TVTimes Souvenir Extra

40p

PATRICK MACNEE tells his own story of those remarkable Avengers

FEATURING

THE NEW AVENGERS



INTRODUCTION

I remember it all, right from that very first episode. It's slightly surprising to think it was as far back as 1960 that I first became an Avenger.

My goodness, how the time flies. . .

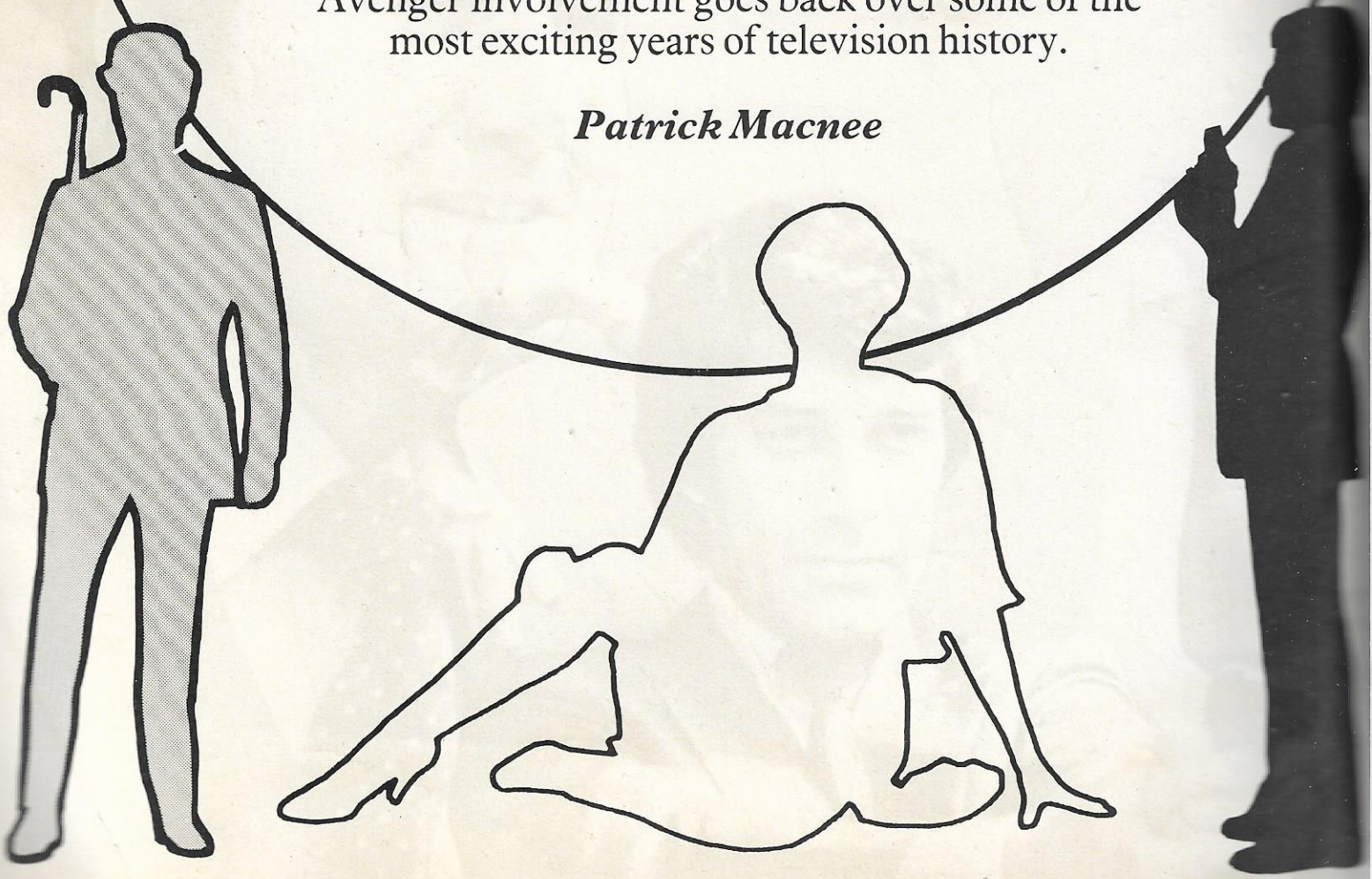
This is a scrapbook of all those memories. All those startling Avenger girls: Honor Blackman as Cathy Gale . . . Diana Rigg as Emma Peel . . . Linda Thorson as Tara King. And now that incredible creature Joanna Lumley as Purdey. Did you know, I wonder, that Purdey is the name of one of the world's most celebrated and perfect shotguns?

Well it's all here. My souvenir history of the Avengers right up to and including *The New Avengers.* I tell my own life story too.

Not at all as attractive as the pictures of the Avenger girls, of course. . .

Yet it is still marvellous for me to recall that my Avenger involvement goes back over some of the most exciting years of television history.

Patrick Macnee





WHY THE NEW TEAM NEVER HOLDS HANDS

And here they are: *The New Avengers* team of Purdey and Mike Gambit. Oh, and myself, of course. I feel Steed really ought to be around to point them in the right direction.

Not, I hasten to add, that either of them seems to need their hands held. In fact, if you held hands with Purdey and she wasn't in the mood — well . . . you could find yourself in an undignified heap on the floor.

Gambit, on the other hand, is an incredible fellow. I do believe he would melt if the lovely Purdey held *his* hand — in the right sort of way, naturally.

But I am glad he's on *The New Avengers'* side. I would think twice before tangling with him if he were one of the villains.







Ian Hendry as the *Police Surgeon* turned crimebuster, forerunner of the all-action Avengers. In those days, John Steed was a mere sidekick, the lovely, lethal Avengers girls just a twinkle in his eye.

HOW IT ALL BEGAN

by Ian Hendry

It all seems improbable now. *The New Avengers* was born out of *The Avengers,* whose "Daddy" was a live cops-and-robbers-with-a-difference TV series called *Police Surgeon* (not to be confused with a later American series of that name).

The idea was that I, as a police surgeon, became an Avenger against everything evil after my girlfriend was shot down in the street by the baddies.

It is one of the ironies of life that the shotdown girl was an actress called Catherine Woodville. Later, she was to become Patrick Macnee's second wife. . .

Pat came into the series as my sidekick. For a long while, no one was sure if he was a goodie or a baddie. And, to be quite honest, neither did we.

But, in those first fumbling beginnings, it was Pat and myself as the actors who helped knock some shape into the whole thing. A lot of other people played their parts in it — as you will learn in this souvenir.

Here, of course, I'm talking as an actor. And from that point of view the series was both funny and furious.

Imagine it. In those early days, television was live. The viewer could watch a terrible fist fight — and 20 seconds later one of the fighters (who'd been covered in mud and blood) was supposed to walk in nonchalantly, impeccably dressed. That second scene, of course, was supposed to be happening hours, days, or even a few weeks later.

I remember one of those sequences where I was fighting a baddie in a studio mock-up of sewers. The fight ended with me doing an 8 ft. back-fall into water. They had built an 8 ft. square water tank made, of all things, from whitewood.

If you have ever fallen backwards from a height of 8 ft. into a water tank only 8 ft. square, you'll know that it is slightly dangerous. I reckon that when I hit the water, the clearance between my head and the tank wall was about a quarter of an inch.

Then came the next problem. A green slime had developed on the bottom of the tank. The baddie had to jump into the water on top of me, and we were supposed to continue the fight until I delivered my killer punch. I certainly won that particular battle. As I lashed out at him, I slipped on the slime and knocked him cold — for real.

There was no time to do anything about it. I had to jump from the tank, run round the set to where the wardrobe and make-up departments were ready with a towel to dry my hair, and slap on a dry top coat so I could make a casual entrance to a room with Steed by my side. This scene was allegedly happening some many hours later.

Underneath I was sopping wet, but as far as the viewers were concerned, I was as warm as toast in my lovely overcoat. I was having it good. Back in the water tank, an inoffensive, unfortunate stuntman, trying to earn an honorable living as a TV baddie, was graciously drowning.

Happily, the studio crew got him out in time.

Those early days were all hysterical and mad and silly. We loved it, really.

Most of all we loved the companionship and atmosphere. I've had a theory throughout my acting career that the first consideration of an actor is to be part of a happy company.

We rehearsed in an old building opposite a pub in Hammersmith. After the cast had been given their copies of the script, I would take them over to the pub, act as mine host, tell them not to worry because they were still on the payroll — and we'd get to work. Then Pat and myself, and sometimes a few others, would go to a nearby steak house. After that, it was usually Pat and I who would grab a bottle of scotch or brandy and go to a flat off Kensington High Street to beat out our latest approach to *The Avengers* characters.

There were some wonderful times. Once, we were supposed to be locked in a wardrobe from which we had to shout, in unison: "Let us out, let us out".

The wardrobe, made of the most fragile plywood, couldn't have withstood an assault by a placid four-year-old girl, much less the combined physical might of two magnificent Avengers.

Eventually, I think it was an old lady who let us out. In reality, if either of us had breathed out too hard the whole wardrobe would have burst apart.

And there were doors that wouldn't open, and handles that fell off when they did. The scenery collapsed once.

Don't forget, all this was going out live, just as you'd see it from your seat in a theatre.

But I do think we managed, in those early days, to develop a new style. I was supposed to be phlegmatic, and when I got too boring Steed was there to send me up and tell me not to be so serious. And when Steed got too outrageous I was there to say: "Oh come on, don't overdo it".

The New Avengers cost £4,000,000 to produce. In the beginning, Pat and I felt as though *The Avengers* cost fourpence. But it did have something special, it did develop into a world beating television series, and it did help a lot of people to stardom. Honor Blackman, Diana Rigg, Linda Thorson, and now, I reckon, Joanna Lumley and Gareth Hunt. Not to mention Pat Macnee himself.

Although I was the first Avenger, Pat will always be Avenger-in-Chief.

Now he will take you down *The Avengers* memory lane in the following pages. I'm glad I was one of the first to go down it.



John Warwick watches Ian Hendry treat a cut on Olive McFarland's head in *Lag on the Run,* an early story in the *Police Surgeon* series.

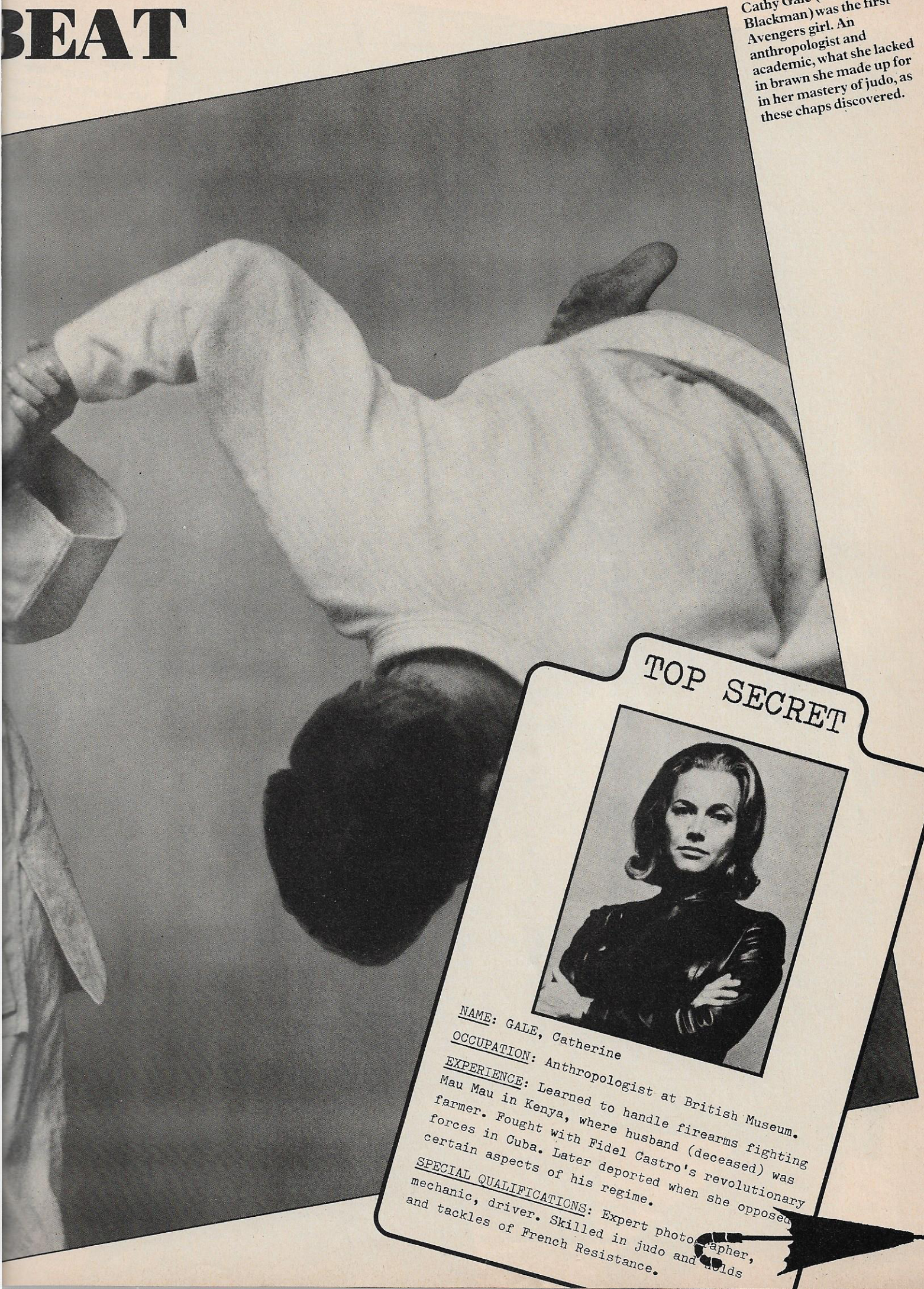
HOW BRAVE AVENGERS THOSE EVIL ENEMIES

And evil they have been — from straightforward, knife-in-the-back villains to super-sophisticated master criminals using the latest technology. But the Avengers — their story is told on the following pages — could always produce a trick or two in tight situations. . .



BEAT

Cathy Gale (Honor Blackman) was the first Avengers girl. An anthropologist and academic, what she lacked in brawn she made up for in her mastery of judo, as these chaps discovered.



TOP SECRET

NAME: GALE, Catherine

OCCUPATION: Anthropologist at British Museum.

EXPERIENCE: Learned to handle firearms fighting Mau Mau in Kenya, where husband (deceased) was farmer. Fought with Fidel Castro's revolutionary forces in Cuba. Later deported when she opposed certain aspects of his regime.

SPECIAL QUALIFICATIONS: Expert photographer, mechanic, driver. Skilled in judo and holds and tackles of French Resistance.



I was the first to suggest to Honor that she dress Cathy Gale in "kinky" black leather, and how good she looked in this overcoat lined in black and white civet.

Honor may have been television's first popular "liberated" lady, but she was still my choice as one of the most beautiful women in the world. She wore the black topper to enchant the opposition at the Old Bailey in *Brief For Murder*.

Out of black leather, Honor could look deceptively defenceless in simple styles. This time, she had received a shock in the post but was determined not to share it with me.





September 29, 1962: Honor joins the team for her first taste of Avengers action. The episode was *Mr. Teddy Bear*, and Bernard Goldman — looking suitably satanic — was one of the villains soon to realise he was dealing with more than a pretty face. . .

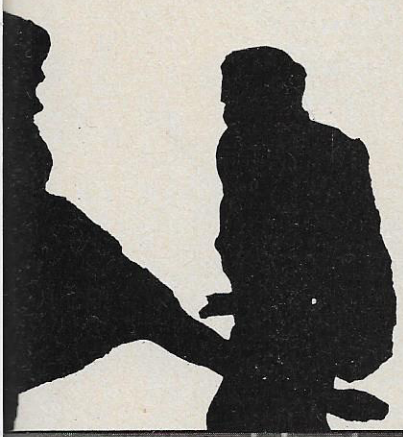




Remember Juno, my faithful Great Dane companion in the first series? When the poor chap died, his daughter Junia (seen here) took over. The dogs were trained to jump up affectionately to ladies by putting a piece of meat in their cleavages.

Irresistible, isn't she? Honor's Scotch plaid cloak — ideal for concealing a gun — is reversible and worn with a black fur scarf.

I must raise my hat to this mirror shot of Cathy and Steed. Clever camerawork has always been a hallmark of the series and a lot of time is spent achieving unusual shots.





You might well ask what's cooking here. It was, in fact, *Death a la Carte,* with Henry Soskin about to sample my culinary skill.



The kilt was not only a disguise but also a nostalgic reminder of my Scottish ancestry, i *Castle De'Ath.* Gordon Jackson — later to be Hudson in *Upstairs, Downstairs* — also appeared in that episode.

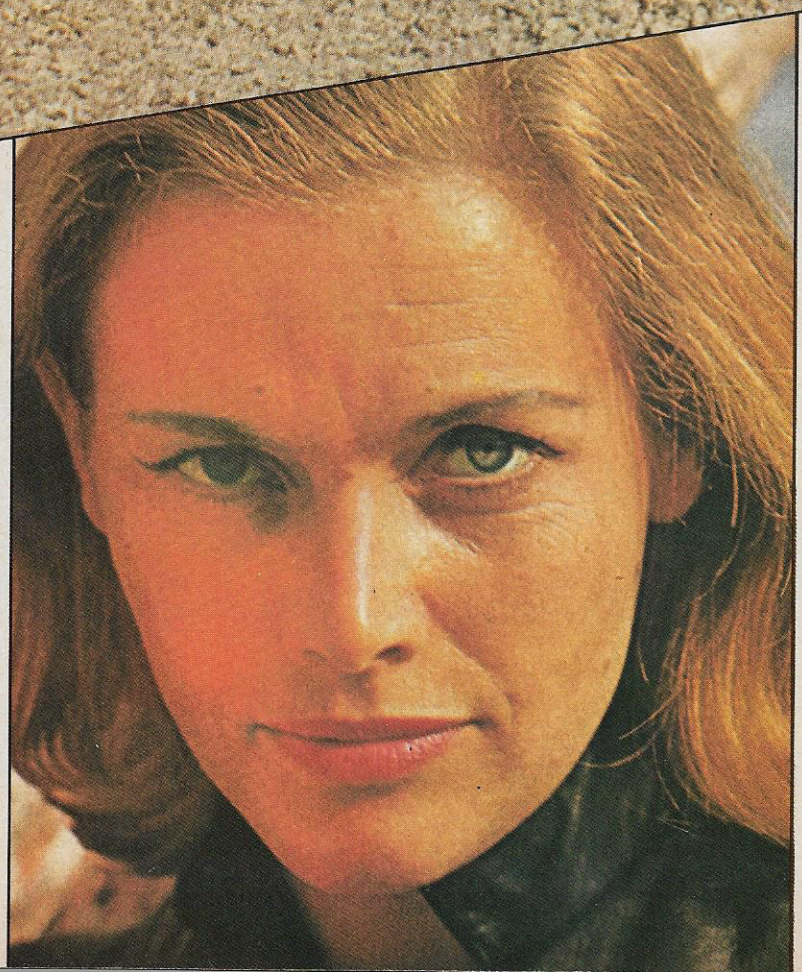
How we became used to eccentrics over th years . . . Major General Kynaston Reeves w one of the oddest, giving me a lesson in military history from his rocking hors in *What the Butler Saw.*







Honor could cast a line with the best of them . . . yet another skill which came in handy. This time, she was after some pretty big fish. . .



Steed watches Honor Blackman turned into Cathy Gale by the make-up department. The bearded by-stander in the back row is the then producer Brian Clemens, who helped to launch *The New Avengers.*

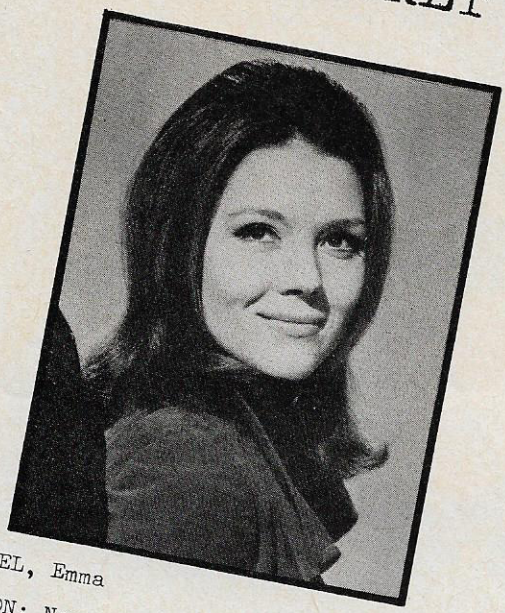




Diana Rigg was the second Avengers girl, winning the role of Emma Peel after a gun-toting screen test (right). Mind you, our adversaries found one way of cutting Emma down to size, as you can see above. All it took was arch-villainy — and a little trick camerawork.

