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THE NEW AVENGERS

SPECIAL FEATURE ★ BIG COLOUR PIN-UP

**BRIAN MOORE'S
ON THE
BALL**

Dixie
McNeil
in colour
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SUPER COMP!
Many prizes See p.26



**THE
BIONIC
WOMAN
THE SIX
MILLION
DOLLAR
MAN
PICTURE
STRIP
ACTION
inside!**

THE NEW AVENGERS

Rumour has it that Mike Gambit was once a major in the Paras. That he was a mercenary. That he once wrestled crocodiles. But that was before he decided to take up more exciting work . . .

Whatever the truth of his background, it's Gambit's "now" image — his unflappable cool and steel-hard fighting tenacity as Steed's right-hand man in *The New Avengers* that'll place him squarely in the ranks of today's TV super-heroes.

Gambit is hip . . . yet he dresses conservatively to merge with the high powered world of espionage and corruption in which he works. He's quiet and deceptively still . . . until he flares into action, when he can strike like a cobra. He drives a fast car skilfully — his experience of formula one racing put to good use — and he's got an eye for the girls. Especially for Purdey.

**Cool...calm...
and deadly
dangerous!**

Gareth Hunt, who plays Gambit, must have much of the hard-hitting Avengers make-up in his own character, if his own history's anything to go by. He remembers being fascinated by science at school. "It appealed to my imagination that it'd have been ridiculously easy to blow up the laboratory . . ."

Luckily for his teachers, though, he liked school. Despite the fact that they never seemed to encourage him in his one ambition — to be an actor. "When I left," he recalls, "there was this careers officer who looked me up and down and said, 'Hunt, you're quite tall. You'll make a good policeman. Next!'"

The force was denied his talents, however, for Gareth joined the Merchant Navy. Before his sixteenth birthday, he was seeing the world. "I stayed in the Merchant for six years," he says. "But one time, in New

Out to right wrongs — in their own inimitable fashion: (left) Joanna Lumley as Purdey, "the ex-dancer with a kick like a mule".

(Left) Steed — real life Patrick Macnee — "I figure it's just nice to be recognised."
(Below) Mr. Cool — that's Gambit, played by Gareth Hunt: "It'd have been ridiculously easy to blow up the laboratory."





Zealand, I got footloose. With another couple of guys, I jumped ship. That was at a place called Napier, and to make a clean getaway, we hired a cab for a hundred mile trip. Cost us eleven quid and two watches.

"We did odd jobs out there, but of course, we were caught, and ended up in the nick. I did three months, and it taught me one thing. Never to get on the wrong side of the law again!"

Back in Britain, he stayed unconventional. Got a job in an ITV studio, switched horses and took a BBC design course, worked as a part-time stagehand. Then, of all things, a spell digging up roads, followed by some door-to-door selling.

"Eventually, I decided it was time to concentrate on that old first love of mine — acting. I studied, played bit parts. Toured in rep, got my confidence and experience, and then joined the Royal Shakespeare Company. Now I'm with the National Theatre, so in a way, if I ever had any ambition, I've answered it."

It was probably during his stint in the fantastically popular *Upstairs, Downstairs* series that television viewers first began to sit up and take notice of Gareth. Now, in *The New Avengers*, he'll undoubtedly establish himself as a star — and that despite the unquestioned competition from the delectable Purdey in the battle for viewers' atten-

tion!

Joanna Lumley, who plays the ex-dancer with a kick like a mule, shares Gareth's early hopes. She was seven when she decided she'd like to be an actress.

"The ambition gave way to other things," she admits. "I thought I'd rather be a surgeon, for example. Then a horse rider. Even a Prime Minister! A ballet dancer like Purdey? Oh, yes, of course. But I grew too tall for that."

She worked in rep, tackled some films, made the London stage, and did a host of television appearances, culminating in eight weeks of *Coronation Street*.

Now well established as an actress, Joanna tried very hard for the part of Purdey in *The New Avengers*. "I liked the part from the start. I knew it was going to be fun to do. I could hardly believe it when I was given my contract."

