The disk coordinator

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Abstract

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TV and the baby Boomers

Danger man/The Prisoner/Early TV

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# Overview of Danger Man/Secret Agent

Figure :McGoohan as Drake

In 1960, a half hour British television program was to be created cashing in on the James Bond craze. Although the Bond movies were yet to be produced, the Bond books and Bond portrayed in a set of comic strips were very popular in England and this popularity would be exported to the US within a year or two partly through a Life magazine story about the favorite books of President John F Kennedy, one of which was From Russia With Love, the subject of the G11 kicker documentation.

It has been reported that a television producer for this proposed series had met with Ian Fleming, creator of the Bond books, to ask his opinion (and possibly his association) about this proposed television series, but Fleming had already signed a contract with other parties in terms of the rights to the Bond character. This would not be the last time a TV producer met and discussed ideas with Fleming. For trivia fans, this is an answer to the question of how the 60's American TV program, The Man From Uncle, was created and conceived. We'll give you a hint by indicating the lead character's name of that show, Napoleon Solo, is the name of a character in the novel, Goldfinger.

But we digress and will indicate to the reader that this is how the television series, Danger Man, started from scratch. In the process of getting onto the air, it cast a very dramatic, but opinionated actor as its lead. Possibly a great move, possibly a bad move as this actor would gain some control over the character he portrayed both to the benefit and detriment of the series.

The actor, born in the US (but at 6 months repatriated with his parents back to England) was Patrick McGoohan. The protagonist of this TV show, Danger Man, was John Drake. McGoohan was a highly intense perfectionist who showed this time and time again in the theater. To him, nothing was gray as far as acting was concerned. Everyone who has dealt with him claims his acting was a form of perfectionism, something he also insisted on others when in command. This author has read several reviews of McGoohan’s plays and critics generally said that he would envelope a part with great passion and projection.

McGoohan, contrary to most actors those and these days, was happily married since 1951, a marriage that would last until his death in 2009, and had a very high expectation of social and, should we say, sexual morals and situations. This was not an actor to be portrayed going from bed to bed. Although the John Drake character was not so written at the beginning of the TV series, McGoohan immediately put that stamp on the role he played. While, no doubt, he was as adamant as far as other ethical and moral conditions were concerned, there was a more gradual inclusion of this ethos into the program, but included it was.

Danger Man was originally designed to also play in the US market but its half an hour format, appropriate in the UK, was not such in the US. Its duration on British TV was two seasons. In the first season, a very limited music theme was installed - just a few chords - but by the second season, apparently what’s known as the highwire theme became the standard. A version of this Highwire theme will be the kicker to the Retrospective CD when it is released in October. In listening to it, any James Bond influence as far as music is concerned is missing given that it was created before the Bond movie successes. It seems to have as its influence the Harry Lime theme (now generally known as the Third Man theme) from the movie, The Third Man. You'll be able to determine if this author is correct in his assumption as the Third Man theme is the kicker for the Introspective CD also to be released in October.

Obviously, with McGoohan vetoing most plot lines, the writing and direction would have to take a different, higher level direction. Production was stopped for several seasons. It gave Mcgoohan time to pursue other roles. While off, McGoohan starred in a Disney production, The Scarecrow of Rodney Marsh, and other movies and plays. He also had the opportunity to say no to the role that would make Sean Connery famous, the aforementioned James Bond. In McGoohan’s case, being turned off by the character, it was a flat no to even auditioning for the role and who knows whether he would have been offered the part or not. His wife in later years reported that he never even considered becoming the actor to lead James Bond onto the screen although the producers of the first movie, Dr No, were very eager to see if he could be so cast.

When Danger man returned to the air it was now as an hour long drama. In the UK it was still titled Danger Man but in the US, where it started to be picked up as a syndicated show, it had two titles, the title with the most staying power was Secret Agent or Secret Agent Man.

The kicker to this CD, the last music selection, is why this name stuck. A new theme had been created using American artists. The theme was created by the song writing team of Steve Barri (supposedly born Steve Barry Lipkin) and PF Sloan who probably, if you listen to the lyrics, like most Americans projected James Bond onto John Drake. It was further modified – to, could we say, an Elvis type of sound by the singer, Johnny Rivers. For whatever reason, the theme invoked the words “Secret Agent Man” and this is what American viewers remember having had no history of the half an hour Danger man production.