We set out to create a different kind of relationship from the one I had with Cathy Gale, using a sort of shorthand in our communications. Here, however, it was a party line on a deserted beach, with Di looking lovely in white lace.

TOP SECRET



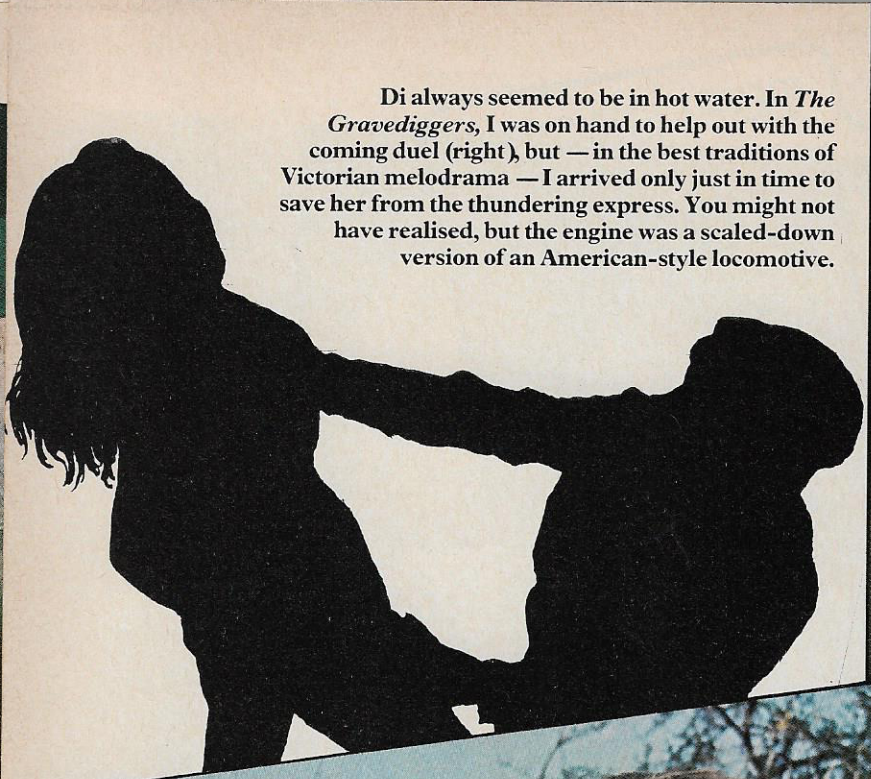
NAME: PEEL, Emma

OCCUPATION: None (private means).

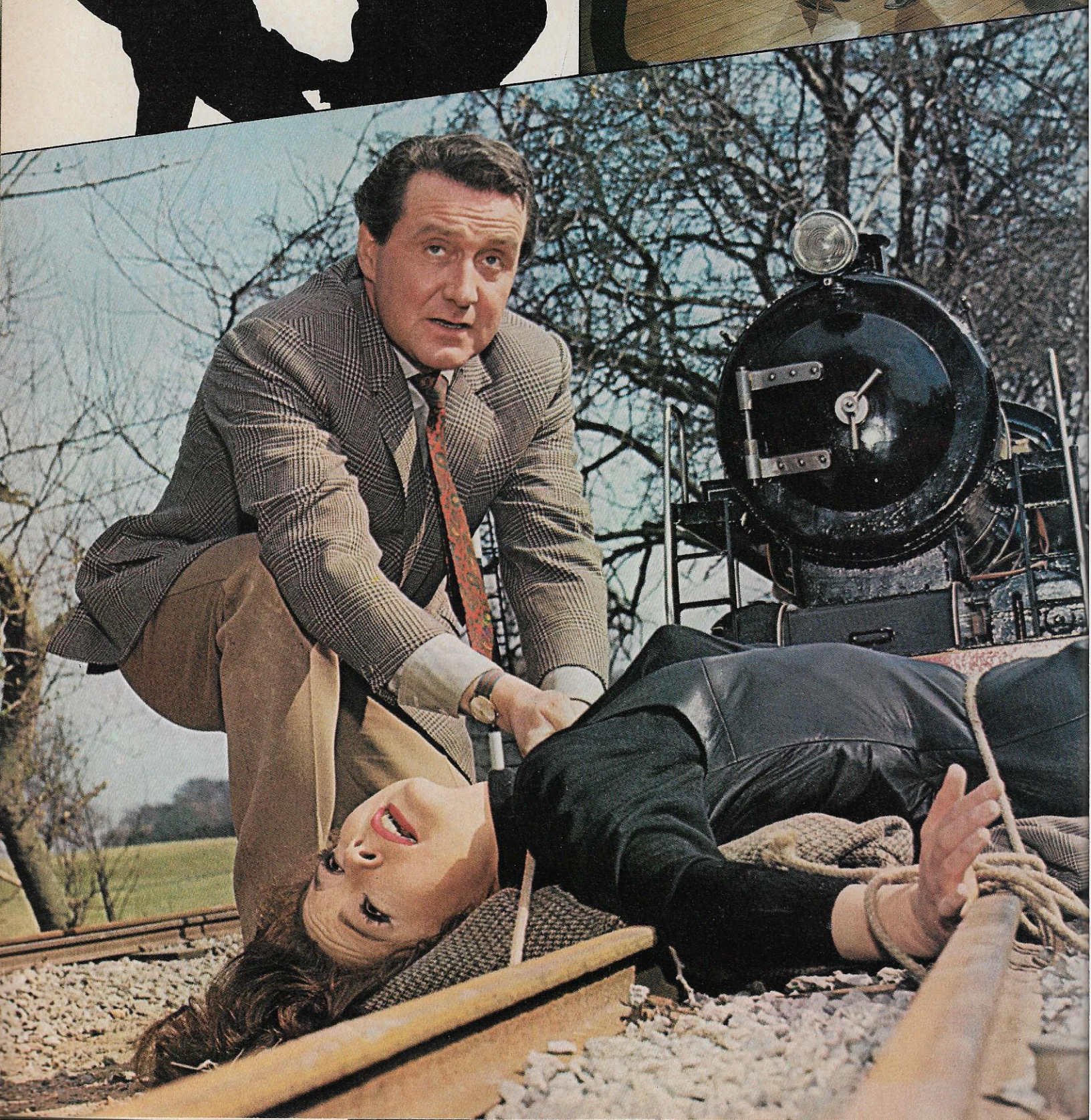
EXPERIENCE: Internationally educated daughter of shipping magnate, widow of test pilot, her lifestyle has given Mrs. Peel invaluable political and social connections.

SPECIAL QUALIFICATIONS: Acts logically and bravely in dangerous situations. Skilled driver. Expert at judo and karate which she has adapted to her natural "balletic" abilities.

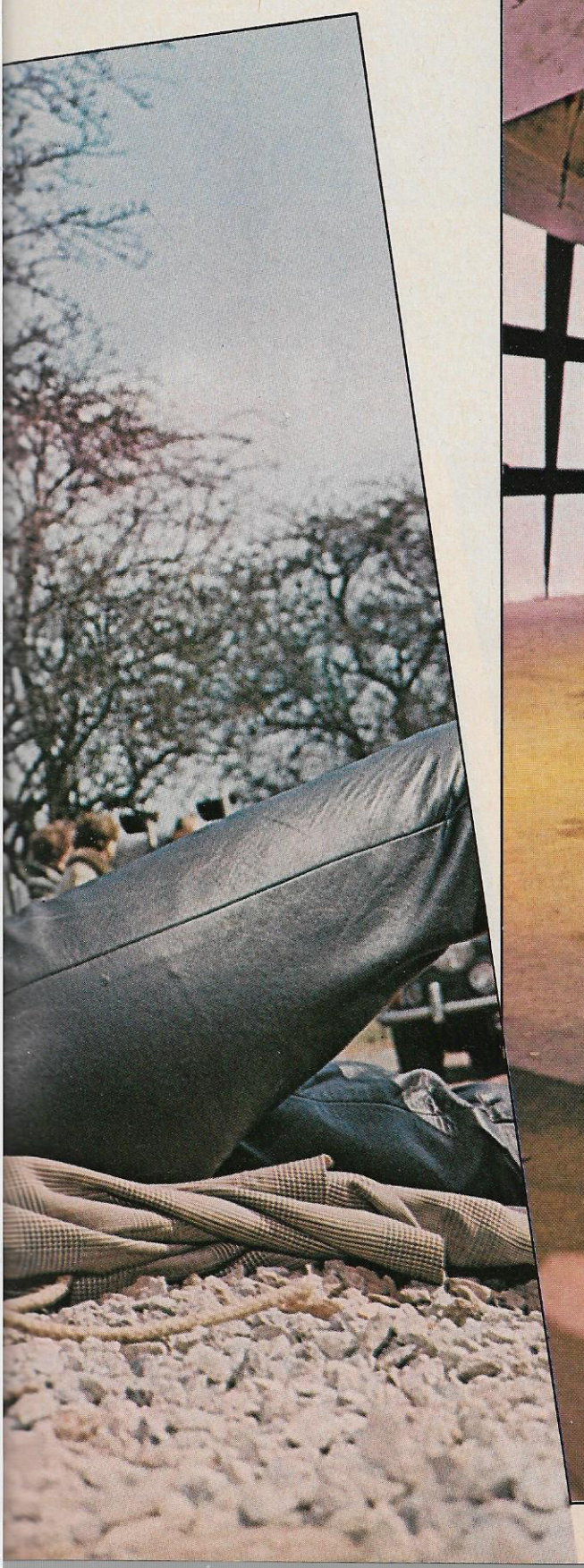
Di always seemed to be in hot water. In *The Gravediggers,* I was on hand to help out with the coming duel (right), but — in the best traditions of Victorian melodrama — I arrived only just in time to save her from the thundering express. You might not have realised, but the engine was a scaled-down version of an American-style locomotive.







There was no end to the ingenious deaths devised for Emma Peel. This time it was to be a two-way split on the blade of a band saw in *Epic*. Peter Wyngarde and Isa Miranda don't seem in the least cut-up by the idea — but then they had planned the whole thing. . .







We had a fast-talking dummy for co-star in this episode, *The Fifty Thousand Pound Breakfast.*



Di was great at comedy and thoroughly enjoyed slapstick. In *Murdersville,* the weapons she faced were custard pies, and I was roped in to help clean up.



Another nasty end was planned for Emma in *The Bird Who Knew Too Much.* Luckily, Steed avoided setting off the trip wire.



The series would sometimes take us back in time, giving Di the chance to look ravishing in period costume.



Emma attends her own funeral. It was in a similarly tight situation that Emma once swung at Jackie Pallo, who was playing the villain. He fell back into an open grave and knocked himself out. Could well have been R.I.P., Jackie. . .



We used all manner of electronic gadgetry in the battle against crime. Here, a passage on tape is about to provide a lead to a cunning killer.









Yes, it's Di in danger again. But the cool stare was an advantage in *The Life and Death of Emma Peel.*

Now it was goodbye Diana Rigg, hello Linda Thorson. She played Tara King, a worthy successor to Di's Emma Peel. But how different they were: Emma icy calm, sexily sophisticated; Tara softer, wide-eyed and pert. Having her around made Steed feel young again.



TOP SECRET



NAME: KING, Tara

OCCUPATION: Actress

EXPERIENCE: Travelled extensively in Canada where father is civil airlines pilot. Learned to handle firearms and ski on hunting trips with him. Trained as secretary in Toronto. Studied at R.A.D.A. in London.

SPECIAL QUALIFICATIONS: Expert shot, skier, driver. Holds pilot's licence. Skilled in judo and karate.

Di's farewell was a sad time, but I'm not about to burst into tears. In fact, the lovely lady had the nape of my neck in one of her deadly, vice-like grips.





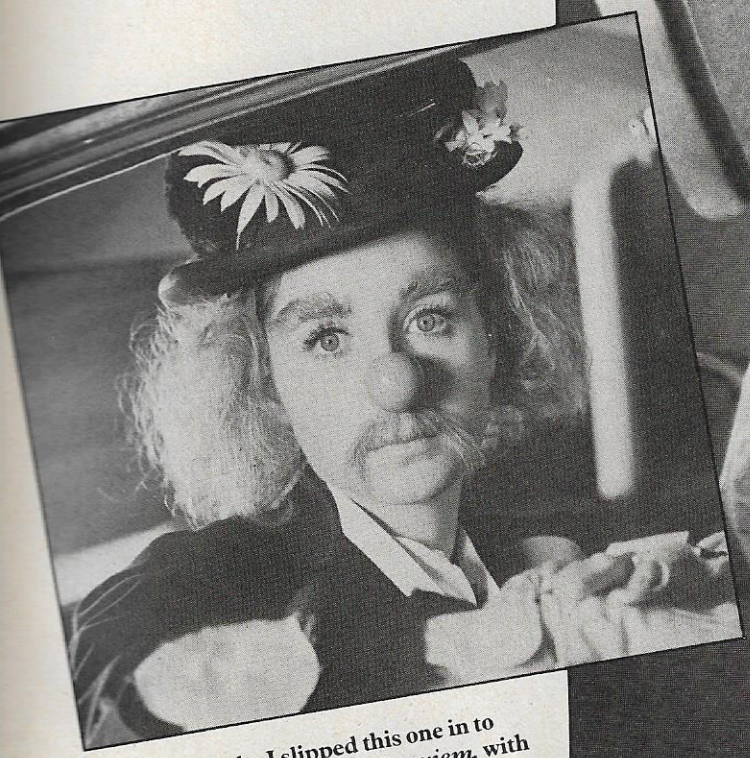




Oh dear, make no bones about it, we arrived too late to save the chap above . . . Linda's arrival, in those devastating black boots and gloves, came in Di's final episode, *The Forget-Me-Knot.*



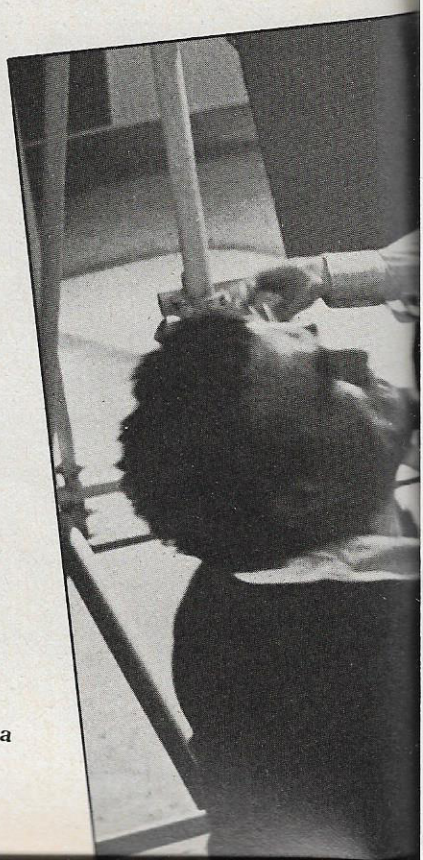
Steed to the rescue with a straight right for the chap who had locked Tara in a Turkish bath. After two or three takes, things had really been hotting-up for Linda in there.

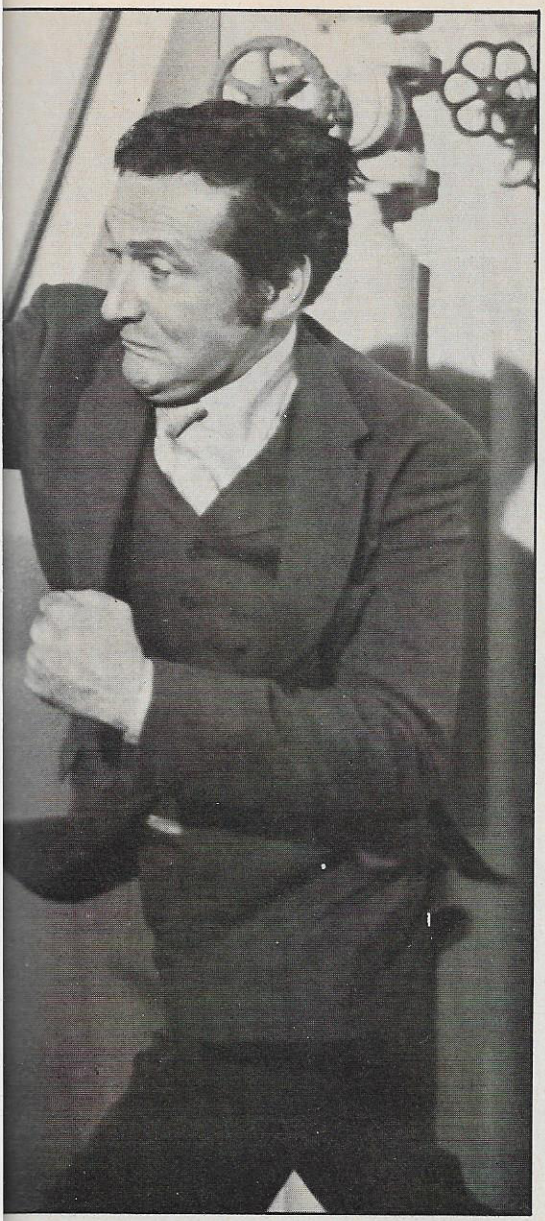


No, it isn't Linda. I slipped this one in to catch you. The episode was *Requiem*, with Angela Douglas hamming it up as a clown.



Terry Maidment receives Tara's treatment in *Split*. First time I've seen a box file used as an offensive weapon. . .

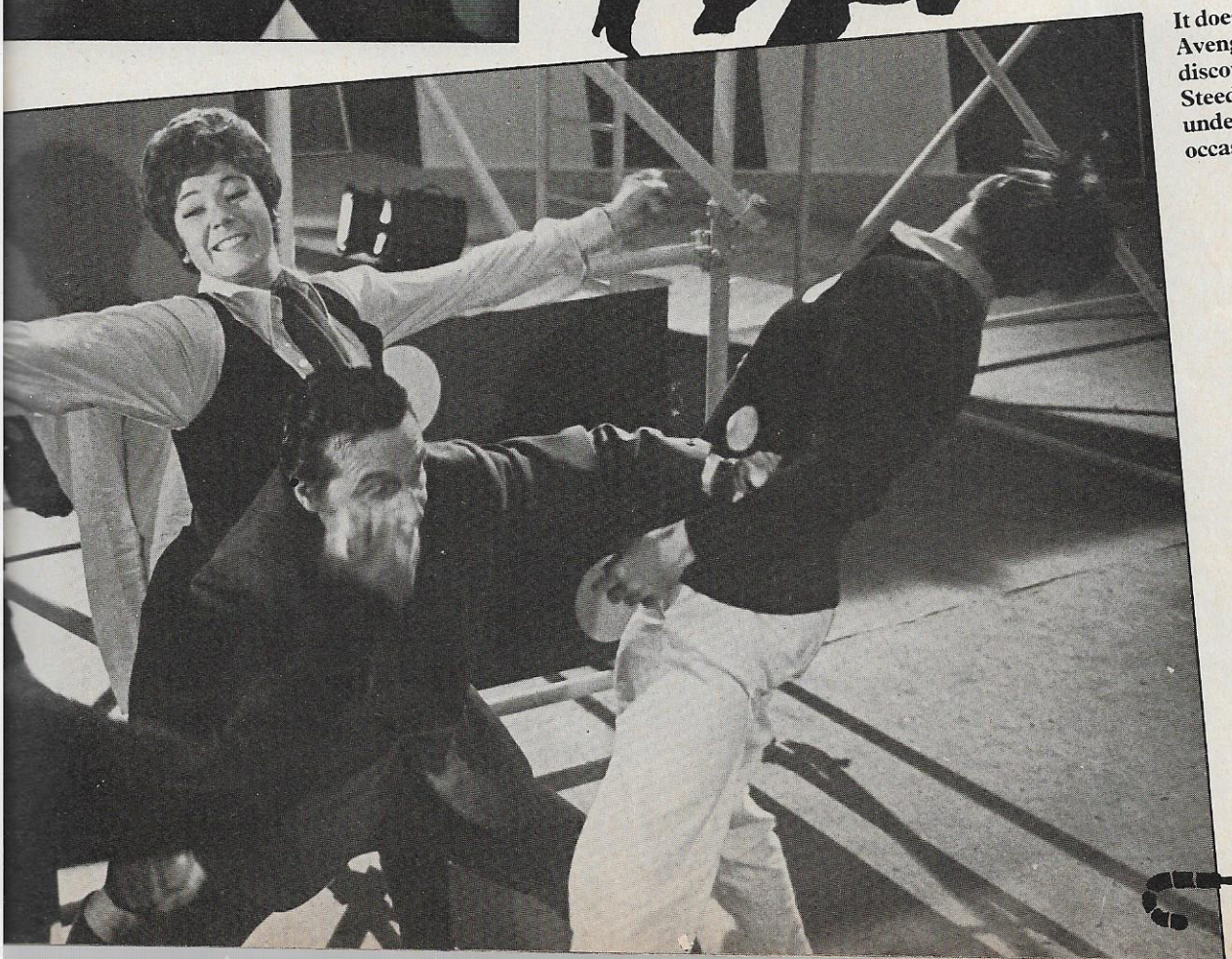








Tara soon followed Emma as the target for devious deaths. She hadn't volunteered to help Fiery Fred in his lethal magic act, by the way.



