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# TV TIMES



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# THE EXTRAORDINARY Mr McGOOHAN

by ANTHONY DAVIS

**A**N iron-barred cage, big enough to house a pride of lions, occupied one corner of the set. In it were two men dressed like Venetian gondoliers. And Patrick McGooohan in a Russian fur hat and a crimson Cossack-style robe.

This was how McGooohan chose to receive newspapermen invited to the studios just before *The Prisoner* started on television.

The cage belonged to an episode to be seen in the future. But the gondoliers were waiters. While the waiters passed drinks through the bars and cameras clicked, Pat carried out a strange Press conference, talking through the bars.

Maybe he felt the setting symbolised *The Prisoner*. He didn't explain to the astonished reporters. Before they could pose any questions, he had reversed their roles and was cross-examining them about the first episode of the series which they had just previewed.

"What about that big ball?" he wanted to know. "What do you think it was supposed to be made of? What did it represent? Did it represent anything to you? What significance did it have?"

He switched his examination from one to another. "How about the old bicycle? Do you think that has any special significance? Did you think there was a science fiction element in the story?" And the Press answered numbly.

It was dynamic McGooohan-

ism, typical of the unpredictable, restless, intense man. His personality overwhelmed the writers. As it overwhelms viewers when he is on the screen.

He is a remarkable man.

He is reputedly the highest-paid actor on TV, earning over £2,000 a week, plus a share of the profits from overseas sales of his programmes. Yet he is unostentatious. He avoids the show-biz show places. He recently gave up the Mini he used to drive, but his new car is a Volkswagen, which hardly rates in the status symbol stakes.

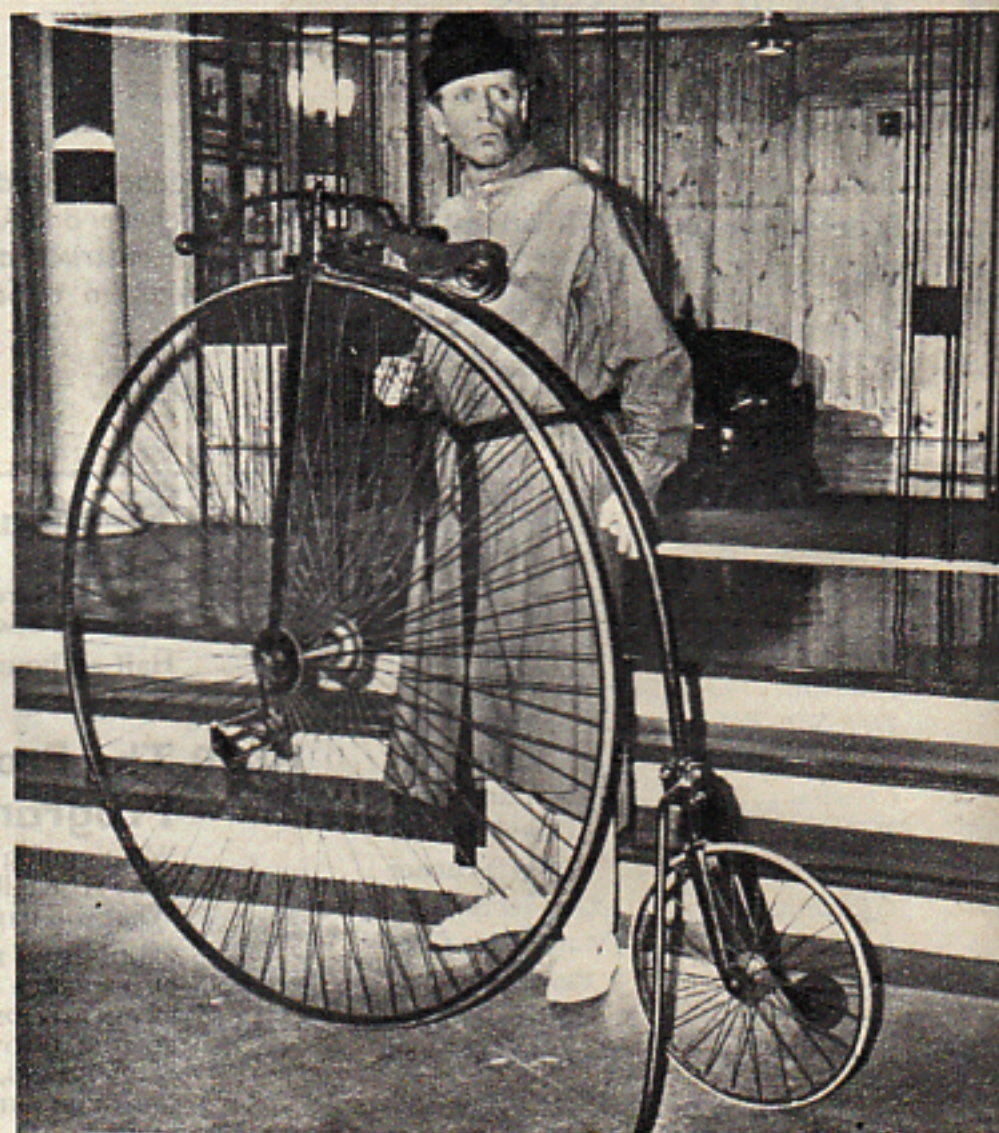
Reporters know him from *Danger Man* days as a man willing to discuss his work. That's a public sector of his life. But his private life and thoughts are a different matter. Not for him are the at-home colour pictures with his wife and three daughters in suburban Mill Hill.

