



'UNZIP YOUR PSYCHE'—
S. J. PERELMAN'S

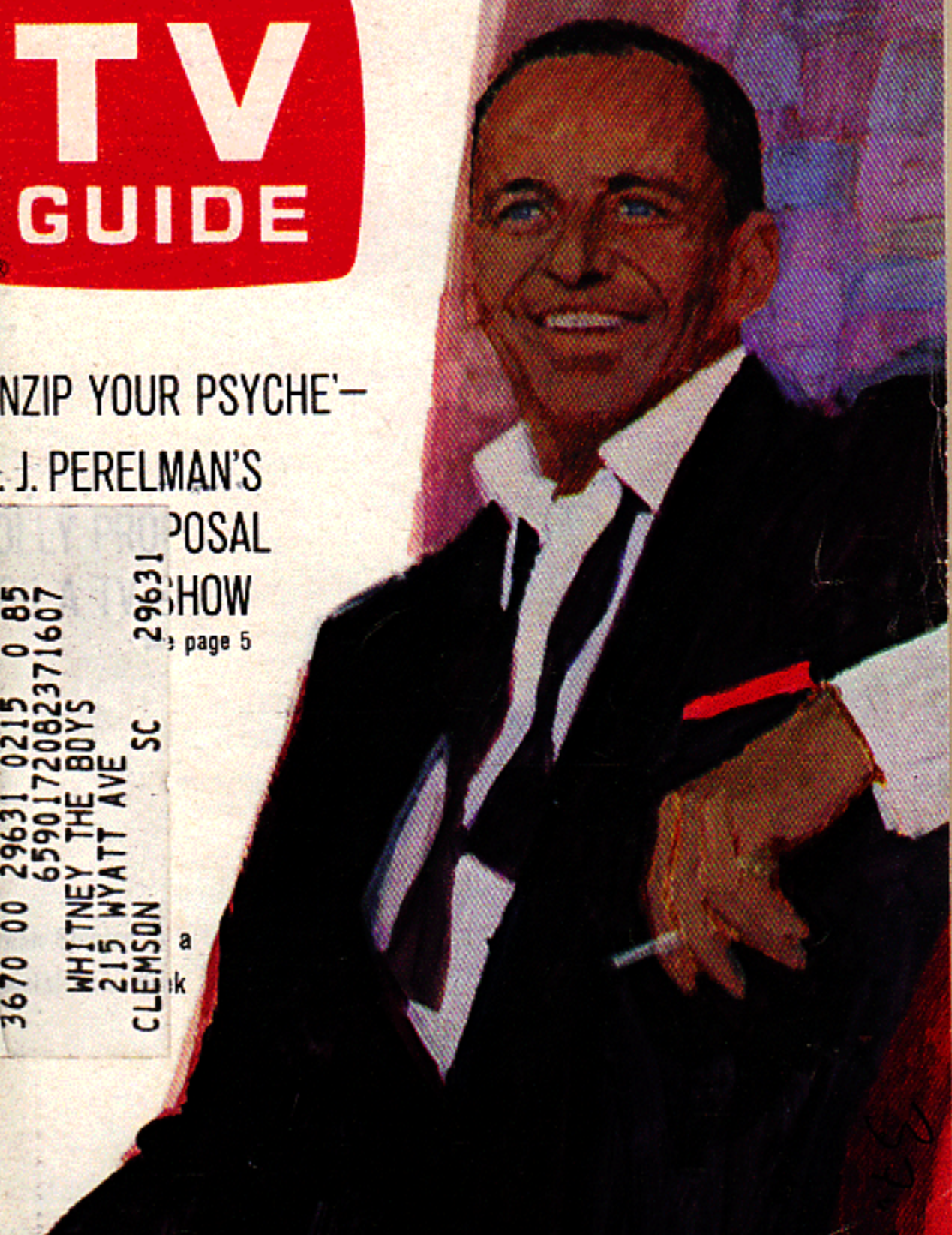
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JAMES BOND IS NO HERO TO HIM

The incorruptible Patrick McGoochan carries no gun, covets no woman, courts no violence in *his* spy series

BY ROBERT MUSEL



When a seductive spy is trapped by a handsome pursuer, the rules of the television game give her a final chance for freedom by using as many wives as the networks will allow. In *Secret Agent*, however, the lady is apt to size up her captor, wisely decide to keep her wives to herself and let the incorruptible John Drake usher her toward the due processes of law.

For the incorruptible Patrick McGoochan will not let his television character, John Drake, do anything he would not do himself. What good are wives against an actor who says: "Every real hero since Jesus Christ has been moral"?

This may be news to James Bond's friends, but with McGoochan it is a solid truism. Some six years ago, when he was first offered the role of Drake, a special security agent vaguely involved in counterespionage, he was already looking with distaste on Bond and the other agents, red in tooth and claw, slithering through the boudoirs of the world.