It doesn't do to offend the Avengers, as these gentlemen discovered in *Game*. Tara and Steed had an intuitive understanding on these occasions. We called it teamwork.



I had great fun fighting Jimmy Jewel in *Look — (Stop Me If You've Heard This One).* He kept changing costumes at amazing speed to confuse Steed.



Don't be fooled by the relaxed atmosphere. Under that fake sun tan we were coiled for action because, true to the episode title, *They Kept Killing Steed* — or, at least, attempting to.



I hadn't joined the Fire Service — this was the pole in Tara's flat. I was always dropping in. . .



Ask not for whom the bell tolls . . . it was that marvellous comedian Eric Barker. But I don't think he was laughing in this scene from *The Rotters*.

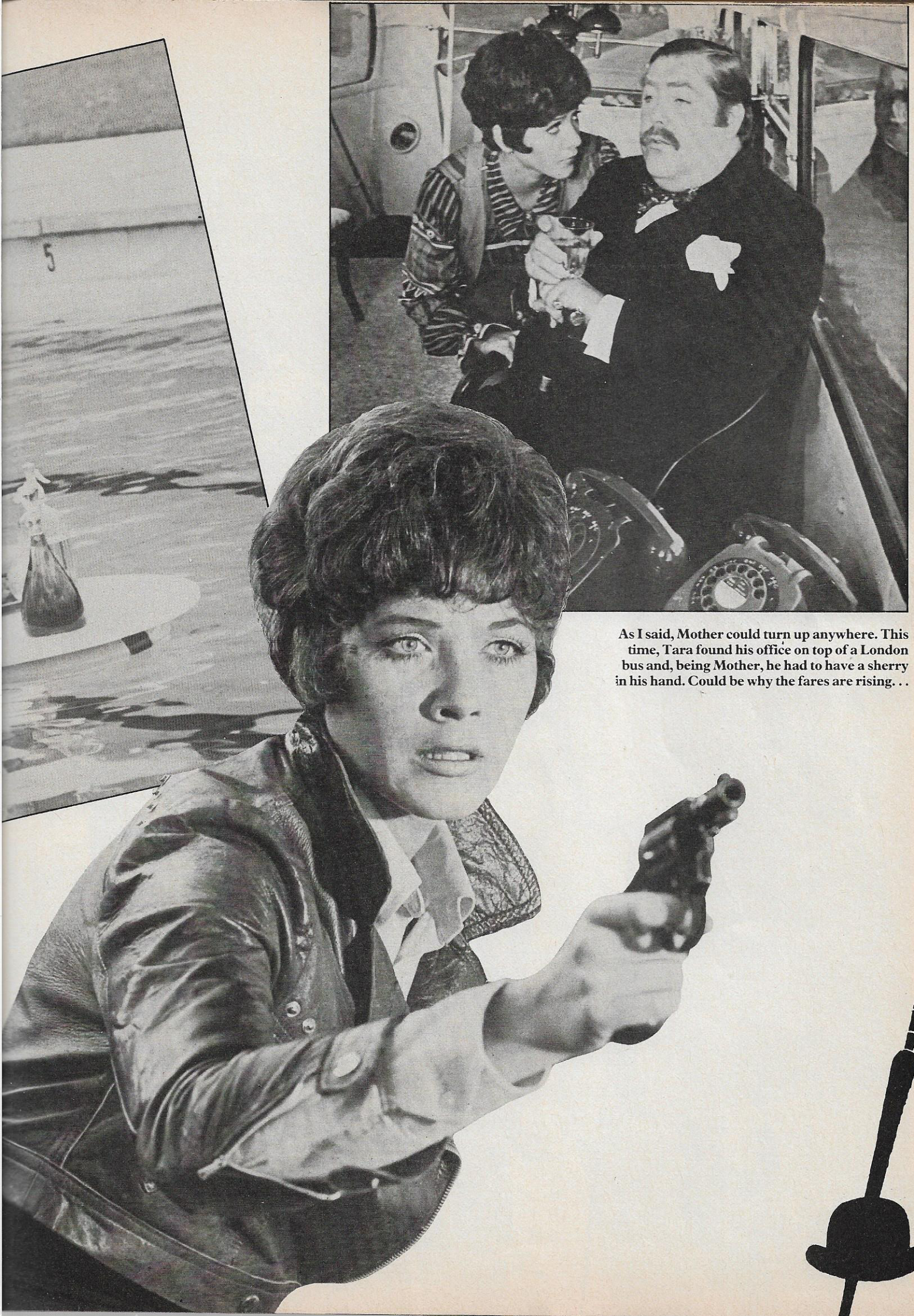






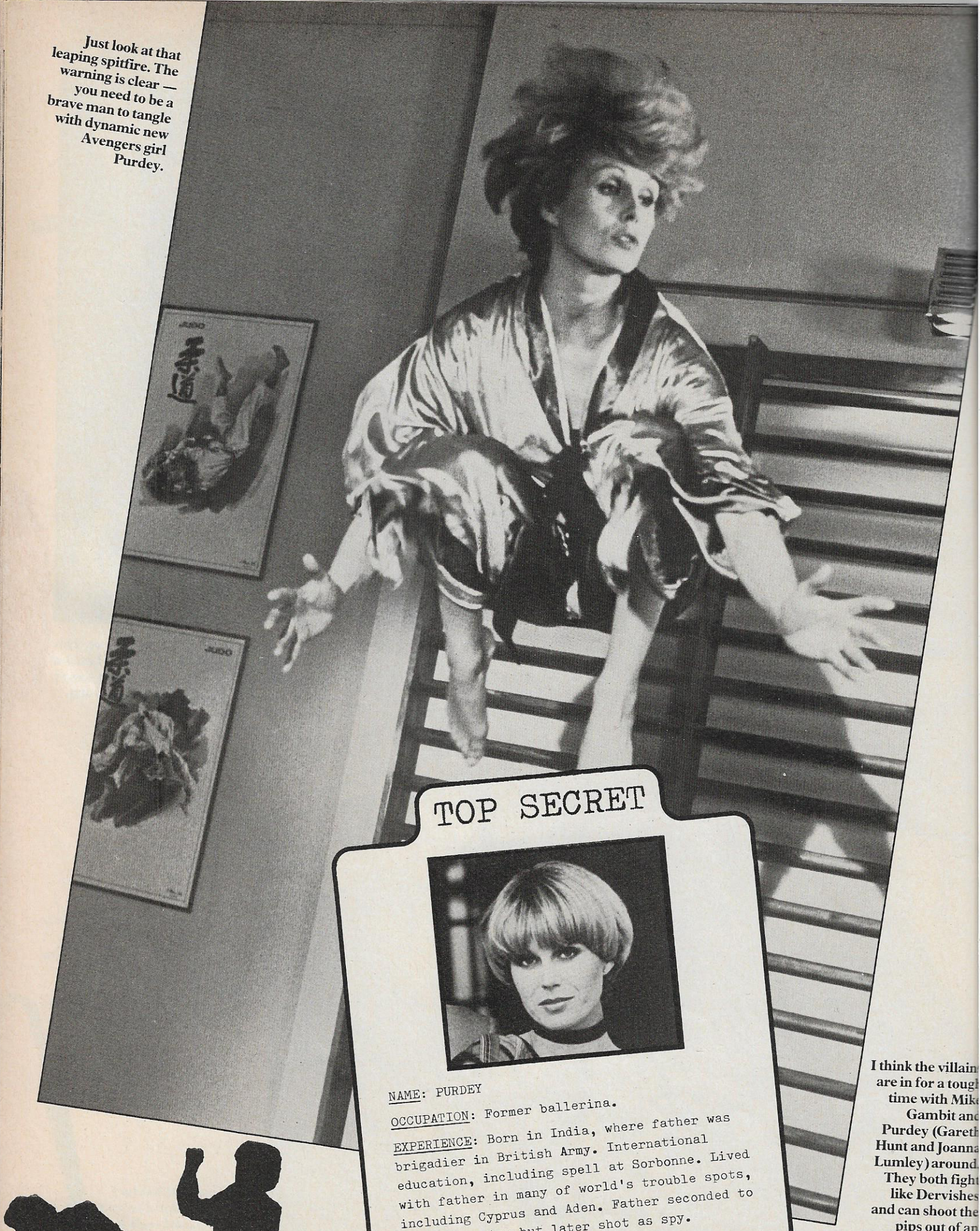
Mother, played by Patrick Newell, arrived towards the end of the first series. He was the head of the Avengers and could turn up in the most unlikely places. . .

I joined Mother at his roof-garden headquarters in *You'll Catch Your Death.* At the other end of the telescope is his assistant, played by Rhonda Parker. A lady always ready for the lead to fly, she needed that bullet-proof vest.



As I said, Mother could turn up anywhere. This time, Tara found his office on top of a London bus and, being Mother, he had to have a sherry in his hand. Could be why the fares are rising. . .

Just look at that leaping spitfire. The warning is clear — you need to be a brave man to tangle with dynamic new Avengers girl Purdey.



TOP SECRET

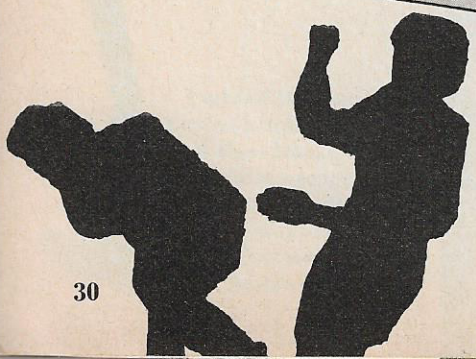
NAME: PURDEY

OCCUPATION: Former ballerina.

EXPERIENCE: Born in India, where father was brigadier in British Army. International education, including spell at Sorbonne. Lived with father in many of world's trouble spots, including Cyprus and Aden. Father seconded to Secret Service but later shot as spy.

SPECIAL QUALIFICATIONS: Expert shot, competent driver. Learned Chinese martial skills while studying arts in Peking. Also well versed in fighting style based on French martial art of Panache.

I think the villains are in for a tough time with Mike Gambit and Purdey (Gareth Hunt and Joanna Lumley) around. They both fight like Dervishes and can shoot the pips out of an apple at 50 paces. I just hope they'll allow the venerable Steed to get involved now and then.

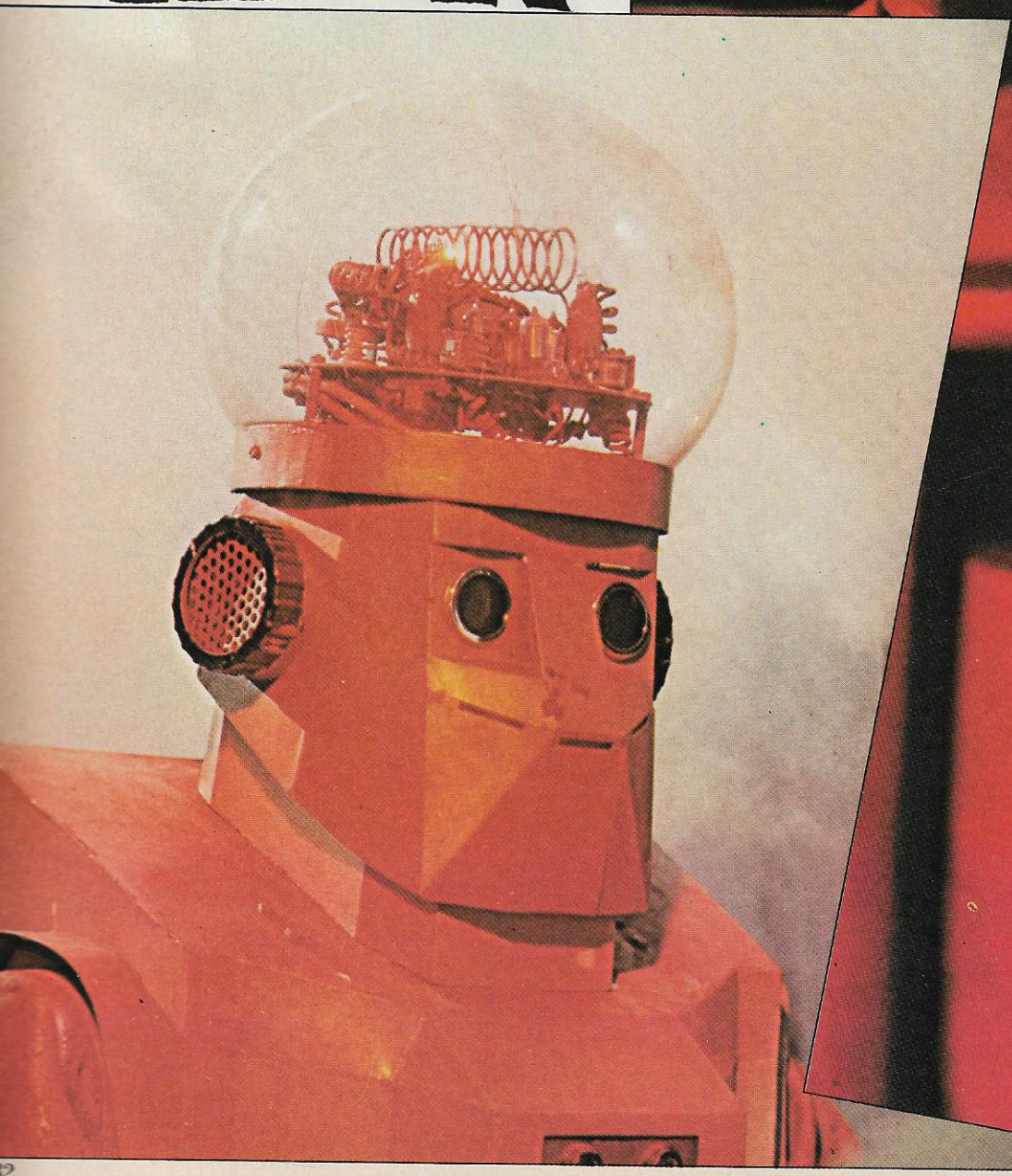


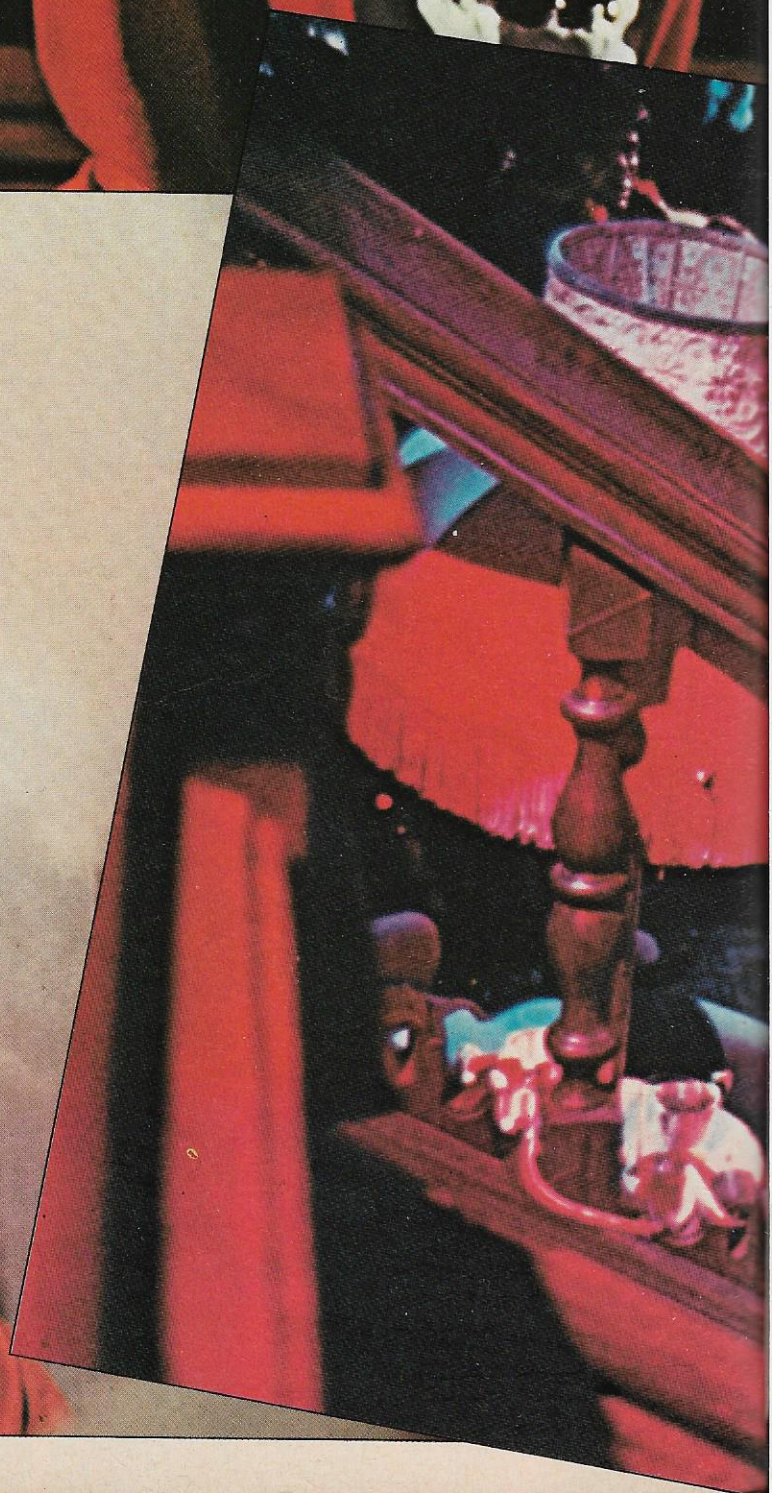


What dreadful carnage that man Gambit seems to leave in his wake . . . Just look at the mess in the picture at the bottom of the page. That and the one of the well-dressed skull are from *The Midas Touch*. But doesn't Purdey look a darling as a clown (far right), in the scene from *Three Handed Game?* The chappie below is a sort of grandaddy ancestor of the dreaded Cybernauts.

















