discussed with Mr. Houghton, you may decide not to show the "creatures" from the Derelict being killed as this synopsis indicates. If they are killed, the action, even though taken by Smith, a heavy, will be defensive. The same philosophy should govern the possible "explosion" of the Derelict (with its inhabitants). It should only occur if necessary to save the life of the Robinsons.

After Packer's second draft script was submitted, Taylor sent a request for additional changes:

- a) Re-establish Smith's function and mission and the fact that he was an interloper.
- b) Carefully review and eliminate all the sweetness and light. Also, double check objectionable lines indicated in marked script (Especially watch stage direction indicating such attitudes in order that director not be misled).
- c) Smith's speech in the middle of Page 22 should have the addition "and get back to Earth."
- d) John's voice – Scene 101 – speech should comment on the presence of Smith and the annoyance he has caused the family.
- e) Re: the "bubble people" – sound effects will play an important part here – use echo chamber – to get humanlike aspect to a non-human looking apparition. Have Will remark: "They are not like us but maybe they are."
- f) Page 58 – Scene 234 – John's first speech, change the word "alien" to "inhuman."

CBS also had issues over Maureen Robinson being placed in danger during the space walk scenes outside the Jupiter 2, and her children's reactions as they watched in alarm from inside the ship.

Paul Zastupnevich said, "The mother should never be in jeopardy. That's why poor June never could do anything. Even when we put her out in space at the one time, to try to help Guy back into the spaceship, there was quite a bit of flack about that." (PZ-KB95)

A clever trick, begun by Packer and Wilson and honed to perfection by director Singer and Jonathan Harris, was presenting Smith as a dastardly villain who we

nevertheless couldn't help but like. The comical exchanges between Smith and Robot, while guardedly subtle at this early stage in the series, nevertheless raised a smile on the faces of those watching.

Pre-Production:

Alexander Singer was hired to direct. He was 37 and, after directing a 1961 indie called *A Cold Wind in August*, Singer started picking up TV assignments, such as one episode each for *Ripcord*, *Dr. Kildare*, *Profiles in Courage*, and two for *Checkmate*, then several for *The Fugitive*. *Psyche 59*, a 1964 feature film, did well enough to make him a sought-after director for about a year, and that brought him to *Lost in Space* for his one and only assignment.

Stuntman Dawson Palmer was the man hired to get inside the Bubble Creature suit, making his first of sixteen known *Lost in Space* "appearances."

Production Diary:

Filmed July 29 through August 9, 1965 (8 days).

The entire episode was filmed on Stage 5, which included the upper and lower decks for the Jupiter 2, and the wonderland interior of the alien ship, which included the landing bay area where the full-sized prop of the entire Jupiter 2 was placed. It was a massive undertaking, helped somewhat by materials used in the 20th Century-Fox film *Fantastic Voyage*, currently shooting on the lot.



New York's *Daily News* writer Kay Gardella visited the set and the offices of Irwin Allen while this episode filmed. She filed a story with her newspaper on August 3, reporting:

Oh, it's big-budgeted all right. In fact, as Allen himself admits, no show in TV has ever spent more in pre-production -- \$650,000 -- with each episode budgeted around \$200,000. A robot, one of the cast of characters, cost \$32,000 to construct.... For the show, a 60-ft., two-story space ship, replete with castoffs and obsolete equipment from our nation's space programs, has been constructed.

There's no specific technical advisor on the show. However, Elizabeth Manuel, head of the research department, keeps a hot-line between here and Washington for final checks on scientific detail and accurate dialogue provided by story editor Tony Wilson and his stable of writers. Where this isn't necessary is in the area of pure fantasy. For instance, when the world's first space colonists are confronted with weird space creatures. We were introduced to just such people on Stage 8. They were plastic-like mobiles heavily populating a ceiling-to-floor sea of what appeared to be cotton candy. "These," said our gallant guide, [Guy] Williams, "are some of the people we meet in space. They're called 'Bubble People.' And all the time we thought they were all here in Hollywood.

