

OVER
300 TV
PROGRAMMES
REVIEWED



THE
ESSENTIAL CRITICAL GUIDE

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FOREWORD BY PATRICK McGOOHAN

Foreword

The Prisoner is described in this book as 'probably the cultiest of cult TV'. But on its first broadcast September 1967 in England, *The Prisoner* was far from an immediate success. It was watched mostly by people who had followed the recently completed *Danger Man*. People expected the same straightforward plots and the same identifiable hero and villain. They were disappointed. What was this new series all about? A man held in a strange village no one knows where. A village populated by enigmatic characters called by numbers instead of names. Each of the episodes compounded the mystery instead of solving it. Who was The Prisoner? What did the name 'Number Six' mean? Who was Number One?

In the last episode I revealed the identity of Number One, the ultimate villain, as the alter ego of Number Six. This did little to pacify frustrated viewers. Outraged, they jammed the switchboard at ITV: they had been led on, swindled, double-crossed.

More than twenty-five years later it is suggested that on any day *The Prisoner* is being shown on some channel, in some country, in some part of the world. There are appreciation societies, magazines published, books written, memorabilia sales, symposia on the meaning and message of the series. People travel across oceans to visit Portmeirion where the series was filmed.

What happened? *The Prisoner* became a cult. Let us look at what makes a cult TV series. Should it be

enigmatic? Then what of *Bonanza*, *Thunderbirds*, or *Danger Man*? Should it be old? Perhaps; but what of *Red Dwarf*, *Blackadder*, *Absolutely Fabulous*? Should it be disliked by the establishment of first showing? What of *The Six Million Dollar Man*, *Lost in Space*, *The Time Tunnel*? Controversy? Then what about *Space 1999*, *UFO*, *The Addams Family*? There are some (*Star Trek* is the obvious example) which make it early into the mainstream and still command cult status.

All the programmes herein are described as cult TV. They attract a fanatical following. They have something that fascinates their acolytes who view favourite shows time after time without diminution of enjoyment. Why? Perhaps the answer is that these programmes were made by enthusiasts who believed passionately in their work, and the energy of their belief is transmitted to a select audience sympathetic to the theme and hungry themselves for an enthusiasm.

The authors of this comprehensive work should be complimented on researching their subject with the attention demanded when addressing a discriminating audience, demonstrated by a note on *The Prisoner*: 'McGoohan intended it to be an allegorical conundrum (his production company was called Everyman, in direct reference to the morality plays of the Middle Ages)'. Thank you!

We who are fortunate to be included in this book should be grateful to those who have warmly supported us over the years and given longer life and a broader audience to our work.

Patrick McGoohan

peril for the Harts was that Jennifer Hart was peculiarly prone to being kidnapped. The other cast regulars were Lionel Stander as the Harts' rasp-voiced, cigar-smoking retainer Max, and a dog, Freeway.

The programme credits listed bestselling novelist Sidney Sheldon as the programme's creator, but the series was merely an update of popular *Thin Man* movies of the 1930s, which in turn were derived from the novels of Dashiell Hammett. (A previous TV series using Hammett's characters, *The Thin Man*, had been made by MGM in the 1950s). *Hart to Hart* lacked the urbane, sophisticated wit of the films – which starred William Powell and Myrna Loy – not to mention their passable plots. The Harts were also indecently gooey, always ending the day with pyjamas, milk and cookies, before turning off the light for another honeymoon. Unfortunately, their sheer good spirits and a certain self-mockingness made them curiously watchable.

