

= Attack on Cloudbase =

" Attack on Cloudbase " is the 31st episode of the 1960s Supermarionation television series Captain Scarlet and the Mysterons . The penultimate episode of the series , it first aired in the United Kingdom on ATV Midlands on 7 May 1968 . In this episode , Symphony Angel ejects from her damaged interceptor into the Sahara Desert ; before she is located , Mysteron spacecraft enter Earth 's atmosphere and launch a devastating assault on Cloudbase . Executive producer Gerry Anderson selected Ken Turner to direct Tony Barwick 's script on account of the episode 's " bizarre " quality .

Filmed in October 1967 , " Attack on Cloudbase " underwent several scripting changes prior to shooting . Challenges facing the Century 21 production team 's special effects department included a complex shot of an Angel aircraft scale model overflying the Symphony Angel puppet , and the extended sequence presenting the attack on Cloudbase itself . The department built only a limited number of saucer @-@ shaped spacecraft models , opting to increase the apparent size of the Mysteron attack force at low cost by attaching flashing light bulbs to the backdrop of the model set .

Composer Barry Gray devised a unique score at the request of Anderson , who judged the series ' archived incidental music unsuited to the episode 's tone . Voice actress Liz Morgan remembers the emotion of the script , while Anderson praises Barwick for his " humanised " writing of the series ' regular characters , considering the nature of the plot to be mainly " dark humour " . In 1980 , the New York offices of Century 21 's distributor , ITC Entertainment , re @-@ edited " Attack on Cloudbase " into a segment of the Captain Scarlet compilation film Captain Scarlet vs the Mysterons .

= = Plot = =

While on regular patrol , Symphony Angel is forced to eject into the Sahara Desert following an explosion to the rear of her interceptor 's cockpit . Suffering from sunstroke , she quickly falls unconscious . After the Mysterons warn of its imminent destruction , Spectrum 's airborne headquarters , Cloudbase , is placed on red alert and sealed from all external contact . Destiny Angel is launched to search for her comrade , but in the light of the Mysterons ' threat is recalled on the orders of Spectrum 's commander @-@ in @-@ chief , Colonel White . This decision provokes a heated argument between White and Captain Blue , who confesses that he and Symphony are romantically involved . White refuses to allow Blue to join the ground forces that are being mobilised to locate Symphony .

Night falls , and Captain Magenta detects an unusual signal in the Cloudbase Radar Room . Rhapsody Angel is launched to investigate and finds that the readings are emanating from a spinning Mysteron spacecraft , which obliterates her interceptor in mid @-@ air . To prevent civilian casualties on the ground , Cloudbase is moved into Himalayan airspace on its horizontal thrusters , while its personnel prepare for the inevitable final confrontation . When more spacecraft appear on the radar , Captain Scarlet volunteers to challenge the Mysterons in Destiny 's place , but crash @-@ lands on the Cloudbase flight deck after his interceptor is damaged .

As the Mysterons start to fire on Cloudbase , Dr Fawn is killed . Posing as his assistant , Mysteron intermediary Captain Black reports that Scarlet is dead with no possibility of recovery , his retro @-@ metabolic ability being too weak to heal such extensive injuries . The Mysteron assault intensifies , resulting in the deaths of Magenta and the remaining Angels , until only White , Blue and Lieutenant Green are left alive in the Control Room . As the stricken Cloudbase loses altitude , Green is killed by another explosion , which also cripples Blue and leaves him unable to save himself . White resolves to go down with his command , and is seen standing to attention and saluting in a spiralling freeze frame shot , accompanied by the sounds of Cloudbase crashing to Earth .

Immediately after Cloudbase 's apparent destruction , Symphony wakes up in the desert ; she is face @-@ to @-@ face with Scarlet and Blue , who are part of the ground forces that have been dispatched to rescue her . In the final scene , it is explained that Symphony dreamt the attack on

Cloudbase in a nightmare brought on by the heat of the desert sun .

= = Production = =

One of the last episodes of Captain Scarlet to be produced , filming for " Attack on Cloudbase " commenced towards the end of October 1967 . In Tony Barwick 's original script for this episode , the role of Captain Magenta was filled by a previously unseen Spectrum officer , Captain Sienna . However , the lines passed to Magenta after the production staff determined that the costs of making a new Spectrum puppet uniform would be too high . The director role was given to Ken Turner , executive producer Gerry Anderson believing that his style of direction best suited the episode 's " more bizarre " tone . Unique among Captain Scarlet episodes , " Attack on Cloudbase " contains no guest characters ; additionally , it is one of only two episodes (the other being " Flight to Atlantica ") in which all the regular Spectrum characters appear , although not all are given dialogue .

The stranding of Symphony Angel in the desert and the Mysteron assault on Cloudbase posed several technical challenges to the special effects department , under the supervision of Derek Meddings . A shot depicting the jet of Destiny Angel shooting past the grounded Symphony required close collaboration between the puppet operators and the effects technicians (the former controlling the wired Symphony marionette , the latter staging the flyby of the scale model interceptor) . The Mysteron spacecraft design was based on the appearance of conventional , " saucer @-@ shaped " UFOs as reported during the 1960s . To make it appear that the objects are spinning in mid @-@ air , Meddings added " veins " to each model to reflect light directed onto the set . Only the foreground of the high @-@ altitude attack sequence was populated by scale models ; since the department lacked the necessary number of operators , small light bulbs were fitted to the backdrop to give the impression of a larger fleet .