Not verbalized to reporter Gardella, but on everyone's mind: the series was rapidly falling further behind schedule. The show had gotten a late start in production due to the changes in the format – having to build the robot and add two new cast members. And, already, it was not keeping up with the six-day production schedule assigned to each episode by 20th Century-Fox.

"The Reluctant Stowaway" had taken director Tony Leader eight days of filming to complete, despite the use of some footage from the pilot film. This was a full two days late in finishing. Alexander Singer had been waiting in the wings on Tuesday and Wednesday, and now, on Thursday morning, he finally got started. The pressure from the front office was on him to make up for Leader's lost time. The shooting schedule for this second episode was also planned for six days.

Day 1: Thursday, July 29, 1965. Filming began at 8 a.m. and continued until 6:40 p.m. First up: the children watching helplessly through the porthole as their parents faced danger outside the ship; Don suiting up and going into the airlock in an



Irwin Allen's intention was that *Lost in Space* would have some sex appeal. Before CBS objected, John and Maureen Robinson were meant to openly display affection, as these unreleased promotional pictures from "The Derelict" reveal.



attempt to rescue John and Maureen; Smith bringing up the fire extinguisher from the lower deck; Don trying to open the hatch, and using the fire extinguisher to cool the expanded metal bulkhead. When production suspended, Singer was one-quarter of a day behind.

Day 2: Friday, July 30. Filming lasted from 8 a.m. to 6:50 p.m. They began with the scenes Singer had missed getting the day before, including Don pulling John and Maureen into the ship, then Maureen having trouble recovering. Next, the encounter with the giant alien ship in space. The cast didn't have to pretend they saw *The Derelict*; rear projection was used and they could actually see what was pulling them in. Locked-off mattes were used for POV shots through the Jupiter 2's view ports.

As for learning to react to off-screen menaces that would only be added in post, June Lockhart observed: "You could pretend *anything* while doing such a scene. You just dip into your little bag of reactions and pretend you're in peril. When I was doing *Lassie*, for example, I knew there actually *wasn't* a bear in the tree, but I did have to protect the kid and the dog. It's really just a game. If you go overboard with your own reaction, the audience has nothing to be frightened about seeing. If you carry on too much, you remove their



A rear projection screen was used outside the main viewport of the upper deck in order to allow cast members to see what their characters were reacting to.

involvement. I don't follow any formula for filming reaction shots, other than, 'Don't smile until the director yells *Cut!*'" (JL-SL83)

More drama as the Jupiter 2 was sucked into the huge alien spaceship, followed by John and Don's decision to go outside to investigate, with Smith, while the rest watched in suspense.

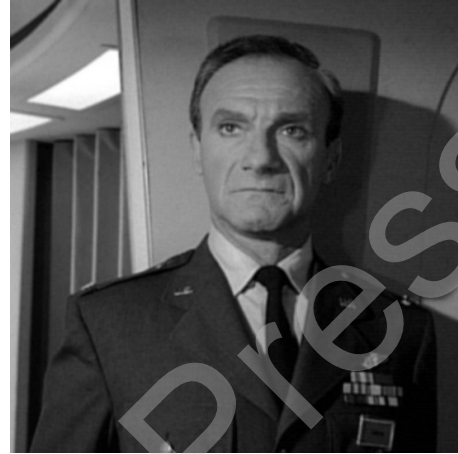
When all had been filmed, Singer was a half of a day behind schedule.

Day 3: Monday, August 2. They filmed from 8 a.m. to 6:48 p.m., still on the upper deck of the

Jupiter 2, as Don returned, then prepared to lift off and pilot the ship out of the giant alien vessel. When Singer called for a “wrap,” he was a full day behind.

Day 4: Tuesday, August 3. Filming from 8 a.m. to 6:48 p.m., again on the upper deck set. Only two-and-four-eighths pages of script were covered. Among these: the action onboard the Jupiter 2 as the ship escapes from the giant spaceship, and then the decision whether to investigate the alien planet. Singer was now one-and-a-quarter days behind.

