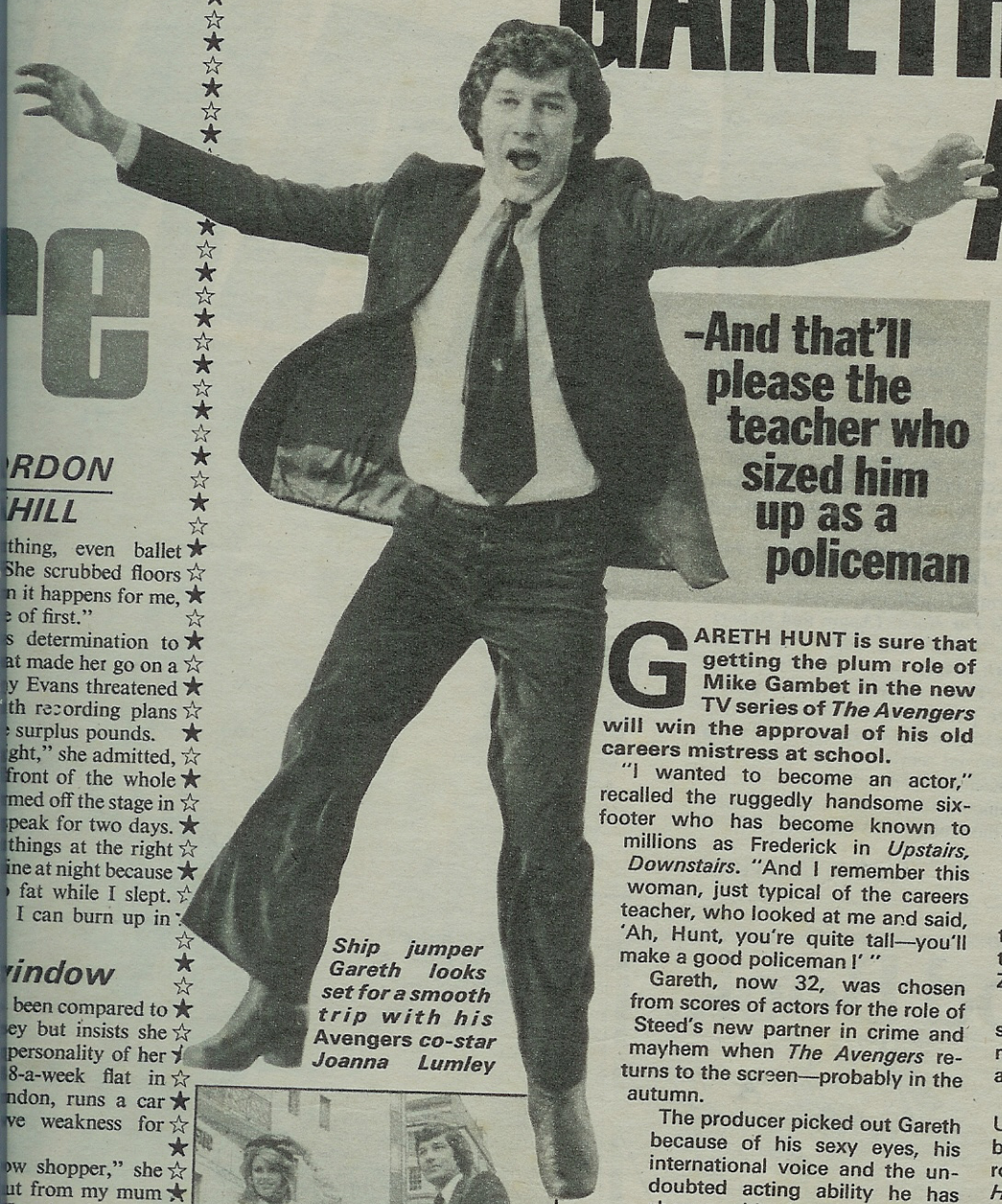
GARETH COPS A STAR PART

–And that'll please the teacher who sized him up as a policeman



Ship jumper Gareth looks set for a smooth trip with his Avengers co-star Joanna Lumley

GARETH HUNT is sure that getting the plum role of Mike Gambet in the new TV series of *The Avengers* will win the approval of his old careers mistress at school.

