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Patrick McGooohan with Lisa Gastoni

Who'd be a TV hero?

Why 'Danger Man' scared me

—by Patrick McGooohan

WE are in Washington, D.C. From out of an impressive Federal building walks a tall, lithe figure.

He comes towards us . . . flicks a lighter to a cigarette and for the first time his features are revealed.

Our man is John Drake, security agent. We are about to follow him through another exciting adventure in his weekly TV series "Danger Man."

Danger is his business and he meets it in every corner of the world from Wapping to Wanchipur.

A man the Press handouts describe as "a man of ideals, with a passionate belief in the dignity of mankind, risking his life in the cause of international peace and understanding."

The role of Drake is played by Irish-American Patrick McGooohan, 33 years old, married with two children.

We met recently in a crowded hotel foyer.

"Let's get out of here quick," he said.

"I hate crowds. My pet hate!"

"Let me take you to dinner," I said, suggesting a well-known London night-club.

"Oh I never go to those places. They're not me, I'm afraid. We will have a bitter in a small pub around the corner. O.K. with you?"

"O.K. with me."

At the bar, he talked about the advantages and disadvantages of being one of the most popular TV heroes.

"I have got no beefs about doing this series at all," he said. "In fact it has been fun and enjoyable and hard work which suits me. I love hard work."

"I don't know why some people were surprised when I decided to do the series. To me it was just another job even though it tied me down for a year. I didn't look on it as a long-term job, just one single assignment."

I asked. "Was the money good?"

"Money isn't important to me," he said.

"The money I got for doing 'Brand' was peanuts, but then I didn't do 'Brand' just for the money."

"Brand" was the play for which McGooohan was voted by the national newspaper critics as the best actor of the year. He won another major award before starting "Danger Man". He was voted TV's best actor of the year for his performance in "The Greatest Man in the World."

"Like everything else I do," he continued, "I get terribly scared before playing a part. I was dead scared of doing 'Brand' because I didn't think I could do it. The TV series scared me too!"

"Why?"

Could Have Been Worse

"Well it might have turned out to be terrible and trashy," he answered. "But I don't think 'Danger Man' has. There are a number of ridiculous episodes which make me boil whenever I watch them, but on the whole there have been some pretty fair films in the batch."

"They could have been worse had the original conception of John Drake been portrayed. This painted him as a rough, tough, sexy guy, who hits below the belt in his fights, is always using a gun and makes a pass at every pretty girl."

"I fought against this. It took a little time, but eventually the character was ironed out. Personally I detest violence . . ." He added with a smile: "one of the reasons why I always stay in on St. Patrick's night."

He said that during the series he has only used a gun once, and when he gets involved in a fight, he fights clean according to the Queensberry rules and all that.

"You've been surrounded by pretty women

in the series," I said. "How is it that John Drake never really got seriously involved with any of them?"

"It would have been wrong!" he said. "There was nothing sexy about any of the relationships with the women he met. He was a man who had to have complete freedom, freedom from any domestic situations that might arise with him going off at any given time. No, it would have been wrong to have got involved with one woman."

We ordered another drink. Some of the locals spotted a famous face at the bar but did not, much to Pat's relief, start talking to him.

"This was your first TV series. How did it feel at first?" I asked.

"Strange. Very strange indeed! I couldn't get used to having to get up at 6.30 every morning when I started. It took me about a month to get into the routine of things."

"Then in the middle of it all, I decided to take a breather and have a holiday which, believe me, I needed. The pace on these films is terrific and by evening you're really whacked."

"Well, I had a couple of weeks off and I guess I ran wild a bit. When I got back to work it took another five or six weeks to get back into the routine again."

"A funny thing happened when we finished the series. For a whole week I continued to get up at six-thirty and drove to the studios as a matter of routine. I couldn't break the habit until I fully realised that it was all over."

"Would you have liked the series to go on?" I asked.

He paused to give the question some serious thought, sipped his bitter and then answered: "Perhaps, but let me tell you this: I would rather do twenty TV series than go through what I went through under that Rank contract I signed a few years ago and for which I blame no one but myself."