Day 5: Wednesday, August 4. It was a longer day – 8 a.m. to 7:17 p.m. Singer shot eleven pages from the script on the lower deck of the Jupiter 2, including the scene where Smith tampered with the Robot; the later scene where John confronted Smith in his cabin; John visiting Will in his cabin; and then into Penny’s cabin. The voice reading Shakespeare on tape played by Penny was an uncredited Richard Basehart, then starring in Allen’s other current series *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea*.



To get the above shot, Jonathan Harris had to stand on an “apple box” (below image).



Also filmed, Will outsmarting the Robot by mimicking Dr. Smith. Bob May was again called upon to injure his legs by “walking the Robot,” although this time he only had to only go a few steps.

Singer finished one-and-a-half days behind.

Day 6: Thursday, August 5. This was supposed to be the last day of filming. Everyone knew it wouldn’t be, and the next episode scheduled to film, “Island in the Sky,” was pushed back. Filming began at 8 a.m. in the hangar deck of the alien ship, outside the Jupiter 2.



The full-size Jupiter 2 allowed the cast to stand inside on a platform and be visible through the main viewport. Of course it wasn't as big as the ship would have been to contain the interior sets we saw, but it was nonetheless a marvel to see ... and yet we would only see it a few times (most notably in this episode and Season Three's "A Visit to a Hostile Planet") due to the time it took to ready the "prop."

Billy Mumy said, "The full-sized Jupiter 2 prop, which resided on the back lot near the carpenters' shop, was made of wood and steel. It looked great ... until you walked up the landing gear and tried to fit inside its empty husk, with four-by-four nails everywhere... It was very cool, though. But we only used it a couple of times." (BM-LISM)

The other two times were for Season Two's "The Ghost Planet" and Season Three's "Visit to a Hostile Planet."

Work continued in different areas of the derelict ship, including Will and Smith's encounter with the "Bubble Boys" (as the shooting schedule referred to them).

Among the portions of the script shot this day:

177 INT. PASSENGER VAULT

ANGLE ON SMITH

entering – his smile becoming fixed and grotesque as:

178 SMITH'S P.O.V. – BUBBLE CREATURE

floating – buzzing – crackling – the inner ultra-violet light almost dazzling in its intensity.

179 ANGLE ON SMITH

A blob of terror – fumbling for the electron gun – producing it – aiming it –

WILL'S VOICE

(yelling out)

No - ! Don't shoot!

Smith reacts – staring around in shock as Will runs toward him.

WILL

They were in those walls. I disturbed 'em...

(indicating)

That one – he – I think I can communicate with him –

SMITH

(staring incredulously –

half dismayed –

shaking his head)

Not human – nothing ... and I was so sure –

WILL

Human? Out here? Billions of miles from Earth?

Smith stares hopelessly – then with a kind of malevolent fury at being frustrated, again raises his electron gun. Will grabs it.

WILL

No! Maybe they can help us!

(beat)

I mean, they're not like us but maybe they are...

Smith stares at him – he looks toward the bubble creatures.

180 THE BUBBLE CREATURES

at a distance – hovering – almost still as they seem to be watching Smith ... the leader just as still – in front of them.

181 TWO SHOT – SMITH, WILL

SMITH

(silently)

All right, my boy – see what you can do.

While Jonathan Harris and Billy Mummy filmed their scenes with the “Bubble Boys,” Guy Williams was interviewed by a Hollywood correspondent for a syndicated

article, carried in the September 3, 1965 edition of the *Galveston Daily News*. The writer told us:

Guy Williams is a bit more relaxed, now that his new CBS-TV series, *Lost in Space*, has actually gone into production. After the pilot was made and sold, many months went by before shooting began on the series, leading Guy to say that if they delayed much more, “by the time we get in our sixth show, we may be doing it live. Actually, anybody can start filming early. This is just another challenge in a business that thrives on challenges.”



They didn't wrap until 6:55 p.m. Singer was now a full two days behind.

