

= The Cham @-@ Cham =

" The Cham @-@ Cham " is the 25th episode of Thunderbirds , a British 1960s Supermarionation television series co @-@ created by Gerry and Sylvia Anderson . The penultimate instalment of series one , it first aired on 24 March 1966 on ATV Midlands . Alan Pattillo both wrote and directed the episode , which opens with a United States Air Force (USAF) aircraft being shot down during the radio transmission of a popular instrumental music track . International Rescue suspects sabotage , and Lady Penelope , Tin @-@ Tin and Parker are dispatched to investigate the band 's current tour venue ? a hotel in the Swiss Alps . There , it is discovered that the attacks are being co @-@ ordinated with the aid of a " Cham @-@ Cham " , an advanced computer sensitive to microtones and ultrasonic harmonics .

Filmed in late 1965 , " The Cham @-@ Cham " inspired innovation in AP Films ' use of puppet characters ; towards the end of the episode , the Penelope character performs a carefully choreographed cabaret dance , despite of the difficulties inherent in producing movement from the marionettes . Additionally , the episode marks the first occasion in any Supermarionation series that characters are seen skiing . Scripted to incorporate themes of espionage and show business , the filming of " The Cham @-@ Cham " entailed the collaboration of singer Ken Barrie , who wrote the lyrics to series composer Barry Gray 's Latin rhythm " Dangerous Game " .

The episode has attracted positive critical reception , with the production design and the soundtrack singled out for particular praise . Sylvia Anderson values " The Cham @-@ Cham " for its " charm " , as well as its visualisation of the Paradise Peaks resort , but considers the plot " far @-@ fetched " ; Stephen La Rivière compliments the episode for its technical accomplishments , in addition to its writing . Cultural historian Nicholas J. Cull comments on the undertones of some of the episode 's characterisations in the context of the Cold War . " The Cham @-@ Cham " was adapted for audio in the 1960s .

= = Plot = =

A succession of RTL2 cargo aircraft running missile shipments have been shot down by enemy fighters shortly after take @-@ off from Matthews Field USAF Base . On Tracy Island , Alan (voiced by Matt Zimmerman) points out that all the attacks have coincided with a live performance of " Dangerous Game " from the hit band Cass Carnaby Five , broadcast on Radio Maxwell ; with Brains (David Graham) , he examines a recording of the latest transmission to determine whether the tune contains a hidden code inserted to disrupt the RTL2 flights .

Meanwhile , Jeff (Peter Dyneley) dispatches Tin @-@ Tin (Christine Finn) and Lady Penelope (Sylvia Anderson) ? the latter posing as a singer , " Wanda Lamour " ? undercover to Paradise Peaks , a deluxe Swiss Alps hotel that is currently playing host to Carnaby and his group . Parker (Graham) secures a job at the bar . Carnaby 's manager is the mysterious Mr Olsen , who regularly makes last @-@ minute changes to the arrangement of " Dangerous Game " before the band perform on @-@ air . Ski @-@ ing down the mountain to Olsen 's private lodge , Penelope and Tin @-@ Tin film him working at an unidentified computer , which is decrypting musical notation into a typed message revealing the date and time of the next RTL2 flight .

Realising that he has had uninvited guests , Olsen contacts his associate ? Banino , a waiter ? with orders to dispose of the International Rescue agents . Parker overhears the telephone conversation and thwarts Banino 's attempt to assassinate Penelope and Tin @-@ Tin using a sniper rifle , tumbling down the mountainside with his adversary (and forming a giant snowball in the process) until Banino is knocked unconscious . On Tracy Island , Brains identifies the device in Penelope and Tin @-@ Tin 's film as an ultrasonically @-@ sensitive supercomputer known as a " Cham @-@ Cham " . Jeff contacts Washington , D.C. to report IR 's findings , but the Matthews Field Commander refuses to postpone the upcoming missile run .

That evening , the Cass Carnaby Five start to perform Olsen 's latest arrangement of " Dangerous Game " . It seems that the next flight of the RTL2 is doomed until Penelope , in the guise of Wanda Lamour , steps out onto the stage to sing a lyrical version of Brains ' own composition . Accepting

without question the new coordinates encoded in Radio Maxwell 's transmission , the airbase that launched the previous attacks misdirects its own fighters , which quickly find themselves in the airspace above Matthews Field . Landing at the scene in Thunderbird 1 , Scott (Shane Rimmer) alerts the Commander and USAF interceptors are scrambled to shoot down the enemy .

Fearing Olsen 's next move , Jeff dispatches Virgil (David Holliday) and Alan to fly Tin @-@ Tin , Penelope and Parker back from the Alps in Thunderbird 2 . The IR agents depart from Paradise Peaks in the hotel 's cable car , only to find themselves speeding uncontrollably down the mountainside when Olsen sabotages the terminus . With Thunderbird 2 's electromagnetic grabs unable to connect with the car chassis , Parker climbs onto the roof to hook the wires with the end of Penelope 's umbrella and attach them himself . When the braking force of Virgil and Alan 's retro @-@ rockets throws the butler into the air , he uses the umbrella to parachute back down . All are treated to a private piano recital of " Dangerous Game " from Cass before leaving Paradise Peaks .

