Revisationally held-up as a bit of a faux pale as a view not helped by 'Terrance Dicks' disparaging comments on the programme's unwarranting after having been 'sold' for twenty years), Moonbase 3 was actually a rather brave stab at trying to toss the Asterix and Obelix way into a dramatic Sci- Fact dynamic. A victim of its own timetables (BBC 1 on a Sunday evening is not the ideal audience for this sort of programme) and (arguably) a dogged persistence on behalf of the production team to致力 adhere to the expense of the series at dramatic pace ensured that not only were there no further series, but that these six episodes were never repeated on terrestrial television. Indeed, they were junked in the mid-1970s, with NTSC copies being discovered in the Fox archives in the early-1990s. Since their recovery, they have been shown on satellite channel UK Gold as well as having been released commercial on DVD by Second Sight.

Set in the groovy, futuristic year of 2003 (technically making it "historical" at the time of writing this guide...), the production team tasked the wonderful polymath James Burke to don his Futurist cap and theorise on what life would be like on the moon. His comments to Radio Times (in the article which accompanied the opening episode) seem hopelessly optimistic in retrospect, but it must be appreciated that this series was made at a time when the Space Programme was still active and expectations were high:

"'Barry Letts had declared 2003 would be a realistic date for bases on the moon. This makes very good sense..."

The article concludes with some soundbites from Leslie Simpson, Erik-00's space-suited villain. In Thomson's words, "Erik-00 is a remorseless, implacable enemy; the most hostile environment Man has ever met. We must fight it together..."

Radio Times also featured a two-page article that contained a reasonable amount of background information backed up by then-current scientific theory. The article was graced with some lovely colour and monochrome photographs, ranging from posed publicity photographs to effects shots to model work (with James Burke kneading next some of the models). An article sidebar pays lifespace to The Quatermass Experiment, even including a stylishly eclectic graphic that originally appeared alongside the original listings in Radio Times in 1963.

The camera script lists this story as Departure and Arrival as well as Episode One (Recording B).

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The script held at the BBC Written Archives is stamped with the legend "This is the only copy of this script. Please return as soon as possible to the Television Script Library."

The episode was preceded by 01/12' of VTR trailers (07:24:06pm to 07:25:26pm). Narrated by John Braban (GDR), the trailers featured Moonbase 3; Countess from Hong Kong (the Film of the Week which followed Moonbase 3); and A Question of Feeling. The trailer contained a 00'8" clip of Moonbase 3's signature tune by Dudley Simpson.

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The three leads pose on set for the Radio Times.

A sequence of photographs from the Radio Times article showcasing the filming at Ealing Studio.

The script gives the teleproduction number as VTC/6HT/86768/A/B/ED, though he is in Radio Times.

Radio Times picture of John Hallam as Peter Conway.

"Adam and Bill. Adam and Kate. Adam and Tom. Adam and Helen. Now. Adam and you. He moves around, our Adam."

Terrorance Dicks is not credited on the script as Script Editor, though he is in Radio Times.

The script gives the teleproduction number as VTC/6HT/86009/SH/B/ED, but the listings must surely mean that a recording was made in the 1968/69 series.

Electronic editing took place on 17th August 1973 in VT 1/16.

Cast


The PasB lists Script Consultant as James Burke.

This episode was recorded in two blocks - VTC/6HT/87678/A & B - on 9th and 10th July 1973 and edited together in post-production.

The episode was preceded (07:25:15pm to 07:26:30pm) by a 01:32" VTR trailer for that evening's Play of the Month: The Love Gift and the Innocent. The trailer was narrated by Richard Baker (BBC). The Love Gift and the Innocent - by Alexander Goldstein - was directed by Alan Clarke and starred David Leland, Gabrielle Lloyd and Patrick Stewart (2142/2936, VTC/6HT/1414/6/ED, recorded on 10th March 1973 and transmitted from 08:17:56pm, lasting 127/20".

Production Information

File Assistant .................................................................Geoffrey Bright
Producer.................................................................Barry Letts
Director.................................................................Terrance Dicks
Production Assistant .........................Caroline Wallasey
Assistant Floor Manager.........................Reilly Elliott
Visual Effects.................................John O'Shaugnessy
Assistant Floor Manager.........................Mike Cathernwood
Director.................................................................Peter Conway
Visual Effects.................................Marcia Ferner
Production Assistant .........................Roger Limton
Make-up Supervisor ..........................Anna Chesterman
Visual Effects.................................Colleen McGee
Make-up Supervisor ..........................Dee Kelly
Visual Effects.................................Ron Bristow
Make-up Supervisor ..........................Ron Alior
Sound Supervisor...............................Brian Hiles
Project Number.................................................2343/8680
Telerecording Numbers .......................VTC/6HT/86768/A/B/ED
Camera Rehearsals ..........................9th and 10th July 1973
Camera Recording..................9th and 10th July 1973
Duration.................................................................51'00"
Studio.................................................................TC-3, Television Centre
Recording Format..................................625 line Colour TV with 16mm film inserts
Archive Format........................................Umatic, timed-coded VHS transfer
From Umatix, D3 of 526-625 line conversion
Film Sequences Used

The script lists the episode title as both Outiders and Episode Three (Recording F).

Radio Times listing has a small photograph of John Hallam as Peter Conway in the body of the listing.

In a different recording pattern to the rest of the episodes, there were three camera rehearsals/recording blocks, with rehearsal taking place on 30th and 31st July and recording taking place on 31st July and 1st August, with the blocks directed together in post-production (VTC/6HT/86634/6 & B). The second recording block took place in a morning session (10:30am to 01:00pm), which is very atypical for a BBC production, where the norm was usually between 07:00 and 10:00pm.

Cast


"We’re both reals, outsiders. We don’t belong, it’s time we got out." Conway and Partners - very different men, very different problems. One of them is heading for disaster..."

Achilles Heel


"Adam and Bill. Adam and Kate. Adam and Tom. Adam and Helen. Now. Adam and you. He moves around, our Adam."

Terrorance Dicks is not credited on the script as Script Editor, though he is in Radio Times.

The script gives the teleproduction number as VTC/6HT/86009/SH/B/ED. SH/B must surely mean that a recording was made in the 1968/69 series. There’s no mention as to why it was done. None of the other episodes appear to have been recorded to this format.

Electronic editing took place on 17th August 1973 in VT 1/16.

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The Pictorial Compendium

Moonbase 3

‘It’ll be like life in a nuclear submarine. No privacy except when you go to the lavatory.’ That’s what James Burke, scientific adviser to the new Sunday night science fiction series, puts it. Moonbase 3, thinks of conditions on an imaginary base on the moon in the year 2033. More about the realism of the serial that stars Fiona Gaunt, Donald Houston, Ralph Bates and Barry Lowe (left) in Radio Times.

Radio Times picture of Donald Houston as David Caufder

Radio Times article of James Burke on set.

Radio Times article of 'Moonbase 3' production ABC 1973, 2004

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