

THE MAGAZINE FOR SECRET AGENT CONNOISSEURS

# TOP SECRET

DECEMBER, 1985

VOLUME 1, NUMBER 2 \$3.50



Copyright, Don Mead of ITC

## PATRICK MCGOOHAN, THE INTERVIEW

Features On Dangerman and The Prisoner

SPYCON: Secret Agents Galore And No Bombs Included

**SUPER SPY SIDNEY REILLY: Exposing The Ace**

Plus columns and features on Bond, The Avengers and much, much more. . .



# Daring To Be Dangerous

## Part Two

**By Dave Rogers**

Though the first 39 thirty-minute episodes of *Danger Man* proved to be highly successful in the UK, similar success eluded the series when it was first transmitted in the USA. The series was picked up by CBS as a summer replacement for the popular *Steve McQueen Wanted — Dead or Alive* bountyhunter saga, but the quasi-American import failed to attract either the attention of the viewers or any advance publicity, running its course and disappearing without hardly a murmur. Foreign sales, and, in particular, a USA network deal were essential if the production company (ITC) were to recoup the series' high production cost, estimated to be in the region of \$50,000 plus.

It appeared then that the world had seen the last of super agent John Drake, and the odds of any further series being produced were somewhat less than slim. Fortunately, this proved not to be the case. Although the series hadn't achieved its expected success in the USA, it had (just) made a profit from international and home sales, and barely three years later, *Danger Man* John Drake was to reappear in the first of 32 new adventures, in a new format, and one with its eye planted firmly on the highly profitable American network market.

Confident they now had a winning formula, ITC wasted no time in promoting the new series as, "...*Danger Man Is Back!* One of the most popular characters ever introduced to television

screens, the original *Danger Man* swept the world, bringing international fame to its talented and goodlooking star, Patrick McGoohan. *Danger Man* is now produced as one-hour programs, with vivid new stories which take Special Security Agent John Drake into even more tensely dramatic adventures in every part of the globe. He is a man who jousts with danger, a man who takes calculated risks, a man dedicated to his ideals. He respects his adversaries and he respects the beautiful women who come into his life. Excitement and suspense are the keynote of stories which live up to the title. The emphasis is on **DANGER!**

In the words of Ralph Smart, (creator, sometimes writer and producer of the entire series), the format had been changed to show Drake as a more humane and less calculating character. "Drake is now less cold, clinical and perfect. He is less infallible and behaves more humanely. He can (and does) make mistakes and is altogether more likeable."

In point of fact, things had hardly changed at all.

True, Drake was (slightly) less clinical in his investigative approach, but perfection was still a byword in the agent's dictionary and he entered into his new adventures with as much zeal and determination to succeed as he had shown in the previous series. He was still a loner and preferred to tackle his assignments without the added restriction of having to worry about a

Copyright, Don Mead of ITC



colleague's welfare. He continued to play down any romantic attachments with the many beautiful women he encountered during his adventures, and tempered his relations with the opposite sex with the knowledge that such involvements could only get in the way of his objectives.

He still remained totally dedicated to his chosen career but now combined toughness with compassion when dealing with his adversaries and the rough and tumble attitude shown by Drake in the earlier series changed. The agent no longer relied on fisticuffs alone to make his point — a change instigated by McGoochan himself, who summed up the change in character by saying, "Drake is fair. He is considerate. He is a gentleman. This is no mere achievement when one considers that, in the brawls, the odds are often heavily against him. I want Drake to be in the classic mould, like the classic western, that meant he had to be a gentleman!"

What had changed, were the duration of each story, (now 50 minutes instead of 30, allowing Drake almost double the time to accomplish his assignments) and the format formula itself. Whereas the previous series had shown Drake assigned as a special investigator for an undesignated North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) department based in an American government building, Drake now found himself a member of Her Majesty's Secret Service and assigned as a Special Security Agent for a London-based government department known as M.I.9. He also had a new boss and was seen receiving his assignments directly from an 'M'-type superior, before jetting to some international trouble spot to unravel the mystery of his brief. Incidentally, Hobbs, Drake's superior in many of the stories, was played by Peter Madden. He turned up later as the undertaker in the opening minutes of "Arrival," the first Prisoner story although, because this was a non-speaking part, he receives no credit in the cast list.

