

MAGAZINE SECONDS

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MAN

... OR ASTRO-MAN ?

MAN ... OR ASTRO-MAN?

That is the question.

Huh? The answer is not the obvious choice — it is not “man” — because these creatures are from somewhere mere man would never dare to go. They’re from Grid Sector 23-B61 — the home of Gort (the robot in The Day The Earth Stood Still), Darth Vader (who needs little introduction), and the parasites who almost out-parasited us on Independence Day.

These pseudo-men — true Astro-Men — crash-landed in the State of Alabama. They terraformed their own innards, thereby acclimating themselves to Earth’s abundance of addictive and menacing toxins. Starting from scratch on their new home world, they created weird electronic contraptions with which they set about making music (snappy Surf riffs, snazzy Mod melodies, etc.). They appeared to be friendly, and to freely freak out and blow our minds — and we all took the bait.

I saw the horrible BIRDSTUFF without his human disguise. His hideous bug eyes dripped acid. Spotting my Rock Critic bar code tattoo, he



demanded I interview him. Nearby his stinking companions STAR CRUNCH, COCO THE ELECTRONIC MONKEY WIZARD, and DEXTER X sat silently, waiting for me to slip up. But I played it cool; by the end of our impromptu interview he felt like Earth’s Biggest Rock Star. Thankfully, he let me live; the guy next to me wasn’t so lucky — those alien scum made the poor wretch listen to their music and, as his ruined ears bled, they sucked him dry!

SECONDS: *So, what planet are you from?*

BIRDSTUFF: We are not from a planet. Planets are very archaic living systems that are not very spatially thought out. We’re from a grid sector known as 23-B61. That’s where Starcrunch originated. Along the way here we built Coco out of spare parts from early-Eighties entertainment systems. We thought he was just an Atari system but we’ve found out recently he’s got bits of Intellivision and Colecovision.

SECONDS: *So you built him after you arrived on Earth.*

BIRDSTUFF: On the way.

SECONDS: *May I ask how you came across Earth-manufactured entertainment systems*

**“In Space, music is a vibration,
so it feels more like a visit to a
chiropractor than it does music.”**

...OR

before you even arrived here?

BIRDSTUFF: Well, Atari is a much larger corporation than you think. The children of Outer Space were not deprived of *Missile Command*. We had it all. We had *Pitfall*; we had Activision out there!

SECONDS: *In your travels*

—
BIRDSTUFF: Not really travels, more like crash-landings. We're not as well-cultured as you might think.

SECONDS: *So you don't teleport; for instance, you actually come and go in vessels* —

BIRDSTUFF: Yeah, we've never mastered the teleportation thing. Starcrunch's hands, which

control the Mosrite device, are a little too precious to end up without one of them. We thought we might be able to make a go of it but it seems that

Def Leppard has proved us wrong.

SECONDS: *Nothing is sadder than watching that one-armed drummer. Don't transcribe that, Adam.*

BIRDSTUFF: No, you have to transcribe that. He was even dragging behind the beat on "Pour Some Sugar On Me."

SECONDS: *You're from a sector* —

BIRDSTUFF: A grid sector.

SECONDS: *But there must've been some*



planetary origins to your civilization.

BIRDSTUFF: More like cosmic debris origins.

We were originally in a gaseous state. We're only in a solidified state on your planet to be congenial to your race of homo sapiens. We don't enjoy having to solemnly sit on this couch right now or travel around in a van, which is a major compromise for us.

SECONDS: *When you all arrived here on Earth* —

BIRDSTUFF: Actually, it was the strange planet of Alabama that we arrived on —

SECONDS: — *in the form you were in prior*

to your arrival here there must've been no opportunity to hear music because the dynamics of an atmosphere are necessary to convey soundwaves —

BIRDSTUFF: In Space, music is a vibration, so it feels more like a visit to a chiropractor than it does music — but we did have the proper filtration devices. We got to hear a lot of transmissions from the early Sixties, both radio and television, that influenced us and molded us on our way here. But we never had plans to be the immensely popular Space Rock combo that we've become. It was all accidental. It was originally a vehicle to

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ASTRO-MAN

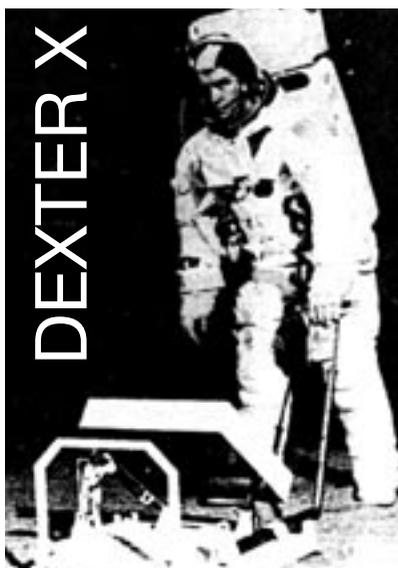
go across this planet and look for parts of the ship that exploded and scattered when we crash-landed in Alabama. Since then, we've practically given up on ever building it. We're just working at various jobs on planet Earth. Coco's in the sanitation field when he's not in the band.

