

= 30 Minutes After Noon =

" 30 Minutes After Noon " is the seventh episode of the 1960s Supermarionation television series Thunderbirds . Written by Alan Fennell and directed by David Elliott , it first aired in the United Kingdom on ATV Midlands on 11 November 1965 . In a plot incorporating visual allusions to 1960s spy thriller films , in particular the James Bond film franchise , " 30 Minutes After Noon " sees the Tracy family attempt to rescue a British secret agent embroiled in the latest scheme of the Erdman Gang , a powerful crime syndicate .

Drawing inspiration from the 1965 spy thriller film The Ipcress File , a recent release at the time of shooting , Elliott decided to bring Fennell 's script to life with the use of " quirky visuals " . As such , Elliott and his camera operator , Alan Perry , experimented with original angles and techniques , electing to introduce one scene with a long tracking shot and filming the characters using a mixture of live @-@ action close @-@ up shots and forced perspective . The music , on the other hand , is recycled from earlier Thunderbirds episodes .

Commentators such as media historian Nicholas J. Cull have praised Elliott and Perry 's cinematographic innovations for imitating the visual style of older espionage films . However , Stephen La Rivière , writer of Filmed in Supermarionation : A History of the Future , argues that the pastiche is not evident throughout : asserting that the switch in narrative focus from the Hudson Building fire to the infiltration of the Erdman Gang essentially divides the episode into loosely connected halves , La Rivière suggests that the visual style of the first owes more to conventional filming techniques . " 30 Minutes After Noon " was adapted for audio in the 1960s and serialised as a comic strip in the 1990s .

= = Plot = =

In Spoke City , Thomas Prescott accepts an apparently innocent hitch @-@ hiker into his car . The stranger 's true intentions are revealed when he attaches a metal bracelet to Prescott 's wrist , warning him that it contains a powerful explosive charge that is due to detonate in 30 minutes ; the key to unlock it will be found in his office at the Hudson Building . Speeding to his workplace with the police in pursuit , Prescott removes the bracelet and leaves it in a filing cabinet . The device explodes as he is returning to the ground floor in a lift : the top levels of the Hudson Building are incinerated , and Prescott is plunged to the bottom of the lift shaft , ten storeys underground .

Although the fire is quickly brought under control , Prescott is completely cut off . News of the events in Spoke City soon arrives on Tracy Island . Jeff dispatches Scott in Thunderbird 1 , while Virgil and Alan take off in Thunderbird 2 equipped with newly commissioned fire @-@ fighting apparatus . Lowered into the shaft in a protective cage fitted with diacetylene sprinklers , Virgil and Alan clamp the stricken lift and return to ground level , whereupon Prescott is arrested . Police Commissioner Garfield notes that classified documentation regarding criminal organisations , including the Erdman Gang , has been destroyed in the fire . Prescott 's claims about the hitch @-@ hiker are validated when the charred remnants of the bracelet are discovered .

An operation to expose the Erdman Gang leads to the recruitment of Southern , a British Secret Service agent , who is assigned to infiltrate the organisation and leak intelligence on its latest scheme . The gang leader contacts the undercover Southern and Erdman operatives Dempsey and Kenyon at Glen Carrick Castle in the Scottish Highlands , and briefs them on their mission . The trio are to drive to the Nuclear Plutonium Store , where isotopes for all Britain 's power stations are housed , and plant explosives to detonate at 12 : 30 p.m. ; this will cause a nuclear explosion of unprecedented scale and devastate half of England . To ensure compliance , the charges , which have already been armed , are contained in wrist bracelets identical to Prescott 's and are to be unlocked on retrieval of the key at the Plutonium Store .

On their arrival , Southern , Dempsey and Kenyon use a ray gun to neutralise the store 's robot guards and bypass the security doors one after the other , ultimately arriving in the plutonium vault . Southern reveals his true identity and holds the others at gunpoint , commanding them to proceed to the Leader 's proposed rendezvous point and capture him . The tables are turned , however , when

a robot traps Southern in a crushing grip . Dempsey and Kenyon unlock the bracelets and make a getaway , jamming the security doors and leaving Southern to die in the nuclear explosion .

Southern 's emergency call is transferred from his superior , Sir William Frazer , to International Rescue . Landing outside the Plutonium Store in Thunderbirds 1 and 2 , Scott and Virgil use the Laser Cutter Vehicle to burn through the doors . Inside the vault , Virgil releases Southern from the robot . As the time nears 30 minutes past noon , Scott , in possession of the three bracelets , takes off in Thunderbird 1 ; he jettisons them over the sea , where they explode harmlessly . On Jeff 's orders , Lady Penelope and Parker intercept the Erdman Gang at their rendezvous and use FAB 1 's cannon to shoot down the leader , Dempsey and Kenyon before they can escape in a helijet . Southern recovers from his ordeal at the Creighton @-@ Ward Mansion .