He has declared his unwillingness to play TV parts he regards as immoral and barred gratuitous gunplay and brutality from his programmes because "children may be watching."

During the filming of *The Prisoner* he has become even more intense and single-minded. At the studios some like him greatly, some are wary of him; all respect him.

But then seldom has any actor staked so much on a series. Not only does he star in it. He thought of the idea. He is the executive producer and has directed a number of episodes. He also wrote some of them.

If the series is a hit, the credit



*This is how Patrick McGooohan appeared at a press conference for his series, *The Prisoner*. Appropriately, he spoke through the bars of the cage. That odd machine of another age is the symbol for the series*

will be chiefly his. If audiences find it too bizarre (and I am assured that it becomes more bizarre as it progresses) then he will have to shoulder the blame.

Only he knows how it will end. The final script has yet to be written. And he has alternative endings in his mind. There can be little question that this is the way McGooohan likes to work. But hence his questions to the Press, anxious to discover reactions.

He emerged from his cage for further pictures. The fur hat and long robe on his 6 ft. 2 in. frame increased his dominance of the room. Yet I have seen him dominate a gathering in casual clothes. While some good actors are insignificant off stage, McGooohan's personality makes him stand out in any company.

And yet he gives little away. He is not an outward going man. He is as enigmatic as John Drake of *Danger Man* or No. 6 of *The Prisoner*. They are seen only in their action roles. One is never told an unnecessary detail of their backgrounds, their interests, their thoughts.

And this is the way Mc-

Goohan likes it, too. To be seen only in his role. Whichever role he is playing.

He is a fine actor. He can make a production out of a mundane act like lighting a cigarette. He is a past winner of an award as TV actor of the year.

He is 39, handsome, and highly professional. "Acting is a job, a craft," he told me. "I arrive at the studios on time. I know my lines. I do a job the way that carpenter there does a job. I don't know anything about art."

Suddenly McGooohan has gone from the room, to make a quick change in readiness for the afternoon's filming. He reappeared briefly in a Wild West outfit with stetson hat. (Yes, it's a way out series.) He said a quick farewell and strode back to work on another set.

On balance, he had probably managed to obtain more information than he had given out. That's McGooohan. As enigmatic and intriguing a character as the heroes he plays. It is in that aloof quality on the screen and off the screen that his magnetism lies.