TVH

The Magazine of Television Heaven issue 3 January 2021

...Goes to the Movies

This issue: The Morecambe and Wise Films - Callan on the Big Screen - Casablanca the TV Series - Doctor Who: The Sixties Movies - The Films of David Croft - Jack Webb's Dragnet - The Real Ghostbusters - Barbara Bates - Man of Mystery

Despite their initial concern about television, it didn't take the big US studios long to embrace the new medium. As explained in *Casablanca - from Big Screen to Small*, Warner Brothers were one of the first studios to enter television production in 1955, by lending from one of their biggest movie hits of all time. It was the beginning of a relationship that still thrives today. In this issue of TVM, we take a look at some of the successful, and not so successful examples of popular television shows being turned into big production features - and vice versa. There's also a look at a series of 'b' movies that now appear to be, but were not, made for television.

This Issue

Casablanca - from Big Screen to Small

In the first big-screen version of *Charlie's Angel's,* a character settles into his seat in the first class cabin of an airplane whilst a screen in front of him plays a movie version of the popular US TV series *T.J. Hooker*. "Not another movie of an old TV show!" remarks the character. It is a tongue in cheek comment for sure, but therein lies an acknowledgement that Hollywood has for a number of years enjoyed something of a love affair with US television. In the early part of the 2000's it certainly plundered the vaults of 1970's kitsch adventure series. With the big box-office success of *Charlie's Angels* and outings for *The Dukes of Hazard*, *The A Team* and *Starsky and Hutch* it would be easy to forget that in television's formative years, the tables were very much turned, and it was the small screen that borrowed from its larger rival.

In the US, Warner Bros was one of the first of the big studios to embrace the new medium of television. Approached by ABC, the giant WB Company gave permission for the screening of its theatrical film releases. Warner's however were keen to broaden their horizons further and it was TV production that they were interested in. And so, a seminal series was created in which the company drew from three of its successful movies and presented adaptations and serialisations of them on a rotating basis, taking each of the stories beyond their closing theatrical credits under the umbrella title of *'Warner Bros. Presents'*, which were introduced each week by Academy Award winning actor Gig Young. The three movies from which inspiration was drawn were *'Kings Row'*, *'Cheyenne'* and a movie that would one day be regarded as one of the finest Hollywood has ever produced...*'Casablanca'*.

Based on the 1942 movie starring Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman, *Casablanca,* the series, debuted on 27 September 1955 at 7.30pm. Taking up the story after Bogart's character, Rick, an American expatriate who owns a North African bar had seen Ilsa, the true love of his life -but now married to another, take off from a fog-shrouded aerodrome, viewers were reintroduced to the main characters of the movie version. Rick himself was renamed Rick Jason and his bar was called the Club American; a bistro that attracted both intrigue and beautiful women. Despite his gruff exterior and outward indifference to the plight of others, Rick worked tirelessly to undermine the activities of the occupying Nazis. Captain Renaud (originally Renault) was the unsympathetic police captain, Ferari -a black marketer, Sasha -a bartender, and Sam -the incomparable piano player.

Charles McGraw, a one-time RKO star who had starred in *'The Narrow Margin'*, played Rick, although he was not the director, John Peyser's first choice. No amount of money could entice Humphrey Bogart to play the inscrutable character he had created in the movie for the television series, and Peyser was convinced that the only other actor who could carry the part, was Anthony Quinn. Jack Warner, WB's president, was happy to go along with the idea, offering Quinn $5,000 per episode and two movies for Warner Brothers. Quinn, although filming *Lust for Life* for MGM at the time, was very keen on the idea. So keen in fact, that he approached *Lust for Life's* producer, John Houseman, to agree to an early release. With Houseman's agreement, Quinn would be available from the start of August to begin filming the television series. However, when Peyser returned to Jack Warner with the good news that they had secured their star, Warner had an alarming change of heart. According to Peyser, Warner's response was "I don't want to pay that greasy Mexican all that money!"