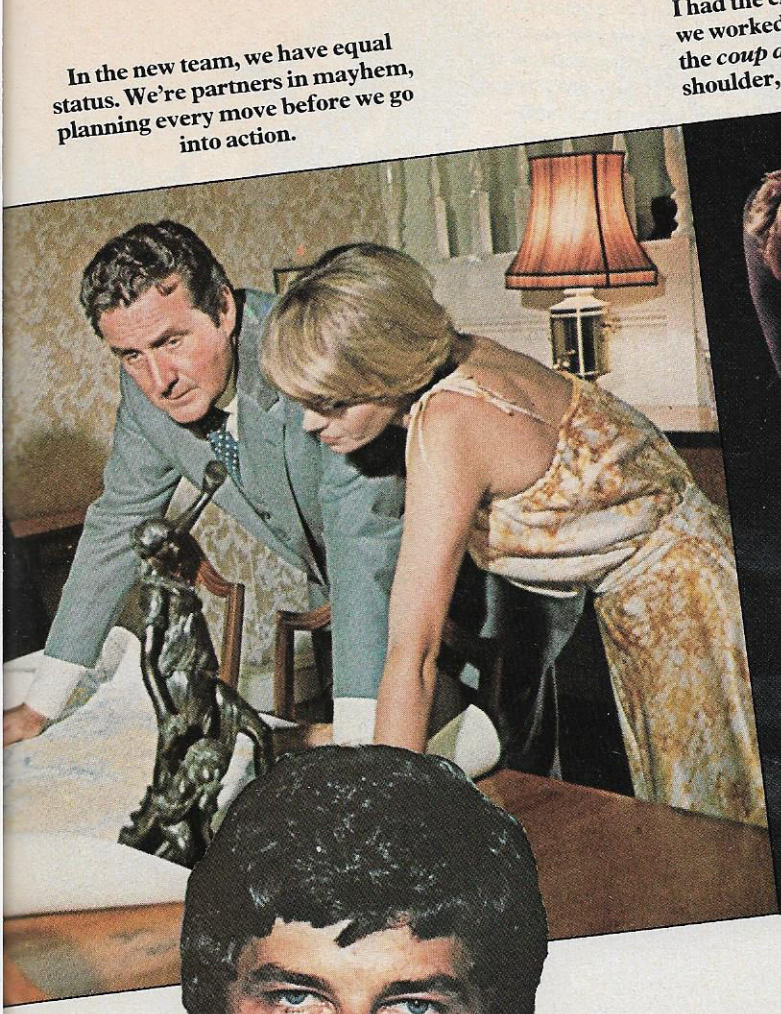
One of the first adversaries the new team tackled was Perov (Peter Jeffrey). He had kept a surprise on ice for years but thawed it out to play us in a deadly game of cards.

Purdey has a guest, the half man, half robot Kane (played by Robert Lang), in *The Last of the Cybernauts.*

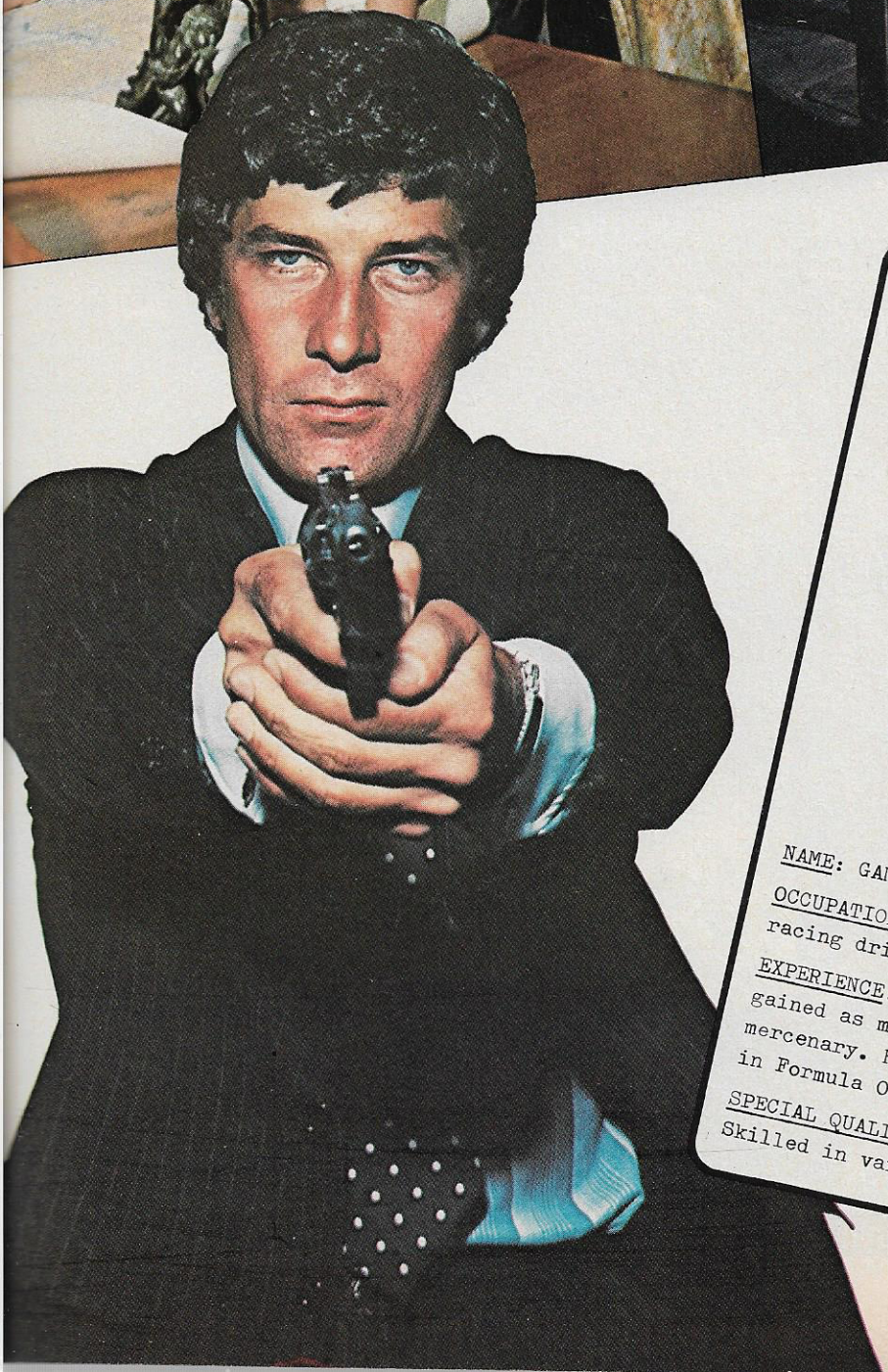


In the new team, we have equal status. We're partners in mayhem, planning every move before we go into action.

I had the chance to assess Purdey's style the first time we worked together. The chap on the left had crept up to deal the *coup de grace*. She simply leant forward, gripped my shoulder, kicked back gracefully — and down he went.







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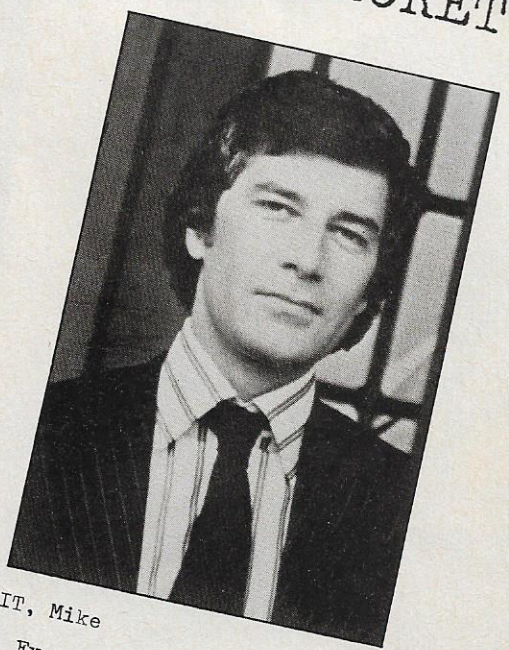


NAME: GAMBIT, Mike

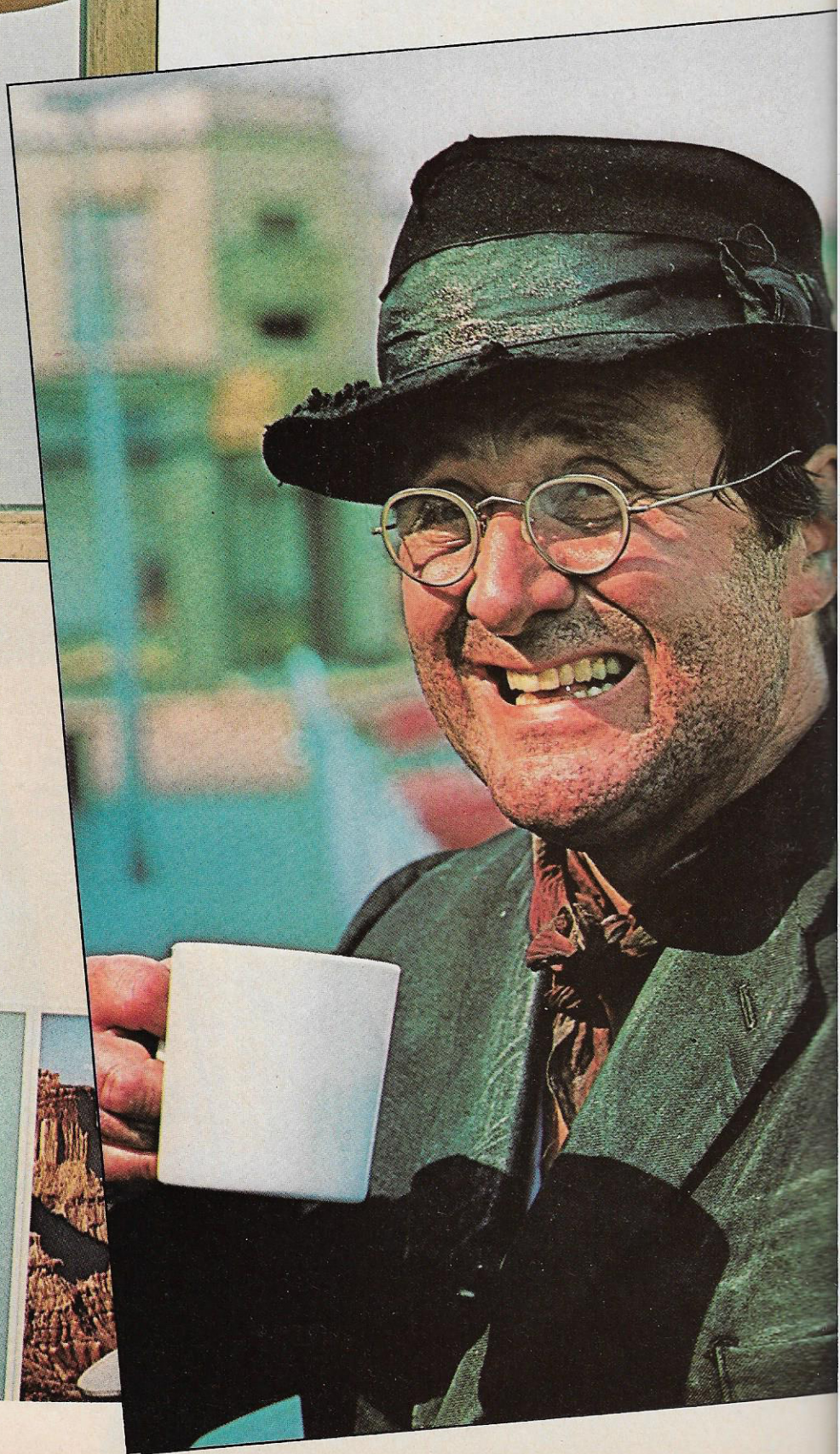
OCCUPATION: Ex-mercenary/Army major/ racing driver.

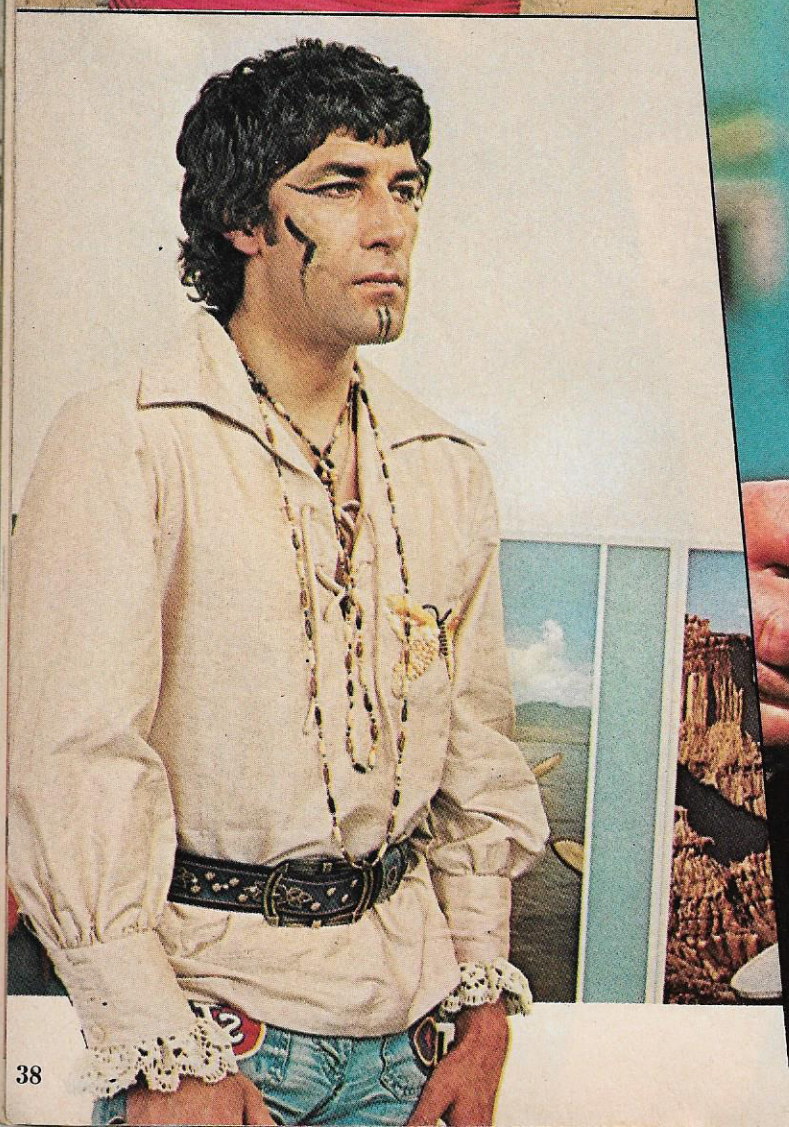
EXPERIENCE: Comprehensive knowledge of warfare gained as major in Parachute Regiment and as mercenary. Has wrestled crocodiles and competed in Formula One motor racing.

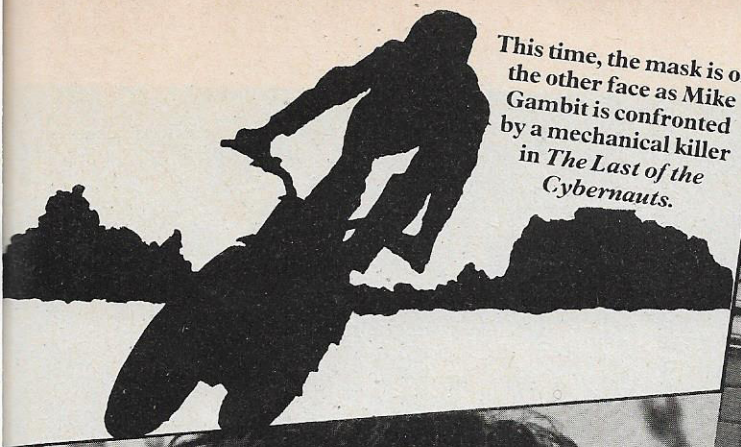
SPECIAL QUALIFICATIONS: Expert shot. Good athlete. Skilled in various methods of unarmed combat.

Avengers' disguises can range from the sexy to the bizarre. In case you don't recognise us that's Joanna looking slinky in her wig and Fifties dress, Gareth posing as a bejewelled pop star, and — yes, really — Steed the tramp.









This time, the mask is on the other face as Mike Gambit is confronted by a mechanical killer in *The Last of the Cybernauts.*

Mike's taste of the pop world was as brief as that tiny guitar. With Purdey's help, he was attempting to stop the abduction of a top scientist in *House of Cards.*

HOW THEY ADD FINESSE TO EVERY FLING

The chap behind all the Zonk! Bop! and Pow! in *The New Avengers* is stuntman-turned-director Ray Austin. A remarkable man, he is 44, a former Army PT instructor, and has arranged stunts, fought and acted in everything from *Spartacus* to *The Saint.* His right hand bears a scar where Richard Burton split an artery during swordplay in *Cleopatra;* he has fallen unscathed from a record 63ft., and he was once one of the few stuntmen in Britain prepared to dive through a plate glass window. These days, Ray divides his talents between directing some of *The New Avengers* episodes and masterminding the action.





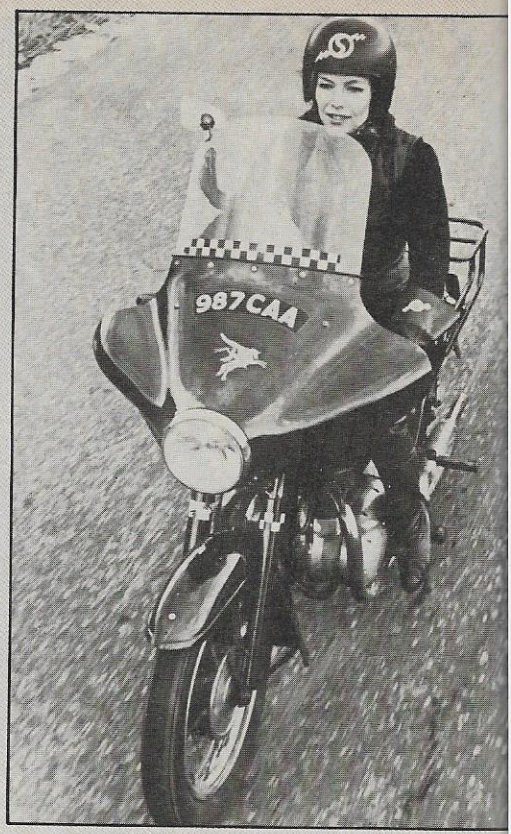
Every posture and move here was cleverly stunted by Ray. It seems almost unfair that he's the one about to take a dive.



As the Avengers girls progressed, so did Ray's style of fighting for them. With Purdey, the stage has been reached where the fights are almost balletic. In this sequence, Ray gets a grip on her (far left) then takes a hammering when she lashes out with straight rights from arm and leg. In reality, of course, Ray could have handled all the Avengers girls at once — with me tucked under one arm.