Unchanged were the keynote of each story. Action and suspense were still the order of the day, and no expense was spared to inject each story with a liberal sprinkling of danger and nail-biting suspense. Drake's new assignments took him to every corner of the globe and brought him into contact with a Nazi scientist accused of concentration camp atrocities "Judgement Day," a lethal

mutant virus capable of banishing life on Earth forever "Dangerous Secret," a "murder for sale" organization "You're Not In Any Trouble, Are You?" chemical warfare "The Battle Of The Cameras," etc.

One of the more unusual, and for McGoochan himself, memorable episodes, concerned an assignment in which Drake is ordered to infiltrate a pirate radio station anchored a few miles off the English coast. Drake investigates the death of a murdered disc jockey (actually a British agent) and discovers who is passing secret information to the enemy over the airwaves. The story turned out to be a real life **Danger Man** affair for McGoochan. The script contained a scene in which Drake has to climb a 60 foot high radio tower in a force five storm and, ever the perfectionist, McGoochan did the stunt himself!

In fact, no pains were spared to get things right in the series and when a story called for Drake to visit Japan (actually a cleverly erected studio mock-up) and attend a performance of 'Kabu' (a version of Hamlet performed

in the centuries old style of traditional Japanese theatre), the scene lasting less than 10 seconds on screen, actually took 10 days to rehearse!

An earlier 30-minute story, "The Lonely Chair" called for Drake to impersonate a man who is confined to a wheelchair throughout the entire story. Once again, McGoochan's endless struggle for perfectionism led him to spend two whole days careering up and down the studio backlot in a wheelchair before he was convinced that he could handle the scenes with conviction — a maxim he also applied to his dialogue scenes.

When faced with, what he himself considered to be 'bad' scripts, it became his custom to deliver each line very slowly to give the words more meaning.

Perfectionist or not, McGoochan insisted that he was not a star. "A star," he said, "is a personality whose name is enough to draw people to a cinema, a theatre or a television screen. My name alone will not do this. After all, what is an actor? An entertainer. A rogue. A vagabond, a clown — a man who plays at living and gets paid for it. I enjoy the work I'm doing now. I make a good



#### **Search And Discover**

Drake examines a colleague's room



living. I'm lucky to be working at all!"

McGoohan's enjoyment of acting was carried over into the series and it's true to say that his own character did much to shape the **Danger Man** formula. This was never more apparent than when McGoohan was in scenes involving Drake's use of gadgetry, those bugging and spying devices that had proved so popular with viewers during the first series and continued to make their appearance in the new format. Drake was seldom to be found unprepared for any emergency, and was kitted out with many sophisticated, inventive gadgets.

These items McGoohan referred to as, "Comic book inventions, but essential to the series if one is to believe in the characters existence and occupation."

One of these devices, an umbrella gun (worked by compressed air), fired a metal dart listening device that opened into a telescopic transmitting aerial on

contact. It allowed the agent to overhear conversations from a distance and was used to good effect in a story called "Dangerous Secret." Another mission, "Such Men Are Dangerous," found our hero armed with a variation on the blow-pipe theme, a bicycle pump used to fire poison darts. A similar device, a dart-firing rifle (assembled from a fishing rod), served its purpose in the story "Have A Glass Of Wine." False-bottomed executive cases containing a veritable arsenal — miniature camera, walkie-talkie, hacksaw blades and a miniature tape recorder (doubling as a cigarette lighter), Rolleiflex camera complete with mounted listening device, and a lady's make-up compact containing a wire-recorder. All were used on various occasions and helped make the series an international smash. CBS in America picked up the series in April 1965, and this time the American viewers

were more ready to accept the exploits of this small screen super spy. The series was an instant success, and further episodes were assured.

Forty-seven episodes were made, 45 of them in monochrome and two episodes, "Koroshi" and "Sinda Shima," shot as a projected fourth series, were the only two to be made in color. These were subsequently edited together, in reverse order, with an added 'linking' sequence and shown in the USA in 1968 as a full-length TV movie entitled "Koroshi."

