DID YOU KNOW...?

Small asteroids are called meteoroids. Travelling up to 70km per *second*, almost all meteoroids that reach Earth burn up in our atmosphere, about 80km up!

4 EAT IT

Controlled by hovering spacecraft, robots could chew up an asteroid!

Hungry robots are the key to this plan! After landing on the side of the asteroid, they'd start chewing up the rocky surface. They'd then throw these fragments into space at high speed with enough force to gradually push the asteroid into a non-Earth impacting course. The project's name? 'Modular Asteroid Deflection Mission Ejector Node' — or 'MADMEN' for short. Brilliant!

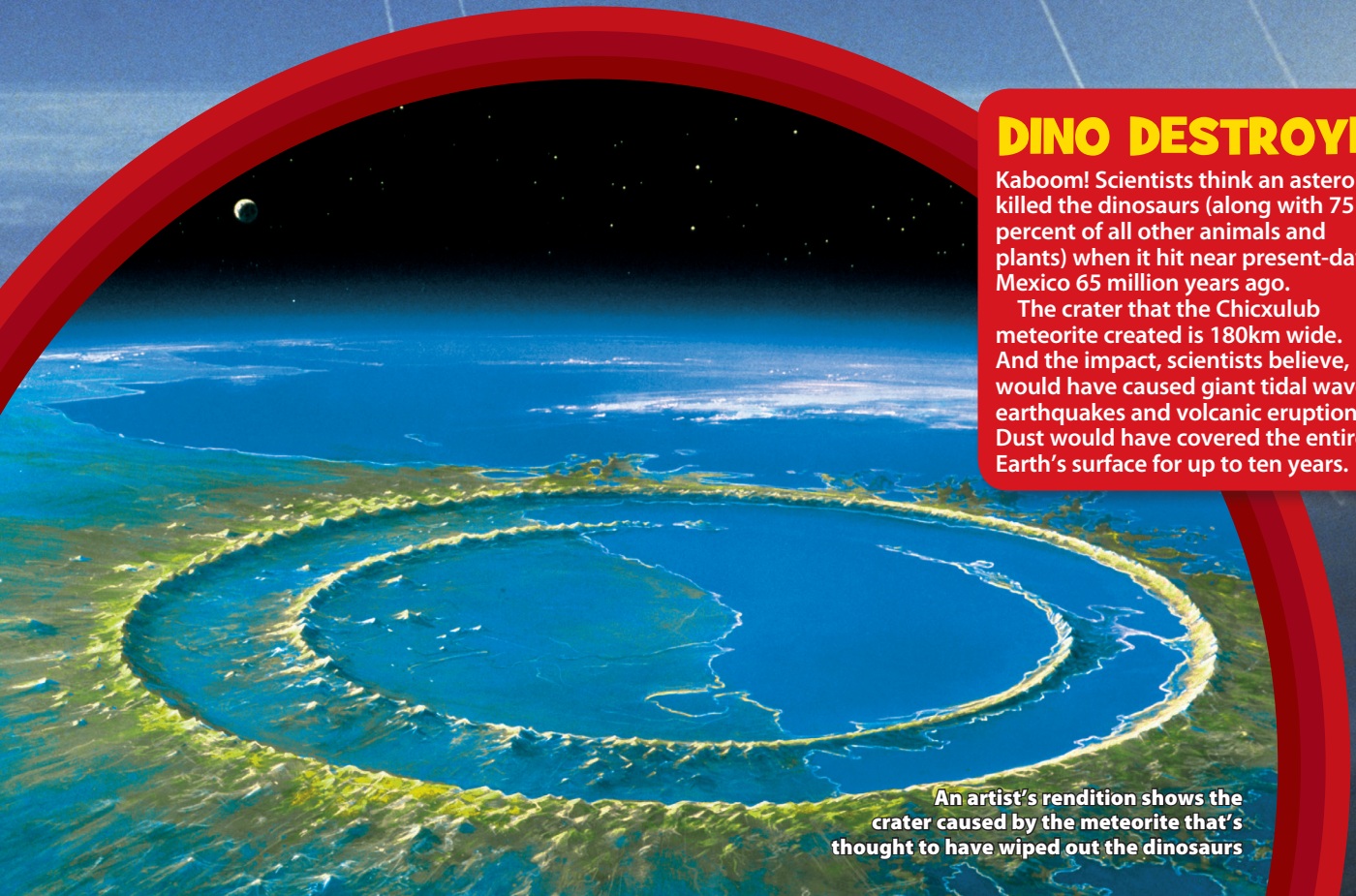
5 BLAST IT

The 'Laser Bees' project , run by the University of Strathclyde in Scotland, calls for small spacecraft to swarm around the asteroid. Each spacecraft would focus a laser beam onto a well-chosen spot on the asteroid's surface. The lasers would vaporise some of the rock into super-heated gas plumes that act like rockets, changing the asteroid's speed and path.

DINO DESTROYER

Kaboom! Scientists think an asteroid killed the dinosaurs (along with 75 percent of all other animals and plants) when it hit near present-day Mexico 65 million years ago.

The crater that the Chicxulub meteorite created is 180km wide. And the impact, scientists believe, would have caused giant tidal waves, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. Dust would have covered the entire Earth's surface for up to ten years.



An artist's rendition shows the crater caused by the meteorite that's thought to have wiped out the dinosaurs

Eat it: courtesy of NASA. Background and Chicxulub crater: Detlev Van Ravenswaay / Science Source.