SECONDS: *In what capacity?*

BIRDSTUFF: Basic human biological refuse disposal.

SECONDS: *Anyway, what must've happened is that the wavefront of electromagnetic radiation emanating from Earth back in the Thirties eventually reached your grid. Did those vibrations get you interested in Earth?*

BIRDSTUFF: Yeah, it was a random arrival, as far as the temporal aspect of transmissions. As I said, through all the filtration devices we have in grid sector 23-B61, we received many transmissions from the first years of the decade known as “The Sixties.” That's why a lot of the original Man Or Astro-Man? sound format was influenced by both Science Fiction and Surf Music from that period. But we've since grown rather homesick, having to smell each other in the solidified form, being in a van seven to nine months out of the year. We long for our home grid sector, so we started to play the



cosmic noise that we grew up with.

SECONDS: *Now that you're in human form, what do you think of human sex?*

BIRDSTUFF: That's the one anatomical part we've not been able to perfect, although we did implant Coco with the Atari 2600 joystick, which Miss Cynthia Plastercaster almost caught up with. He's worried — his fire button's been shaky. He's always grabbing on that thing — he can't go left at all. His joystick hangs to the right. It was too shot over that way for Cynthia Plastercaster to get a

good mold.

SECONDS: *That's obviously one of the biggest pitfalls when using spare parts in constructing a sentient being.*

BIRDSTUFF: Yes it is. It's sad.

SECONDS: *What's your comment on the Space Program we almost got going here?*

BIRDSTUFF: We appreciate it in a very nostalgic sense. We do have a fondness for the primitive attempt at Space Travel you guys've made.

SECONDS: *We use something like big firecrackers.*

BIRDSTUFF: It's technology by the Chinese still at work. I'm trying to pay homage without being mocking.



SECONDS: *When you were in the grid, you obviously were able to observe our nascent Space Program. Did you see it as a threat, like “Oh no, here they come”?*

BIRDSTUFF: You’re still under the assumption Earth people have been out of their own atmosphere and to the Moon. I don’t know if you saw—

SECONDS: *The movie Capricorn One?*

BIRDSTUFF: Yeah.

SECONDS: *So our Moon landing was staged to propagandize us?*

BIRDSTUFF: Yeah, you can see the guy holding the cue cards in the reflection of the helmet shell. It’s obvious, but people like to live in their own little fantasy worlds.

SECONDS: *If they were on the Moon, they would’ve encountered monsters.*

BIRDSTUFF: Exactly.

SECONDS: *Remember The First Men In The Moon, that George Pal movie? Those creatures living in the Moon —*

BIRDSTUFF: Yeah — where were they? The giant ant farm living underground in that lunar cheese — we stopped by on the way here. The Moon is a rest stop on the way to planet Earth.

SECONDS: *The Nazis have a secret base on the Moon.*

BIRDSTUFF: Obviously.



SECONDS: *So could you please critique America’s Space Program?*

BIRDSTUFF: As I said, to integrate with Earth we had to choose some temporal point and that was the early 1970s. You were heading out of the once-great glory days of NASA and it’s sad to think it was all inspired by purely political endeavors — which it obviously has been, being that they haven’t done anything in the last twenty years besides kill some elementary school teachers and send a little remote control probe to Mars. The inquisitiveness of the people on the planet

Earth doesn’t extend to searching for things as a pure intellectual endeavor. The searching for signals with radio telescopes might prove to be totally futile, but you can’t concern yourself with the present. What’s the Gil Scott-Heron diatribe — “Whitey On The Moon”? You guys have screwed up your planet so much — there’s all these concerns that you have to take care of but at a certain point you have to think of future intellectual endeavors.

SECONDS: *There’s an Ed Sanders record, Beer Cans On The Moon, from ’72. Maybe your electromagnetic resonance, traveling backwards in time, put the idea in his head —*

BIRDSTUFF: I think that’s what it was.

MAN ... OR ASTROMAN?



SECONDS: *Did you guys see beer cans on the Moon?*

BIRDSTUFF: Actually, we did. Strangely enough, they were Stroh's.

SECONDS: *Sanders would have had no way to know that unless you guys imparted this information to him.*

BIRDSTUFF: Exactly. In our perspective, the only thing that can spark any future in which you'd go out into the great beyond is that people are basically bored.

SECONDS: *Let's talk about planetary science. Don't we need an atmosphere composed of the vapors of DMT, crack and marijuana?*

BIRDSTUFF: This atmosphere is slowly getting converted into tobacco smoke. For a long time, we thought we thrived in a nicotine-induced haze but we found it's not true. That's why we mainly did most of our live experimentation in small, sniveling Indie Rock clubs.