= = Production = =

The penultimate episode to be filmed for series one , " The Cham @-@ Cham " was written by Alan Pattillo , who attempted to imitate classic Hollywood musicals with his script 's show business plot and the exotic setting of the Paradise Peaks resort . As an in @-@ joke , Pattillo named Penelope 's alias , Wanda Lamour , after one of the Thunderbirds puppet operators , Wanda Brown . Production was completed in November and December 1965 .

Since convincing walking movements had always been difficult to accomplish with the unevenly weighted Supermarionation puppets , the common practice at AP Films Studios was to allow walking to be implied , rather than seen , by having the hand of a puppeteer move a marionette 's legs using a " bobbing motion " . The scene in which Lady Penelope sings Brains ' lyrical version of " Dangerous Game " required the puppet to waltz through the Paradise Peaks ballroom set , necessitating that Brown move the character 's legs out of shot while fellow operator Christine Glanville controlled the upper body from the overhead gantry .

Gerry Anderson remembered that AP Films had never attempted to film ski @-@ ing sequences previously , but judged the scenes of Penelope and Tin @-@ Tin travelling to Olsen 's lodge to be suitably realistic . Anderson himself conceived the " ski thrusters " that the agents use to power their ascent up the mountainside while returning to Paradise Peaks . Praising production designer Bob Bell 's visuals , he opined that the episode " gave our art and design departments a chance to show what they could really do , and they didn 't let us down . "

Series composer Barry Gray devised a Latin rhythm track for the centrepiece of the episode 's soundtrack : " Dangerous Game " . Although singer Ken Barrie was commissioned to sing the lyrics to the tune , the production staff ultimately substituted Gray 's alternative instrumental version whenever the Cass Carnaby Five are seen to be playing . For the scene featuring Penelope 's rendition , Sylvia Anderson based her singing voice on that of Marlene Dietrich . An incidental music track composed for the Supercar episode " Amazonian Adventure " , titled " Happy Flying " , accompanies the shots of Penelope and Tin @-@ Tin ski @-@ ing to Olsen 's lodge .

As with " Attack of the Alligators ! " , the episode that had been filmed immediately prior , the technical complexity of " The Cham @-@ Cham " resulting in the production finishing nearly a week past the deadline and considerably overspending its budget . To compensate for wasted time and costs , the Thunderbirds scriptwriters re @-@ wrote the series one finale as a clip show , " Security Hazard " , which would make extensive use of flashback footage to limit the requirement for new scenes .

= = Reception = =

Sylvia Anderson considers " The Cham @-@ Cham " to be one of the best episodes of Thunderbirds , and a rival to " Attack of the Alligators ! " in terms of quality . On her website , she comments : " Even though the plot is far @-@ fetched , it has charm and , because of the lovely Swiss mountain setting , has credibility . " Simon Archer and Marcus Hearn , writers of What Made

Thunderbirds Go ! The Authorised Biography of Gerry Anderson , describe " The Cham @-@ Cham " as " perhaps the most lavish @-@ looking episode of the series " , citing Lady Penelope 's deep @-@ cover cabaret performance and the skiing sequences as examples of the instalment 's " unforgettable images " . Tom Fox of Starburst magazine is broadly complimentary , awarding the episode a score of 4 out of 5 . He comments positively on the production design and the Thunderbird 2 rescue , both of which ? in his view ? help to " make up " for the plot , which is judged to be " tenuous at best " . While expressing puzzlement at Brains and Penelope 's tactics for the diversion of the enemy fighters , like Archer and Hearn he praises the entertainment value of Parker 's unusual descent by umbrella .

Fox 's reception to " Dangerous Game " is similarly positive . Reviewing the CD release of the original Thunderbirds soundtrack , Morag Reavley of BBC Online describes Anderson 's rendition as " slinky , sexy and slightly off @-@ key , like a hung @-@ over Zsa Zsa Gabor " . For Heather Phares of Allmusic , the tune is a highlight of the album : while the " Latin Rhythm Instrumental " " [reflects] the ' 60s ' ongoing fascination with exotica and Latin pop " , the lyrical version " could be a kissing cousin to seductive spy themes like ' Goldfinger ' . " Stephen La Rivière , writer of Filmed in Supermarionation : A History of the Future , praises the technical proficiency of the production staff , characterising the skiing and dancing scenes as " [flying] in the face of what puppets can and can 't do . " He sums up the episode as " a glorious example of Thunderbirds at its best , combining all the elements that made the show so popular : the characters , the adventure , the rescues and , of course , the humour . " Expanding on his last point , La Rivière emphasises the family appeal of the episode 's comedy , arguing that the subtlety of Parker 's occasional double entendres is counter @-@ acted by his slapstick moments , such as the innovative use of Penelope 's umbrella (described as " doing a ' Mary Poppins ' ") .

Historian Nicholas J. Cull interprets " The Cham @-@ Cham " as a product of its Cold War context , noting the " Central / Eastern European accents " of the hostile airbase personnel . The episode achieved ratings of 2 @. @ 82 million viewers when it was repeated on BBC2 in 1992 .

= = Adaptation = =

An audio adaptation of " The Cham @-@ Cham " , narrated by voice actor David Graham in character as Parker , is included on the 1960s Century 21 mini @-@ LP Lady Penelope .