



JOANNA LUMLEY -

Getting A Kick Out Of Her New Role

Athletic, brave, but undoubtedly feminine — that's Purdey in "The New Avengers." And it's also a fairly accurate description of Joanna Lumley, the talented actress who landed this part in a million.

JOANNA LUMLEY had just karated a potential thief, who was lying on the floor . . . until the camera stopped.

Smiling, Joanna came over to talk to me during her break. She lit a cigarette, and began by telling me how astonished and delighted she had been to get this part.

"I couldn't believe it when I was offered the part. I did try really hard for it. It was a good part and I knew it would be a lot of fun to do.

"I was very dejected at the time I did the audition. I'd been out of work for six months, there was a leak in the loo at my flat and the sash cords were all broken on my windows. In fact, I was so fed up that I'd thought of going to the States."

It was a good job she didn't go to the States, for the part she landed was one of the best that British television has to offer and a thousand or so hopeful actresses applied to be John Steed's new partner in ITV's four million pound production.

It's a part which will almost certainly launch Joanna into international stardom. Incidentally, it will also provide her with rather more money than is necessary to repair the leak and broken sash cords in her flat!

If the days dragged for Joanna before she landed this plum role, since then she's hardly had a moment to herself. Not that she seems to have suffered from it. In fact, she has thrived on the hectic schedule.

"I'm up at six," she told me, "and in the studio by half-past seven. Then we work right through the day until the light fades. When I'm not actually on the set, or on location, I have to go to the wardrobe, or hairdresser, and do a certain amount of publicity work. It is very hectic. But I love it!" She smiled and continued:

"Sometimes I stop and think — this is really strange. Here I am being paid for doing something that I enjoy so much. It's not like work." And then she added, perhaps rather rashly:

"Acting is something I'd do for nothing! I thoroughly enjoy it."

PURDEY, the character Joanna plays, is something of a superwoman — ultra-feminine, witty, a crackshot, expert in unarmed combat and unbelievably athletic and agile.

Is Joanna anything like this incredible

A
Special Interview
By
MICHAEL
ALCOTT



character? She smiled broadly. "In some ways," she agreed. "Of course I'm not as skilled as Purdey. I can't knock people about as she does. In fact, I'm not at all aggressive by nature. "Nor am I as liberated as she is. And Purdey doesn't get the sulks, which I do occasionally. In general, though, I do feel that I'm being myself when I play Purdey. I've tried to make her like me, as much as the script allows, and I've tried to create a likeable character, which hasn't always been easy."

So when you see Purdey, you see Joanna Lumley, to a certain extent. But I wanted to find out more about Joanna herself.

She was born thirty years ago in India, where her father was a Gurkha Major. She has one sister:

"Aelene, a lovely name. She's older than me," she stressed and added, "she's smaller than me,

you see, and people always assume that she's younger." She pulled an angry face and clenched her fist. Then she laughed at the family joke.

Her early years were spent in the Far East—India, Hong Kong, Malaya. Then she came to England, cried at the sight of the industrial landscape and continued her schooling at an Anglican convent near Hastings.

"I was very bad at school," Joanna confessed. "Always causing trouble. But the nuns were very tolerant. They were good teachers and I liked them a lot. Although I was rather lazy, I enjoyed languages, games, and art."

Acting appealed to her from an early age, although she had other ambitions than the theatre when she was a young girl.

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natural elegance, trim figure and finely-chiselled features, she had no difficulty finding work as a model.

But at eight pounds a week in a London store, it was hardly a fortune and the endless parading up and down didn't provide much excitement.

So she moved into photographic modelling, with great success. During the swinging Sixties, Joanna was in demand all over the world and her face stared from the pages of all the leading glossy magazines.

Exciting as the life was, Joanna hadn't given up her childhood ambition to be an actress.

"At a party I met Richard Johnson and told him that really I wanted to act. To my surprise he offered me a part in the film 'Some Girls Do.'"

In 1967 she made her screen debut—not that many people noticed her. She had only one line:

"Yes, Mr Robinson." Still, it was a start.

More film work came her way—a part in a James Bond film, a Dracula film, and a part in "Games That Lovers Play." She did repertory work in the theatre, appeared with Brian Rix in "Don't Just Lie There, Say Something." And there was lots

of television, too—in such programmes as "Coronation Street," "Steptoe and Son" and "Call My Bluff."

BUT whilst her career as an actress was progressing nicely, Joanna's private life wasn't going so well. Her marriage to Jeremy Lloyd was not a success.

"It was very turbulent," she told me. "And it only lasted a few months." Then she brightened. "Fortunately, it has matured into a very good friendship."

Joanna learned a lot from that experience, and is wiser for it. And now, having hit the jackpot, she could, if she wished, join the fabled jet-set again, but it doesn't interest her. She's more reflective, quieter, more interested in spending what spare time she does have with her son, Jamie.

"I don't like parties very much," she said. "I don't drink. And I don't like crowds of any kind. Not that I'm a loner. I can stand my own company for about ten minutes before I get bored."

She paints, draws, knits, plays squash and tennis.

"Sometimes I go for a run through the streets of Fulham," she added. "I get utterly exhausted and then realise that I haven't got any money on me to pay the bus fare back to my flat!"

Now, that's not the kind of mistake that Purdey would make!

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**Now,
where have we
seen that
brolley before?**