Barely a few months after the color series was cancelled, McGoohan marched into Lew Grade's (the then head of ITC) office and presented his idea for a new offbeat and different television series. Its title, **The Prisoner** and... well, the rest is history and will form the concluding part of this Patrick McGoohan feature.

## First Season Episode Guide

**SERIES ONE:** 39 thirty-minute episodes.

**THE KEY** by Jack Whittingham (from a story by Ralph Smart)

A fellow agent and his wife spell danger for Drake when he is sent to investigate how secret information is being leaked from the American Embassy in Vienna.

**THE VIEW FROM THE VILLA** by Brian Clemens/Ralph Smart

When an American banker is found dead and a shipment of gold worth \$5 million is missing, Drake is assigned to find out how/why the gold disappeared. His investigations are hampered by a beautiful (but deadly) Italian fashion designer. (NOTE: Portmerion served as the backdrop for this story.)

**FIND & RETURN** by Jo Eisinger

Drake must beat his rivals and discover the whereabouts of a beautiful woman spy who is wanted for espionage and high treason by British Intelligence.

**TIME TO KILL** by Ian Stuart Black/Brian Clemens

A blind date in Paris leads to Drake and his lady-friend being arrested on a

murder charge. Handcuffed together, they escape and embark on a dangerous hunt for the real killer, a deadly international assassin!

**UNDER THE LAKE** by Jack Whittingham

Five million worth of forged American dollars are flooding European capitals and Drake must discover the counterfeiters factory at all costs. Danger threatens when he meets a young girl on a train journey from Vienna.

**THE JOURNEY ENDS HALFWAY** by Ian Stuart Black

Posing as a Czech engineer, Drake visits China to investigate the disappearance of an eminent doctor. Doublecross and counterplot lead him into unearthing a well-organized escape route for criminals.

**A POSITION OF TRUST** by Jo Eisinger (f.a.s. by R. Smart)

Opium supplied on an international basis leads Drake into an adventure in which he becomes as much involved in the human tragedy as he does in finding the syndicate supplying the drugs.

**THE SISTERS** by Jo Eisinger (f.a.s. by

B. Clemens)

When a mid-European pleads for political asylum, Drake is sent to vent her request but when a second girl (reputedly the sister of the first) arrives and also seeks asylum, Drake's suspicions are aroused.

**AN AFFAIR OF STATE** by Oscar Brodny

Soon after arriving to check the gold reserves of a small Caribbean country, an American economics expert is found dead. The verdict is suicide but British Intelligence think otherwise and Drake is sent to investigate.

**DEADLINE** by Jo Eisinger (f.a.s. by Ian Stuart Black)

The only woman who knows the truth about a murder that has instigated a wave of terrorism in an African country has fled into the jungle. Drake's mission is to find her and persuade her to give evidence against the killers.

**BURY THE DEAD** by Ralph Smart (f.a.s. by B. Clemens)

Drake receives a ticket for the opera in Palermo. It contains a coded message that a NATO agent has been killed and



Drake must take his place and investigate the agent's death.

**THE GIRL IN PINK PYJAMAS** by Ian Stuart Black (f.a.s by B. Clemens)

Drake flies to a mid-European country to investigate the attempted assassination of a pro-Western President. The key to the mystery is held by a young girl who is found wandering alone dressed in pink pyjamas!

**SABOTAGE** by Michael Pertwee/Ian Stuart Black

When a transport plane flying between Singapore and New Guinea is destroyed, the most likely explanation is sabotage. Posing as a down at heel pilot, Drake investigates and uncovers a network of international agents.

**THE TRAITOR** by John Roddick

The wife of an Englishman in Kashmir (actually a traitor), becomes suspicious when Drake arrives. She remits Drake's photograph to China. The reply is to prove ominous for Drake as it contains one word, "Eliminate!"

**THE NURSE** by Ralph Smart/Brian Clemens

Drake's mission to evacuate the British Consul from an Arabian Embassy is made that more difficult when he has to rescue the baby son of an assassinated king who, together with his nanny, are hiding out in the wilderness.