= = Production = =

Initially unenthusiastic about his task of realising Alan Fennell 's script , director David Elliott developed his inspiration after seeing the 1965 spy thriller film *The Ipcress File* , starring Michael Caine . He remembers that the film " used all the old @-@ fashioned shots ? looking through a lampshade , etc . On Monday morning , Paddy [Seale , lighting camera operator] came in and said , ' I saw a film this weekend , ' and I said , ' So did I . ' ' Was it *The Ipcress File* ? ' ' Yep . Right , that 's what I want to do . ' " In homage to *The Ipcress File* , Elliott decided to incorporate " quirky visuals " into his direction of the Thunderbirds episode .

Elliott decided to open the Glen Carrick Castle sequence with a tracking shot covering all three walls of the puppet set , coordinating the necessary camera manoeuvres with camera operator Alan Perry . In a pioneering move for a Supermarionation production , forced perspective is used during this scene to present a live human hand and scale puppet characters within the same frame . While the hand , intended to belong to Southern , twiddles a pen in the foreground of the shot , the puppets of Kenyon and Dempsey are positioned across a table in the background . Although the puppets of Thunderbirds were sculpted in 1 ? 3 human size , a visual illusion ensures that Kenyon and Dempsey appear to be accurately scaled in proportion to the hand .

Incidental music for " 30 Minutes After Noon " was , for the most part , recycled from previous Anderson productions . The television belonging to Hudson Building janitor Sam Saltzman issues the " March of the Oysters " track from the Stingray episode " Secret of the Giant Oyster " . The Highland theme from " Loch Ness Monster " accompanies the scenes set in Glen Carrick Castle ; the castle model is itself a re @-@ use of Castle McGregor , which appeared in the same Stingray episode . Its last appearance in the Supermarionation productions was as Glen Garry Castle in the Captain Scarlet and the Mysterons episode " The Trap " .

= = Reception = =

" 30 Minutes After Noon " achieved viewing figures of 5 @.@ 2 million when it was repeated on BBC2 in 1992 . According to Nathalie Olah of *The Independent* , the nature of the episode 's plot demonstrates the " sense of drama " that made Thunderbirds popular : " Sure , most kids didn 't understand the workings of a plutonium bomb , but the fact that the show was capable of sustaining their attention , as well as that of their older siblings and parents , meant they had some idea by the end of said episode . " Thunderbirds co @-@ creator Sylvia Anderson praises scriptwriter Alan Fennell 's " vivid imagination " and his complex script , while also opining that " 30 Minutes After Noon " was " more a vehicle for live action than for the limited emotions of our puppet cast . "

Media historian Nicholas J. Cull links the episode to one of Fennell 's other Thunderbirds scripts , " The Man from MI.5 " , in which the main guest character is a British Secret Service agent called Bondson . For Cull , " 30 Minutes After Noon " is one of several Thunderbirds episodes that incorporates visual homage to the James Bond films . In particular , he comments on Southern 's briefing scene , in which the characters of Southern , Sir William Frazer and an unnamed aide are substituted by hats on a stand : " Southern 's hat is a trilby , tossed onto the stand in best James Bond fashion . " Tom Fox , in a review for *Starburst* magazine , draws a similar conclusion with

regard to the scene ; he picks out the robot guards and the " spooky " , " nefarious " and " palatial " hideout of the Scottish castle as the episode 's other highlights . He gives " 30 Minutes After Noon " a rating of four out of five stars .

Commenting on David Elliott 's resolution to diversify the range of camera angles , Stephen La Rivière , author of *Filmed in Supermarionation : A History of the Future* , expresses disappointment that the first half of " 30 Minutes After Noon " presents standard camera work : he judges these scenes to be " filmed as normal " , and suggests that they compare negatively to the " quirky visuals " of the latter half . La Rivière also discusses the episode 's editing , noting that " 30 Minutes After Noon " is split into two distinct storylines (with the exploits of Southern and the British Secret Service only coming after the devastation of the Hudson Building) . He argues that , in this respect , the episode is similar to its antecedents , whose running time was unexpectedly doubled from 25 to 50 minutes and which therefore had to be extended with character @-@ based subplots , secondary rescues and other filler scenes .

In a review published in NTBS News Flash , " 30 Minutes After Noon " is described as a " thrilling , well @-@ paced episode " , which " brings together a very sadistic bad guy scheme and some innocent , and some not @-@ so @-@ innocent victims in peril , all providing plenty of action for International Rescue . " The reviewer commends the pacing as being " especially good " , and also credits the " inventive camera work " , commenting , " I don 't think I 've seen more use of ' real hand acting ' in any other episode . " The concept of exploding bracelet bombs is connected to the premise of the Saw horror films , in which victims are seen to be trapped in dangerous situations and are threatened with death if they do not carry out tasks that are put before them .

= = Adaptations = =

An audio adaptation of " 30 Minutes After Noon " , narrated by David Graham in character as Parker , was released as a mini @-@ album in the 1960s . The episode was also serialised by Alan Fennell and Malcolm Stokes in issues 18 ? 20 of *Thunderbirds : The Comic* in 1992 , and re @-@ released in the graphic collection *Thunderbirds in Action* later that year .