Unsurprisingly, Peyser was appalled at the movie mogul's response and further distressed when McGraw was cast in the lead. "He couldn't act his way out of a hat", Peyser later commented. The combination of a less than enigmatic star and what Peyser described as "unbelievable, incredibly lousy scripts," left the director with the view that the series' fate was sealed before it even went in front of the cameras.

The supporting cast for *Casablanca,* the television series, were most notable for their close associations with the original movie. French actor Marcel Dalio was promoted from a croupier at Rick's Place to Police Captain Renaud, whilst Dan Seymour had lived with the tag "the young Sidney Greenstreet" before actually filling the big man's shoes for this version, and Clarence Muse finally got to play Sam after auditioning for the part but losing out to Dooley Wilson in 1942. The series also featured a guest first episode appearance by Anita Ekberg as an unnamed woman who many assumed to be Ilsa Laszlo. However, only 8 50-minute stories were made before the series was cancelled (thirteen of each movie adaptation had been planned, *Casablanca* fared better than *Kings Row* which only managed 5 -although *Cheyenne* ran for eight years).

This was one of three appearances on the small screen for *Casablanca*. In 1953 it had been made as a one-hour dramatisation on *The Phillip Morris Program,* although Warner's would not allow any recordings (kinescopes in those days) to be saved, and in 1983 producer David Wolper cast *Starsky and Hutch* star David Soul as Rick Blaine (the character's name in the movie), in an attempt to revive the format for NBC. The show folded after three episodes.

By borrowing from its own blockbuster movies, Warner Bros' efforts were greeted with mixed success in 1955. However, the company went on to produce dozens of hit programmes within a short space of time and eventually became one of the most important producers of TV series in America. You could say, it was the start of a beautiful friendship. **TVH**

The Big Routine: Jack Webb's Dragnet

by Nur Soliman

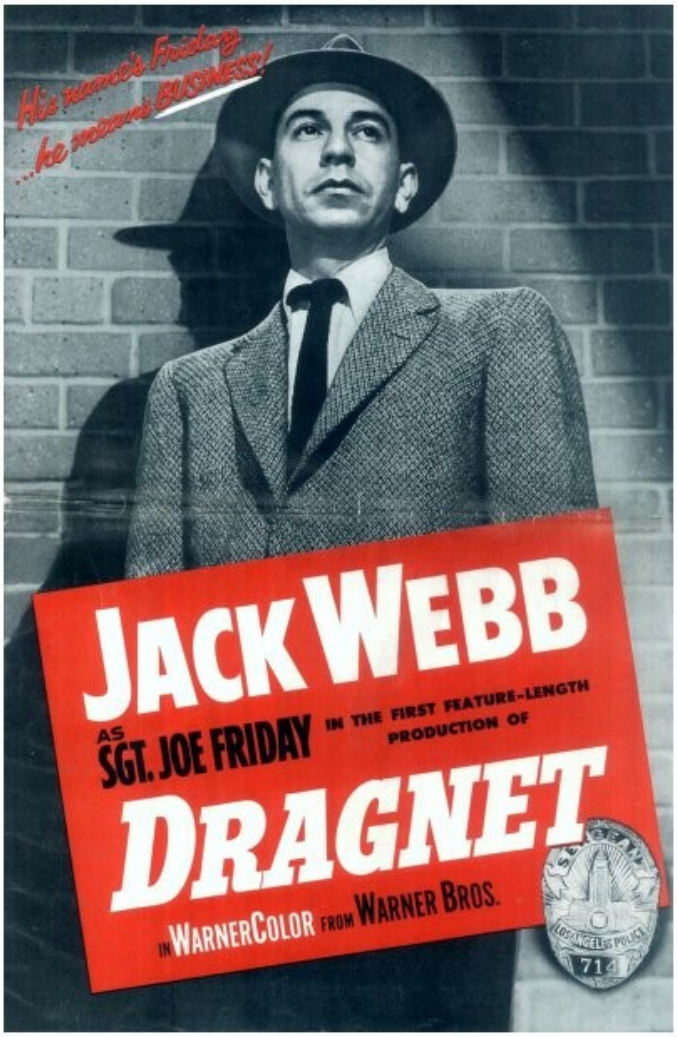
'The story you are about to hear is true. The names have been changed to protect the innocent.'

