

ASSIGNMENT: EARTH

PROPOSAL

Created
by
GENE RODDENBERRY
and
ART WALLACE

Paramount Studios
Hollywood, California
December 5, 1967

ASSIGNMENT: EARTH is...

... the *STAR TREK* spin-off pilot of a new show, *ASSIGNMENT: EARTH*, a totally new today concept which can be described as Science Fiction 1968! Laid against 1968 backgrounds and stories, but without losing the excitement and imagineering which identified futuristic *STAR TREK*.

... created by Gene Roddenberry, originator and Executive Producer of *STAR TREK*, co-created by writer-producer Art Wallace, also one of the highest-reputed professionals in television today.

ASSIGNMENT: EARTH is...

... science fiction today. Not another planet, not the far-off future, but here and now.

... and also, a lot of fun. Is there a viewer who hasn't dreamed of being the one who solves the world's problems?

Try it now, sit back and daydream a moment, identify as a person who has...

... in your office, a device which looks like a walk-in wall safe, but actually is a disguised **TRANSPORTER** device. Set the dials properly, step into the "wall safe" door and you can be instantly transported to any place on Earth!

... on your desk a device which looks like a simple electric **TYPEWRITER** – but don't bother to touch the keys, simply talk to it and it will type it as fast as you can say it!

... an item in your coat pocket which looks like a ball point pen. It isn't. It's a fantastically useful and powerful **SERVO** which can open a locked door, stun an opponent, cut through a foot of titanium steel as if it were butter. And more.

... a giant **COMPUTER** hidden behind office bookshelves which constantly monitors everything going on in the world today, can give you just about any fact about any person or thing, however hidden or secret.

Yes, *ASSIGNMENT: EARTH* is all those things, and more, operating here today, involving today's people and locales, and telling stories important to today.

ASSIGNMENT: EARTH will be presented to NBC in the form of a 20-minute presentation film, titled, scored and dubbed specifically for sales use and will include...

... an opening introduction, featuring the *ASSIGNMENT: EARTH* lead actor.

... the key *ASSIGNMENT: EARTH* scenes from the spinoff episode, scenes edited to omit references, centering on *ASSIGNMENT: EARTH* characters and concept.

... also, scenes from upcoming *ASSIGNMENT: EARTH* episodes, short film clips depicting the exciting range of action-adventure stories in the new television series.

ASSIGNMENT: EARTH Presentation Film

- I. TITLE, using authentic NASA space footage, film of our Earth shot by United States astronauts only this year. Overlay with *ASSIGNMENT: EARTH*.

- II. From the *ASSIGNMENT: EARTH* episode.
 1. The arrival of our lead character (Anthony Seven) in the luxurious apartment/ headquarters complete with the hidden giant computer, the disguised wall safe transporter device which can whisk him immediately to any point on Earth, the other imagineering devices in this series.

 2. Tony Seven's meeting with Roberta, *ASSIGNMENT: EARTH*'s second lead character. He assumes she is, like himself, another "secret agent" from the far-off advanced planet where Seven and other humans lived and trained for their mission here to save Earth from itself. The fun of learning that Roberta is all too human – she's merely a very bright, lovely young secretary holding down a temporary job here. Seven has given himself and his mission away – the fun and excitement of watching him backtrack and concoct a story which covers himself.

 3. Various, scenes of Tony Seven in action as he makes his way into the most carefully-guarded acreage in the world – the heart of Cape Kennedy at the peak; of launching a nuclear warhead satellite.

 4. Film of a major rocket launch, acquired from NASA. and used with their approval and active assistance, including many closeup scenes never before presented on television.

 5. Mister Seven and Roberta in captivity and (laying out our series concept completely) his trying to win her support by explaining who and what he really is – and why it's important to her (and to the audience).

 6. NARRATED by our lead actor, selected scenes showing, for example, Tony Seven in a Chinese prison camp, on a Tahiti beach, aboard a Soviet Union trawler, in a London modern-day Jack the Ripper situation, involved in a 1968 western story, etc., all showing our *ASSIGNMENT: EARTH* lead, in various countries and stories typical of future *ASSIGNMENT: EARTH* episodes.

- III. Short sales presentation by lead actor, hitting sales points per NBC recommendations, an interesting, likeable guy, excited about the action-adventure potential of *ASSIGNMENT: EARTH*.

ASSIGNMENT: EARTH is...

... the story of a man named Anthony Seven. He is human, a descendant of a group of Earth people who long ago were transported from Earth to a far-off planet belonging to a race of superior beings. These highly-advanced beings knew that Earth, as happens to all inhabited planets, must some day reach a time of crisis and would need help. Thus, for generation after generation, this colony of Earth humans have lived, trained and waited for the day when a chosen few of them would be selected to return to Earth and secretly help guide their home planet through that era of crisis.

Thus, Anthony Seven, as human as you and I, has never lived on Earth until the opening of our pilot spin-off episode when he arrives here. Doubly interesting is the fact he was not himself trained for this mission, but rather was dispatched here to determine what happened to the pair of secret agents who had been sent, but not heard from, since. Seven not only finds that these two agents have been killed, but also discovers that Earth is only hours away from launching the first fully-orbital nuclear warhead. It is urgently necessary that he takeover the assignment immediately, prevent the arms race disaster certain to follow. (Obviously, this is only one of hundreds of widely-different types of crisis, offering stories large and small, which Earth now faces.)

Neither trained nor conditioned to live and work in Earth's rather primitive civilization, Seven has his troubles. At the end of our story, he has found a way to solve this particular problem, only to discover to his chagrin that he must remain here and take over this secret agent assignment permanently.