Hawaii Five-O

USA 1968–80 270 × 50m col CBS. Leonard Freeman Productions. UK tx 1970–82 ITV. cr Leonard Freeman, Jack Lord. exec pr Leonard Freeman, Philip Leacock, Douglas Greene. pr Bill Finnegan, Bob Sweeney, Richard Newton, Gene Levitt, B W Sandefeur, Stanley Kallis, Leonard Katzman, Leonard B Kaufman, Jack Lord. dr Various, including Michael O'Herlihy, Gordon Hessler, Sutton Roley, Alvin Ganzer, Corey Allen, Herschel Daugherty, Alf Kjellin, Marvin Chomsky, Reza S Badiyi, Nicholas Colasanto, Paul Krasny, Philip Leacock, Jerry Thorpe, Irving J Moore, Jerry Jameson, Jack Lord, John Moxey, Robert Butler, Harvey S Laidman, Barry Crane, William Hale, Ernest Pintoff, Sutton Roley, Brad Van Ecker. wr Various, including Robert Lewin, Leonard Freeman, Arthur Bernard Lewis, Robert C Dennis, Stephen Kandel, Norman Lessing, John D F Black, Shirl Hendryz, Edward J Lask, Glen Olson, Martin Roth, Robert Hamner, Dean Tait, William Robert Yates. mus Morton Stevens (theme), Peter Rugolo. cast **Steve McGarrett** Jack Lord **Det Danny 'Dan-O' Williams** James MacArthur **Det Chin Ho Kelly** Kam Fong **Det Kono Kalakaua** Zulu **Governor Philip Grey** Richard Denning **Doc Bergman** Al Eben **Jenny Sherman** Peggy Ryan **Wo Fat** Khigh Dhiegh **Lt Lori Wilson**

Sharon Farrell **Det Ben Kokua** Al Harrington **Che Fong** Harry Endo **Det Duke Lukela** Herman Wedemeyer.

The longest-running cop series in the history of American TV. Ex->*Stoney Burke* star Jack Lord played detective Steve McGarrett of the Hawaii State Police, head of a special squad working out of the Iolani Palace which reported directly to the governor. Too important for everyday crime-busting, the team – principally McGarrett himself, boyish Danny 'Dan-O' Williams and native islanders Chin Ho Kelly and Kono Kalakaua – concentrated on psychopathic killers and Triad-like forces from the Hawaiian underworld. A particularly cunning and elusive Mr Big was Wo Fat (Khiegh Dhiegh). Fighting Wo Fat and his ilk was a full-time mission for McGarrett; he had no apparent life outside the office, save for an occasional sail in his dinghy.

The kindest thing to say of the acting of the principals in *Hawaii Five-O* is that it was constant: Lord never registered an emotion, MacArthur never looked anything other than surprised. The rank-and-file police, played by off duty cops, were often more accomplished. And the stories were frequently flimsy. However, few shows have looked more stunning than *Hawaii Five-O*, which was shot entirely on location in Hawaii. Even when plot and character dragged, viewer-attention was taken by the exotic setting, enhanced by exquisite photography.

For a series of such longevity, cast changes were few (presumably the working conditions were too good to give up). Zulu departed in 1972, but Kam Fong and MacArthur played McGarrett's assistants until the end of the 1970s. With the departure of MacArthur, the show's famous catchphrase, 'Book 'em, Danno', had to go too, and somehow things were never the same. The ratings were falling anyway, and the introduction of a new woman detective in 1979, Lori Wilson, played by Sharon Farrell, did nothing to halt them. No doubt, however, it was some satisfaction to Lord/McGarrett that in the last episode before the series was unplugged he finally caught Wo Fat ('Woe to Wo Fat').

The memorable theme music, played over the stylish opening and ending credits (the latter showing Polynesians powering an outrigger canoe) was composed by Morton Stevens.

Despite the murder rate of the series it did much to promote Hawaiian tourism. Hawaii now has a 'Jack Lord Day' on its calendar.

Hazell

UK 1978-80 22 x 60m col ITV. A Thames Television Network Production. *cr* Gordon Williams, Terry Venables. *pr* June Roberts (season one), Tim Aspinall (season two). *dr* Don Leaver, Alistair Reid, Jim Goddard, Moira Armstrong, Peter Duguid, Colin Bucksey, Brian Farnham. *wr* Richard Harris, Gordon Williams, Tony Hoare, Peter Ransley, Trevor Preston, Terry Venables. *mus* Andy McKay. *cast* **James Hazell** Nicholas Ball **'Choc'** Minty Roddy McMillan **Cousin Tell** Desmond McNamara.

Steve McGarret (Jack Lord, second from right), Danny 'Dan-O' Williams (right) and the team from Honolulu's special police squad plan the capture of another baddie in paradise in *Hawaii Five-O*. 'Book 'em, Dan-O!'