Day 7: Friday, August 6. Another long day – 8 a.m. to 7:13 p.m., filming in the “Hall of Controls” area of the alien ship. The images of star clusters and distant galaxies were provided by The California Institute of Technology, also known as CalTech. The private research university located in Pasadena, California, managed JPL (Jet Propulsion Laboratories) for NASA. The pictures were taken from CalTech's 200-inch telescope, located on nearby Palomar Mountain. Beginning in 1948, and for more than 40 years, it was acknowledged to be the world's most powerful optical telescope. The picture provided to *Lost in Space* had been taken in 1959, as acknowledged in the end credits of every episode from the series.

At the end of the seventh day of production, Singer held at two days behind.



Above: Guy Williams standing outside the full-size Jupiter 2 "prop." Below: June Lockhart resting between scenes on a slant board. The stiff spacesuit did not allow for her to sit.



maybe they are not sure of the wire's strength. I'm wired like a puppet, but those wires have to be thin enough so they won't photograph."

Day 8: Monday, August 9. The longest day yet, with Singer being pushed to finish. They filmed from 8 a.m. to 7:55 p.m. It took all of that to cover the remaining eight-and-three-eighths pages from the script in and around the "Hangar" of the alien spaceship.

Also filmed: the exterior shots of the Jupiter 2 in space, as John tried to repair the ship, then drifted off into space, and then was rescued by Maureen.

June Lockhart told interviewer Steve Swires of *Starlog*, "That was very complicated. I had to wear a special flying suit with a harness around my pelvis. There were bolts which stuck out at the hip and were attached to wires outside the suit. When I was lifted up, the wires supported me by my crotch, and I had to balance myself so I was flat. Because the harness was so tight around the femoral artery, it shut off the flow of blood to my brain, so I could only stay up there for a short while. It was a very difficult stunt to do, but I got a kick out of it. It helped to be athletic, which I am." (JL-ST83)

Interviewed by syndicated entertainment columnist Erskine Johnson while filming this episode, Guy Williams admitted that he kept telling the production people that he weighed ten pounds more than he actually did. He said, "They keep asking me to fly on wires, and they look worried, like

Johnson wrote:

For his space walking in the show he is dangled from wires attached to a trolley-like affair on the high ceiling of the biggest sound stage at the 20th Century-Fox studio. The trolley is operated by a technician seated at an electronically operated console who, explains Guy, “can reel me in and out [from] our space craft just by pressing buttons. Really, it’s amazing.”



In a different interview, with Joan E. Vadeboncoeur, and published in the September 5, 1965 edition of the *Syracuse Herald-American*, Williams told how the producer’s efforts to make *Lost in Space* a visual feast had caused giant problems. One month before the series’ scheduled premiere on CBS, he said, “We haven’t filmed the third show yet.” The on-set effects, he said, were “a good part of the reason we’re behind.”

The production ended as it had been for three days now – two days late.

Alexander Singer chose not to return to the series or to direct any other one-hour episodes for Irwin Allen.

June Lockhart said, “We had some very good directors on *Lost in Space* that first season, but they probably only did one or two shows, and then probably went to a halfway house!” (JL-SL94)

It was likely Irwin Allen would not have invited Singer back. Allen kept a record of how many “camera hours” each director took to complete his episode(s). Singer used up 80.6 camera hours to finish his. Only two First Season episodes took longer, and, after getting a second chance, the director of those was not asked to return either (see “Island in the Sky”).

Singer was in demand elsewhere and kept busy on less problematic series, including directing nine episodes of *The Fugitive*; eighteen for *Lou Grant*; fourteen for *Knot’s Landing*; and sixteen for *Cagney & Lacey*. Returning to the sci-fi genre, Singer directed six episodes of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, six for *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, and ten for *Star Trek: Voyager*. Proving there was no residual bad blood between himself and Irwin Allen, Singer also directed a 1976 TV movie and back-door pilot for Allen – *Time Travelers*.