**THE BLUE VEIL** by Don Inglis/Ralph Smart

Rumors that slavery is being practiced by the ruler of an Arabian country, lead Drake to form an uneasy alliance with the ruler so that he can gain access to a diamond mine in which the slaves are allegedly being held prisoner.

**THE LOVERS** by Jo Eisinger/Doreen Montgomery

Drake is ordered to investigate death threats made against the life of a foreign president visiting London. He and his wife are known as 'The Lovers' because of their happy marriage, but Drake's investigations prove otherwise.

**THE SANCTUARY** by John Roddick/Ralph Smart

A suspected terrorist, serving a prison sentence for planting a bomb, is believed to have similar employment arranged on his release. Drake investigates and un-

covers an I.R.A. bomb plot.

**THE DEPUTY COYANNIS STORY** by Jo Eisinger

Rehabilitation funds, meant for a mid-European country fail to reach their intended source. Drake, ordered to find out who misappropriated the funds, finds himself in a deadly situation.

**THE BROTHERS** by Ralph Smart

Drake's mission is to recover secret documents stolen from two survivors of a ditched aircraft. His investigations prove to be among the most hazardous of his career.

**COLONEL RODRIGUEZ** by Ralph Smart

Drake is sent to a Caribbean state to clear the name of an American reporter arrested for alleged spying activities. Drake himself is arrested and framed for the murder of one of his contacts.

**THE RELAXED INFORMER** by Ralph Smart/Robert Stewart

A security leak calls for drastic action, so Drake stages a holdup and steals a recording wire from a known courier. His activities are discovered by a female interpreter who reports him to her superiors. Is the girl simply a pawn in the game? Drake's life depends on the answer.

**FIND & DESTROY** by Ralph Smart/Robert Stewart

When a small submarine containing sophisticated equipment on board is wrecked off a South American coast, Drake is sent to destroy the vessel. His investigations are hampered when he discovers that the only man to know the exact spot where the submarine lies has already been approached by the opposition!

**THE PRISONER** by Ralph Smart/Robert Stewart

An American citizen in the Caribbean has taken refuge in the American Embassy and cannot leave for fear of being arrested and accused of espionage. Drake's mission...devise a plan to rescue the man.

**THE LONELY CHAIR** by John Roddick/Ralph Smart

When the daughter of a crippled industrialist is kidnapped and the payment for her release is top secret designs,

Drake replaces her father and attempts to outwit the blackmailers. Can he rescue the girl in time?

**DEAD MAN WALKS** by Ralph Smart/Brian Clemens

Sent to Kashmir to investigate the supposed deaths of a number of scientists working on tropical plant diseases, Drake uncovers a daring plot which involves a new plant virus and a lethal bacterium.

**THE CONTESSA** by John Roddick/Ralph Smart

When cocaine is discovered hidden in the jacket of a docker injured in New York, Drake flies out to await the return of the dead man's ship. Posing as a dockhand, he uncovers a drugs operation involving a beautiful French Contessa.

**JOSETTA** by Ralph Smart

A blind South American girl hears her brother being shot but the killer escapes unseen. Drake finds that the girl's evidence is not enough to convict the killer so he devises a daring plan involving himself as bait.

**THE ISLAND** by Ralph Smart/Brian Clemens

Drake is stranded on a remote island with three other survivors of a plane crash, a glamorous countess and two hit-men whom Drake had been taking for trial. The two men manage to convince the local community that Drake and the girl are the killers. Can he restore the status quo in time?

**THE CONSPIRATORS** by Ralph Smart/John Roddick

To prevent him from giving evidence, a British diplomat is murdered. His wife is determined to write a book about the scandal and refuses Drake's offer of protection, until an attempt is made on her life.

**NAME, DATE AND PLACE** by Ralph Smart/John Roddick

When three important members of the European Parliament are murdered in an identical manner, Drake is convinced that an international organization is responsible and he sets out to uncover the truth. His enquiries lead to him commissioning a murder...his own!