Joanna follows the now legendary figures of Cathy Gale, Emma Peel and Tara King as the immaculate John Steed's latest leading lady. And Steed, of course, is the pivot, the hinge-pin of the whole series.

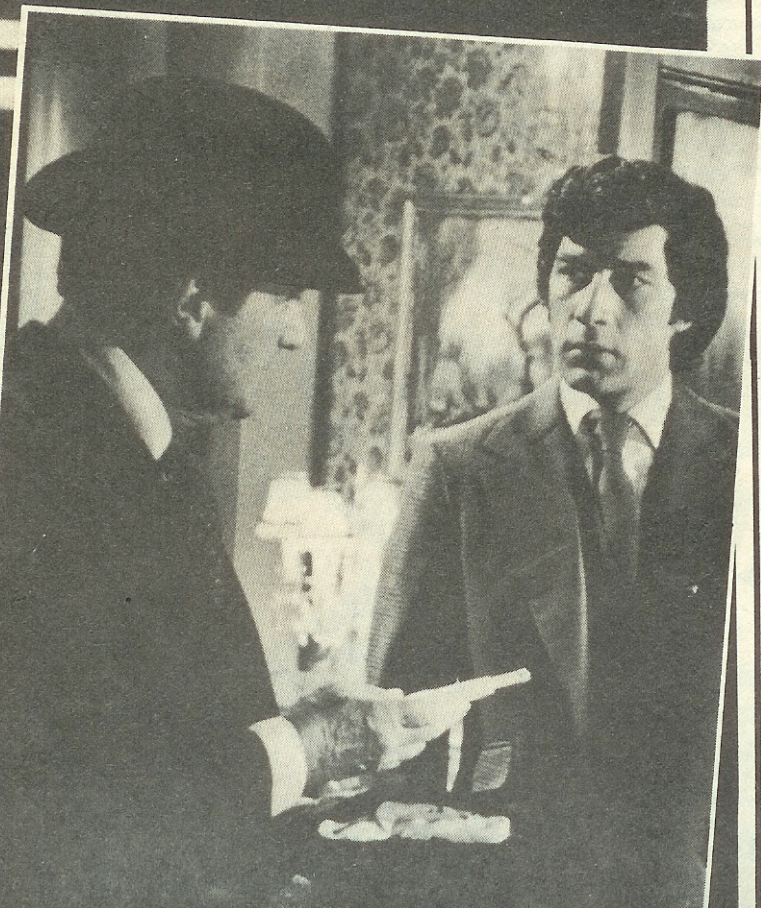
Known world-wide for his unruffled calm in the face of almost incredibly terrifying dangers, Steed (not to mention his bowler and his umbrella) is the ultimate in suave Englishmen. *The New Avengers* finds him still in possession of his London Mews flat, but he's now got a country place as well. A

mansion where he breeds beautiful horses and entertains beautiful women. He still has his Bentley — to back up the new Range Rover and a wide-wheeled, highly polished road version of a racing coupe, hand-tailored and capable of 200 mph.

Patrick Macnee, who is John Steed, and has been since the birth of that swashbuckling adventurer back in 1960, is an old Etonian. As debonair off stage as on, he doesn't mind any suggestion that he's type-cast. He smiles at the thought that, wherever in the world he goes, people remember him as the man with the disarming charm who entered their lives through the TV screen. "I figure," he says, "that it's just nice to be recognised. Not, perhaps, as a movie star, but more as an old piano that sits in the corner of a room, and they've grown accustomed to it being there. Our *Avengers* series have all generated that kind of warmth. They've been that kind of show."

He could remind people of his films. He made his first — *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* — in 1942. But no. "You're that nice man from the *Avengers*," they say when they meet him on the street . . .

And now the legend — for it is a legend — continues. One familiar face, and two new ones. Steed, Gambit and Purdey — sure to stand out in the crowd of television's current righters-of-wrongs for what they are. True super-heroes!



An awkward moment dawns for Steed and Gambit, and the tension mounts for two of the New Avengers.