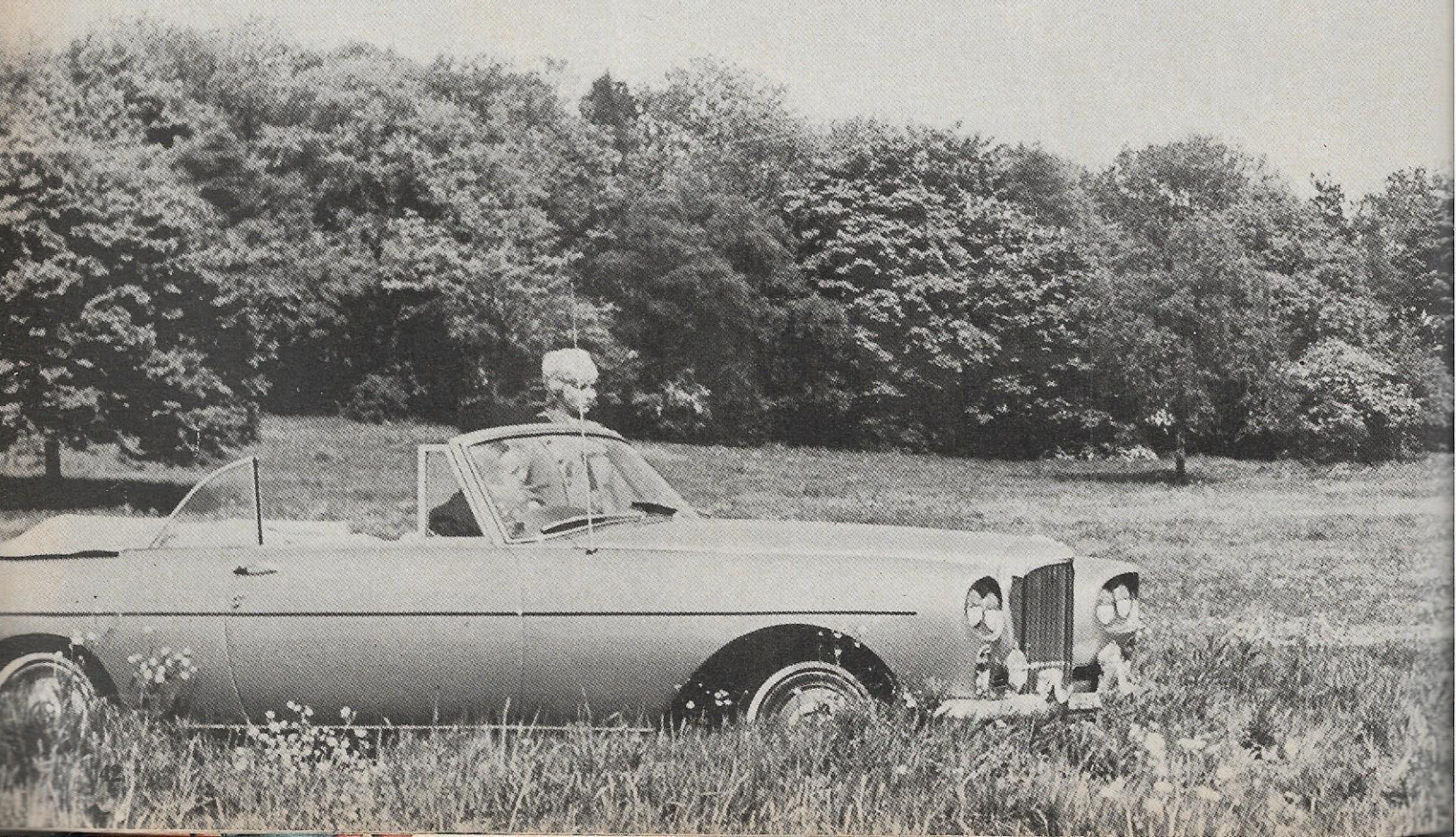


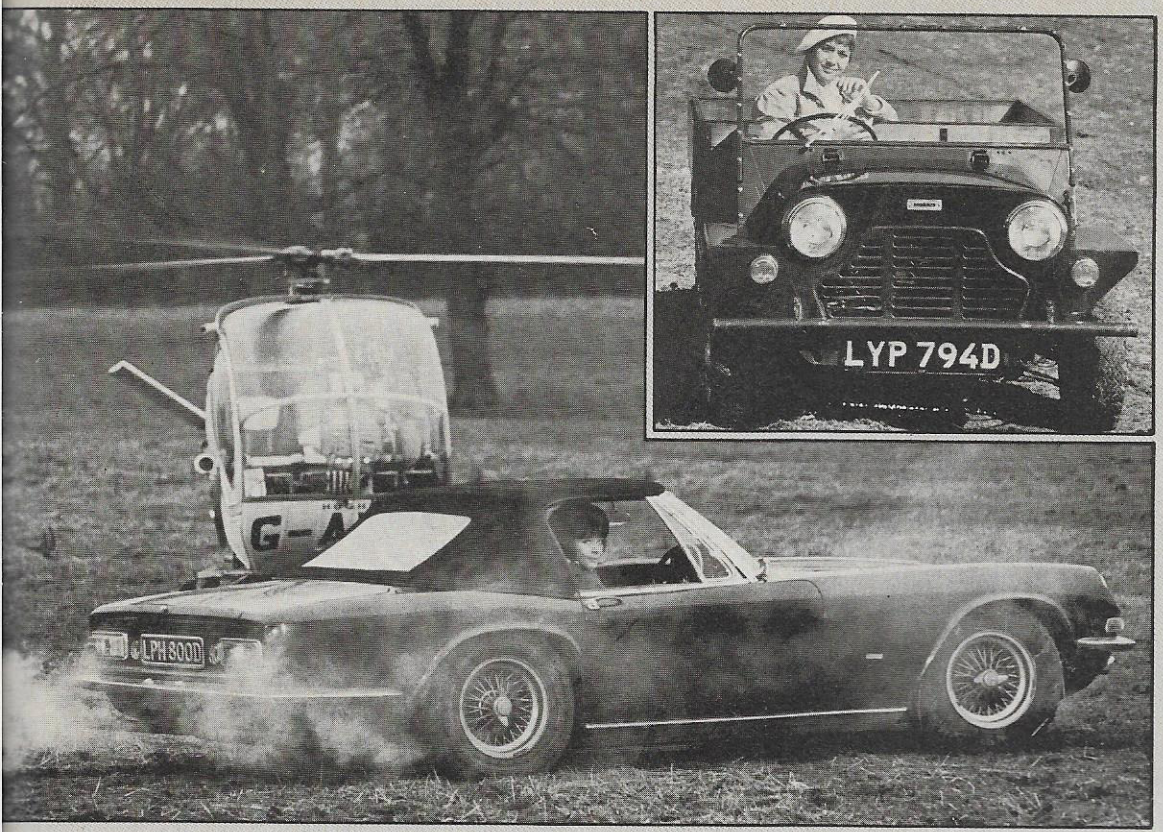




HOW THE AVENGERS

One of the most exciting things about *The Avengers* has been the chance I have had to indulge my taste f
years. There was that fantastic Bentley that had its hey-day at Le Mans in the Roaring Twenties, the luxu
and now I have the ultimate in get-up-and-go motoring. Here, then, are four pages devoted to the other scen

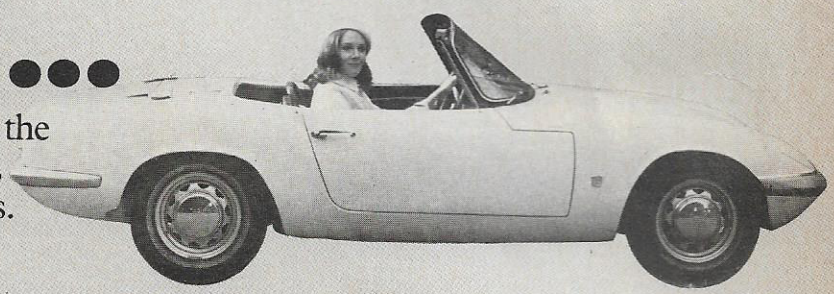


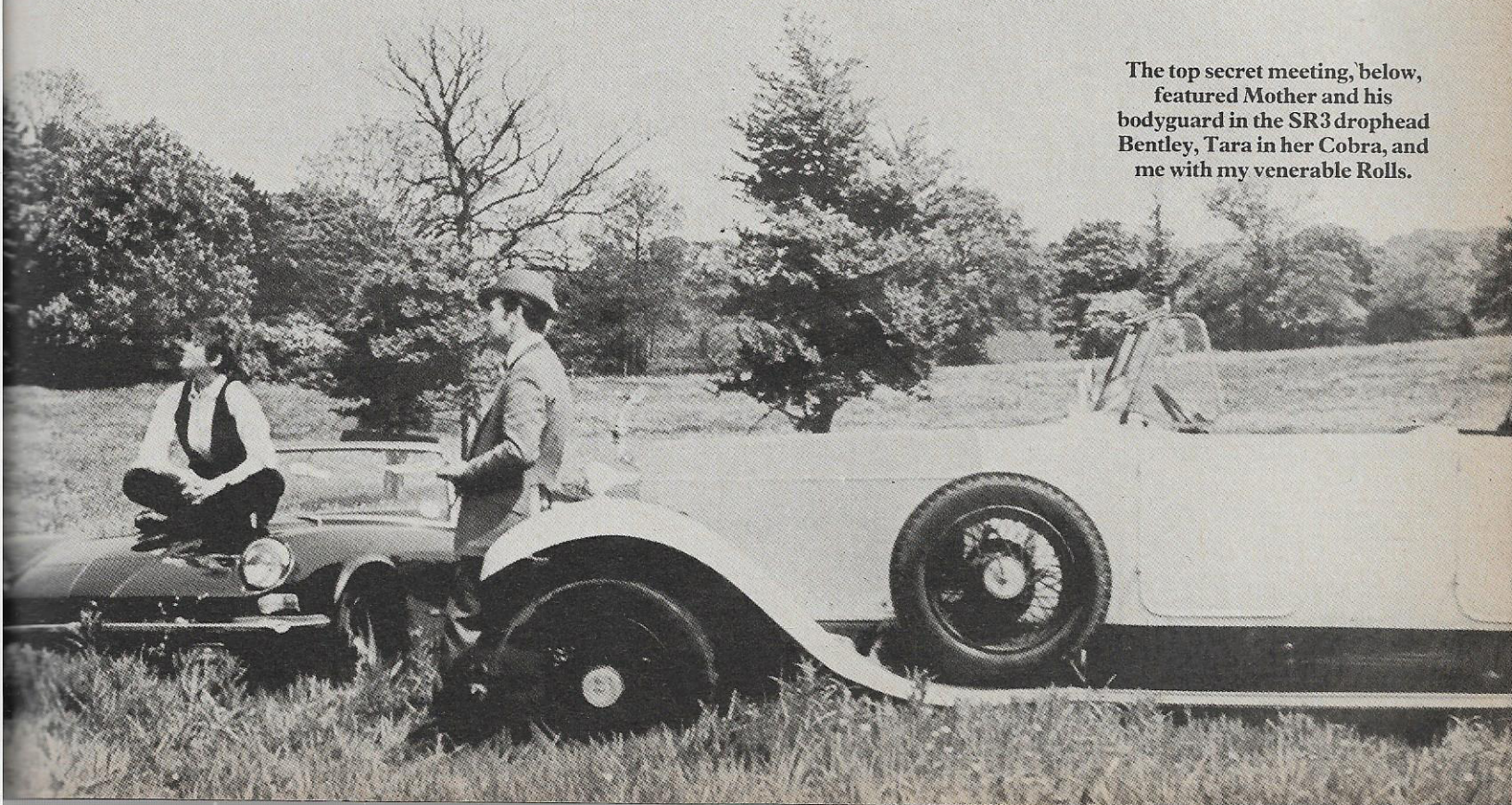


The vintage Vauxhall (far left) must rank as one of my favourite vehicles. It may not have had the sports racing pedigree of the Bentley, but it was still a thoroughbred in its own right. The girls seemed more attracted by out-and-out speed. As Cathy Gale, Honor Blackman (centre) preferred two wheels to four, while Tara King (Linda Thorson, lower left) stuck to the sheer power of her AC Cobra, and Emma Peel (Diana Rigg, below) drove that Lotus Elan like a Grand Prix car. But both Tara and I used the Mini Moke (top left) when the going was tough.

MOTOR ON...

rs. And what beautiful wheels they have given us over the
us Rolls-Royce which was never noisier than its clock,
ealers — the fastest, most sophisticated on four wheels.





The top secret meeting, below, featured Mother and his bodyguard in the SR3 drophead Bentley, Tara in her Cobra, and me with my venerable Rolls.

...AND ON



Mike Gambit runs the sleeker of our two Jaguars, a red XJS. With a top speed of more than 150 m.p.h., it can outpace almost anything they put on his tail.

Purdey's mount is an MGB, decked out in patriotic red, whi and blue. It's like her — sexy, unusual and eye-catching.



I drive the Jaguar 5.3 coupe, seen above in standard road rig, and racing on to the page in its Group 2 track paint. In the latter form, the mighty engine justifies the nickname, Big Cat.

HOW THE AVENGERS FACED UP TO FASHION...

There was always a touch of class about the Avengers . . . especially in fashion. It began with John Steed's Savile Row attire . . . giving a whole new stylish dimension to the brolly and bowler hat brigade. And then, the Avengers played its own part in the liberated revolution with the functional leather-wear of the luscious Cathy Gale — just the job for fighting fiends and foe. Emma Peel further developed her sophisticated version of that fighting gear with trendy trouser suits. Tara King — reflecting the changing times — brought a more feminine look with a confident, carefree feeling. Now the perfect Purdey carries the tradition forward . . . reflecting all the glittering, flowing, free and easy styles of the Seventies. Here, let *TV Times* Fashion Editor Jill Whiffing, take you on a fashion tour of Avengers . . . old and new.



Cathy Gale, the original action girl of *The Avengers*, could pack in elegance with the punches. Here she wears a full-length evening dress in glossy black leather-illusion fabric with a matt black wool cloak lined with satin. And on the left, the better-known leather gear of the Swinging Sixties.

Dressed for riding — if only in the nursery — John Steed wears an elegant mohair suit in French navy, while Emma Peel sports matching suede gaiters and jacket over a black polo-neck cat suit.









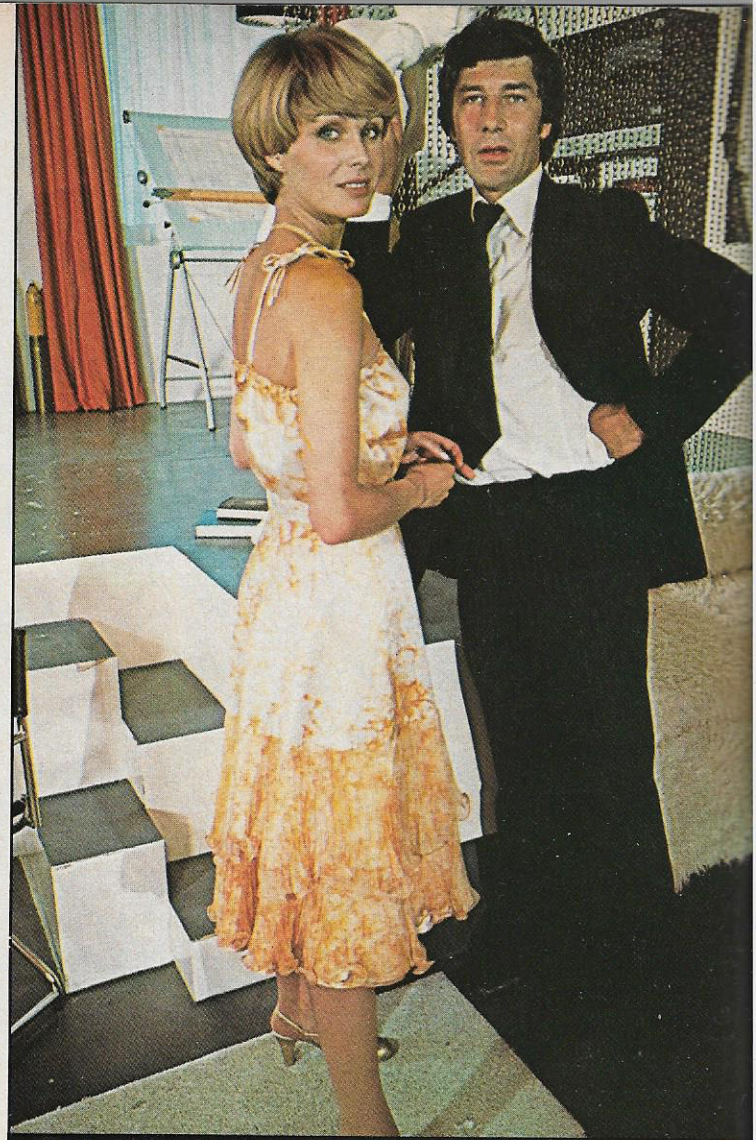
Tara King in a pensive mood wears a tartan waistcoat and matching mini that shows off the legs she usually encases in black boots.

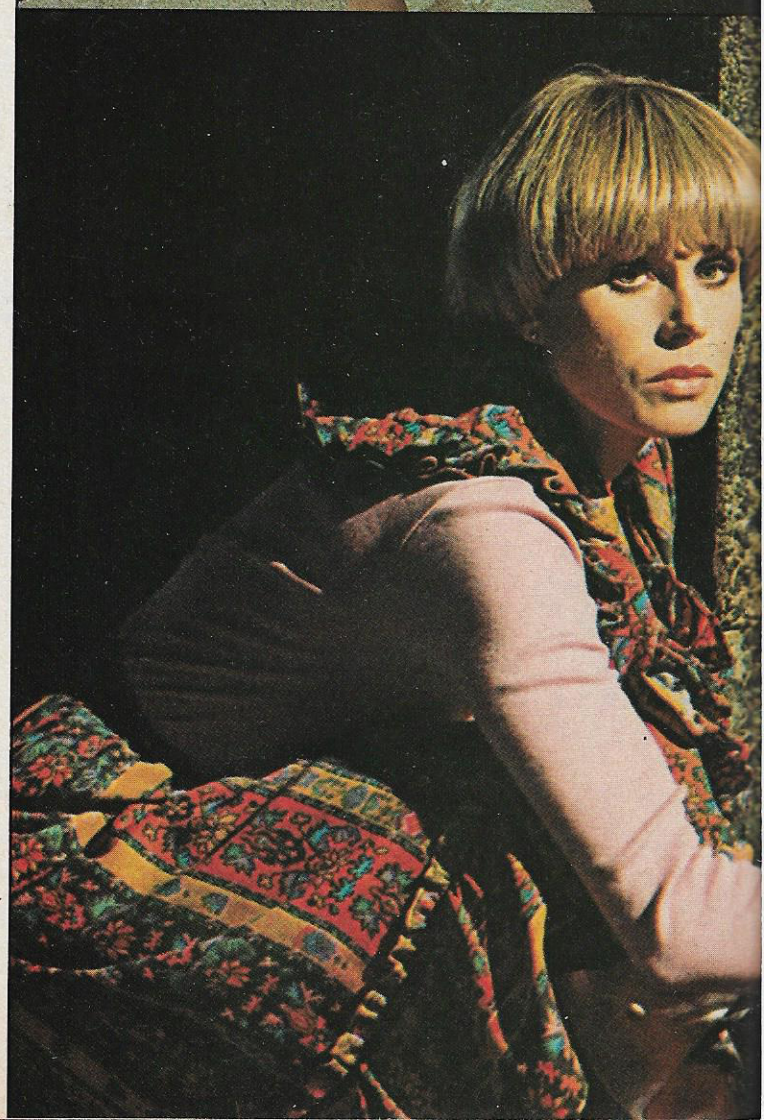
Picnicking with panache, a dinner-jacketed Steed serves Champagne to Tara, who enters into the spirit of the occasion in an open-weave long-sleeved evening dress.

Tara dressed for action in a corduroy bomber jacket, open-necked shirt, and a chic felt beret.

A cool, cream Steed contrasts with Tara's outfit of waistcoat and matching knee-length skirt, worn with polka dot scarf and topped off by a trilby.

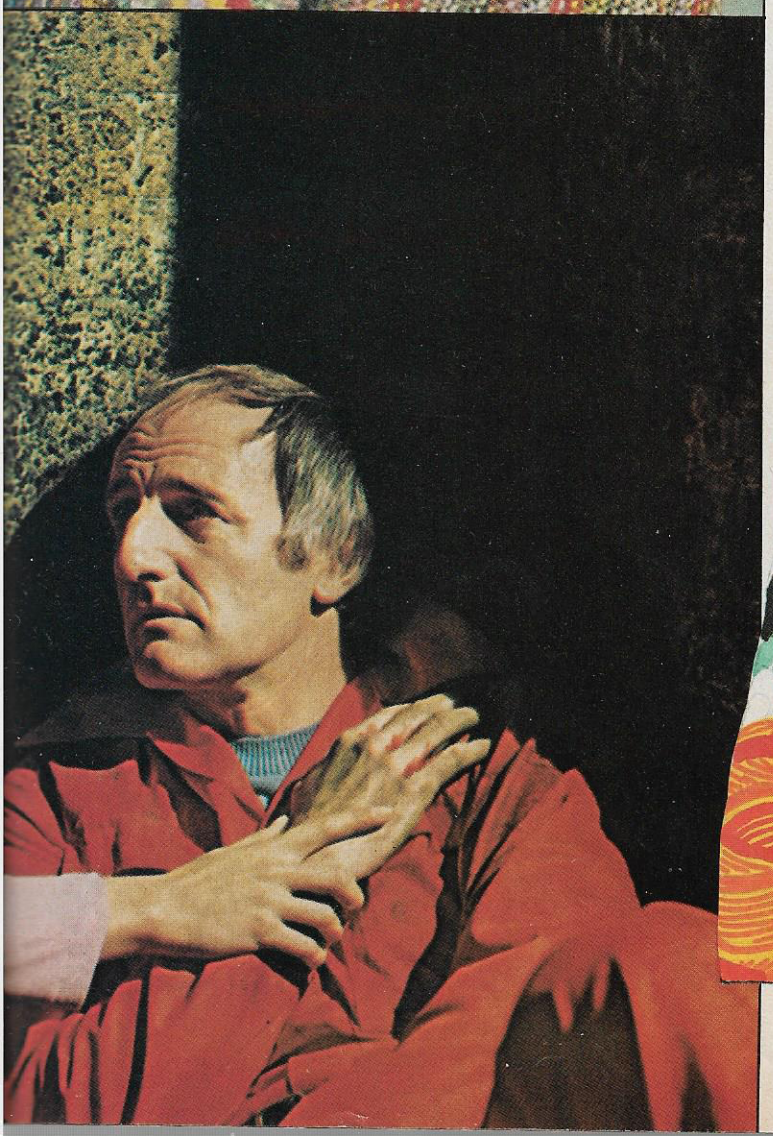






Purdey, with her perfect model-girl measurements, is a dress designer's dream. In the centre, she shows her versatility with fashion — and situation — alongside Gareth Hunt (top left) and Jeremy Young (below). The design above, by Katherine Buckley, is a yellow batik pattern silk dress. The skirt, in pleated chiffon, has two frills and repeats the pattern. The top is gathered at the waist and has ties at each shoulder. The outfit is worn with a silk scarf.



