

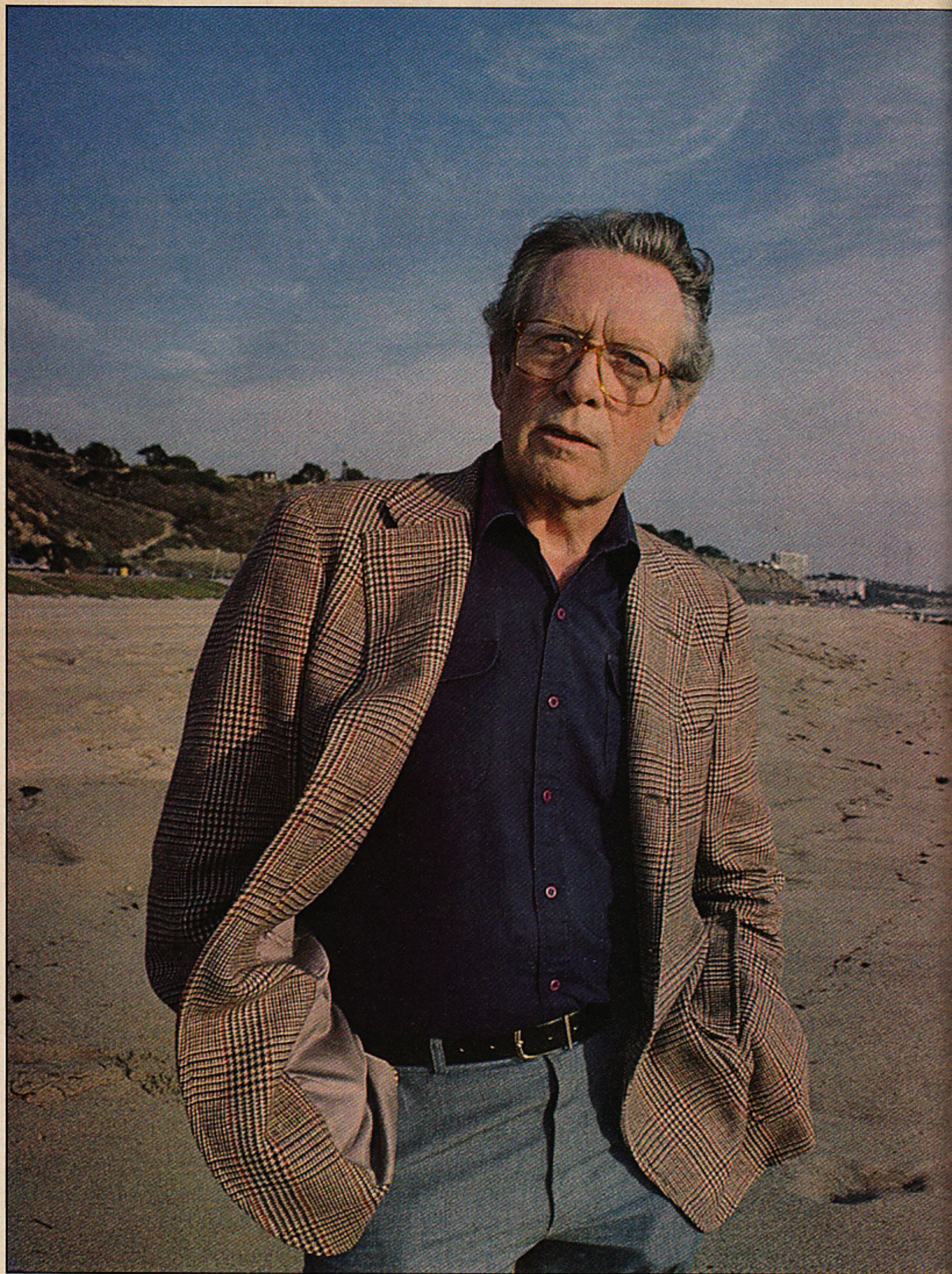
TELEGRAPH

SUNDAY MAGAZINE



**PATRICK
McGOOHAN
RETURNS
"DANGER MAN"
IS BACK ON STAGE
AND SCREEN**

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ACTING

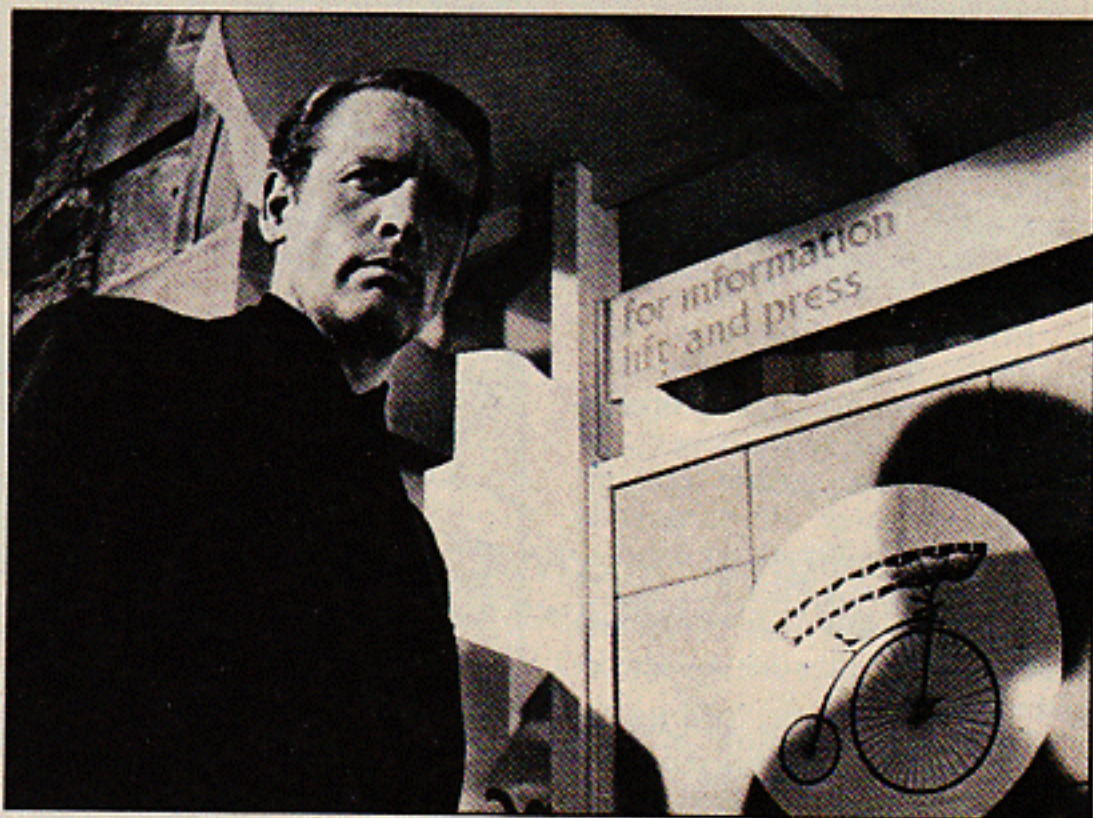
BACK AT CENTRE STAGE

By Anthony Masters

The unpredictable seems to be a way of life with Patrick McGoochan. Twenty years ago he was a top British television star.

Now he is on the edge of a new – and perhaps just as tempestuous – career.

What is the mystery of the years between?



Patrick McGoochan (left) strolls along the beach at Malibu, California. Above: as British television fans remember him in the series *The Prisoner*

Twenty years ago Patrick McGoochan was a television star, having shot from acting obscurity to prominence in Lew Grade's television spy series *Danger Man*. Soon afterwards he became a sort of cult figure when his next ATV programme, *The Prisoner*, attracted vast audiences. Then, after only one short series, he abruptly left his puzzled British viewers to go and live in Switzerland and, subsequently, the United States. Ever since, many have wondered why he left so suddenly and what has become of him and his career.

In fact, it was McGoochan himself who ended what had become a highly controversial series, saying: "It has knocked me out – I am whacked. I just can't do any more". And it was

mounting tax problems which drove him from the country as soon as the series had been completed.