SECONDS: *When you began disseminating information in a musical form, you were on Estrus Records. That was interesting because in opposition to your technical nature was a record company with a name that implies a primitive state of animal attraction.*

BIRDSTUFF: That was just stepping out of the primordial ooze and starting as a simple one-celled organism. We certainly do appreciate that evolutionary aesthetic that Estrus had.

SECONDS: *Are there used spaceship salesmen where you're from?*

BIRDSTUFF: I don't know. We'd buy one. Coco has made us travel all over the world

to try and find the parts needed to complete him. We've played shows in Tasmania and he knew where the floormats were and he found a cigarette lighter in Slovenia.

SECONDS: *So you're getting the pieces together slowly but surely.*

BIRDSTUFF: No, Coco's basically lying. He's headed for disaster anyway. Man Or Astro-Man? used to be a live television cathode ray sensory overload experience but now Coco's rebeamed the transmissions trying to do the E.T. "phone home" thing, and he's actually sending strange transmissions with our rotating satellite dish from the stage.

SECONDS: *I can't help but feel that Earth's Science Fiction is just the manifestation of our archetypes. Since you have a cosmic overview, let me name a few Science Fiction stories and you tell me which ones are true and which ones are fiction.*

BIRDSTUFF: In all honesty, when we originally arrived on your planet we were fearful of Science Fiction because it reminded us of the actuality in which we existed. Some of your Sci-Fi anthology series of the late Fifties and early Sixties are damn close to how it really is out there. The cheesy Sci-Fi like *Rocky Jones*, *Space Ranger* —

SECONDS: — *really happened?*

BIRDSTUFF: Yeah. We do have a fishing line attached to our spaceship. If you want to name a film or other element of Science Fiction media, we'll tell you if it's true or not.

SECONDS: *Alright* — *Forbidden Planet.*

BIRDSTUFF: *Forbidden Planet* did happen. That was our civilization.

SECONDS: So you're Krells? I'm impressed.

“We were originally in a gaseous state. We’re only in a solidified state on your planet to be congenial to your race of homo sapiens. We don’t enjoy having to solemnly sit on this couch right now or travel around in a van, which is a major compromise for us.”

How about the events in *Event Horizon*?

BIRDSTUFF: *Event Horizon* did not happen. But *Hellraiser* did.

SECONDS: The Day The Earth Stood Still — *did that really happen?*

BIRDSTUFF: Yeah. In fact, I don’t know if you know this, but highly evolved intelligent beings of an extraterrestrial nature — like ourselves — often have robots for pets. A lot of times you’ll go over to Starcrunch’s laboratory and hear that weird sound mylar Pop Tart packaging makes when it’s opened, and then you’ll hear a microwave on high for thirty seconds. That’s fuckin’ Gor making Starcrunch some Pop Tarts. He keeps the house really neat — he does the bathrooms.

SECONDS: *Here’s another one — Alien.*

BIRDSTUFF: The whole *Alien* series happened up to the point where Sigourney Weaver shaved her head. That was where it got farcical. I don’t think that was necessary.

SECONDS: *Wasn’t Sigourney sexy with a shaved head?*

BIRDSTUFF: For an Earth contingent. Again, we’ve never had any success integrating with the female of your species.

SECONDS: [referring to subject’s companion] *But you’ve brought this very lovely female Earthling along with you to our interview. She must not be very happy about being used as a prop —*

BIRDSTUFF: I need her for cover and other reasons I’m not ready to talk about yet.

SECONDS: *Back to Sci-Fi realities: what about Tron?*

BIRDSTUFF: That’s happening all the time,

except the Light Cycles didn’t ever happen.

SECONDS: The Andromeda Strain — *was Earth infected by a microbe from Space?*

BIRDSTUFF: Basically, everyone died and was re-formatted back to life. People had all these terrible fears of some micro-organism taking over. This memory implant spawned so many terrible TV series of the early Eighties, like *V*.

SECONDS: *Like Alien Nation?*

BIRDSTUFF: Exactly. But it was a really good idea when the aliens in *Alien Nation* got drunk off milk.

SECONDS: *What terrestrial Sci-Fi writers reflect the status quo of the universe?*

BIRDSTUFF: We all have a great affinity with Philip K. Dick and the way he makes a nice little maze out of the axons and dendrites of the human mind. Jack Williamson, Robert Heinlein, and Arthur C. Clarke — most of the classic Science Fiction of the Sixties.

SECONDS: *Do you think that a classic Science Fiction anthology, consisting for example of those writers’ work, will become the equivalent of the Bible in the future?*

BIRDSTUFF: Probably so. All the subliminal messages contained within Science Fiction enter into a mass consciousness and end up being true. It’ll be funny when Science Fiction writers develop more of a sense of humor and develop things that have nothing to do with functional technology but actually are just to play a great joke on the universe. That’s what *Coco’s* doing now. He’s built many inoperable