From a music standpoint (and from a standpoint of these CDs) the intro guitar riff is a parody on the beginnings of the James Bond theme. Given the popularity of these movies (Secret Agent Man was in production from 1964 through 66 at the height of Bondmania) almost every guitar riff had elements of the most famous guitar driven song in the world at the time. This was no exception. But once into the theme, Johnny Rivers, the artist and singer to whom you are listening, made this song into a hit of its own and supposedly in 1966 this song topped out at #3 on the billboard chart of most favorite songs in this country. We might add that Johnny Rivers was a very accomplished musician in his own right and was very well known during the 60's for such hits as Memphis and Maybeline.

One more note: On the internet there are multiple renditions of Johnny Rivers singing this song with just three verses. We have made sure to include with this CD the version that has the instrumental third verse. Listen to the guitar: it very highly styled. All of this would have been academic as far as the TV program was concerned as only the first verse was heard.

## We Want Information, Information, Information. Discussion of the Prisoner

We left the discussion of the A13 kicker at the point where the 1 hour Danger man/Secret Agent was about to be produced. It was a hit in both the US and especially in the UK. This success is at a time when the Bond movies are rolling along and there are many Bond movie imitations on the Big and Little screen. The aforementioned Man From Uncle ran on NBC in the United States from 1964 through 1968.

In the era of the spy and the supposed spy life style, Secret Agent was very different. Patrick McGoohan, at the helm of John Drake, in essence, elevated this character  as has been observed by many sources including this writer who remembers being a fan of this show. To some degree, this representation of character more closely followed Ian Fleming’s interpretation of Bond with a notable exception which we’ll let you think about assuming you have read the A13 and G11 kicker documentations.

For McGoohan, as with Sean Connery, success opened up many opportunities in TV and movies as he became one of England’s most popular actors at a time when that country was still generally filming in black and white. However, by the mid 60’s, much of the country had color sets and many shows flipped over to color production as did Secret Agent/Danger Man in ’67. Two episodes for that season were supposedly filmed when McGoohan dropped his bomb shell.

What is it with actors in successful enterprises? They all like the fame, no doubt the fortune, but this comes with the need to act in something else. They are not content to a final interpretation of a character and, unfortunately, successful TV shows or movies create this type of situation. No, there is need for new characters to build on.

Israeli dancers to some degree understand this. A minority would be content to keep dancing the same dances forever but there is a majority who want newer, different, more innovative dances to be studied, memorized, danced to , enjoyed, reinterpreted before the eventual and inevitable fading of enthusiasm for the old as newer dances get so applied.

So, similar to Sean Connery as James Bond, not to mention various dancers over the years, McGoohan tells his producers, that’s it, He’s quitting. Apparently his contract is written so that at any time he can walk and walk he does after the first 2 episodes of the new season never to come back as John Drake.

What would you do if you were Lew Grade, the executive producer (the head honcho) of the network producing and airing this series. Your star has walked and It’s apparent that he will never return to this role that he has defined to the nth degree. No-one is irreplaceable, but the closest anyone has ever gotten is Patrick McGoohan’s status at that time.

Lew Grade responds in the following manner - perhaps you would also – by querying his most prominent actor with a sort of, ‘Well, what do you want to do? Whatever you want, let’s do it!’ The resolution of this answer creates what many consider the most unique and most frustrating TV Show ever presented. It is a show that defines, enhances and destroys this actor’s career given that the actor has taken complete control of the project. It is in a nutshell: James Bond meets Kafka!

# The Music of John Drake as Secret Agent and No 6

In a long about way, this brings us to the kicker of this B13 disk. We are, of course, referencing the Prisoner TV series. If you’ve never watched the series, before reading further, listen to this music. What do you hear? What do you feel? Most listeners would say that the percussion denotes movement, marching, perhaps the need for escape. The strings denote anger and forcefulness as they are played. You now have the gist of the Prisoner TV series. The high moral standing John Drake, who is never officially named, has had enough. Someone in his secret organization has done something his morality cannot tolerate. He is resigning!

However, this is not the situation where you resign, take a few weeks off and find another job. No, this is an organization which follows you home, drugs you into a coma while in your apartment and from which you wake up in an exact duplica of your residence within “the village”, a place of no escape where the question, asked a million times a day and in as many ways, is “why did you resign?”