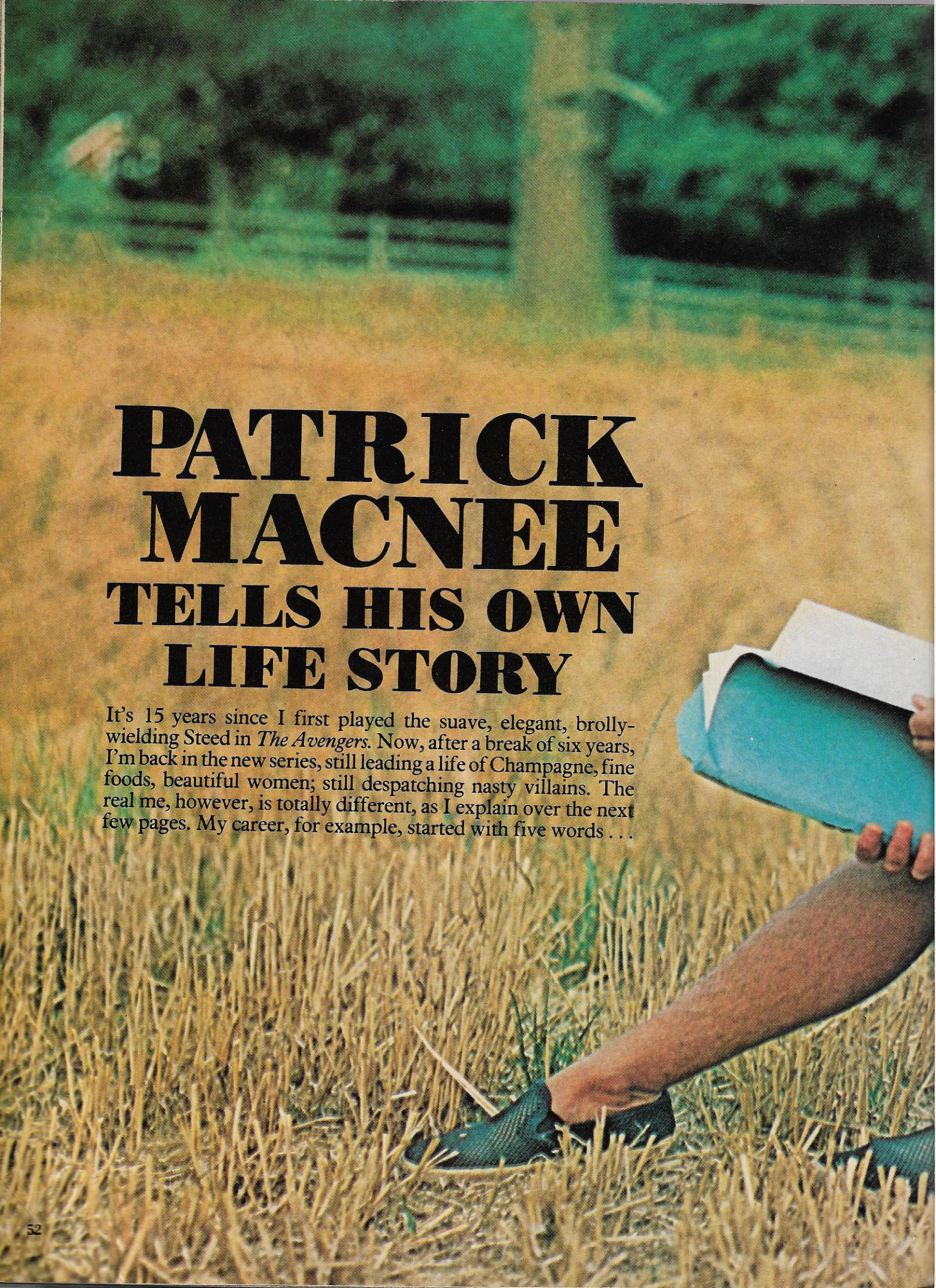




Another design for Purdey is this kimono in orange, black, green, red and yellow flower print silk. It buttons on one side but is otherwise loose. The sleeves are long with wide slits.

PATRICK MACNEE TELLS HIS OWN LIFE STORY

It's 15 years since I first played the suave, elegant, brolly-wielding Steed in *The Avengers*. Now, after a break of six years, I'm back in the new series, still leading a life of Champagne, fine foods, beautiful women; still despatching nasty villains. The real me, however, is totally different, as I explain over the next few pages. My career, for example, started with five words . . .





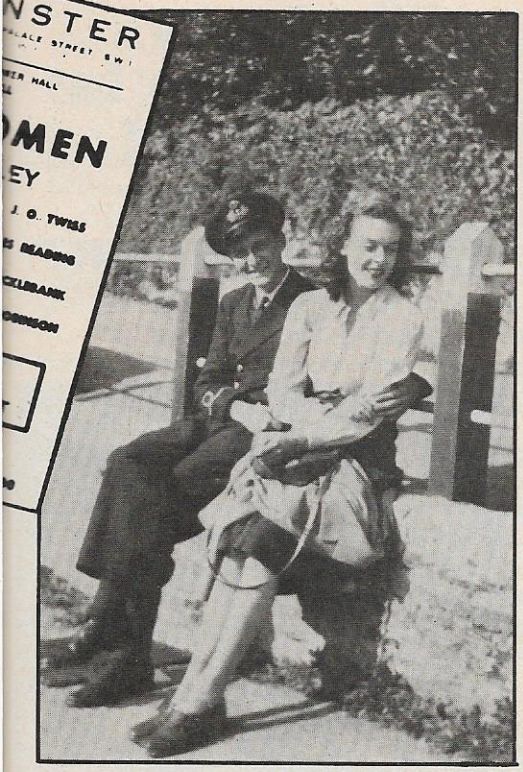
'I came from a socially privileged background, that has both helped and hindered me'

As a child I did not share my father's love for horses and I remember that I was really nervous when, aged four, I posed on the one below with my cousin Josephine. Eton, of course, was designed to turn boys into men and the process must have been well advanced by the time the picture was taken of me in my second year (right). I left Eton in 1939, with the war just two months away. The group shot at the bottom of the page is of the class of '39, with me ringed in the back row.











Turning the clock back even further, the babe in arms is me, about to be christened Daniel, although my mother always called me Patrick. On the right, my parents, great horse lovers, are heading for the local hunt. With me far left is Barbara Douglas, my first wife. We became close friends when we toured in *Little Women* in 1941.



THIS BOOK is my personal scrapbook of *The Avengers*. The girls ... and John Steed. But the real me is somewhat different from Steed. When I decided to write my life story, I thought the most interesting thing that ever happened to me was an almost throwaway appreciation by one of Britain's foremost critics.

Nearly 30 years ago, Harold Hobson heaped praise on an unknown actor whose name wasn't even in the programme. "He said only five words," said Hobson, "yet for me it was the most striking moment in a performance in which such moments are not few".

I contrived to get the wife of the late Dennis Price to write a letter for me to Hobson identifying this unknown actor. Hobson graciously reprinted part of his review and named the name—spelt correctly I may add—Patrick Macnee.

What I thought was important is that as recently as a few months ago Hobson recalled the play *(The White Devil)*, saying it was the one in which Macnee "made his name". And thus I basked, and still do, in the glory of being almost unique in having a prime critic remembering a five-word performance 30 years later. The words? Simply: "This is not true, madam."

I recall becoming so obsessed with my beautiful review that Robert Helpmann (now Sir Robert), who is a brilliant mimic, used to take the mickey out of me unmercifully ...

Then it occurred to me that I have a lot more to say about myself than that, and the telling of a few of these things may be of help to others; others as young as I was, and as old as I am.

I am 54 now and looking back on my life the big unhappy truth is that I gave up my wife and two young children to chase after money and fame. Later you will learn of the immense irony of how the money and so on actually happened. But the truth of the matter is that if I could do it all over again, I would change practically everything. I would not have left my first wife and our children. I was utterly wrong to do so and I live now, still regretting at leisure.

I came from a socially privileged background, one that has both helped and hindered me over the years. I was born in London on February 6, 1922, but my earliest memories are of where we lived at the racehorse training centre of Lambourne, in Berkshire. My father was a well-known trainer called "Shrimp" Macnee so there was an early "horsey" influence on me. Not that horses were welcomed by me in the least; they were thrust upon me by my father. I recall the terror I went through when I was shoved on a very tall horse at the age of four. I didn't mount a horse again until I was about 17. After that I used to ride racehorses in training sessions with my father.

Virtually all my childhood was spent away from home in various public schools. At five, I was sent for three years to a kindergarten in Minehead, Somerset, followed by four years at Summerfields Preparatory School in Banbury, Oxfordshire.

It was at the latter I developed my interest in acting. I remember a master called Allington being a great influence in that direction. I actually did *Henry V* when I was eight years old. Eton followed in 1934 and even there the theatre was a strong subject.

But the only time I was home with my mother and father was during the school holidays. That was the pattern of my life for 12 years. On the credit side, I suppose one is immensely well-educated. On the other hand, I feel that not to see one's parents for relatively long periods and to be put into a cloistered educational establishment away from home—in some cases quite far away from home—for a number of years, has a devastating effect on your later life.

You always feel you are being sent away and you don't have any sense of family whatsoever.

Educationally, it's very good, but psychologically it has its hazards. These days I find myself unable to reflect emotionally on my schooldays. I've thought about them often, but I can't come up with an emotional response.

Michael Caine once complained he hadn't had the advantages of a public school background. Do you feel, when you are a small child, that those advantages compensate for missing out on having a loving, *united* family? At least, as a small boy he had his Mum whom he adored and his family and lots of shouting kids. And they were together in a loving situation. You are better off with love in a back street in Tooting or Clerkenwell than without it at Eton.

There's another aspect, too. When you're from Michael's background you've got more incentive to make a success. I was left with less sense of spirit and attack. When everything's laid on you become like I was, taking things too easily and too much for granted.

My "privileges" seemed to run out when I was about 17; the family seemed to have run out of money. So, although I was suited to a life of the well-bred, the money wasn't there to live up to it.

I am supposed to be a descendant of Robin Hood. If he existed, Robin Hood,

was an Earl of Huntingdon. My grandmother was the daughter of Admiral Hastings, who was the brother of the Earl of Huntingdon. The Earls of Huntingdon are therefore my cousins on my mother's side of the family.

My mother's father was a Henry from Kildare, so there's a chunk of Irish in me. My real first name is not Patrick at all, but Daniel. Because she was Irish, my mother always called me Patrick and I have always retained her name for me.

Once, my son Rupert, fed up with Macnee being wrongly spelled, dropped the "Mac" altogether, but it completely backfired on him—everyone stuck a K in front of the "nee".

My great grandfather was Sir Daniel Macnee, the painter and a President of the Scottish Royal Academy. His son was an engineer and one of the many who built the Forth Bridge. The family came from Stirling, a lowland, flinty-walled Scottish town, and later moved to Edinburgh where they founded an engineering firm called Macnee and Son. My father broke away from the engineering side to take up training because he loved horses. Loved them? He was practically wedded to them for the rest of his life.

He was well over 40 when he married my mother, who must have then been in her early 20's.

"Shrimp" Macnee, as the name implies, was a small man. He had a marvellously wry sense of humour, but he devoted his life to horses rather than human beings. After I left Eton in July, 1939, two months before the war started, I helped him in his work. I travelled round most of the racecourses with him—Cheltenham, Newmarket, Brighton, Goodwood—in his scarlet 1928 Chrysler two-seater. I even used to lead the horses round the ring. I had a great love for my father.

I don't know exactly why we ran short of money; probably he just didn't win enough races. I don't think he was a gambler—but in my sort of family you simply did not know about the family finances. It wasn't the kind of thing one talked about.

My firm intention was to go into acting, and actress Margaret Rawlings, to whom I was introduced, told me to get into drama school. This was in 1940 and I won a scholarship to the Webber-Douglas drama school in South Kensington, London, not because of any special merit but because the war had taken so many of the younger men.

I wasn't there long. I answered a *Stage* advertisement and managed to get into repertory at Letchworth Garden City, in Hertfordshire. Then I joined the actor-manager Harry Hanson in rep. at the Princes Theatre, Bradford. In 1941, I joined a tour of *Little Women*, where I met my first wife, Barbara Douglas, who was also in the cast. We toured all over Britain,



"I always seemed to be working in those first post-war years"





I was in *The Elusive Pimpernel* in 1950. In the same year, Joan Maude and I were in *The Family Honour* (top left). Top right: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, with Joan Benham as co-star.

finally getting to the Westminster Theatre, London, where I had my first taste of a West End show.

My last work before going into the Royal Navy was as general understudy at the Haymarket Theatre in *The Doctor's Dilemma*, starring Vivien Leigh.

My naval career started off in a paddle steamer on the Firth of Forth. I did the usual officers' training thing and became a sub-lieutenant. Then I trained for the coastal forces on motor gunboats, to which they fitted torpedo tubes, turning them into powerfully armed motor torpedo boats.

Next, I found myself in Dartmouth, a member of the famed Eighth Gunboat Flotilla. From then until D-Day in 1944 our stamping ground was the Channel, off Dartmouth and Dover, Felixstowe, all round there. I didn't see much action, to be quite honest. We used to go out to sea and have "actions" but they weren't very successful.

The only time I missed going on a mission the boat was sunk. I'd caught bronchitis and was in Chichester Hospital when it happened. I didn't know about it until I'd reported back to base. A lot of the crew were killed, but the captain and my replacement survived. It was extraordinary. I had been on scores and scores of trips before missing the one that proved fatal, yet the odd result was that it had no particular impression on me. We were immune to shocks in those days. We treated it all very casually, which is easier to do when you're in your early 20's. I was only 25 when I came out of the Navy.

Then again, with our public school background, we were educated into war. I had been in Eton's Officers' Training Corps and we lined the route for King George V's funeral in 1936, at St. George's Chapel, Windsor—in uniform at the tender age of 15. We were conditioned to go to war.

I'd first met Barbara at the Webber-Douglas school, but we first became close on the *Little Women* tour. She was the first woman I had seen naked.

We were brought up on romantic love, rather than sexual love, as influenced by the films of that time. I loved her, and I married her not just because we went to bed together. As I have said, if I could do it all over again I would still be married to her. There is absolutely no question of that.

But we were not emotionally prepared for marriage or responsibility. I remember deeply resenting having children at an early stage because we had so little money. I was broke. Every day started by thinking of ways to rustle up enough money to get through it.

The pressures were so incredible that when they were released the marriage ran into trouble. I really believe people ought to be educated in human emotions as they are in Latin, Greek and mathematics. I fully approve that people should live together before marriage. I didn't even know the concept of that when I was young. Living together isn't all sex, you know.

The Blitz, I remember, was a fearful time. I felt it was far safer in the Navy. In London there was an underground club called The Music Box near the Café de Paris which we used because we thought it safer. I was far more frightened during the Blitz than at any time in the Navy. I was lucky during my service; many of my friends were killed but my experiences were few and I survived without much trouble.

There were so many ironies. There was a man called Francis Head who was the bravest man I knew. He went through every conceivable naval action during the war, then got killed on the back of a motor bike while popping down to Felixstowe.

I find I am shaken by death and sudden loss much more now than I was then. Like the Royal Air Force pilots, one developed a veneer of "cool". A person was killed, there was a gap, but you went on. It's like doctors and patients—if you allowed yourself emotional involvement you wouldn't be able to carry on.

The "cool" sprung from the code of discipline which partly came from my education. When you are sent away to a boarding school you get used to hiding your feelings, you develop a protective covering. A show of emotion in those days was positively indecent.

We escaped a lot in drink, too. We all drank a great deal of alcohol. One wouldn't have admitted it openly but largely through fear, every night we didn't go to sea we got drunk. Gin was only 7s6d. (37½p) a bottle. Gin seemed to be a cure for everything; a naval doctor once prescribed gin when I had an attack of dysentery.

But it proved no remedy for one unpleasant malady. For no apparent reason both my testicles swelled up. One went down after a few days but the other defiantly stayed up. So, terrified, I reported sick. It wasn't mumps, it wasn't V.D. (I was still a virgin). Eventually they diagnosed it as just one of those things that happened to otherwise healthy 21-year-olds. I read (upside down) what the doctor wrote in Latin and translated it thus: "If this man's testicle doesn't subside in a month it will have to be cut off." Not a pleasant prospect.

To my immense relief it did go down, too much as a matter of fact. And to this day one of them remains small, no bigger than a thumbnail. Yet I subsequently had two perfectly healthy children and a perfectly normal sex life. Looking back, the war went extremely smoothly for me, everything seemed to happen when I wasn't there, like the night the boat sank. For a time I actually felt guilty that I wasn't getting killed or wounded or loaded with medals—a throwback, I suppose, to the influence of my schooldays when I was striving to get to the top of the class.

So somehow, when the war ended I was still there, relatively unscathed. There simply hadn't been a bomb or a bullet with my name on it, for which I remain deeply grateful.

I did no acting during my service days. The nearest I came to it was at the Royal Albert Hall at the World War One Remembrance Day service in 1945. I stood up beside the organ pipes in front of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth and recited a poem by a quite aged admiral. It started, I remember: "Farewell white ensign, battle-scarred and torn . . ."

My wife was out front and there was Ralph Reader and all his Boy Scouts fainting in droves. I was trying to concentrate on this turgid verse on the auspicious and fraught occasion when someone behind hissed at me that I should take my hat off.

I burst out in a sweat, made a few futile gestures and finally settled for leaving the hat on. I haven't the remotest memory why I was chosen for that ceremony—someone must have known I was an actor.

And back to acting I went, in a whole series of plays and reps. Our son Rupert was born in 1947 at the time we were doing the dress rehearsal of the play I'm so proud of, *The White Devil.* Daughter Jennie arrived three years later. Barbara never returned to work, which was a great shame because she was a very good actress indeed.

I always seemed to be working during those first post-war years, but I never seemed to have any money. In fact, I never did make any real money until *The Avengers,* which was 20 years after I'd started my career.

We lived in a little flat at World's End, off New King's Road, Chelsea. We got it in 1946 and paid £3 10s. a week. There was also a little rented cottage at Rye Harbour, Sussex, which sounds splendid, but it was a very simple place really.

After the marvellous Hobson notice, I could have gone in as understudy to Paul Scofield in the Phoenix Theatre production of *The Relapse.* When he left the part I may even have taken over from him. After that, Robert Helpmann wanted me to go on to Stratford.

I was talking recently to Michael Bates, who took more or less that same route. His top salary in those years of doing high-class drama was £8 a week. But instead of taking the "legit" route, I chose to go into films doing lucrative extra and bit-part work. I was a member of the court in Laurence Olivier's film of *Hamlet,* and one of Sir Percy Blakeney's (David Niven's) band of supporters in Baroness Orczy's *The Elusive Pimpernel;* both paying £10 a day. I'd toyed with films before I

joined the Navy and even tested for the lead in *Thursday's Child,* a part which got Stewart Granger off the ground.

After *Hamlet* I *did* get a major role—in Mario Zampi's *The Fatal Night,* but nothing came of the performance. I remember at the time that actors who were caught up in the war hated those who weren't. They all seemed to get on.