For Lord Grade had given him a completely free hand to direct, write and edit the series called *The Prisoner*, and, while McGoochan played the leading role of Number Six, his own company, Everyman Films, made the programmes. The whole project was financed to the tune of £850,000 – a huge sum for the sixties – by ITC, a finance company long associated with ATV. ITC's head, Bernard Kinnaman, says, "Lew Grade gave McGoochan carte blanche, but drew a breath of relief when the series was finished".

Grade had at first planned a second series and may have expected it to become a sort of extension of *Danger Man*, but it had taken

Kobal Collection

Julian Wasser

on a life of its own and become, in the words of critic Fergus Cashin, "an intriguing, baffling detergent opera".

In fact McGooohan had only wanted to make seven episodes. Persuading him to make ten more was Grade's error, believes Kingham. "The basic idea didn't progress", he says, "and McGooohan will admit that he had run out of steam".

But McGooohan also had financial problems – he had too much money. "In addition to his fees", says Kingham, "he was on profit participation. But he never collected it because of his tax problems". In 1974, after the failure of another venture at an early stage of production, Everyman Films went bankrupt with debts of £63,000, more than half of which was owed to the Inland Revenue. However, for ATV and ITC *The Prisoner* was not a financial disaster. Although sold in the United States for \$120,000 an episode, instead of the hoped for \$150,000, it has been transmitted time and again over the years and is now a cult series.

But at the time, and despite having quickly become a great success, with an enormous public following, McGooohan took his family to Switzerland to try and piece together what he considered to be his shattered career.

Now, at 55, McGooohan is making a return to British audiences in a variety of roles. His latest film, *Kings and Desperate Men*, released in Britain last Christmas, was praised by the critics; a new Walt Disney film, *Baby*, is due to open in London at Easter; and he hopes to return to the British theatre soon, his tax problems over. He is currently appearing on the Broadway stage, in Hugh Whitmore's *Pack of Lies*, 25 years after his last theatre role. But what happened after that sudden departure in 1969?

McGooohan was born in New York in 1928, but his immigrant parents had returned to Ireland and then moved to Sheffield by the time he was eight. At the end of a lonely school life at Ratcliffe College in Leicester, where he found it difficult to fit in with the restrictive rules and codes of behaviour, he decided to train as a Catholic priest. But he changed his mind at the last moment – the first evidence of the brinkmanship which was to become almost part of his character. Instead, he worked in a wire factory, on a chicken farm and in a bank, spending his spare time with five amateur dramatic societies, before he approached Geoffrey Ost, Artistic Director of the Sheffield Playhouse, in 1947, and asked him if there was a vacancy. Ost, impressed by McGooohan's personality, created one.

"The Playhouse was the happiest period of my life", he reflects now. "I even met my wife there". He has been married to former



Martha Swape/Outline

Back on stage after 25 years: McGooohan on Broadway in *Pack of Lies*



Starring with Alexis Kanner (left) in the film *Kings and Desperate Men*



McGooohan's latest film, *Baby* (above), is due to open in London shortly

actress Joan Drummond for 33 years.

He spent eight years in rep before making his first West End appearance in 1955, playing the lead in *Serious Charge* at the Garrick. There he was spotted by Orson Welles, who asked him to play Starbuck to his Ahab in *Moby Dick Rehearsed* at the Duke of York's Theatre. It received enthusiastic reviews.

Some weeks later McGooohan stood in for Dirk Bogarde during an actress's screen test. Rank was so impressed that the actress was forgotten and McGooohan was offered a five-year film contract. Almost predictably, he was a misfit in the Rank "charm school" system, and after

four films the contract was dissolved.

But Patrick McGooohan's rise continued as he moved to television. "I loved going on a live set with that unseen audience. If you made a mistake there was nothing you could do about it, so you didn't make a mistake". In 1959, while appearing in a television production of Clifford Odet's *The Big Knife*, he was seen by the man who was to change his life, Lew Grade, Chairman of ATV. Grade was looking for a distinctive young actor to play a secret agent in his new series, *Danger Man*. In McGooohan he saw what he wanted. But first McGooohan completed a

memorable and critically acclaimed performance in Ibsen's *Brand*, this time back on the stage with the '59 Theatre Company at The Lyric, Hammersmith.