Reflecting on Jack Webb's *Dragnet* can seem like a master study of adaptation. From 1949 on, iterations of the police series made their mark on audiences, with iconic recurring elements like the ominous musical opening theme, Sgt. Joe Friday's matter-of-fact scene-setting introductions, and the unnerving mug-shot closing sequences. *Dragnet* became the ship that launched a thousand radio/TV 'procedurals' flooding the airwaves and permeating our cultural consciousness since.

Today, it can appear dull, dated, even unintentionally self-parodying, as the progressive Webb began to sound jarringly staid and conservative in a changing, conflicted era. If the format feels over-familiar it's likely because it was the first of its kind, but in a way *Dragnet* itself was conceived as an adaptation, after Webb befriended and spoke with Marty Wynn of the LAPD while filming that classic crime/police procedural noir *He Walked by Night* (1948). Webb found that even real-life 'dullness' had meaningful, storytelling potential and adopted a factual approach for his series; what he eventually produced became its own creature entirely.

The original franchise included two tele-film adaptations. Disappointingly, they didn't bring the successful film break Webb hoped for (what he ran with eventually ran away with him: the 1967 film reportedly got him to make the second TV series, beginning to tire the legendarily intense workhorse), and he only directed a handful of other (good) films before turning out popular series like *Adam-12* and *Emergency!* but I feel the *Dragnet* films allow us to enjoy Jack Webb at his almost-finest. They're imperfect and fall a little short, but they're also promising glimpses of what he might have been capable of with a little more experimentation, still fine complements to the old radio/TV episodes extant today.

Dragnet (1954)



This film feature (the first-ever theatrical film based on a television series) is essentially an extended TV episode, with Friday (Webb) and partner Frank Smith (Ben Alexander) investigating the gangland murder of a small-time bookie and ex-con. The Department has their eye on all the right hoodlums but are hard-pressed for substantial proof that would hold up for an indictment. The pressure builds up to breaking point between the detectives and their suspects who elude them at every turn. Plucky policewoman Grace Downey (Ann Robinson) finally obtains vital incriminating evidence, but is it too late?

It's a treat to see the series' hallmarks transferred as-is in higher production value and glorious colour, from the quick hardboiled dialogue and matching, alternating close-ups, to the obsessively linear book-procedure. The film also presents some interesting departures from Webb's usual formula. There's more in-depth exploration of plot akin to '30s/'40s crime films and novels. The ever-changing gallery of criminals, victims, and officers were usually drawn with some economy against the larger landscape of the weekly crime and Webb's beloved Los Angeles, which isn't actually the shortcoming it sounds like it is. Actors were usually discouraged from memorising their scripts (reading from cue-cards/TelePrompTers), which strangely enough results in restrained but realistic-feeling exchanges. But here we get to enjoy a little more from Webb's stock casts and go-to favourites, consistently distinguishable by their voices as well as faces. There are longer, lingering scenes with chief suspect Max Troy (whose delicate stomach condition might be borrowed from infamous mobster Mickey Cohen), superbly played by Stacy Harris, and stalwart character actor Virginia Gregg has a touching, inspired cameo as the victim's widow drowning her grief in drink – even the blank-slate straight-backed Friday reveals a new, uncharacteristically physical, side to his nature.

Webb also stretches his directorial wings with well-rewarded risk, venturing into new visual territory, with interesting plays on light, angles, and camera motion worth admiring, trademarks of a man who flourished finding his space in any medium. Other parts of the film don't hold up as well: the heavy-handed musical cues and schmaltzy archness are palatable, even endearing, in the half-hour segments; here they can seem comically over-serious. Most importantly, after a violently effective 'howcatchem' opening, the story slightly peters out, with more time than it knows how to occupy fully, saved by the ever-reliable structure covering all the avenues the force would have to diligently pursue. The film still sits very comfortably in the *Dragnet* universe though, a fascinating lens into the Webb world-view which means these pacing weaknesses are generally overlooked by the loyal viewer: it would just take more film-length features for Webb to tell a better film-length story.