**To Be Continued Next Issue**



# The Prisoner Recaptured

Patrick McGoochan, Interviewed

By Tom Soter



Copyright, Don Mead of ITC

Patrick McGoochan knows what he wants. He enters a restaurant, walks with quick determined strides to a coffee machine, and pours himself some coffee. He sits, lights a cigarette, and orders a corned beef on rye without glancing at the menu.



He looks not unlike the man he was 17 years ago shouting "I am not a number! I am a free man!" on *The Prisoner* TV series, the man about whom Johnny Rivers sang in "Secret Agent Man": "They're givin' you a number and takin' away your name." The face is more lined now, he wears horn-rimmed glasses, and at over six feet he seems taller than you'd expect. But the eyes are still piercing blue, the large forehead is just as prominent, and the voice — that curious, Mid-Atlantic accent that can give an ironic twist to the simplest phrase — is as forceful as ever.

## The Prisoner Released Again

He is talking about his TV work because, once again, it is in the news. Maljack Productions/MPI Home Video has released the *Prisoner* episodes on tape and they have sold about 3000 copies each so far. *Secret Agent* is to follow.

"It was an allegory," he said of *The Prisoner*. "I am not sure that I can explain everything about it myself. But I was allowing instinct to carry me a certain amount of the way. I knew there were certain themes I wanted to go after."

Themes like personal identity. Trust. Imagination. Education. All of which keep cropping up in McGoohan's work — his stage role in Ibsen's *Brand* (for which he was named "best actor" by British critics in 1959), his early film work in *The Quare Fellow*, his later films like *Escape from Alcatraz* and his performance in *Pack of Lies*, a Broadway play that dealt with betrayal.

"I don't want to make any statement," he remarked. "If I did, I would be a minister, a politician. Our first job is to entertain. Entertainment is therapy. But it can be inspiring. It can affect one's life."

Certainly that was part of the rationale behind his TV series, *Danger Man*, that eventually became *Secret Agent*. The producers wanted a James Bond-type hero, shooting off quips as rapidly as his gun and hopping into bed with a new girl every week. McGoohan had other ideas, however, and after seeing the first script wrote a long letter to the producer of the series, outlining what his character, John Drake, would and would not do.

"We eventually did it without any of that rubbish in it," he said. His strong feelings led to the most unusual — and

fascinating — secret agent to appear among the 1960s crop of Napoleon Solos, John Steeds, and Simon Templars. "You never saw me fire a gun." And he never dallied with the damsels. "I said to the producers, 'If I start going with a different girl in each episode, what are those kids going to think out there?'"

McGoohan, married to former actress Joan Drummond for over 30 years, with three daughters of his own, feels Drake's morality was his strength. "When one says a moral hero, for some reason it has sort of a prissy sound to it. But you can have a hero with principle who is more of a man than a hero without principle." For McGoohan, it was more important that Drake thought, rather than fought, his way out of tight spots. "I used this," he said, tapping his forehead. He has always used that brain, almost obsessively.

## Ready When The Time Came

Born in Astoria, New York in 1928, he grew up in England, entered the British stage in the early 1950s and television in the late '50s. "I wanted to get some experience with cameras. It was a great opportunity to learn about production. I used to spend every spare minute in the editing room. I handled cameras myself. I had plans to use my technical experience with filmmaking for my own productions. So when the time came, I would know what I was doing."

That attention to detail is just as strong in his private life. When he and his eldest daughter made a home movie, for instance, the actor insisted on a script, a budget, then "proper editing, proper music, just as though it were a 35-millimeter film. If you're going to do a painting, you are not going to throw a can of paint at the canvas and hope something sticks. Even if you are not an artist, you should try and put something on the canvas in some sort of order that says something. As opposed to saying, 'Well, that doesn't matter.' Because everything matters in the end."

Such ideas culminated in *The Prisoner*, the story of one man's fight against a de-humanizing system. McGoohan plays Number Six, in one critic's words "a man of great resource and cunning," a former secret agent who resigns his job and is spirited away to a sea town known only as the Village. Everyone there has a number instead of a name. "Nothing can be taken for granted in the

Village," noted critic Hank Stine in 1970. "Nothing can be trusted but the self, and paranoia is a stable adjustment."