We will not discuss the underlying morality of this program. If you’ve never seen the show, it’s available on DVD. We will limit our statements to the fact that few shows, if any, have had such recognizable visual accoutrements. From the romance architecture of the outdoor scenes of the village (Portmerion in Wales, famous in its own regard), the caricatured dress/design, the pennyfarthings and similar vehicles, the décor of the interiors, names if numerics are your thing and, of course, rover – the final defense of the village - It all comes out of the mind and genius of one man, Patrick McGoohan, No. 6, who is the lead actor, lead writer, often director of the show. And, the frustrating ending, episodes  16 and 17, in essence destroys his acting career in England and he is somewhat forced to relocate to California – on his own accord and not drugged to be sure  -  always pursued by the question, also possibly asked a million times a day, what’s the ending of the last episode mean?

We can’t give an answer either. Luckily, we are interested in the music. There are two themes in play with the Prisoner, one at the beginning of the hour as the show would start and one at the end to which you are listening. The beginning theme is much too long for these CDs and is rendered in two parts: before the drugging and then after. On the Internet (and Youtube) you can find this if you like. The ending theme is the one played here and is much shorter and in one piece.

The composer is Ron Grainer and his first attempt at a theme, which you can also hear on the net, was very low level and subdued. Mc Goohan, who was in charge of everything including the selection of music, wanted something more dramatic, loud and explosive and Grainer just took his original interpretation, doubled the speed and increased the volume fourfold. This is what you are hearing.

We hope you enjoy the music. If a prisoner fan, we’re sure this brings back memories and if not, perhaps this is something you might want to research although probably not to this degree

TV Parts played by Patrick McGoohan

John Drake in Danger Man

John Drake in Secret Agent

No 6 (John Drake) in the Prisoner

Rafferty as a retired Military Doctor

In the A13 and B13 documentation, a timeline was established dealing with Danger Man through the Prisoner. Much is made of this transformation of the character of John Drake and most would say it is attributable to the iconoclastic personality of Patrick McGoohan, the actor who played both parts. No doubt this was true but there may be other reasons that should be considered.

In addition to the above, the kicker for this C13 disk, known as the Highwire version of Danger Man, composed by Edwin (Ted) Astley, is of interest due to its tangential relationship with at least one TV show which might be the center of structural changes as to how TV shows were televised in the 60's era (not to mention be of interest to this web site and its creator).

Astley, who is the father in law of Peter Townsend of the Who, writes this theme for the second season of Danger Man which we think occurs sometime in 1962/1963. 10 years previous he creates the Ted Astley band, which was well recognized throughout England after a time. When he writes this Highwire theme, he has already turned his attention to becoming a specialist in music scores for TV shows. This is very similar to another musician studied in these disk coordinator CDs, John Barry Prendergast, whose initial claim to fame is the John Barry Seven but who would also become involved in movie (as opposed to TV) themes.

Figure :McGoohan as No 6

# Content changes in TV from the 60’s to the 70’s

But, we come to the question, what was on TV in the late '50s, early '60s and what does it tell us about the evolution of TV media over the years? We should begin by explaining that television is really an extended use of radio using two (or more) radio sources. Conceived while cultivating potatoes, so the legend has it, by Philo Farnesworth in 1927, television was in its infancy by the onset of World War II. It did have some successes by that time having been used by the Germans to televise the 1936 Olympics and by RCA to broadcast Yankee games to a very small audience in greater New York starting in 1939. But commercial television, being a source of 2 or more radio signals, was banned by all the participants of World War II for security reasons (although its cousin, Radar, was greatly developed and utilized during that war).

By the war's end, television is ready to boom in the United States. But, besides Yankee (and Phillies) games, what do you put on a medium such as this. At the start everything is live from comedy shows to game shows to drama. Comedy centers on those personalities popular in commercial radio and so we have Jack Benny and George Burns continuing their radio shows but on this new media.

Game shows also were popular and generally were composed of several star panelists doing or guessing something. It also offered the biggest irony by having Philo Farnesworth as a contestant on I've Got A Secret (his secret, by the way, was that he had invented television). Variety shows abound, at first live then taped, and you can look at the Bob Hope specials or the Carol Burnett show (not to mention Ed Sullivan) as examples of this. But something is missing here as far as the television we knew in the late 1950's, early 60's is concerned. This is nothing special here that you did not have on radio or at the movies on either side of the Atlantic.

In the case of non-variety type of shows, there was limited opportunity for guest stars. You could hardly have multiple guest stars, or a change of scenery, in Jackie Gleason's The Honeymooners. Your show of shows also would have been limited by location and the addition of additional personalities. Even Gunsmoke needed established sets as it was constituted at that time.