Post-Production:



Of the Jupiter 2 miniature seen inside the derelict ship, L.B. Abbott said, “We had a two-foot diameter Jupiter 2 with the mechanical sophistication capable of physically performing the lowering and recovery.” (LBA-LISF1)



Lost in Space fan and magazine writer Mike Clark was more specific, saying, “The interior of the Derelict starts off with the 15” Jupiter II miniature on horizontal Lydecker-style guide wires that tangled as the jaws of the Derelict closed, causing the model to shake. The live-action team neatly carried the shake through to the shot of the Robinsons inside the Jupiter, and it cut beautifully.

“However, once fully within the Derelict, the 48” model was flown by vertical wires and took over for the hovering and landing.” (MC-A115)

What appears to be a matte shot placing June Lockhart and the children in the Jupiter 2 when the ship was stationary inside the belly of the giant alien ship was actually something much more impressive than a matte process. Clark revealed, “This is not a miniature or a matte shot. It’s a live action shot of the full-scale Jupiter 2 with the actors at the window.” (MC-A115)

In other shots, when the Jupiter 2 is in motion, turning and making its way through the interior of the alien craft, the motionless crew members seen through the main viewport are miniature figures. On the smaller television screens of the 1960s, the stick figures almost looked good enough.

Frederick Baratta was the head of the second film editing team on *Lost in Space*. “The Derelict” was his first of 27 episodes. He had already cut three episodes of *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea* during its first season. Prior to that, he’d been the lead film editor on twelve episodes of *The Outer Limits*.

Herman Stein wrote the music score for this episode. Stein was a child prodigy who reportedly played piano at age three, and was a concert performer by six. Starting in 1951, he spent ten years on the staff of the Universal-International music department where he composed themes and scores for many of the studio’s science-fiction and horror films, including, from 1953, *It Came from Outer Space* and *Abbott and Costello Go to Mars*; from 1955, *This Island Earth* and *Revenge of the Creature*; from 1956, *Francis in the Haunted House* and *The Mole People*; and from 1957, *The Incredible Shrinking Man* and *The Monolith Monsters*. Stein did his share of westerns and comedies, as well. In this episode of *Lost in Space*, with certain scenes featuring Smith and/or the Robot, Stein’s sense of humor comes through. He was 50, and would contribute music to three more episodes of *Space*, one of *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea*, and eighteen of *The Time Tunnel*.



Composer Herman Stein.

As for replacing Bob May’s voice with his own as the Robot, Dick Tufeld said, “The dubbing was done rather imperfectly. They used to dub one reel at a time. There were a couple to the show, and we would sometimes have a different mixer in the second part of the show. The sound mixer would not always use the same equalization for looping. One mixer might give a tinny/metallic sound, while another might push the lower register. Consequently, you would have the robot sounding one way before the commercial break, and sounding another way for the last part of the show sometimes.” (DT-LISF4)

Total cost for “The Derelict”: \$189,915, far above 20th Century-Fox’s target of \$130,000 per episode.

Release / Reaction:

(Only CBS broadcast: Wednesday, September 22, 1965)

The Beatles, with *Help!*, still had the top-selling album at Sears and Montgomery Ward, as well as other stores that sold records. The title track was the most requested song on America's radio stations. On TV, the new Beatles cartoon series began on ABC's Saturday morning schedule. It would run for three years. The most popular movies playing across the country were *The Sound of Music*, *My Fair Lady*, and *Those Magnificent Men in Their Flying Machines*.

As for "The Derelict," the syndicated newspaper column "TV Scout," carried in the September 21, 1965 edition of *The Edwardsville Intelligencer*, said:

Series has more cliff-hanging thrills for the younger set. The Robinsons are still floating around in space from tether to tether. Some of their new problems include a huge, mysterious space craft which gobbles up their ship, and Dr. Smith, who keeps teaching his robot mean tricks. Also, there's the chance to land on a planet, which glows like a rotten tomato.