The Big Dragnet (1967)

After ending the first television series, Webb may have hoped to return to the world of *Dragnet* in the form of occasional tele-films, but this second outing would end up slightly revised and embedded within the '60s TV series. *Dragnet* never shied away from tough themes, but this film has a particularly dark, lurid crime, as Friday and new partner Officer Bill Gannon (a pre-*M*A*S*H* Harry Morgan) painstakingly trace the fate of four missing women who fall victim to a depraved 'Lonely Hearts' killer (also mostly based on a real-life case). The detectives seem to go in circles for a while, thoroughly sorting through conflicting descriptions, conscientiously pursuing clues and leads that go nowhere, even solving another unfortunate murder on the way, before the trail culminates in a confrontation. This stand-off, between scads of squad cars and an unstable trailer on a muddy precipice (in a rainstorm at night, no less), is perhaps one of Webb's greatest dramatic scenes across *Dragnet*, but the key of the case would still come afterwards, just part of regular routine.

Here too, familiar faces, guiding voice-over, linear structure, brisk dialogue and close-ups, plus the sometimes-sentimental sombreness and drab celadon-green interiors that would feature more often in the '60s series. But this film feels a lot more like a feature: the trademarks are still there but they become a secondary framework for creative, artistically engaging direction, richer character-focused moments, accommodating more atmosphere, suspense, mystery, even action over the clipped-pace accuracy that *Dragnet* typically relied on. There's even humour, one of the great saving graces of the film (and the ensuing series), and it's all down to Morgan.

Ever since the show got its start on radio, Sgt. Friday's partners like Romero and Smith provided much-needed human warmth and gentle comic relief to the grimness of *Dragnet*. They were usually kindly married or family men, gentle hypochondriac types with mild, endearing quirks who took a brotherly interest in looking out for Friday who was by contrast a serious altar-boy bachelor with virtually no real personal traits or private life to speak of. If the cool, laconic Friday hardly found anything to smile at in his daily battle against the onslaught of urban crime, there was always something about tonic salt water, odd lunch combinations, or family advice that he could at least wearily humour, moments that would betray Friday's soft vulnerable heart. The disarmingly good-natured presence of Morgan's Gannon did this often (starting in this film with ill-fitting dentures and ulcers that are eventually cured by Pismo clams of all things) – and good thing too, considering Friday would grow even more cynical with the way of the world as the series went on.

'It wasn't brilliant detection, just routine work.'

These words aren't from *Dragnet* but *Fabian of the Yard*, a 1954 British TV series dramatising cases of the real-life Detective Superintendent Robert Fabian (who closes an episode with this endearingly humble reassurance). *Dragnet* was so ground-breaking and distinctive in its approach that it influenced *Fabian* as well as Ed McBain's *87th Precinct*, *NYPD Blue*, *Law & Order,* John Creasey's *Gideon's Way*, even certain Western serials and WWII hero anthologies, so far-reaching and natural-seeming is its impact that it survives mostly in imitations.

If it started out as such a glowing innovation however, the last main reincarnation in 1967 would sometimes feel alternately anachronistic, pedantic, or defensive. Elsewhere, TV entertainment was introducing more nuanced irony, camp self-awareness: maximalist, embellished theatres of character and colour. Not so *Dragnet*, as serious as the post-Depression, post-war noirs it came from, Webb still carrying all the same lessons in economy and conventions in storytelling he adopted as a younger man. With solid scripts that in true B-movie style showed and didn't tell (even the dialogue showed more than it told), he relied on the same quotidian foundation from which his pageant on humanity emerged, doggedly devoted to portraying the men and women he believed lived to protect others.