Danger Man began transmission on September 12, 1960. Despite misgivings about being typecast, McGooohan played in 86 episodes at a salary of £2,000 a week. By then the father of three daughters, he reacted against what he considered was the rising tide of sex and violence on television by refusing to kiss his leading ladies and insisting on keeping all his fights clean. It was not for religious reasons, he says. "I certainly believe in a God, but I don't go around waving a flag about it". He turned down the opportunity to play James Bond in *Dr No* after three approaches. "I just didn't care to do it – and I have no regrets".

By 1965 *Danger Man* was into its third series and McGooohan was looking for a new project. While shooting an episode at Portmeirion, the fantasy village in North Wales, he conceived the idea of a series about a prisoner held captive in a timeless village by an unidentified group.

For many people, the McGooohan mystery really began when he abandoned his consolidated success in *Danger Man* for *The Prisoner*, with its surreal situations and its wilful determination not to explain anything or anyone. McGooohan sold the project to a bemused Lew Grade over breakfast.

The series was transmitted between September 1967 and February 1968, attracting 11 million viewers. But, behind the scenes, McGooohan's total control of his wayward brainchild was causing major problems. Each script was vetted in detail by him. Moris Farhi, who later wrote several episodes for BBC Television's *The Onedin Line*, was asked to write an episode in a week. "He turned it down flat", remembers Farhi, "because I had a scene with him perspiring under torture. 'Heroes don't sweat', he said".

After episode 13 George Markstein, the series story editor, resigned in protest, saying: "I think McGooohan would like to be God". Later, he added, "I think that in many ways *The Prisoner* is a tragedy because McGooohan became a prisoner of the series". Lord Grade himself denies that he axed the series – "It was only decided to do 17 episodes, that's what Patrick wanted" – but with McGooohan himself turning his back on the project, ATV had to shelve any plans for a second series.

Roger Goodman, a former co-ordinator of The Prisoner Appreciation Society, McGooohan's fan club, believes there was another reason for the way in which the series ended: "The original idea was for the prisoner to escape and have adventures elsewhere – yet always

shackled to the village. But this extension, which would have allowed a more straightforward series, seemed to McGooohan to be too much like *Danger Man*."

Even now, The Prisoner Appreciation Society continues to thrive, and in 1983 Channel Four re-ran the entire series, commissioning filmmaker Chris Rodley to make an investigative documentary. Called *The Prisoner File*, this caused more controversy, with McGooohan fiercely critical of George Markstein's comments in it. Given a private showing, McGooohan filmed his own answer to Markstein's criticisms, but a technical ruling by Equity prevented his film being seen here.

McGooohan's first destination after his abrupt disappearance was Switzerland, where his wife's parents lived. Then, after two years of planning and recuperation at Vevey on the banks of Lake Geneva, he and his family left for Santa Fe in the New Mexico desert, where McGooohan directed the film *Catch My Soul*, a rock version of *Othello*. But he was never again to have the power over a project which he had with *The Prisoner*. "The hardest thing to hold on to was perspective", he reflects. "I got spoiled because I had complete control, down to every last nut and bolt".

In 1972 the family settled in Pacific Palisades, a suburb of Los Angeles away from Hollywood glamour. "It's a bit like Mill Hill, where we used to live", says Joan McGooohan, now a successful estate agent. Drink became a problem for the actor, but after a second drink-driving offence he gave up alcohol completely.

Since then McGooohan has made a

number of film and television appearances, including two episodes of the detective series *Colombo* with his friend Peter Falk, for one of which he won an Emmy Award. A 1976 film, *Silver Streak*, was recently seen on British television, and he came here briefly in the same year to work on a television version of Alexandre Dumas's *The Man in the Iron Mask*. He was also here in 1983 to film *Jamaica Inn* in Cornwall for Harlech Television.

The success of *Kings and Desperate Men* has brought McGooohan back to the attention of British audiences. Made in Canada in 1977 and 1978 by Alexis Kanner, who appeared in *The Prisoner* and who also stars with McGooohan in this film, it was shown at the 1984 London Film Festival before going on general release. "Pat is a dangerous performer", says Kanner. "You never know what is going to happen when he is around".