On September 23, after watching two episodes of *Lost in Space*, Bob MacKenzie, writing for the *Oakland Tribune*, reviewed the series, and, especially, "The Derelict," saying:

When my brain has become numb and paralyzed by the strained and labored doings of the half-hour comedies, when I am weary and heavy laden with the pathetic antics of Ivy-League Frankensteins [*The Munsters*] and affluent hillbillies [*The Beverly Hillbillies*], when the hollow reverberations of the laugh-track have sunk me into despair – then I turn to a program where innocence reigns; where the comedy is pure and unintentional, unaccompanied by electronic guffaws. *Lost in Space* is its name, and its charms are boundless. Not that it is so radical. Its thesis is no less preposterous, nor its plots more ungainly, than those of the more unlikely comedies. Its delicious appeal lies in the fact that it is apparently meant to be serious. In all seeming solemnity and good will, it puts forth the notion of a wholesome American family, clad in fetching Saran wrap, meandering through the stratosphere in a flying saucer without the least idea of where they are, with nobody for company but an irritable robot and a sinister foreign spy.

If the actors have any inkling that the situations are ridiculous, the dialogue side-splitting and the whole series irresistibly comic, they don't betray it by the quiver of a lip. They play it with all the solemn earnestness of a ladies club meeting to discuss the Viet Nam question. Most charming is the beautiful naiveté with which the program ignores the elemental scientific facts known by every literate six year old in this, the age of space. In last night's

episode, John and Maureen were outside the ship fixing something when the door stuck shut, trapping them outside temporarily. There was a comet on the way, and John and Maureen bravely told the others to drive on and leave them in space, to save themselves from the comet. Of course, all they would have had to do is hang on to the ship by their guide-wires, and they could have ridden right along without the least discomfort. But, if the writers knew that, they weren't letting on. Later, Don came out and laboriously lifted their unconscious bodies back into the ship, straining noticeably under their weight. A cynic would object here that people in space don't weigh anything, and Don could have thrown them both in with one hand. Anyone who would bring up an objection like that is ill-tempered and reactionary. Later on, they are trapped inside a giant space ship by a large creature resembling a caterpillar. Little Billy Mummy struck up a promising friendship with the caterpillar, who apparently had no trouble understanding English. But, before we could learn if the caterpillar was a former Rhodes Scholar, the spy shot it and the group had to make a fast exit.

The character with the most verve is Jonathan Harris, smirking diabolically as "the spy of a foreign power." It is not stated what foreign power he represents, but he has a decided British accent. Does this mean we will be at war with the British in 1997? Come to think of it, those British have been getting rather uppity lately.

On September 26, Ginny Fisher, writing for the *Sunday Journal and Star*, out of Lincoln, Nebraska, said:

The new series, which airs in the 6:30 p.m. [Central Time] Wednesday timeslot is, naturally, geared towards the younger crowd. The trouble is that it isn't so much a top effort for children as it is just a childish effort – and there is a big difference. Any weekly show that feels, after an hour's worth of programming, the need to stop suddenly in the midst of a harrowing adventure and briskly announce "continued next week" is slightly immature. Cliff hangers were bad enough, but space hangers, come now!

What's really irritating is that "space hangers" and rough robots that go around mumbling "destroy, destroy" are not needed. Basically, the show is good enough entertainment, especially for the young or for Flash Gordon diehards. The stars are capable, the topic is timely and the stage is set for multiple adventures. Monsters they should have, sure, it's that type of show. But gimmicky monsters, never! ...

The show is somewhat akin to *Gilligan's Island*, which proved such a successful sleeper last year, and, naturally, to the novel *Swiss Family Robinson*, which is ever popular.... Therefore, the series should have some audience potential, but it may have to

straighten out and fly right a bit first. Erase the comic strip gimmicks and techniques and the show may have a chance.

This will never be a great or critically acclaimed show, but as a possible adventure series it could eventually become good escapism fare. However, if the show continues to have space hangers and such, it could turn out that unlike “Trix,” this serial is for rabbits – kids are too smart.