His creative strength was perhaps eclipsed by his more old-fashioned sensibilities as well as his ongoing struggles within the network system and industry as a whole, but I'd argue that Jack Webb's visions makes him one of the greatest, earliest *auteurs* comparable to better-remembered/stronger successes like Sterling or Spelling. Now perhaps an under-sung, 'underplaying' pioneer, Webb left behind an individual, resonant oeuvre, a media legacy as complex as its creator: a man who looked at 'brilliance' and 'routine,' and found he could make radio/TV alchemy with a little of both. **TVH**

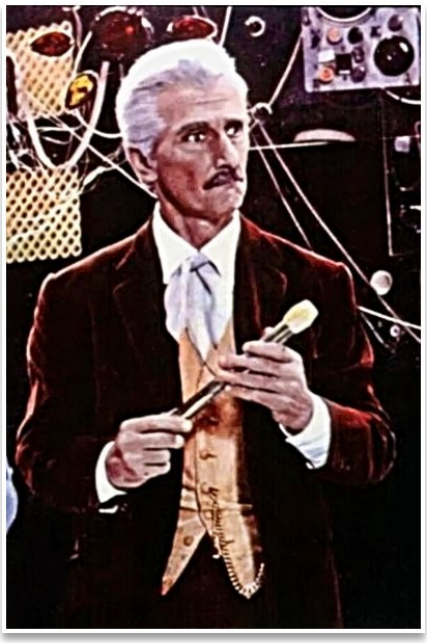
Doctor Who? The '60s Dalek Movies

by Daniel Tessier

"Dr. Who is not a mysterious, somewhat sinister alien, but a genial old human gent with a passion for invention."

The two 1960s Dalek movies have always occupied a strange place in the hearts of *Doctor Who* fans. Repeated endlessly on television over the years since their cinematic release, the films were far more widely seen by the general public than any of the original television serials for a good many years, most casual viewers probably don't realise that these two features do not form part of the 'true' *Doctor Who* at all. For hardcore fans, the distinction is obvious and vital, and many refuse to see the movies as anything other than a cheap substitute. Now, the movies may not form part of the main continuity, but they're both good slices of fun, family science-fiction entertainment, and that's what *Doctor Who* is all about.

The films were produced by Milton Subotsky and Max Rosenberg for Aaru Productions, a division of their production company Amicus – the horror studio that wasn't Hammer. They had purchased the option to make cinema version of the two first two Dalek serials from Terry Nation and the BBC for the princely sum of £500. 1965's *Dr. Who and the Daleks*, based on the first Dalek serial (most commonly just called "*The Daleks*") has the distinction of being the first production to feature someone other than William Hartnell in the role of the Doctor. Peter Cushing is Dr. Who, and it's difficult, with so many regenerations having gone by, to realise how big a deal this is. The movie version is stating from the off that this is a new production, and not part of the series. The differences are immediate and obvious: instead of the familiar swirling visuals and the classic Who theme, we get a typically jaunty tune on a coloured background, that could have come from just about any British film of the 1960s. As we open on the Whos (yes, their name actually is Who in this one!), it's clear that we're in for a much more light-hearted affair than the original serial. We see Dr. Who reading a copy of *The Eagle*, while his granddaughters, Susan and Barbara, are flicking through science texts. Before long, Ian has come along, ready to take Barbara out on a date. This isn't the crew we know...



Taking the four characters one a time, it's amazing how different they are to their television counterparts. Dr. Who is not a mysterious, somewhat sinister alien, but a genial old human gent with a passion for invention. Cushing, best known for his Hammer roles including Sherlock Holmes, Frankenstein and Van Helsing, plays him with an absent-minded amiability. If there's any version of the Time Lord he's like, it's Sylvester McCoy in his rather juvenile first season. Dr. Who is dressed in Edwardian-styled clothes, not because he travels in time and picks up his habits from various eras, but because he's quirky and eccentric (something he shares with Cushing, who frequently dressed like this, and often took his period costumes home with him from productions). Doddering about with his knees bent in an attempt to simulate old age, it's by no means a subtle performance, but it's certainly a charming one.