In the film, McGooohan has found a role which is just as original as "Number Six". He plays the eccentric host of a Canadian radio talk show who is held hostage by a terrorist group and forced to hold a trial by radio. The performance is riveting, extraordinary in its sheer power.

While rehearsing *Pack of Lies*, which opened on Broadway in February, McGooohan was enthusiastic but nervous about his first stage appearance since 1959. He had the offer of appearing in England two years ago as Captain Ahab in *Moby Dick* at Manchester's Royal Exchange Theatre, but he pulled out. A spokesman for the Royal Exchange commented: "He has told us he no longer has the confidence to act on stage". Yet McGooohan says now that he is anxious to return. "I

had tremendously happy times in England and I want to go back. A play would be ideal - and I hope to be making a film there, too, in 1986. But I will never do another television series, not for all the money in the world. Television is fodder, popcorn".

Now a grandfather, McGooohan lives away from show business pressure - "among real people", he says. Of his three daughters, the eldest, Catherine, is married to a film producer; Frances is manager of a clothing store; and the youngest, Anne, is studying child psychology.

"My acting is only craft", he says. "I just learn the lines and show up on time".

Each morning McGooohan rises at five to take a solitary three-mile walk along the shore near his home, during which he plans and reflects. "I don't need much sleep, so I get out of the house and leave everyone else in peace. I take a notebook, jot down ideas, sort out my day, take breakfast out". He says his main ambition is "to be occupied".

In his new film, *Baby*, McGooohan plays a ruthless explorer who will stop at nothing to take credit for the discovery of a baby dinosaur in an African rain-forest. He is clearly on the edge of a new, perhaps just as tempestuous, career. One review of *Kings and Desperate Men*, said, "Welcome back, No. 6. You've returned - not a moment too soon". (T)

FREE prisoner POSTER

from the original
Prisoner Appreciation Society - founded in 1976 - Six Of One Club offers Sunday Telegraph Colour Magazine readers a free full colour poster of *The Prisoner* featuring Patrick McGooohan.

Just send a large (A4 size) self-addressed envelope stamped to the value of 24p to P.O. Box 61, Cirencester GL7 7AU, and your Prisoner colour poster will be mailed to you by return.

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"... you've done a fantastic, absolutely fantastic job... I think your dedication is extraordinary... Thank you very much"

PATRICK MCGOOHAN
Honorary President: Six Of One Club.

VERY
The original
Prisoner Appreciation Society.

THOUGHT FOR FOOD



APRICOT-STUFFED CHICKEN BREASTS My love of apricots really began after my Uncle Ernest married again some time after my Aunt Harriet had died. His second wife was the widow of a Greek gentleman and she had the culinary equivalent of green fingers. She could turn a couple of breasts of lamb into a Lucullan feast. It was the way she used apricots which I remember best. She used them in savoury and sweet sauces. One of my party favourites was a casserole of lamb and aubergine which she topped with halved apricots, black olives and strips of candied orange peel. To celebrate her 90th birthday I invented this week's chicken and apricot dish. At the first mouthful her eyes lifted heavenwards and she exclaimed "Pollioreo".

Slit 4 skinned chicken breasts lengthwise to achieve pockets. Slip into each 4 dried Turkish apricots which have been soaked by just covering in water overnight. Season with salt and freshly ground pepper. Lightly flatten the breasts. Roll in seasoned flour. Brush off any surplus. Now coat with beaten egg and roll in fine white breadcrumbs. Chill for 1 hour. Melt 2oz unsalted butter plus 1tblspn oil in a sauté pan and cook slowly until the fillets are a deep golden brown and cooked through (about 6min. each side). Serve coated with apricot sauce made by emptying the sauté pan of any fat and then deglazing it with 2tblspns Grand Marnier. Add 2tblspns red wine vinegar and 1tblspn sieved apricot jam and boil together until the liquid has nearly evaporated. Add the juice in which apricots were soaked and 8fl.oz good strong homemade chicken stock, and reduce by one-third. Strain into a clean pan, bring back to the boil and beat in 2oz butter, piece by piece. Serves 4.

Denis Curtis

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