

# BROUGHT TO BOOK

by Graham P. Williams



THE EAGLE'S NEST was the second in a series of six books based on THE NEW AVENGERS, published during 1976 and 1977 by Futura Books (paperback) and Arthur Barker Ltd. (hardback). This series was the first to contain stories adapted from actual TV episodes (the original AVENGERS novels published during the 60's contained entirely 'new' stories, none of which were screened on television).

There are, of course, those who dismiss "TV novelisations" as one of the lowest forms of popular literature but I've always found them both entertaining and useful and a handy way of keeping TV scripts "on file".

Most fans of the series will know the basic plot of "The Eagle's Nest" - it was the first episode of THE NEW AVENGERS and got the series off to a cracking start with a wonderful story about a group of "monks" on a remote Scottish island who turn out to be fanatical Nazis bent on bringing their Führer back to life. This novelisation is a faithful re-telling of that story (though the original scriptwriter, Brian Clemens, isn't credited here). You may think that the story isn't really long enough to fill a 190 pages, and of course you're quite correct. Instead of trying to "pad out" the original story with inventions of his own, John Carter has made the wise move of adapting another Clemens episode THE MIDAS TOUCH, thus making this into a two-story volume. Unfortunately, "The Midas Touch" was one of the more forgettable stories -

in my opinion, at least - and it doesn't work too well here.

There are always problems when a writer tries to adapt someone else's script for publication. Original characters and situations can easily be misunderstood or misinterpreted by another writer so that, even though the spoken dialogue remains the same, the linking narrative can spoil the effect. John Carter's adaptation suffers from this problem: as far as I can tell, much of the original Clemens script has remained in tact, but Carter has felt it necessary to tinker about with his subject material to such a degree that the John Steed in this book is not the John Steed we've come to know and love.

A classic example of this is a sequence where Steed has a comical encounter with a little old lady who has lost her dog, which is named "Posey-poof". "... I was just going to take him for walkies. I must have left the door open just a teeny bit - and he was gone. Steed was becoming impatient, but, as was his usual rule, he tried not to show it to the old lady ..."

This particular sentence, implying a certain intolerance on Steed's part, is swiftly followed by another example of Carter's misinterpretation of the Steed character. Once the old lady has tottered off out of earshot, he has Steed saying: "Posey-poof, oh my God..."

Now why on earth should John Steed - a man who has had to contend with all manner of certifiable loons including eccentric steam railway enthusiasts, nutty brigadiers who re-enact their war memoirs in their own living rooms, homicidal vaudeville comedians and scientists obsessed with deathwatch beetle's - be so impatient with a harmless old lady who has lost her dog? Answer, he wouldn't! As something of an individualist himself he'd probably shrug it off and take it in his stride. But John Carter includes this kind of re-interpretation as though he has to make some excuse for writing such dialogue in the first place. (One might almost suspect that Carter doesn't have all that much enthusiasm for the subject matter.)

Another quibble is that "Mother" - who only appeared during the sixth season of THE AVENGERS - is referred to quite often in the text. Obviously, Steed had to have a superior during the course of THE NEW AVENGERS, but I can't recall that Mother was ever mentioned. Indeed, I've always thought that the best way of appreciating THE NEW AVENGERS is to imagine that some kind of major Departmental reorganisation occurred between the end of THE AVENGERS and the start of the new series: this would seem to be a reasonable assumption and would explain many of the differences between the two series. John Carter obviously doesn't feel that such assumptions are necessary here.

The last paragraph in the book is so corny, so mind-drenchingly banal, that I shudder to repeat it here:

"The three of them walked past the car and out of the exhibition car park - together and in step, as they always were. Three minds and bodies working as one - the New Avengers."

Stirring stuff! As I've already said, "The Eagle's Nest" is a very useful volume and as such is well worth adding to your Avengers collection. John Carter didn't do quite as good a job as he could have, however - certainly not as good as Peter Cave's no-frills novelisation of THE LAST OF THE CYBERNAUTS ..? (re-titled "The Cybernauts") which I hope to review next time round.



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