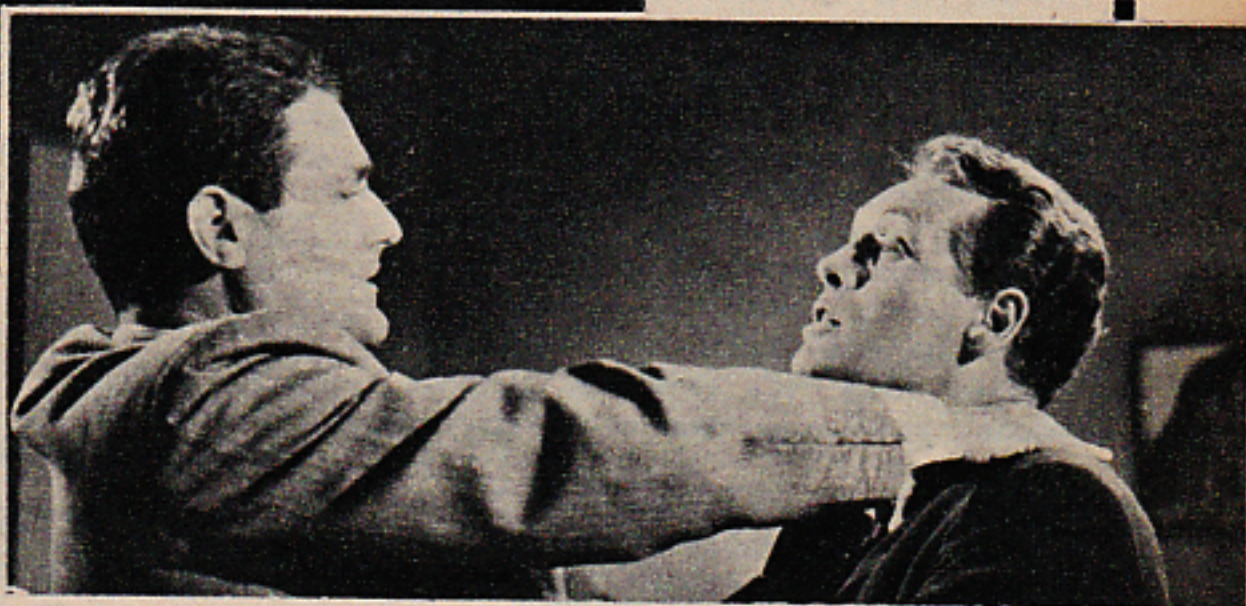
"I will never sign another contract that requires me to do more than one film a year for a company." (Continued on page 41)

"It might have been trashy, but I don't think it was"

by
Ken
Ferguson



McGoohan as John Drake,
a man of high ideals



McGoohan fights Charles Gray in an episode from "Danger Man"



"Risking his life in the cause of peace . . ."



McGoohan in a tense scene with Eric Pohlmann



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Why 'Danger Man' scared me

(Continued from page 14)

"That is just about my limit. I got so terribly bored and depressed while I was with Rank mainly, I think, because of the inactivity. I did some terrible films, but I do not want to talk about it at length."

"Did you ever get bored on 'Danger Man'?"

"There isn't time to get bored," he smiled.

"But I did get terribly depressed on one occasion. If you have ever been a boxer you'll know how I felt."

"It was like getting up on the count of nine and all around you is a haze of blurred faces and the ceiling is going round. Well that's how I felt. But on the whole I enjoyed working on the series. We had a marvellous crew and in some ways it was rather sad when we all said goodbye at the finish."

"Y'know, doing a TV series is similar to repertory. It is the closest thing to it. You learn a great deal. I am greatly interested in the technical aspect of the film business. Working on the series gave me a great insight into the technicalities of film production. In fact soon I am going to direct and produce my first feature film."

"From a directing point of view, wouldn't you agree that it is difficult working with a technically clued up actor?"

He grinned. "I agree it is."

"Then didn't you find yourself wanting to direct and selecting angles and so on?"

He grinned again.

"Yes, I did. In fact I was allowed to direct one of the episodes called 'The Vacation' which I personally think had the best story of the lot, not because I directed it but because it was a good story."

"It was about a hired assassin I meet sitting next to me in a plane while on my way to my first holiday in months."

Always In Demand

Now that "Danger Man" has finished filming McGoochan has not taken a back seat as an actor. Some TV series have ruined actors by typing them so, that they cannot get other roles. Not so McGoochan. He is always in demand and he finds himself able to turn down work owing to heavy commitments.

Today McGoochan is a big success.

His main aim now is to do more film work because he says he enjoys it more than any other medium.

He has just finished a leading role in a film called *Two Living, One Dead* made in Sweden.

"I did it because of the off-beat story," he said. "I play a post office clerk, married and with a family who is involved in a dramatic situation. The part also gave me the chance of working with Anthony Asquith, who in my opinion is a first-class film director. One can learn a lot simply by watching him."

It can be said that today Patrick McGoochan is a happy man.

"I lead a quite private life. My own home and family is my own affair. It will not be exploited in articles. I have turned down a number of people who have wanted to come along to do a photographic family feature, for I have always felt this is my own affair."

Home is in Mill Hill and the McGoochans live comfortably indeed. It is a home they have always lived in.

"We lived there when I had nothing and we are still there. We love the place so much, why should we move?" said happy McGoochan.

We left the pub followed by the inquisitive glances of the locals and as we moved out into the street we bade farewell.

And John Drake, alias Patrick McGoochan went off on another assignment . . . Back to his wife and children.



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