He read the first scripts and suggested radical changes. The creators of the series were coldly polite. Did this actor want to do their show or didn't he? McGoochan then said he did, and so meekly that their suspicions should have been aroused in view of his previous record on stage and screen of fighting for his own conception of a role.

"It was a dirty trick," he now says cheerfully. For what he had really decided to do was change the scripts during the actual shooting, when the desire to get on with the expensive job at all costs would be on his side.

So John Drake, conceived as rough, ruthless and romantic, was shaped by McGoochan into a man who carries no gun, covets no woman and courts no violence.

There was mild panic at first when it became obvious McGoochan had

taken command of the ship and was steering in uncharted television waters. An American representative hurried over to England, where the series is made, to plead for more sex and sadism and at least some publicity photographs of the star entwined with glamorous girls. McGoochan told him there must be a market for a hero who is decent, and to go find it. Of course, he was right. *Secret Agent* not only sold everywhere else, it became one of the few British series to crack the prime-time American market—CBS carried it briefly in 1961 as *Danger Man* (its British title), telecast it again last summer, then brought it back for a third trial this winter.

Not many people know the real McGoochan and that's the way he likes it. One of his associates told me he had never been to his home and could think offhand of very few who had. "I believe," McGoochan says, "that a public performer has a right to a private life." He rarely sees journalists, usually limits the all-powerful British press to 15 minutes per interview. Yet, instead of tearing him apart, they like him. For this is no affectation born of success. He was that way before reviewers began hailing "a brawny hulk of Irish muscle" 11 years ago.

McGoochan (a suggestion that he change his name once brought the savage retort that it would be an insult to his father) is 38, taller than he looks—6-feet-3—and even better looking than he screens, with cold blue eyes under hooded lids, a crinkle of lines in the corners. It is a handsome face, indeed, but one that has obviously been lived in.

Since I probably set a new British record by interviewing McGoochan twice in a relatively short time, I am somewhat of an authority on the man. His secret is that he is basically very shy. The first time I left him, he didn't know what to do with his hands and finally settled for

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tipping his cap to me. He is more assured now than he used to be, but he still sees no reason to bring his pretty wife or his three daughters into the publicity for the show.

McGoohan was born in New York of Irish farming parents who returned to the old country when he was in his infancy. The family moved on to England when he was 10 and, although he won a scholarship, he quit school in his teens to go to work. He had a spell in a wire mill and as the young manager of a small sub-branch of a bank. Later McGoohan became a poultry farmer and he might still be counting his chickens except for an attack of bronchial asthma that put him on his back for six months.

One day, after his recovery, he went into the Sheffield repertory theater on a whim and asked for a job. He was accepted as a "dogs body" (stagehand of all work). But in the next four years they made an actor of him and he made a married man of himself by taking actress Joan Drummond to wife.

He hit London's Broadway—the West End—with considerable impact in 1955. "Finely drawn," said a critic of his role in his first play. "Could not have been more dynamic," was the judgment on his role in Orson Welles' stage version of "Moby Dick." "Magnificent!" was the tribute of the London Times for his interpretation of Ibsen's "Brand" in 1959 which won him nomination as the best stage actor of the year. That same year the Guild of Television Producers and Directors voted him best TV actor of the year.

Since no one gets rich on the British stage and because he had a family to support and few movie offers, McGoohan was ready to listen when he was pitched *Secret Agent*.

Nevertheless he decided he would play television his way or not at all.

"When I first started the series,

they wanted me to carry a gun and have an affair with a different girl in each episode. I wasn't going to do that. I simply will not appear in anything offensive. I won't accept bad language or eroticism.

"But this doesn't mean I'm against romance. Romance is the finest form of entertainment. Westerns are romance. It's something you create in the mind of the viewer. What I object to is promiscuous sex which is anti-romance. Television is watched by so many people, children and grandmothers among them, that it has a moral obligation to its audience."

After filming of the first 39 half hours ended in 1961, McGoohan went back to films ("I've yet to make a really good feature film") and television plays. And then it was decided to turn *Danger Man* into an hour-long series and, after four years, McGoohan was back as Drake.

McGoohan is a demanding artist, but he is generally liked by his crew because they recognize him as a professional who could, if he had to, light a set or edit a film or even design a production. Home movies are his hobby and he is using them to train his daughter, Catherine, 13, who wants to be a director.

Travel is another of his hobbies—always with his wife. He rarely visits the bright lights of London. He prefers to drink, mainly beer, at an ordinary pub. One reason may be the tradition no one is bothered in a pub.

There was a stampede when the word first reached the secretaries that McGoohan had come to film at Shepperton. His effect on women is remarkable. I had to meet some friends at the studio bar and McGoohan guided me there. The biggest stars have played at Shepperton, but you wouldn't have believed it from the stir his arrival caused. Pretty heads spun his way. Red lips smiled in his direction. McGoohan, the family man, paid them no attention.