"I always had these obsessions in the back of my mind for man in isolation, fight against bureaucracy, brainwashing, and numbers," remarked McGoohan. A visit to the Welsh resort town of Portmeirion, with its fairy tale-like buildings, inspired him. A talk with Sir Lew Grade fired him into action.

Grade had financed *Secret Agent* and wanted McGoohan to do another adventure series. "I said, 'I don't want to do anything quite like that. I want to do something different.' He said, 'What?' So I said, 'This.' And I pulled out a script that I had prepared of the first episode of *The Prisoner*."

McGoohan and his *Secret Agent* cohorts — David Tomblin, George Markstein, Bernard Williams — began work on the series after that. Grade had wanted 26 episodes but McGoohan had planned only seven. ("I didn't think we could sustain more than that.") Nonetheless, he and Tomblin came up with 10 more script ideas and each of the resulting 17 episodes dealt with the actor's favorite themes, from identity ("The Schizoid Man") and trust ("Checkmate") to elections ("Free for All") and education ("The General").

In "The General," the *Prisoner* opposes a brainwashing system known as "Speedlearn" that endows its users with a university-level degree in 10 minutes. You might know the facts and figures, argues Number Six, but you really know nothing. You are one of many, a "row of educated cabbages."

## From Talk To Action

"The right sort of education enables one to think original thoughts," McGoohan says now. "There are people who know something about every subject under the sun. But they are just a reference library. Knowing too much stuff, that is closing up your mind. You will find that all the great inventors — Edison, Bell — I can't think of one who was highly educated. The exploration of their mind wasn't surrounded by too much education. The mind is set free. The innate power of creation was there."

Similarly, "I don't agree that travel broadens the mind. You have got to find out where you live now. How much did Shakespeare travel? Did he miss out on Broadway? Times Square? The broad-





### **McGoohan Today**

#### **The Prisoner in New York City**

ening of the mind is here," he says, tapping his head again. "I suppose that's an outrageous statement," he adds, with his characteristic half-smile.

"Let's qualify that. I don't think it's an outrageous statement because I think it is true. Someone else might, though, —

that is my point. If it is examined, the travel thing, the education thing, I think that at the very least there is a premise for debate about it. And that is always fascinating.

"Take **The Prisoner**. Each person would look at it and I hope have a

different interpretation of what it is supposed to be about. That is the intention — to be left hanging somewhat and to lead people to say, 'Well, maybe this was intended.' But as long as they looked at it and thought about it and argued about it, that was the whole concept."



# McGoohan, In His Own Words

By Tom Soter

You've called your series family shows. What does that mean?

"One of the reasons I didn't want to use excessive violence in *Secret Agent* or in *The Prisoner* was because television at that time was certainly a guest in the house. I felt that just as one tries to behave properly as a guest in someone's house, it behooves one in playing on television to behave with a certain amount of — certainly we had fisticuffs and fights in *Secret Agent*, but we never had any sort of violence that would affect a child in any way or offend grandmother. We just tried to get the stories. I think there was a fairly good standard of story. We did the same kind of thing with *The Prisoner*. It's more obscure. It's an allegorical piece."

How did *The Prisoner* come about?

"I was doing *Secret Agent*, which in England was called *Danger Man*, for Lew Grade, now Lord Grade, and I thought we had done enough of the *Secret Agents*. I went to Lew Grade and said, 'I think we've done enough. We are starting to repeat ourselves a little bit and I'd rather not do anymore.' And he said, 'I'd like you to do another series. Something in the same line, action-adventure.' I said, 'I don't want to do anything quite like that. I want to do something a little different.' And so he said, 'What?' I said, 'This.' And I had my briefcase and I pulled out a script that I had prepared of *The Prisoner*'s first episode. It wasn't entirely complete, only 70 pages, plus an exposition giving what the background, but it had the concept and all that sort of thing."

"He said, 'Well, you know I can't read,' one of his jokes, 'Tell me about it.' So I talked about it. This was at six o'clock on a Saturday morning at his office in London where I always used to see him. He used to go to his office at six and I had to get up early anyhow. So I talked for 15 minutes or so and he walked up and down in his office puffing on his Winston Churchill cigar, which he always smokes, and there was a pause. And I thought, 'What is he going to say?' He said, 'You know something, it's so crazy, it might work. When can we start? How much will it cost? When will

you deliver?' I had a budget and a schedule ready. We just shook hands and he said, 'Go.' And I went and did it."