Luckily for the baby boomers, the first generation to be affected by this media, this is about to change. In the late fifties comes the western serials like Gunsmoke but even more importantly is another western series, Have Gun Will Travel. Richard Boone, designated by his card as Paladin, awaits adventure while lazing in San Francisco. With a telegram, every week he rides to a new location in the west, confronting a new villain and possibly assisting a new heroine. Every week is different from the previous week.

You now have the model for many television series from the late 50's through the late 60's. Paladin is emulated by Maverick (the hero travels town to town looking for a card game), all sorts of detective series including Peter Gunn, Mickey Spillane and various look alikes from Warner Brothers where our heroes in their offices await new cases. In England it was the same. And, the previously written up Danger Man falls into this category of the hero episodically moving from his operational center.

What is the appeal of this type of programming and why at that point in time. The timing may be answered to some degree by advances in the technology of taping medium which possibly allowed for the quick filming needed for these types of series. In the past the only copying was by magnetic wire which was inefficient and whose main basis was music. Now, used first by the computer industry as mag tape -and its equivalent as video tape - the industry could video tape and easily record images and sounds. Live broadcasts were no longer required and there was now a quick way to capture the images of different sets. The programs indicated above were probably the first to use this medium in this way although elements of photography, still the standard for movies, were still probably the primary means of capturing images for the rest of the industry. (Although Alfred Hitchcock used this videotaping technique when creating Psycho in 1960 and this may have been the first movie to be filmed as if a TV program)

Given the capability to quickly film these scenes, we have cowboys (Paladin, Maverick, Cheyenne), detectives(77 sunset strip, Bourban Street Beat) , secret agents (Danger man, The Man from Uncle) and Lawyers (Perry Mason) emanating from their office into adventures dealing with new clients, women, villians, etc each week at a new location which was nothing more than sets in the back lots of the studios. For the audience, it was something new each week with characters introduced who did not overstay their welcome given that by the next week (and generally by the point where the ending credits ran) they were gone.

But why stop with specific home offices. The ultimate to this type of storytelling and TV adventure is to have a show centering on someone who neither has or needs an office and has plenty of reason to be on the move, on a weekly basis perhaps, from place to place.

Three TV shows, two in the US and one in Britain, are created to fill this type of need and type of hero. At the heart of the US shows is Roy Huggins, a novelist who joins Warner Brothers in the late 50's and then goes independent (while suing Warner Bros for copyright infringement). As an independent, he creates the Fugitive and Run for Your Life.

The Fugitive, as you probably know, is about Dr Richard Kimble, found guilty of killing his wife, but who escapes and in his pursuit of the real killer, the one armed man, while being pursued by Lt Girard, needs to move from place to place very rapidly and often.

Run for your Life involves a highly successful lawyer, Paul Bryan, who being told that he has a fatal illness and less than 2 years to live, decides to live life to the fullest without the constraints most of us have in doing this as to money and reason. Among the most ironic aspects of this show is that its character, having 2 years to live, appeared in 4 years of TV production.

These types of programs seem ideal for television of that era for the reasons mentioned above. But what's the downside? You need lots of scripts with supposed new ideas per the season episodes or the audience will tire even of this. Even so, in many cases scripts are duplicated with minor changes to be used in both shows. For any television series, this type of plagiarism is not unique for as Fred Allen once said, "Imitation is the sincerest form of television."

# The Man and his roles who ties a lot of interests together

In England, a different tack is applied and it is here where Edwin (Ted) Astley plays his part. ITC is the independent network in England at that time when English broadcasting is dominated by several BBC channels. ITC is run by the very famous Lew Grade, mentioned in both the A13 and B13 documentation. Grade already has a hit in Danger Man but he would like a second series (if not more) of similar success. Perhaps he orders that similar programming to that described above be developed, one where the hero is just dealing with different locations and people each week. Or, perhaps, it's happenstance. But, in one way or the other, an idea is developed pertaining to a character without a home base with the added plus that a whole set of already existing literature is available about him to produce scripts.

From pulp fiction, if you will, a character is investigated about whom his creator has written a vast amount of stories. This character, a kind of devil-may-care, humorous loner, looks at himself as a kind of modern Robin Hood. He has already been the basis of a set of successful movies (none of which literally used the author's books or words, but still helped define this character even more) during the late 30's into the early '40s and these movies are quite interesting to examine even today as they become the vehicle for the beginning stardom of the actor, George Sanders.