And there were ironies. I remember trying to get a part in *The Cruel Sea,* saying that at least I'd been in the Navy. All I got was the old story: "You don't look the naval type, old boy."

Frankly, I didn't really deserve any success. I had no faith in myself whatsoever, no drive and I was held up by my own background which more or less implied that it was very bad form to be a vulgar success.

It wasn't until later, when I went to Canada and life was more rough and tumble and you either succeeded or went under, that I adopted a different, more vigorous approach to succeeding.

I did a year's rep at Windsor before answering the call to Canada. That was the happiest year of my life. I should never have left. People like Patrick Cargill and Geraldine McEwan stayed on and still made it.

I was in too much of a hurry in those days. I was trying to run before I could walk. I just didn't know enough, I wasn't nearly good enough for all that running. I felt I had to do everything in a hurry. I wish to God I hadn't.

The most I ever earned at Windsor was £15 a week and I was getting desperate for money. I even convinced myself that my wife and children would starve if I did not take up the marvellous offer that came from Canada, in 1952.

I had a friend in Toronto, David Greene (who won an Emmy — American TV's "Oscar" — this year for *Rich Man, Poor Man*) who'd got a job as one of the first directors for Canadian television. He was really an actor, who had toured with me, and he was reduced to working in a glue factory in Toronto before he announced himself as a director.

He wired me at the Rye cottage saying if I could get to Canada in 24 hours I was in business. I borrowed some money off the man who owned the cottage and fled.

There I was paid the absolute fortune of 100 dollars a week. Half of it I sent home, and my own living costs weren't high because I lived in the Y.M.C.A.

Incredibly, it seemed, I became a star almost immediately. I got on well with David (I was the first actor he'd directed!) and I had two series, one after the other: *The Moonstone* and an adaptation of a Canadian novel. One of my support players was Christopher Plummer.

Suddenly I was a big fish in a very small pool, small because the television transmitter reached only around the Toronto area, so I was only famous in the city. But for all that it went completely to my head and I felt quite ashamed that there I was, a star — and still living in the Y.M.C.A.

I was more or less based in Canada for the next eight years. We did all of Shakespeare and Christopher Fry on radio and television. It was the golden period of Canadian expression. And some of the people who were part of it became famous — director Norman Jewison (*Fiddler on the Roof, In the Heat of the Night*), Lorne Greene, Barry Morse, and Chris Plummer, among others.

I started to get around a bit. I toured America, spent a year in New York; I even came back and played the Old Vic. But I didn't come back often enough. In 1955 Barbara said she wanted to marry someone else.

I had first met Barbara at 19 and stayed faithful to her until I was 29. It sounds odd in the light of today's thinking, but it is totally true. It was a case of reverting to the discipline again, I suppose. That public school training certainly nurtured endurance in every sphere. . .

Reluctantly, I agreed to give Barbara a divorce. Actually she didn't remarry until nine years later. But ever since we have remained close.

At the time, I tried to wipe my memory clean of all thoughts of my wife and children. I couldn't stand the reality of it. I couldn't watch a film with children in it without breaking down. My guilt at leaving the children when they were five and three was devastating. They have since said it was obvious I had to go to Canada. I repeat, I was wrong. I should have stayed and seen it out with them.

The great irony of my life is that if I had not gone I would not have met the man who in later years was to offer me the part of Steed in *The Avengers,* and thus a measure of stardom.

I'd had a reasonably successful career for eight years in Canada, the United States and other countries. But nothing world-shattering happened for me and when I returned to England in 1960 I had only 400 dollars. I gave up acting — or rather it gave up me — so I was happy to take the job of producing the Sir Winston Churchill TV documentary *The Valiant Years.* I was getting a princely £50 a week and had John Schlesinger as my director.

I was quite enjoying making the series, but I desperately needed to earn more money, so I dropped a line to the man I'd met in Canada, Sydney Newman, who was now an executive in British television. I only wanted some kind of acting job for a few weeks over the Christmas period. He said they had Ian Hendry doing a series which was originally called *Police Surgeon.* He was the star and they wanted a side-kick for him for a few months and perhaps I might like to play that role. Oh, and one other thing, the title of the show was being changed to *The Avengers.* The basic storyline was that Hendry's girlfriend gets gunned down in the street and he takes up the cudgels against the world's villains as an Avenger.

The girl who got killed was Catherine Woodville, and she was to become my second wife. But it didn't happen right away. I didn't meet her properly until 1962. We had a great deal in common and we lived together until 1965 when we married. Idiotically, almost immediately after the marriage, our relationship started to collapse. A few months later she went to California, where she later remarried and has stayed ever since. She's a brilliant horsewoman and wins many events out there.

While we were together we were very close; she opened my eyes in so many ways to a whole new attitude to life. She was keen on health foods and the proper treatment of one's body. My daughter Jennie was an asthmatic and it was largely through Kate's influence on proper foods and climate (I sent Jennie to California) that the asthma virtually cleared.

At the time I was quite a heavy drinker, which wasn't surprising as I was brought up in alcoholic surroundings. It seems all the people in the horsey world drink a lot, and what with the Navy, and gin at 7s.6d. (37½p) a bottle, I had become a thoroughly confirmed tippler.

But Kate made me wonder what life would be like if one lived a much purer, closer-to-nature sort of existence. That thought helped me later — when I was having psychiatric help — to get rid of smoking and virtually give up drinking. As a younger man I was very unfeeling for others, but Kate helped me develop more concern for my fellow man.

You may ask why we broke up, especially so soon after the marriage. To my mind it was a classic example of September marrying June. In my case, I think it's wrong to marry someone 16 years younger than yourself.

I was under psychiatric treatment in Los Angeles, on and off, for three years until 1969. It transpired that I was only getting satisfaction out of acting as a compensation for highly unsatisfactory relationships in my private life. But the most extraordinary thing about that treatment was the smoking.

It was pointed out to me that I had to discover *why* I was doing something which was basically so destructive to myself. The analysis proved an expert job of detective work. The trail led to the cause being someone I hated, who had died of cancer of the throat through smoking heavily throughout their life. I hated that person because of some imagined injustice when I was eight years old. When that person died, I felt so guilty over my hatred that I subconsciously took on the affliction of over-smoking.

In the consulting room the person's name was finally dragged from me in a

howling primeval shriek. The entire repression was released. I haven't smoked from that moment onwards, and I was an 80-a-day man.

The drinking was less of a problem. It was explained how all my life it had been an unnatural cissy thing *not* to drink. Yet the people I loved and respected did not feel that it was unmanly not to drink. I suddenly no longer felt the need to drink to win acceptance. The self-destructive habits vanished. I was free.

Now I am concentrating my mind in shedding two stone in weight. I am 14 stone and I should be 12. But I must slim and I will slim. Perhaps as *The New Avengers* series progresses you may notice a visible shrinkage of Steed. . .

To be quite honest, my weight problem might be slightly difficult to tackle because it is really the only self-destructive thing I have left — and we all have a certain psychological need to abuse ourselves in some way.

Yet, if you confronted yourself with the bald statement that you were trying to kill yourself, you would consider yourself mad. Odd, isn't it?

Take alcohol, for example. I wonder what the real statistics are for the number of people in hospital with alcohol related diseases — or diseases aggravated and even brought on by simply drinking too much? Alcohol is a corrosive poison. My second wife put it this way: "You wouldn't wash your eyes in whisky, would you? Well, your stomach isn't as strong as your eyeballs." If you look at it that way, it makes you think. . .

I suppose all this overeating and drinking doesn't matter so much when you're younger. But it's surprising how quickly it catches up with you as the years go by. I have no desire to go back to being young again. But I do want to retain my fitness. So I'm a great advocate of getting back to the natural things in life. Goodness, the Vietnamese can run all through the night on a diet of berries and nuts!

Things like cooked meats are simply not good for you (there are other, better sources of protein). They just hang about the stomach. The body is meant to function not just dangle heavily on your bones.

Having said this, I must tell you one story that knocks all my theories about keeping fit with health foods and so on into a cocked hat. I recently had some arthritic and tension problems with my legs. Mike Collins, the special effects man who makes the explosions in *The New Avengers*, gave me a copper band to wear around my ankle. I told him I didn't believe in witchcraft. It was all a bit of a joke really, but I put it on and I've had no trouble since. Well, the things these special effects men can do . . . I suppose they're witchdoctors anyway.

Please don't get the impression, by the way, that I am some kind of health fetishist. I am not. There was a time, not so

'I needed money...they wanted a side-kick for The Avengers'







I returned to the bridge (temporarily) for the exciting film, *The Battle of the River Plate*, with Anthony Quayle. Top: as Hornblower in BBC TV's *The Skin Game*, alongside Diane Watts. Two years later, I was in Canadian TV's *Affair at Assino* (centre). Katharine Blake was the nun.

long ago, when I used to refer jovially to myself as being an exponent of the "ruined look". Some people like to feel a sophisticated decadence is romantic and I was one of them. My second wife made me see otherwise; life without excessive indulgences not only makes you feel better but it makes you a fuller, happier and, I would go so far as to say, a much more considerate person.

It also sharpens your sense of humour, which got me into trouble in America recently. I was being asked some totally inane questions about my Scottish heritage and out of capriciousness I referred to the Scots crossing the Border and lopping the heads off the dreadful English. The journalist concerned completely missed the point and wrote an article quoting me as attacking the English. The demented creature didn't realise I was talking about 400 years ago.

The outcome was that many of my friends turned their backs on me and one eminent actor, who lives close to me in Palm Springs, was heard to say he could never visit me again.

Fortunately, the record was put straight by an English journalist, Dermot Purgavie, who interviewed me in New York. I told him my daughter had written to say my reported remarks had so upset and worried my mother that she was frightened to go out on the streets; she was so ashamed.

When I was offered the supporting role in *The Avengers*, initially for three months, the most important thing to me was the size of the pay packet: £150 a week—more than I'd ever earned. (Later I joined in an Equity strike against ITV for double pay for everyone. It lasted five months and at the end my agent said: "Right, now you can pay Patrick £300." He was told I would get £155 and if I didn't like it I could go elsewhere. So much for the strike).

Ian Hendry was in *The Avengers* for the first nine months of its life. He was the guiding light, the inventive genius. We clicked immediately. With his originality and a little stimulus from myself we created a style of show which I believe was ahead of its time.

He took the ordinary cops-and-robbers theme and turned it upside down. For a long while, for instance, it wasn't really made clear whether Steed was a goodie or a baddie. And director Peter Hammond gave it immense imagination. He used a stylised, Germanic shooting that gave a strange, odd, Fritz Lang effect. When Ian went, Sydney Newman came up with the idea of introducing a woman. But not an ordinary woman. Up to that time in such TV series, women were either wives or secretaries or sex objects, but not women who used their minds, made decisions, or took part in the action.

So Sydney went a step further. He made up a character called Cathy Gale, who was inspired by a mixture of the famous anthropologist Margaret Mead, and the late Margaret Bourke White, who was a great photographer on America's *Life* magazine.

The end product was Honor Blackman emerging, hurling men over her shoulders. She very cleverly chose to play the whole thing as a comic strip (to me, *The Avengers* is comic strip at its best). She played it with the authority of women's equality, and she was the first person to do it in a popular medium.

Doing *The Avengers* was hard work, but great creative fun. We seemed to have hardly any scenery and there were all sorts of primitive difficulties in the early days. But that may have been an advantage. I think those sort of problems provoke the most interesting work, especially when you are also fighting against accepted habit patterns for cops-and-robbers-type television series.

I base Steed on a combination of Leslie Howard's Sir Percy Blakeney in *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, a performance by Ralph Richardson in a 1936 film called *Q Planes*—and on my father.

Steed, of course, has a quite splendid wardrobe, even better in *The New Avengers* than in the old. Yet the joke is when I started as an *Avenger* my entire personal wardrobe consisted of one rather shabby, blue serge suit. But Steed had at least £500-worth of clothes, and always looked immaculate.

I design all my own *Avenger* suits. Pop music boys like Herman (of the Hermits)—Peter Noone, as he's now known—admitted in print getting the idea of velvet collars from Steed. For those sartorially interested, most collars are made as a *contrast* to the suit's material. I use ladies' velvet of a kind that could almost be the same material as the suit. It moulds and complements the suit. There are no breast pockets and only one button to get the best moulding of the chest.

I also have a deliberately low waist and the finished effect is utmost simplicity in clothing but with an individual style. I have never allowed it to be merchandised, but I'm not surprised it has been copied from time to time.

In fact, my own taste in clothing in my private life is positively beachcomberish. I usually wear an old pair of shorts, and a safari jacket. Most of my life is spent in hot climates so I don't need much in the way of clothes. And I am certainly not going to add to my rather meagre wardrobe—at least until I've lost those unwanted two stones. Then there will be a slim-line Steed. In developing him as a character, I considered one of the most important facets was to give him good manners. Again, that fitted my background; it was manners to the exclusion of all, even to a fault. You did not complain about the food, you opened doors for ladies. You could bash someone over the head if you felt like it, but you always observed the social proprieties.

When you put a man like that alongside an emancipated woman, the effect can be quite amusing. The "marriage" of Steed and Cathy worked. They had what I like to think was a sexual elegance. There was always the suggestion that their relationship went further, sexually, than was shown on screen. But it was suggested and implied—never revealed.

I was the one who suggested to Honor Blackman that she dressed Cathy Gale in black leather, using the expression "kinky". It came to mind because once in New York I saw actress Viveca Lindfors make an entrance dressed completely in black leather. It delineated her body and made her look quite sensational.

It was not until later I discovered the whole skin-and-leather fetish was a basic primitive erotic. But at the time I made the suggestion to Honor I honestly did not know I was hitting on a well-known subterranean deviation.

I had never met Honor before she joined *The Avengers*. I recall vividly being struck by her incredible beauty. And she has a very secret thing, an occasional flash of vulnerability which makes her fascinating to men.

Honor left to become a James Bond girl in *Goldfinger* and Diana Rigg replaced her in January, 1965. She reminded me very much of my first wife, Barbara, and we have always had a very close, fond friendship. She was wonderful to work with and we shared a mutual obsession for detail. We deliberately set out to contrive a new and different relationship from the one I had shared with Cathy Gale.

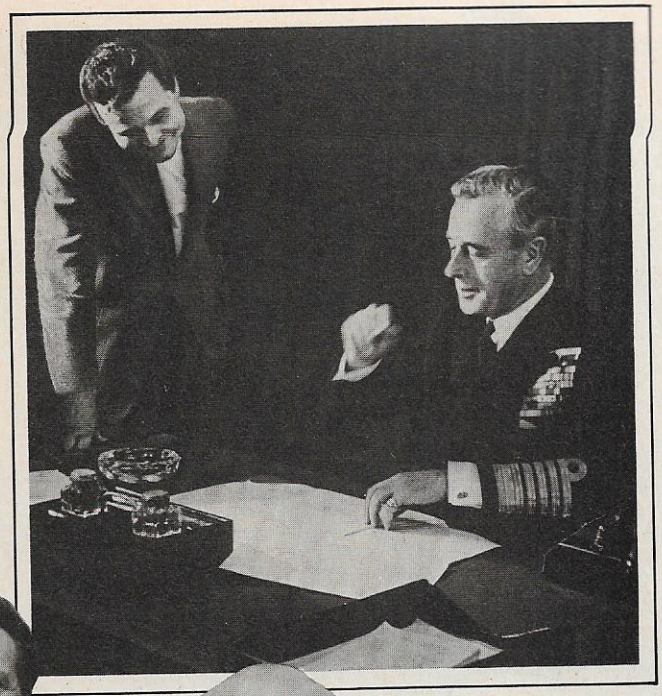
We used a sort of shorthand in our communication. And we evolved a style of playing two-handed scenes for comedy. We put Emma and Steed in routine situations, like having a meal or playing a game of chess. They would casually discuss some mastermind's plan to rule the world at the same time as serving the soup.

We took the sex relationship for granted. By the mid-Sixties the Pill was part of life so we took it for granted that Emma and Steed slept together, but simply didn't dwell on it. We treated sex as naturally as we would eating. For years now I've been asked if Steed slept with Cathy Gale and Emma Peel: now you know.

Because we didn't have to bother about sex we could get on with the plot. In fact, in my private life, I find that in one's 50's the sex urge is somewhat diminished. This, I think, is rather helpful. One doesn't have to spend all one's time chasing after the opposite sex, so the time and energy involved can be devoted to other things.

Linda Thorson came into the show in the autumn of 1967. We did 30 episodes through until 1969. She played Tara King, a veritable sex-bomb of an agent.

'I've never invested in anything except my children's education'





I married my second wife, Catherine Woodville, in 1965, four years after we met on *The Avengers* set. She was to prove a great influence on me. Top: I worked with Earl Mountbatten on the Winston Churchill documentary, *The Valiant Years*, and found him to be a charming man.

She certainly devastated me with her strong tone of sexuality. As I have said, with the previous two girls, sex was as normal as eating a meal. To continue the comparison, Linda played Tara King like an 18-course banquet . . .

Today, seven years on, I feel that *The New Avengers* has a fresh validity; the timing is perfect for a whole new series. But if I had been asked any time in the past seven years to do it, I can assure you I would have refused.

For me, a most exciting thing about the old *Avengers* is its recent apparent discovery by American youth. It has become a cult thing in the colleges. There are 83 episodes of the series with Di and Linda which are currently showing in some American city every day of the week.

From this you will assume I must be vastly wealthy from the repeat fees. Not so. Down in the small print on the contract there's a clause that says no repeat fees will be paid unless it is shown in more than 20 places at the same time. This time, just in case, I've looked very closely at the small print . . .

In fact, we never picked up the usual fringe benefits from *The Avengers*. Pat Phoenix once told me that a lot of money could be earned from opening supermarkets and so on, but I never made any money that way. I was working seven days a week, for a start. And for one three-month period I made two one-hour episodes a week. I didn't have the time to open a bottle of wine, much less open a supermarket.

I have never been a good businessman. My politics are primarily to the Left and I subscribe to the view that national wealth should be shared more wisely than in the past. It's no use labelling me as a hypocrite; I've only lived outside this country because it was easier to get work elsewhere and I've lived abroad since 1952, a very long time before it was a tax advantage to do so.

I have never been a great supporter of capitalism, and I've never invested in anything except my children's education. I sent Rupert to public school, and later university. Jennie was also well educated, so in some small way I've been able to alleviate the guilt I have felt for leaving them when they were young.

It's only lately that I've gone in for a few insurance policies. My only real possession is a small bungalow with a small plot of garden in Palm Springs, in California. I don't have a sense of ownership, or need for it. Despite my upbringing, I would hate to have servants. I have a daily woman who comes in now and again and cleans up, but the thought of employing people to do things appals me.

Although I live alone, I am by no means a "loner". I have a regular girlfriend and I enjoy the company and conversation of people; and I am longing for my children to make me a grandfather. I like to live

alone simply because I always wake in the middle of the night and can't get back to sleep when there's someone else there.

Two days after I finished the final episode of *The Avengers* in 1969, I left for California and settled in a little apartment. Then I worked on films in Cyprus and Malta and toured Australia and New Zealand in *The Secretary Bird.*

At first, I got bad reviews in Sydney for the play, and it worried me. But I worked hard and when we went to Melbourne the following year, it was an enormous success. Then I was asked to go to London to take over from Anthony Quayle in *Sleuth.* I made the excuse that I was otherwise committed.

The truth is I was too scared to play in the West End in such a role. Even with all my experience, I didn't feel up to it, especially after all those years working in television.

But after two years I felt ready again, successfully played in *Sleuth,* and enjoyed a 16-month run on Broadway.

I believe *Sleuth* was my personal turning point as an actor. I think it made me stronger. For the first time in years, I realised I could do more than lift a bowler and dash about as Steed.

For all that, I don't like to underestimate Steed—the character is much more difficult than it appears.