Immediately before Cloudbase crashes to Earth off @-@ screen , a still frame depicts Colonel White giving a salute from behind his Control Room desk . Anderson , who attributes this creative decision to maritime tradition , specifically remembered suggesting " Let 's make sure [Colonel White] goes down like the captain of a big ship . " Liz Morgan , who provided the voices of Destiny and Rhapsody Angels , has discussed how the emotion of the script manifested itself at the recording session : " It was a moment when Destiny was very worried about Captain Scarlet and she was making impassioned pleas for him . Well , I started to cry , and immediately a voice came down from the recording booth and [producer] Reg Hill , who was directing that particular week , said , ' No , Liz , love . Do it again , love . Puppets don 't cry ! ' " .

" Attack on Cloudbase " is one of a minority of Captain Scarlet episodes whose incidental music was scored especially , as opposed to being recycled from the series ' audio library . Composer Barry Gray devised the unique score following Anderson 's determination that none of the used tracks fitted the episode 's unusual tone . The recording was conducted on 3 December 1967 , four months after Gray 's last contribution to the series , with an orchestra of 14 instrumentalists . The new tracks were titled " Desert Symphony " and " The Mysterons Attack ! " Music for " Expo 2068 " originated from the same studio session . It is also one of four episodes where members of Spectrum come face to face with Captain Black , the other three episodes being " Manhunt " , " Spectrum Strikes Back " and " Flight to Atlantica " .

= = Reception = =

James Stansfield of the entertainment website Den of Geek considers " Attack on Cloudbase " the best episode of Captain Scarlet and the Mysterons , ranking it first in his " Top 10 " list . Describing the instalment as highly entertaining , even if " shocking and surprisingly bleak " , he praises the characterisation and Tony Barwick 's writing in general , and in particular the shocking killing of Rhapsody Angel and the conflict between Captain Blue and Colonel White . Stansfield 's review is not without criticism , conveying disappointment with the plot twist conclusion and also questioning a minor plot hole : why Symphony Angel discards her helmet after crash @-@ landing , thereby

breaking off radio communication with Cloudbase . He suggests that the unreality of the main plot is inferred some time before it is confirmed in dialogue , with the demise of the normally " indestructible " Captain Scarlet and the presence of Captain Black ? whose appearance does not in any way astonish Blue ? serving as " hints ... that all might not be quite as it seems " .

Morgan Jeffery of Digital Spy describes " Attack on Cloudbase " as " thrilling " , opining that it is " perhaps the highlight " of the series . Like Stansfield , he is critical of what he refers to as the " lame , ' it was all a dream ' ending " , judging it to be rendered more frustrating by the fact that the series ' final episode , " The Inquisition " , is a clip show that ends ambiguously with regard to the fates of Spectrum and the Mysterons : " Cut the final few minutes from ' Attack on Cloudbase ' and imagine what a finale that would have been ! " .

In a DVD audio commentary for the episode , Gerry Anderson remembered that the writing of " Attack on Cloudbase " set out to strike a purely comic note ; he suggested that the nature the finished product was more typical of black comedy . While admitting that the dream sequence and reset button technique were arguably uninspiring clichés , in the case of " Attack on Cloudbase " he defended the use of such plot devices for their suitability in both initially alarming viewers (with the apparent deaths of the main characters) and ultimately reassuring them (with the revelation that the attack on Cloudbase was , in the end , " all a dream ") . Anderson praised Tony Barwick 's script , citing Blue and Symphony 's romantic relationship and the underlying tension between Blue and Colonel White as examples of Barwick 's " humanisation " of the puppet characters . Captain Magenta 's comic quality as the herald of the attack is , similarly , another " wonderful example of ' Barwickism ' " .

Chris Drake and Graeme Bassett describe " Attack on Cloudbase " as " tense and exciting " , adding that it is " guaranteed to keep the viewer guessing " . The British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) has passed the episode with a U certificate , while also noting that " Attack on Cloudbase " contains " very mild , fantasy " violence . Anderson argues that the weight of the episode 's dark and violent tone is lessened by the relaxed closing scene , whose writing was inspired by the reasoning that there should be " a sequence where everyone was happy together , and clearly no one had come to any grief " , thus creating the " inevitable happy ending " to an otherwise tragic plot .

= = 1980 re @-@ edit = =

Footage from " Attack on Cloudbase " was re @-@ edited to form part of Captain Scarlet vs the Mysterons , a compilation film released in 1980 . A new ending , specially filmed by ITC Entertainment New York , comprises a CGI " pyramid " with an accompanying Mysteron voice @-@ over (provided by an American actor) , implying that the attack on Cloudbase was in fact real , and not the product of a nightmare . The Mysterons use their powers to reverse time , aborting the timeline in which Cloudbase was destroyed and its personnel killed . The re @-@ writing of the ending was received negatively by fans of the original , uncut episode .