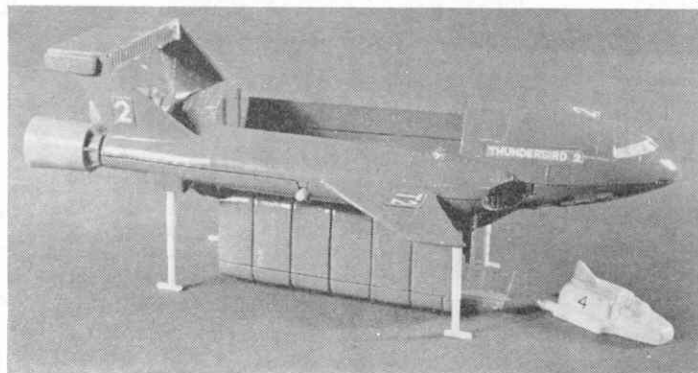


ALL the publicity surrounding the highly popular television puppet series 'Thunderbirds' tells us that 'Thunderbirds are go' and, as far as I'm concerned Thunderbirds definitely are go! What might be a 'silly children's programme' to some people is, to me, one of the best-produced and most skilful shows on television. Not only are the puppets themselves excellent models and animated by experts, but the equipment and the 'sets' in which they appear are amazingly detailed and real. All this, coupled with the skill of the photographers filming the various programmes, raises the series well above the ordinary run-of-the-mill T.V. show, from a technical point of view alone. Add to this the gripping suspense of the average Thunderbirds story, bearing in mind that it is aimed at youngsters, and you have a top-notch programme.

All well and good, but what, you

Thunderbirds are Go!



may be wondering, has this to do with us here? The answer is simple. No matter what individuals think of Thunderbirds, Meccano Limited, as a company, have no doubt that Thunderbirds are go. Already they have produced a Dinky Toy model of Fab 1—the futuristic vehicle owned by Lady Penelope and driven by Parker—of the T.V. series. Now they have come up with another two International Rescue specials—Thunderbirds 2 and 4.

Followers of the series will know that International Rescue, around which the show is written, is an organisation dedicated, as the name suggests, to almost impossible rescues, not only on land, but also under water, as well as in outer space. To help them carry out their tasks, the heroes are equipped with a variety of specialised machinery, mostly rocket-powered, which enables them to do just about any-

The two large pictures show the 'real' Thunderbird 4 diving on an underwater mission, and Thunderbird 2 (the subject of the Dinky model) hovering before extending its landing legs. Both photos are copyright AP Films Ltd. 1966.

By Chris Jelley



thing. The only problem is how to transport the required machinery to the scene of a rescue when needed, and the originators of the programme have hit on the perfect answer—Thunderbird 2!

In effect, Thunderbird 2 is little more than a giant motorised chassis like a space ship with an enormous hole punched in the middle. This 'hole' is designed to accommodate a huge, removable pod or container in which all the necessary equipment is carried. When you think about it, the idea is ingenious. International Rescue can have any number of containers, each ready-loaded with all the equipment necessary for a particular job. It is then only a matter of moments for Thunderbird 2 to pick up everything required in an emergency, thus saving hours of valuable time.

Dinky Toys Thunderbird 2, marketed under Sales No. 101, is made under licence for Century 21 Toys Ltd., who hold the rights on 'Thunderbirds', and it certainly captures all the 'action' of the original. Manufactured almost entirely from die-cast metal for strength, it is of course, an exact reproduction externally on the prototype, from the 'flattened-cigar'

shaped body to the raised platform tailplane, and incorporating the stubby, swept-forward wings. Protruding aft beneath the tailplane are the rocket exhausts, in red plastic with silver inserts, which strike the eye and give an appearance of power to the whole model.

Casting detail is very good, showing body panels, rivets, windscreen, flaps, etc., but of far more interest is the 'pod'. Yes! Like the original, the Dinky is fitted with a removable container complete with a drop-down door and carrying, believe it or not, a tiny plastic replica of Thunderbird 4! In the T.V. show, you may remember, Thunderbird 4 is used for underwater work and, as such, is comparatively small and compact. The Dinky Toy version, of course, must be small to fit into the container, but before anybody starts complaining, I should explain that it really comes as a bonus, Thunderbird 2 being the star of the piece, so don't go talking about 'fiddles' or anything like that. The pod, itself, incorporates two free-running rollers, allowing it to be moved into position and also serving as an under-carriage for the complete model when the pod is in place in the aircraft.

Now we come to what I feel is the most intriguing feature of the whole toy—the 'legs'. Before describing them, however, we should take another quick look at the T.V. programme to recap the usual operational methods of Thunderbird 2 when arriving at the scene of a rescue. After finding a suitable landing site, you will remember, the ship hovers over it for a few moments, then slowly lands vertically. As soon as it settles, the pod is released, and four telescopic legs raise the main ship until the container door is clear and can open. Thunderbird 2 then takes off, leaving the container behind, except on some occasions when it remains in the raised position.

The important items here are the legs and I am pleased to say that the Dinky Toy, also, is equipped with four retractable legs. Considering the small size of the model, of course, these could not be made telescopic, but they fold into the body, and are spring-loaded, so that a touch on two little buttons, one at each side, sends them shooting down into position. Consequently, it is possible to reproduce almost the exact operations followed by the original and even if the absolutely

identical sequences cannot be followed, you can still have loads of fun.

Overall, the model is $5\frac{3}{8}$ in. long by $1\frac{1}{4}$ in. wide by $2\frac{1}{4}$ in. high on its legs and a height of $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. with the legs retracted. The pod alone is $2\frac{1}{8}$ in. long by $1\frac{1}{4}$ in. wide by $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. high, while Thunderbird 4 inside is $1\frac{3}{16}$ in. long. Thunderbird 2 is finished, generally, in the correct green gloss with yellow legs and, as already mentioned, red rocket exhausts, whereas little Thunderbird 4 is yellow, also with red rocket exhausts. Various identification names and numbers in white lettering appear on the body, wings, and fins of Thunderbird 2 to add the final touch to an excellent Dinky Toy.

This, then, completes the model, but, as this is probably the last issue of Meccano Magazine to be published, I should like to say goodbye to all my readers and should like to thank all of you who have written to me over the past few years. Don't forget, however, that Meccano Limited is still very much in existence, and that new Dinky Toys will continue to appear every month. Watch television and the Press for details.