ASSIGNMENT: EARTH could also be called
HAVE GUN – WILL TRAVEL, 1968

Yes, we're quite serious, and should know what we're talking about. Co-creator, Gene Roddenberry, was head writer of *HAVE GUN – WILL TRAVEL*. He points out that the prime dramatic ingredients of the two shows are identical – both shows feature a slightly larger-than-life main character, who sallies forth weekly from a familiar home base to do battle with extraordinary evil in an action-adventure format. As top *HG–WT* writers were aware (and others realized it, too), there were a surprising number of science-fiction ingredients in the character of Paladin. Certainly, for a person living in 1872, his remarkable knowledge, attitudes and abilities were very much of a man from another place or another time. In fact, one of Paladin's most-effective dramatic tools and charms was his detached and superior, sometimes almost condescending, perspective from which he viewed the fallible world about him. *ASSIGNMENT: EARTH*'s Anthony Seven will have much of the same perspective and charm. And, because of what he is, he also has much of the same strengths.

Will the audience identify? Roddenberry recalls he was there when the same question was asked about super-hero Paladin. The answer was in a hit show, which ran with extremely high ratings for many years. (We can't help but add the same question was also asked about Mr. Spock, who has now become an American folk hero.)

Unless almost every current high-rated action-adventure television show has it all wrong, unless John Wayne has played it all wrong all these years, the audience not only identifies with unusual and superior lead characters, but shows increasing signs of much preferring such heroes over the slice-of-life variety which have failed in series after series.

Today's audience more and more seeks escape and identification with larger-than-life characters. Ordinary people are getting hemmed in by an increasingly complex and frightening world and the viewer finds that identification and escape are possible only through characters who have unusual strengths and abilities. Examples:

I SPY, MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE, HARPER, OUR MAN FLINT, JAMES BOND; and we find the same factor in comedies such as *BEWITCHED, GET SMART*, and others.

TIME OF CRISIS

The late 1960s and 70s are the most critical Earth is likely ever to face. Our audience, from housewife to college draftee to scientist, knows this and personally identifies. A public figure was quoted recently as saying –

“I am only half joking when I say I pray every night that somewhere on Earth there are visitors from an advanced race who can help Earth out of its growing dilemma.”

If you don't think that possibility (or hope) isn't on a lot of average audience minds, consider the recurring waves of flying saucer visitors stories that flood the newspapers every month or so. (*LOOK* ran a special issue on this subject and sold out their entire first printing over night!)

If there was such a race somewhere who wants to help us, how would they do it? A logical way would be as in our story. In short, the *ASSIGNMENT: EARTH* lead character is not an alien, not a robot, but a human, raised and trained, to search out and find the sparks of Armageddon, extinguish them before the blaze engulfs us. It may be a large story, as in our pilot, or it may be as small a story as saving a highly necessary young scientist, who is about to wreck his life and career and deprive the world of something vital he must offer. The enemy can be the Mafia, a greedy politician, an overly eager agent operating inside the Pentagon, or even the Kremlin, or an honest mistake about to be made by a powerful Senate committee. It can be a university bacteriological experiment about to go awry, it can be, in fact, any action-adventure about almost any interesting subject in almost any place.

ASSIGNMENT: EARTH's Anthony Seven is well positioned for a television series lead.

He has the same wide story latitude that has made the detective lawyer, doctor and western marshal television lead standards.

Is *ASSIGNMENT: EARTH* science fiction? No, if you mean by that strange planets, exotic aliens and science-oriented stories. Our time is today, our locales contemporary, our action-adventure tales place in recognizable story areas. Yes, it is science fiction, if you mean by that imaginative, lots of exciting gimmicks and devices and extraordinary challenges to an extraordinary man.

It is a matter of record that *STAR TREK's* most exciting and successful audience shows were those three in which Captain Kirk and Mister Spock return to 20th-century Earth and played out their story there. However interesting a science-fiction device or weapon is when used on an alien planet, it is triply exciting when the same thing is used in a familiar Earth locale. The word is contrast.

Since the question is bound to come up, let's ask it. Is *ASSIGNMENT: EARTH* anything like *THE INVADERS*? No, quite the opposite. QM Productions made a basic error in their most important ingredient of the show – they picked the wrong villain. One-dimensional bad guys from outer space make for one-dimensional stories. Every successful dramatist should know that the only villain capable of supporting the main episodes of a television show is man himself. The list of man's possible villainies is endless, an extraordinary collection of vices; weaknesses, creeds, jealousies, hatreds... you name it. There has never been a successful novel, screenplay, stage production or television series using any theme but man against man, or man against himself.

The **ASSIGNMENT: EARTH** team:

GENE RODDENBERRY, co-creator, executive producer. He will also supervise and produce the pilot episode. His credits are well known to NBC. Of greatest importance to *ASSIGNMENT: EARTH* is Roddenberry's ability to create and maintain high believability in both situation and character; witness *STAR TREK*. His imagineering knack is equally well known, underscored by the fact that his spaceship conception, *STAR TREK*'s USS Enterprise, is now the largest selling model kit ever to appear on the toy market.

ART WALLACE, co-creator, producer, writer of the pilot episode. Wallace, a New York writer, who will make himself available for West Coast production chores for an *ASSIGNMENT: EARTH* series, is one of the most respected and prolific in both the writing and production fields on shows like *DEFENDERS*, *NAKED CITY*, *ALCOA ALUMINUM HOUR*, *CHRYSLER THEATER*, *STAR TREK* and many others.

STAFFED BY the most experienced science-fiction professionals available, utilizing the *STAR TREK* team and the proven techniques, experience and facilities of Paramount-Desilu Studios.