Just like that?

"Yes, and he never bothered me. He left me completely alone. I used the same crew that I had on *Secret Agent*. They were waiting for a phone call from me. So I said, 'Okay, fellas, you're still in business.' And that's what happened. I went out and called my best buddy, who worked all the way through the *Secret Agent* thing. We started with the same crew."

Who is your 'best buddy'?

"David Tomblin."

He was the producer.

"He was the first assistant all through the *Danger Man/Secret Agent*. We became very close friends, and I needed someone because I was so heavily involved in writing scripts, directing, acting, and of course it was my company that produced it. I needed someone I could utterly rely on, so I asked him if he could be something that would be called the "line producer" in the movie industry. So he was the line producer."

"Then I had a marvelous production manager who was also a production manager for *Secret Agent*. Because I had two guys there I knew I didn't have to worry about minor details, they'd be taken care of. There was no committee to deal with. I don't now where you could get that now. Because if there are any decisions, there are committees, committees everywhere these days."

"If there was a decision to be made, either David or Bernard Williams, the production manager, would come on the set where I'd be working and in the break will say, 'Listen, with regards to the next show...' They might be talking about sets or they might be talking about costumes. And they say, 'We've got three options, A, B or C. Which one do you want?' And I'd say, 'B. You think that's the right one or not?' If it wasn't, 'Well, how about A?' And we'd discuss A. Within five minutes, we'd reached a decision on A, B or C. And they went off and did it. That was the committee meeting. That's all we ever had. That's how everything was done."

Did you plan to do 17 episodes?

"I had only wanted seven. Today it would be a mini-series, ideally. In those days they didn't have mini-series. Then Lew Grade sold it to CBS and he asked me to come in one of the Saturday mornings and he said, 'Listen, I've sold it, but they'd like more. And I said, 'I don't think we can sustain more than seven because it is very, y'know, far out is not the word, but it was a bit tenuous, by its very nature. He said, 'We'd like to do 26,' which was sort of a round number in those days. You'd have 13, 26, 39. I said, 'I don't know. Call me Monday morning.'"

"I went off and met with David (Tomblin) and we worked. We thought and talked the things over the weekend and cooked up another 10 story lines. Just ideas, two or three lines each. I called him and said, 'We can get another 10 for you, I reckon, by stretching it. Then I regard most of it as padding.' Then we had to try to not make them padding, try and make them true episodes. And so we got the writers working on them. And that's what we did."

Were you satisfied with the other episodes?

"Some of them weren't too bad."

There were some unusual ones, like "The Girl Who Was Death."

"That's correct, you caught on."

And "Living in Harmony."

"You got it, right on the button. Those were the difficulties we had. It is not everybody that noticed what you notice. You are right on the button. Congratulations."

The Village is in Wales, isn't it?

"Yes. A place called Portmerion in North Wales."

How did you find it?

"I went there when we were shooting some locations for the first series, *Danger Man*, and we actually spent three hours in this village because we needed something that looked Italian. I remember I did a lot of driving around in an Aston Martin and then walking around. I said, 'Has this ever been used in the movies?' The answer was no and I said to myself, 'I am going to stick it in the back of my mind, maybe one day...'



"So then we had a vacation about a year later and I took my family there. While we were there I wandered around. I got to know it like the back of my hand. I always had obsessions in the back of my mind for man in isolation, fight against bureaucracy, brainwashing, numbering, and all this sort of stuff. And I put the two together. That's how it evolved."

**Many have said that the last Prisoner was outrageous.**

"I intended it to be. The intention was to leave people hanging somewhat and to leave people to say, 'Well, maybe this was intended.' But as long as they looked at it, thought about it and argued about it, that was the whole concept. It was easy for me to tie that thing up and give it a James Bond ending. There was a riot in England when they saw the last episode. They expected when the Number One guy was to be revealed, he'd be one of those James Bond heavies with the shaven head and the gold or steel teeth. They were outraged."