"I wanted to become an actor," recalled the ruggedly handsome six-footer who has become known to millions as Frederick in *Upstairs, Downstairs*. "And I remember this woman, just typical of the careers teacher, who looked at me and said, 'Ah, Hunt, you're quite tall—you'll make a good policeman!' "

Gareth, now 32, was chosen from scores of actors for the role of Steed's new partner in crime and mayhem when *The Avengers* returns to the screen—probably in the autumn.

The producer picked out Gareth because of his sexy eyes, his international voice and the undoubted acting ability he has shown with the Royal Shakespeare Company, the National Theatre, and, of course, in *Upstairs, Downstairs* which brought him in a steady flow of fan-mail.

Keeping busy

At a cost of £4 million, 30 episodes of *The Avengers* co-starring Patrick Macnee—returning as Steed—and Joanna Lumley are planned. That should keep Gareth busy for at least three years, besides possibly making him an international star.

But if Gareth has fulfilled that teacher's hopes of upholding the law, he certainly knows all about life behind bars. He once spent three months in prison, and isn't ashamed to admit that as the key turned in the lock he was near to breaking down.

His sin was jumping ship from the Merchant Navy, and the punishment is something he will never forget.

"It taught me one thing, I never want to do any more time in the nick," he said. "When they stuck me in a cell on my own, it really hit me as to what it was like to be locked up.

"I started to bang on the door shouting to be let out. There were tears in my eyes—until I saw what somebody before me had written over the cell door. It said 'Do Not Lean Out Of The Window.' I laughed."

Terrible feeling

But it was one of the few moments that Gareth was able to smile during the three months he was in a New Zealand jail.

"It's a terrible feeling when you are shut in a cell on your own, 12,000 miles from home. It's the frustration and the claustrophobia.

"We all had to queue up for a shave. Using a razor blade after 30 other blokes have used it before you is pretty rough. I spent a lot of time reading *Hornblower*. While I was there, the last person to be executed in New Zealand was hanged. All in all, I wouldn't like to spend any further time in prison."

Gareth was in the Merchant Navy for six years before he jumped ship with two mates. When they made a run for it, it was rather like something out of *James Bond*.

Gareth said: "We crept along the wharf with our bags, flitting from shadow to shadow. We got a taxi to a coach station, the coach took us inland but we missed our train connection. So we made the longest cab ride I've ever had. It was 100 miles and cost us £11 and two watches."

They took odd jobs to make a living. Once they existed on lemons for two days.

"We always felt the entire police force was looking for us. One day we were getting ready for a dance when there was a knock on the door. Two of us got caught but they never got the third guy."

There's certainly been a turn-around in his fortunes since those dicey days.

Tim Ewbank

re

RDON
HILL

thing, even ballet
She scrubbed floors
n it happens for me,
e of first."
s determination to
at made her go on a
y Evans threatened
th recording plans
surplus pounds.
ght," she admitted,
front of the whole
med off the stage in
peak for two days.
things at the right
ine at night because
fat while I slept.
I can burn up in

window

been compared to
ey but insists she
personality of her
8-a-week flat in
ndon, runs a car
ve weakness for

w shopper," she
ut from my mum
London for look-
dow. We walked
st End selling sex
e on, let's go in',
nused.
hen I told her I
friend who is an
a London night-
she'd have to get
society, which I
r a 66-year-old

courting adores
together a year
e moment, we'll
ng a baby at 17
fully about every
now on."

ARE THEY NOW? Saveen

came one of ventriloquists and Sixties. Daisy May he on television t on radio. t up ventriloquism as a boy and when he joined the Army he entertained at troop concerts.

Today Saveen is still active as a "vent", and also runs an entertainment and employment agency in Surrey.