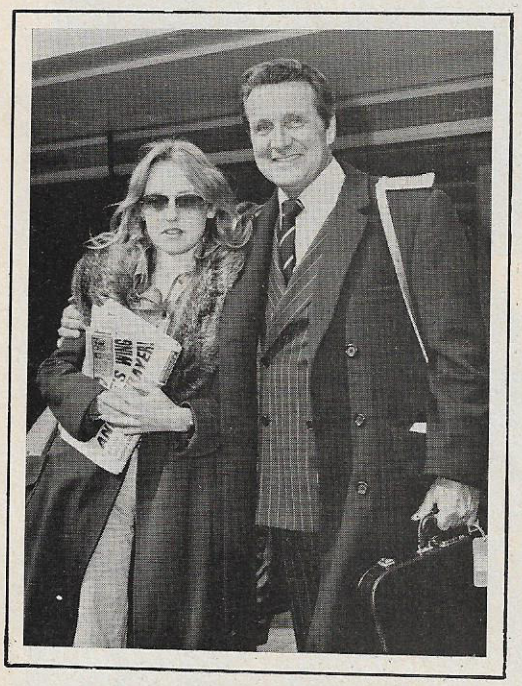
I've concentrated almost entirely on the stage for the past seven years, but I've "guested" in a few TV series: *Columbo, The Virginian* and *Alias Smith and Jones.* It was while doing TV that I worked with Faye Dunaway—definitely one of my favourite actresses.

The New Avengers sort of sneaked up on me. Last year, I was in a play at Chichester Festival and on the very last day I had to travel to Elstree Studios, Hertfordshire, to do a Champagne commercial for French television. It was an *Avenger*-style commercial, mainly featuring Linda Thorson (who's a big name in France) and I was only there as a kind of reminder of *The Avengers.* They kept on at me to do my lines in French, which I find difficult. Time was getting late, and I had a 100-mile drive to catch the curtain at Chichester. I was just dashing out of the door when a tall Frenchman called Rudolf Roffi asked me if I'd like to do *The Avengers* again. I rushed past him saying: "I certainly can't do it in French."

I forgot all about it until six weeks later when Brian Clemens rang me at the Schubert Theatre in Chicago, where I was playing in *Absurd Person Singular.* He said it was no joke—*The Avengers* was going to be done again and they wanted me in it. I said send me a script. They never did. I didn't see a script until I came back to Britain. My daughter Jennie was very suspicious at first. She said there must be some kind of catch.

But when I did get some scripts I realised they were better than ever before.

'As my autumn approaches, I feel I'm a better person'



Arriving back in London, with my daughter Jennie, to begin work on *The New Avengers*

And there we were, doing it. Now it's almost as if I've never been away.

I'm the only survivor of the original *Avengers* cast and I've been in this business too long to wonder whether or not *The New Avengers* will be a success. The new *Avenger* girl, Joanna Lumley, and her partner, Gareth Hunt, are absolutely wonderful. They are young, fresh, new—and both have strong attitudes towards their roles.

Because I'm much older now, my own approach as Steed is different; you may find it more relaxed. The last time I desperately needed the extra money, and I had been out of acting for many months.

My daughter Jennie, now 26, is a professional cook and caterer in Los Angeles, California. Rupert, 29, is a TV producer and director in Toronto. My first wife Barbara, whose second husband, Dr. Graham Foulds, has just died, lives in Menorca.

Now I don't need to earn the money, my needs are small. I can work all over the world at something or the other in films, TV and theatre. I've still got my legs and my voice and my memory.

New Avenger Gareth Hunt is a fellow Aquarian. A man full of innovative energy; a fine actor from the National Theatre, but also a man who has had wide experience, gained in naval service, all over the world. Joanna is Joanna. A highly individual person. I love her. She just radiates—whether with fire and brimstone early in the morning, when confronted with yet another irritating inadequacy—or conversely, with deep compassion and understanding of other people's problems, at all times of the day. Between them, they should generally create a truly *New Avengers.* The series is being made by an independent new company called the Avengers (Film and TV) Enterprises Ltd.

The New Avengers storylines are great, and the action is terrific. Much of the recent TV I've seen seems sadly lacking in high-powered action. I think what we've got this time is a thriller show with comic undertones. Anyway, you'll soon let us know if it's any good.

As for the future, well even if the show does click I'm not too sure I ought to stay on too long as Steed. You can't have an arthritic secret agent (although I hope I'm a long way off that condition). I was quoted once in an Australian magazine as saying I wanted to spend my remaining years vibrant, healthy and sexual. Well, who doesn't?

I have said I have simple needs, including those of the spirit. I have an uncomplicated belief in God but I distrust institutionalised religions. They have been responsible for more war, devastation, inquisitions and downright cruelty than almost any other single force. They also control too much of the world's wealth and guide far too many of the world's people. But my own belief in the Almighty is simple, and like the best thing in religion, within myself.

Now, as my autumn approaches, I like to feel I'm a better person than I once was; that I'm nicer to people; that I'm less vigorously competitive.

Happy? Content? Satisfied? No, they are all words I don't like. Satisfaction implies self-satisfaction; happiness suggests sloth and self-indulgence; content always makes me think of someone who's had too much to eat.

No, I like curiosity, particularly intellectual curiosity. Out of fear and nerves as a young man I always strove to give the impression I knew a great deal more about life than I did. Now I know better and thus I am getting more insight into the broadness of life. It disturbs me to see people in such a rush. So many don't bother to stop and notice anything, least of all each other.

When I was younger I was so neurotically blinkered by my own worries and self-interest I didn't see anything going on around me.

Now I find the very moment of time—and people—very precious. And if you conclude that this is maturity, then it's been a hell of a long time coming.



On a beach in Sussex with a friend, Marie Cameron, this year.

DICE WITH THE AVENGERS!

Can you match the ingenuity and lightning reflexes of the Avengers? Or do you feel capable of beating them at their own game? Here's the chance to find out as Steed, Purdey and Gambit invite you to take up dice and cards and hit the Avengers trail.

Game devised by Eric Linden

You will need: two dice; the four Aces, Kings, Queens, Jacks from a pack of playing cards; six coloured counters (or buttons); paper and pencil.

Players: one player may control all three Avengers, or all three crooks, or they can be individually controlled.

Object: the Avengers must arrive at their rendezvous points and then make for a second, a third and so on until they are heading for the same one as another of the team. They need not throw an exact number to get to the rendezvous point, but simply enter and forfeit the remainder of that score. When two Avengers have the same rendezvous point, the first to arrive may forego his throws while waiting for the other to turn up. Then, travelling together, they have to link up with the third. When the three have joined forces, they make for the final rendezvous and the showdown. If they get there without the villains stopping them, that's it. Our heroes are triumphant yet again. The aim of the players representing the crooks is to stop the intrepid trio and take them to Gang HQ.

To start: the three Avengers and three crooks must be placed on the grid. To find your starting point, roll both dice and select a card. If the card is a club, put it back and take another card. This gives your grid position. If your dice add up to 2, for example, and you have the Ace of Hearts, your grid position would be the top left corner. If starting point already occupied, try again. Place cards back in pack and shuffle. Ignore instructions, if there are any, on the square where you first land.

Rendezvous points: each of the Avengers rolls dice again and selects a card. This gives the first rendezvous point they make for. If the card turns out to be a club this time, it acts like a Joker and they can choose any rendezvous point. Each Avenger must write down and name the rendezvous point before the next player tries for his. It is important to place cards back in pack and shuffle after each turn. After the rendezvous points have been determined, the cards are only used when a player lands on pick up points or reaches his rendezvous and tries for another.

Pick up points: these are diversions. You must go through the dice and card procedure again to find a new grid position and go straight there. Then carry on, from that point, making for the original rendezvous. Handy to be able to vanish if you're in danger of capture . . . If you land on another pick up point with this procedure, stay on it. Don't go through the procedure again.

Movement: this is in any direction, but always in a straight line each time. If you hit the edge of the board, rebound along your original path for the remainder of the score thrown. Where squares are separated by broken lines follow instructions inside the area contained by the heavy continuous rules.

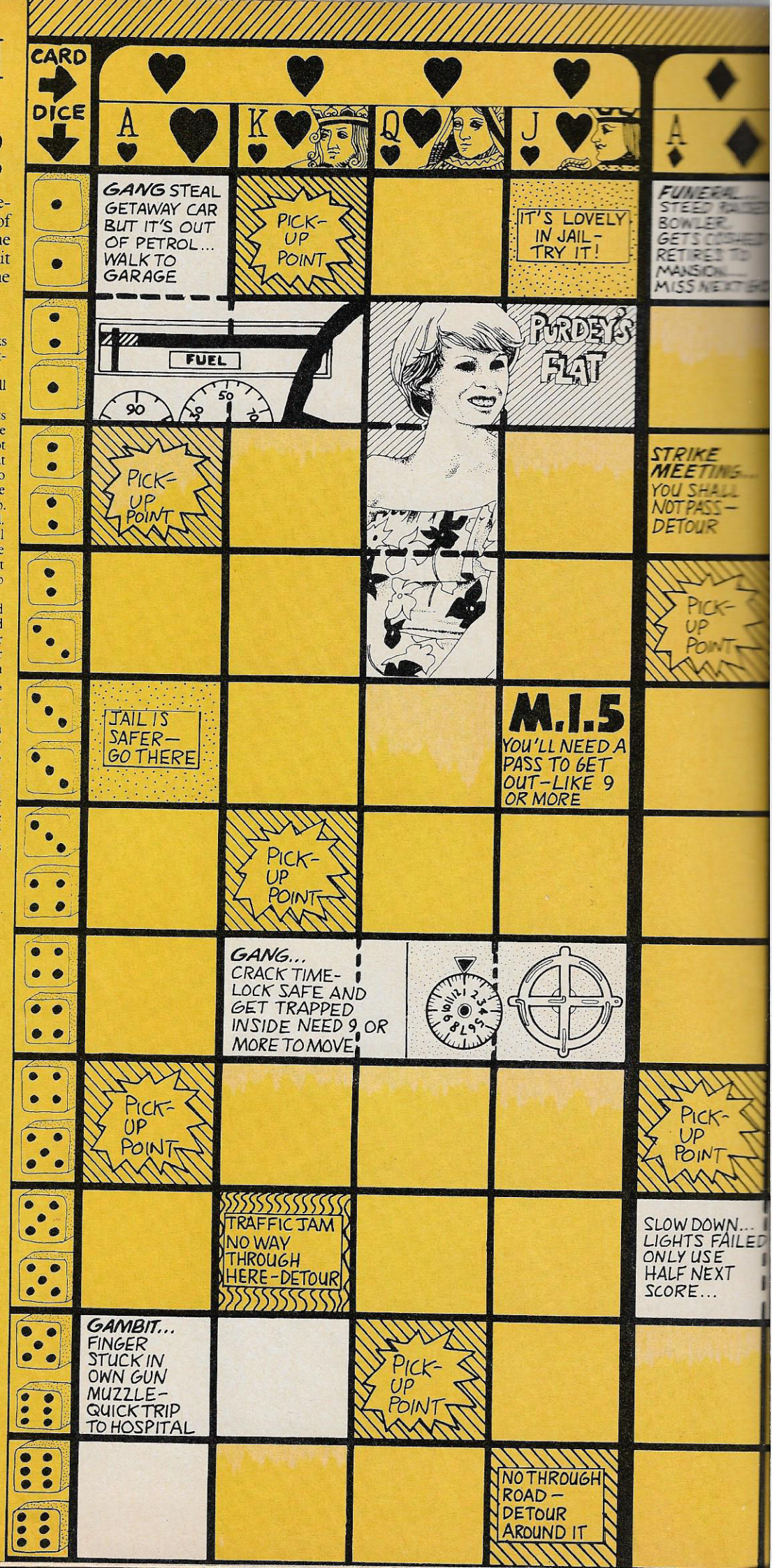
Capture: Avengers don't capture crooks, they defeat them. But Steed, Purdey and Gambit can be captured. Crooks do this by landing on the same square. Their object is to get the Avengers back to Gang HQ. They must throw an exact score to enter. One crook capturing one Avenger can whisk him back to HQ using the full amount of his score each time. One crook capturing two Avengers can only use half his score (ignore fractions). One crook capturing three Avengers uses one third of his score (ignore fractions again). Captures can only take place on blank squares.

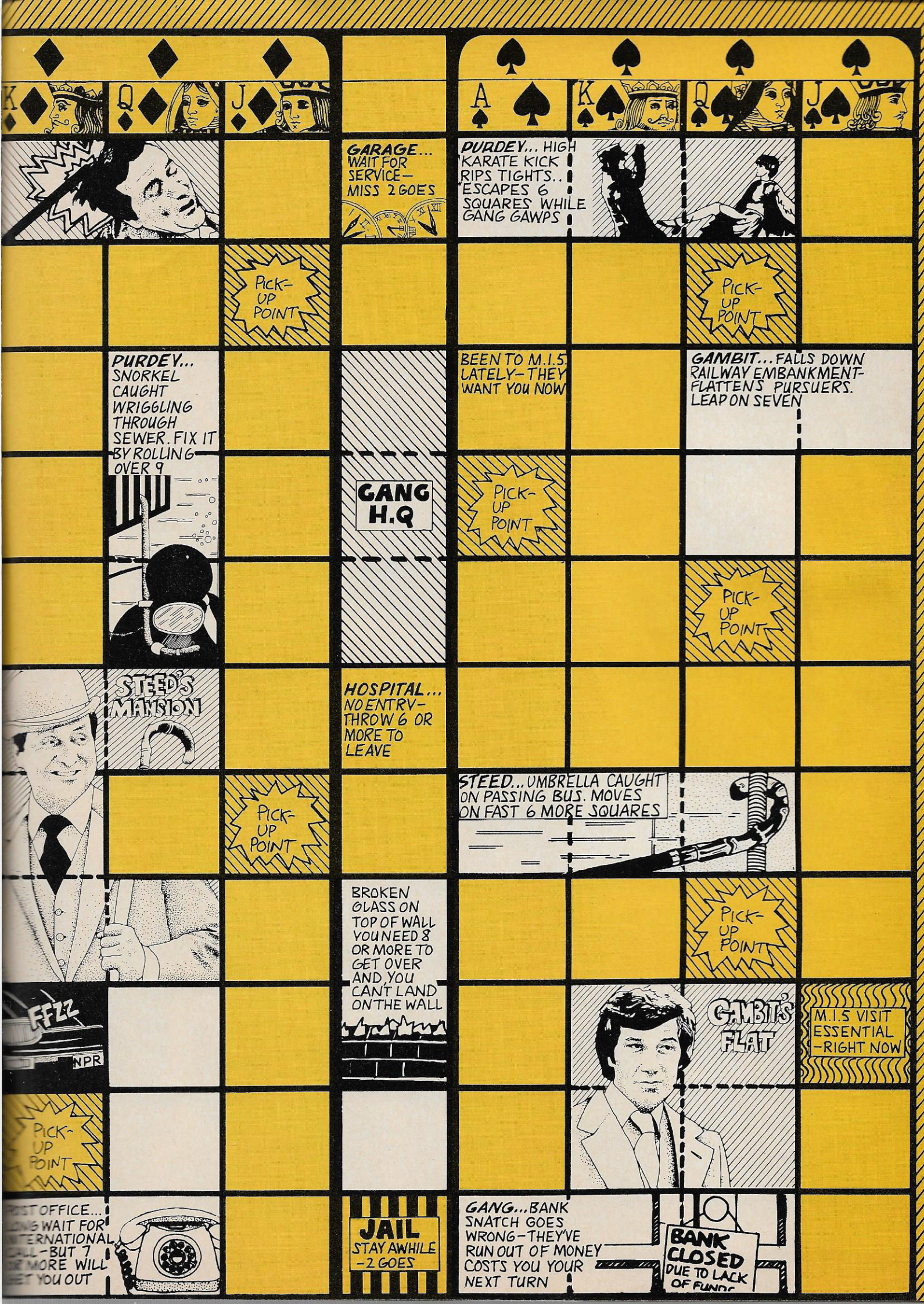
Escape: a captured Avenger, in HQ or not, still takes his throw of the dice. A six with either of them, while en route to HQ, allows him to escape — using the score he has rolled. Escape from HQ is more difficult. He must get the same number with both dice. Then he moves out fast next time. Otherwise, he stays put and his scores don't count.

Rescue: if an Avenger can't escape, there's always rescue. Very tricky. Another Avenger must throw the exact amount to break into HQ. At this point, the original prisoner forfeits his turns. They both stay in HQ until the rescuer throws a six. Then each moves out with his next throw. The danger is that if the crooks get the third Avenger in while the first two are there, it's the end for our heroes. Once captured, Avengers can also be rescued *before* being shut up in HQ. To do this, another member of the team must land on the same square. This immediately frees the Avenger and puts the crook in jail.

Homes: Steed's mansion, Purdey's flat, Gambit's place and Gang HQ can only be passed straight through by the owner. Everyone else has to go round them, unless the home happens to be a rendezvous point. Trying to reach the same rendezvous might sound odds against, but remember a club card counts as a Joker, and then you can name your own rendezvous point.

Defeat: no true Avenger would admit the possibility, but if the crooks get all three in Gang HQ, then defeated our heroes will be!




K
Q
J
A
K
Q
J
GARAGE... WAIT FOR SERVICE— MISS 2 GOES
PURDEY... HIGH KARATE KICK RIPS TIGHTS.. ESCAPES 6 SQUARES WHILE GANG GAWPS
PICK-UP POINT
PICK-UP POINT
PURDEY... SNORKEL CAUGHT WRIGGLING THROUGH SEWER. FIX IT BY ROLLING OVER 9
BEEN TO M.I.5. LATELY—THEY WANT YOU NOW
GAMBIT... FALLS DOWN RAILWAY EMBANKMENT- FLATTENS PURSUERS. LEAP ON SEVEN
GANG H.Q
PICK-UP POINT
PICK-UP POINT
STEED'S MANSION
HOSPITAL... NO ENTRY— THROW 6 OR MORE TO LEAVE
STEED... UMBRELLA CAUGHT ON PASSING BUS. MOVES ON FAST 6 MORE SQUARES
PICK-UP POINT
PICK-UP POINT
BROKEN GLASS ON TOP OF WALL YOU NEED 8 OR MORE TO GET OVER AND, YOU CANT LAND ON THE WALL
FFZZ
NPR
GAMBIT'S FLAT
M.I.5 VISIT ESSENTIAL —RIGHT NOW
PICK-UP POINT
ST OFFICE... S WAIT FOR TERNATIONAL ALL—BUT 7 E MORE WILL ET YOU OUT
JAIL STAY AWHILE —2 GOES
GANG... BANK SNATCH GOES WRONG—THEY'VE RUN OUT OF MONEY COSTS YOU YOUR NEXT TURN
BANK CLOSED DUE TO LACK OF FUNDS

ROLL OF HONOUR

Familiar faces by the score have passed through the Avengers' series — playing the rich, the mighty, the evil and the innocent. Here is a selection of the famous faces who've appeared with Steed and his team since those early days of 1960


Warren Mitchell


Peter Barkworth

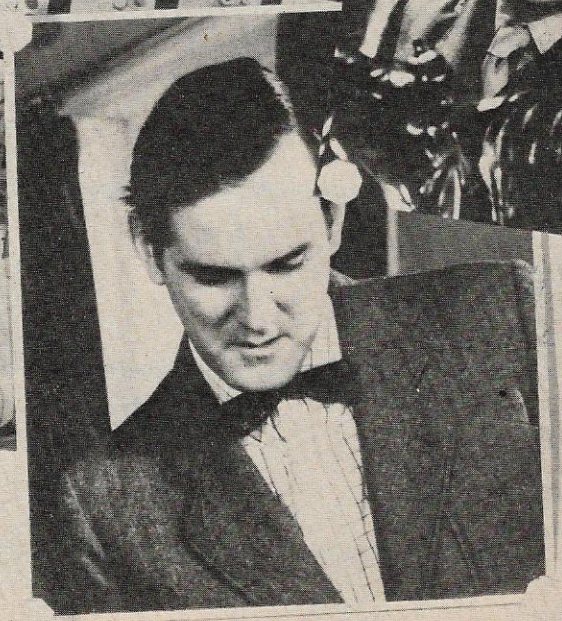

Moira Lister


Jimmy Jewel


Charlotte Rampling


Donald Sutherland


Bernard Archard


John Cleese

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David Langton
Nicola Pagett
Liz Fraser
Gordon Jackson
James Hayter
Peter Cushing
Roy Kinnear
Kate O'Mara
Stratford Johns
Angela Douglas

'The Avengers girls took the sex relationship for granted . . . simply didn't dwell on it. Because we didn't have to bother about it we could get on with the excitement'

Patrick Macnee