On September 29, *Los Angeles Times*’ entertainment correspondent/critic Hal Humphrey had one of his articles syndicated across America, picked up by newspapers such as the *Steubenville Herald-Star*. Humphrey wrote:

In a flush of disgust after witnessing the first scenery-chewing episodes of the new CBS-TV series *Lost in Space*, I tagged off my review by commenting that “Your 5-year-old will eat this up.” I have since been upbraided thoroughly for my remark, and with considerably justification on the part of my upbraided, who is Mrs. Orman Longstreet, a former chairman of the Los Angeles 10th District PTA’s TV-radio committee.

“The time and format of *Lost in Space* suggest that it is indeed aimed at families, and that there are probably a number of 5-year-olds who are its actual or potential audience, but a 5-year-old won’t eat it up, he’ll hate it,” writes Mrs. Longstreet.

“In an age of space and space technology,” she continues, “a 5-year-old would not understand this show as fantasy, and my main objection to it is that, having hurried a family into orbit without even minimal safety or security precautions, the plot first puts the mother into considerable peril and shows her family being worried about her, and then goes on to put the father into mortal danger and leaves him there until the next week!”

...Mrs. Longstreet’s letter closed with this provoking thought: “Unless children are provided with material of quality, they will grow up not knowing what quality is. If they are exploited, and frightened, and condescended to in the name of entertainment or anything else, they will grow up to exploit and frighten and look down on other people, and to some extent we will all be the poorer.”

I do not intend to cop a plea here, although I did not mean to imply that simply because the *Lost in Space* series obviously was geared for kids it necessarily would be good for them to watch.... So, if I in any way implied a recommendation of *Lost in Space* for 5-year-olds, I hereby take it back.

One day later, United Press International writer Rick Du Brow took assessment of the new season. His syndicated commentary was carried by newspapers across the

U.S., including the *Bristol Daily Courier*, of Bristol County, Pennsylvania. Du Brow raved over NBC's *I Spy*, which he found "delightful," and liked ABC's *The Big Valley*, with characters that struck him as "straight and unpretentious." Then, Du Brow turned his attention, and his sharpened pencil, toward "the tiffany network," writing, in part:

Meanwhile, back at the launching pad, CBS-TV offered a new hour series called *Lost in Space*, a science-fiction concoction of depressing cleverness and comic-strip juvenility concerning a family of the future that is sent to another planet for colonizing purposes. Unfortunately, a spy aboard throws the spaceship out of whack, and while we left the family lost in space Wednesday night, we are assured they crash on an unknown planet.... I understand, by the way, that this show is also supposed to be tongue-in-cheek at times, but the acting indicates that is just an excuse. In short, it's like a live-action cartoon.

Irwin Allen's agent Herman Rush, said, "It was a frustration for him when the critics were negative. The critics were always looking at things like they should be classics, they should be *Playhouse 90*; they should be that type of product. They always were critical of adventure, children's shows, that type of thing. Irwin understood that, he accepted it. It was frustrating, but that was the world he lived in. And he paid attention to those reviews. He may have been unhappy with them, but he'd say, 'Maybe they have something here; let's analyze it.' He faced it. A lot of those weekends [at his Bel Air home] were spent reading reviews. He had a clip service that gave him the reviews from all over the country, so he had a lot of local paper reviews, as well, not just the national ones from the various TV guides." (HR-A115)

Despite receiving mostly bad reviews, *Lost in Space* was winning where it most countered – in the TV ratings.

According to the A.C. Nielsen 30-City Ratings survey for September 22, 1965, the 7:30 to 8:30 p.m. network race played out this way:

Network / Program:	Rating	Audience Share:
7:30 – 8 p.m.:		
ABC: <i>Ozzie and Harriet</i>	9.9	19.0%
CBS: <i>Lost in Space</i>	19.1	36.7%
NBC: <i>The Virginian</i>	15.8	30.4%
8 – 8:30 p.m.:		
ABC: <i>The Patty Duke Show</i>	13.7	24.6%
CBS: <i>Lost in Space</i>	20.2	36.3%
NBC: <i>The Virginian</i>	16.0	28.7%