**Instead he had a gorilla mask.**

"Yeah, all that nonsense. Because it's an allegory. And you—as much as anyone I've spoken to—understands what, by spotting those episodes and saying what you've said, you obviously have a pretty good idea of what it was intended to be."

**You once said that Drake in Secret Agent should be a moral hero. Why?**

"You see, this is the thing—when one says a 'moral hero' for some reason it has a rather prissy sound to it, which it isn't actually intended. You can have a hero with principle who is more of a man than a hero without principle. You see it was difficult for them because secret agents don't have much principle. They are not allowed to. James Bond has no principles whatsoever. So it was difficult when something came up in the story—I'd say, 'He wouldn't do that.' And they'd say, 'Secret agents do that all the time.' This secret agent won't do it."

"I never carried a gun, ever. You never saw me fire a gun. I outwitted them with this (Taps his head). I said, 'I won't do the series if we're going to have anything of that sort.' The very first script I read—which I didn't do—had a guy lying on a bed and it had a girl who was some sort of a Russian agent. He says, 'Now what we're going to do is find that safe and conquer the combination.' He reached up to the picture—this was all in the script though we didn't do it—

and lowers the picture. The safe's behind it. He rolls over on top of her and says, 'I can't quite reach the combination.' "I saw this and had to make it very clear. This is the first episode of the first ever Danger Man. I sat down and I wrote a letter to them sort of saying, 'This ain't it.' They had to re-think it a bit and then we did it without any of that rubbish."

"I mean, let James Bond do that. I don't want to. This was television, in film it would be different. My whole point is that if it were today it wouldn't matter. The infant, the seven, eight-year-old child knows how to work those things and they can switch them to see anything. You see X-rated stuff in your living room."

"That's how it happened. I don't think it made Drake a less interesting character because he didn't carry a gun or because he did not roll into bed with every girl he clapped eyes on. If that's being moral, that's the way it had to be."

**What scares you the most? You said in a recent interview that doing the play, Pack of Lies, scares you.**

"Well, you've only got to look at the movie *My Favorite Year*. That's what it's about. Because there are no retakes. You're out there and you're exposed, which I think is good. It's a good challenge and that's scary. Twenty-five years is a long time to be away from this particular medium and it's a different technique. One tries to feel one's way back into it."

**Is there some role that scares you?**

"You mean a challenging role that I'd like to do or that scares me?"

Yes. When you may say, 'I don't know if I can handle that.' Do you ever say that?

"The only roles I say that to are bad ones. And what roles? King Lear? I may have a stab at King Lear in the near future. I don't know. It doesn't scare me

too much. I only think Shakespeare's been done too much. I had my time in Shakespeare. I've done all that for now. At a future time it may come up again."

**People know you from Secret Agent and The Prisoner. In the Broadway play, Pack of Lies, you're once again playing a spy. Have you ever felt trapped by the roles you play?**

"I never thought of it like that. I think it's totally disassociated from Secret Agent. The character in *Pack of Lies* is a civil servant, which is quite different. He doesn't go out on assignments to Tel Aviv or Istanbul. He's the guy at home there in London. He works a lot of the time, I imagine, out of an office. It's not really related to the Secret Agent chap at all. He's probably a very conservative chap. He's based on an actual character, and I would guess that he's retired now, somewhere up in the country. And he probably reads the *London Times* every day and might have a few investments in the *Financial Times*. He probably putters around doing a bit of gardening. He is probably a very conservative chap, dressed in tweeds."

**He is very different from Secret Agent's John Drake.**

"That's my point. Where do secret agents go when they are finished? Not like that. They don't go that way. Most of them end psychotic messes. It's a very strange occupation. Most of them don't look like Sean Connery. Most of them look like someone you might be passing down the street. You won't look twice."

**Sort of like Harry Palmer. Actually, most of the Secret Agents have the quality of the film The Ipcress File — that gritty realism.**

"Yeah, that may be."

**Did you know any spies?**

"No, I stay well away from them. The only spies I know are in the movie industry. There are a lot in that...lots."



Copyright, Don Mead of ITC