Starting in 1945, this character was transported to radio and Vincent Price had the lead. The radio programs dramatically recreate this character's creator's original stories. Only one thing is appropriated from the series of movies indicated above - the character's musical theme song

The creator of this modern day Robin Hood was said to have been born in China to a Chinese surgeon and English mother. Immigrating to England after WWI, he at random chooses the last name of Charteris and so the identity of Leslie Charteris is born. Although he tries several occupations, he finds that he is a natural writer and we're sure you know the rest of this story as he creates the character in question, Simon Templar, aka the Saint, who acts like a modern day Robin Hood.

Someday, on some silly and insignificant web site, we will produce some documentation about The Saint. And his creator, like all the authors these CDs have dealt with, has an interesting life story to tell. But, we are interested in how the televised edition of the Saint fits into these CDs and in some way deals with the evolution of John Drake into the Prisoner and into the theme music that is C13's kicker.

First, Edwin Astley mentioned above, creates a new theme for the upcoming Saint television series in 1962. He is probably more famous for the television Saint theme than he is for the Highwire theme that is on this CD’s last track. Like all musicians, Astley borrows ideas for his theme songs and you can discern some similarities between the Highwire theme and initial Saint TV theme. Interestingly enough, Astley will incorporate music themes from the Saint movies in a later re-creation of the Saint TV theme, but that's a story for another day.

Another tie is the selection of the actor to play the Saint. During the early 60's one British male model of fashion, makes the transition to acting but in the United States. For its last season, he joins the cast of the aforementioned Maverick as Beau Maverick, a part of the British side of the clan so it is claimed. His part is not really significant but he does impress with his ability to handle humor with or without dramatic situations. This proves useful when he auditions for the lead part in this sister series to Danger Man, The Saint, and he will play the part of Simon Templer successfully with great popularity worldwide, including in the United States, until the series is terminated at the end of the 1969-1970 season.

Figure :McGoohan as Scarecrow

You are no doubt asking yourself whether this ended this actor’s career in the performing arts? Did he return to modeling the finest of British suits? Not to worry! You may know of him through another film series he takes part. It turns out that by 1972, a very famous movie series, one that has on occasion been chronicled by the kickers of these CDs, was in need of an actor to carry on the series given that the original star had decided to pursue other acting parts.

And so it is Roger Moore, part of the fictional Maverick clan and the embodiment of the Saint, Simon Templar, who in 1973 straps on the Berns Martin Triple draw holster containing the Walther PPK (it would have been a Smith and Wesson in the books) and smartly reports to Miss Moneypenny and their boss, M, in the fictional offices of MI9 as the new James Bond, 007 as he stars in the movie, Live and Let Die.

Now, this is quite a bit of trivia in terms of the linkages between authors, TV series and the like. But, what about the transformation of Danger Man to the Prisoner? As mentioned in the beginning of this discussion, we might be seeing the recognition that television series were about to change again. The late 60's and early '70s show a change in direction of this media. It is no longer the Roy Huggins model that is followed. Set pieces in specific locations become the norm again and you can see this through the years in Mash, ER, Knots Landing, Dallas, etc which returned TV to the formula of set location with an ensemble cast and limited guest stars. With John Drake transported to the Village, we now have a series set in a location, strange as the location and the people within it might be.

There probably were many reasons for McGoohan's tiring of playing John Drake and his wish to play No. 6. We've discussed several of these reasons in the prior A13 and B13 documentation. But, McGoohan, if one listens to interviews with those who worked with him during this time, had an interest in the evolution of television media. Perhaps this was his way of moving the process along at least for his show.

Therefore, it is with great pleasure that we present as the kicker to the C13 disk the theme song for the British TV series, Danger Man as originally done by Edwin Astley. This becomes known as the Highwire version. In listening to this theme, keep in mind that it doesn't stand alone: it is part of a set of links that help to tie many things together - maybe not to you, the reader, but at least to the one person writing this documentation.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Tv Shows mentioned in this article | Aired On |
| Danger Man | ITV |
| Secret Agent | ITV |
| The Prisoner | ITV |
| Gunsmoke | CBS |
| Have Gun Will Travel | CBS |
| 77 Sunset Strip | ABC |
| Maverick | ABC |
| The Saint | ITV |

Note:This information has been taken from [the Diskcoordinator website](http://www.thediskcoordinator.com/). Specifically [www.thediskcoordinator.com/trisk1.doc](http://www.thediskcoordinator.com/trisk1.doc)

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