Susan, or Suzie as she's more often referred to, is considerably younger than her television counterpart. Played by twelve-year-old Roberta Tovey, she's something of a child prodigy, able to understand the workings of her grandfather's time machine and continually racing off into potentially dangerous situations. Unlike her alter ego, however, she doesn't continually fall over, sprain her ankle, or squeal and sob at the slightest provocation. This small human girl is actually are far more resourceful and believable character than the alien Susan ever was!

Barbara, who is played by Jennie Linden (Hammer's Nightmare), is also considerably divorced from her television counterpart. Rather than her uptight schoolteacher, this version of Barbara is Suzie's elder sister, a hip(ish) eighteen year-old with only a passing interest in the Who family's scientific endeavours. Other than this, though, she's pretty slimly characterised; even her fondness for Ian seems to vanish after the first quarter of the film. Ian is easily the character most different from his small-screen forbearer. Brought in entirely as comic relief, he's well-meaning, brave but amusingly clumsy. Roy Castle (legendary singer, dancer, actor and presenter) puts a pratfall into almost every action that he performs, and this can become very wearying, but he does imbue the character with considerable charm, and you're rooting for him all the way through (and he never even gets a proper snog off Babs!)

The TARDIS is present and mostly correct, but one has to ask why? Copying it wholesale from the BBC television series, the producers seem to have forgotten that the ship was in disguise as a police box and got stuck in that shape. Here, however, the TARDIS, or just "*Tardis*", as it is known, is police box-shaped for no readily apparent reason. The interior is equally baffling; it's all very intriguing, but if anyone actually tried to operate the thing they would most likely trip over several loose wires and break a limb on the way down. However, at least the exterior and interior doors line up – something that didn't happen on television until 2005!

"Daleks are wisely kept as the vindictive, scheming monsters of old."

The story itself stands up very well even now. In fact, it's an improvement on the original in terms of pacing. Truncated from the seven-part serial into a single feature, it loses the drag of the original. Of course, the original was never intended to be viewed in one sitting, whereas this movie is. Still, you have to admire Milton Subotsky (and David Whitaker, who worked upon it, uncredited) for turning the serial into a fast paced and fun romp without losing any of the key elements. We're onto the planet Skaro in a trice, with the early explorations played out more slowly, really allowing the creepiness to build.

Admittedly, the petrified forest, although impressively created within a vast set that actually looks like a forest (a Who rarity), loses some of the chilling atmosphere of the black and white original. Once we're into the Dalek city, after a replacement fluid link (the Doctor – sorry, I mean Dr. Who – having lied about the damage to the original as an excuse to explore), things pick up the pace considerably. The city is another very impressive piece of work, entirely plastic (a first in the relatively low-tech 1960s), although the addition of drapes and lava lamps hints at a previously unexpected love of interior design in the Dalek psyche.

The Daleks themselves are equally impressive. Although the film is of a lighter tone than the original, the Daleks are wisely kept as the vindictive, scheming monsters of old. Although larger, more colourful and fitted with fire extinguishers in place of ray guns, they retain their menace, and their voices are powerful and alarming. The Dalek mutant, seen here fleetingly in a clone of the original serial's most famous set piece, in which the mutant is evicted from its travel machine, is chilling – a slimy, green claw slithers out from beneath a cloak, leaving our imaginations to do the rest. The peaceful, humanoid Thals, too, are well realised. Although absurdly made-up, and looking a touch 1980s as a result, their simple two-piece outfits are a great improvement on the bizarre plastic body suits of the original. They are given relatively little time on screen, far more attention being paid to their Dalek cousins, but are generally played convincingly. The final battle is stirring stuff, a tremendous set piece by 1960s Brit standards that still holds up very well. It isn't long before the travellers set for home, ending the film on a sadly rather naff note when they materialise in the midst of some stock footage of Roman legionaries.

The second of Aaru's Dalek movies, 1966's *Daleks: Invasion Earth 2150 AD*, is generally regarded as superior to the first, although in my opinion it's actually a slightly weaker effort. Based on the serial *The Dalek Invasion of Earth*, it's an entirely Earth-based adventure. Peter Cushing and Roberta Tovey return as Dr. Who and his granddaughter Susan, however, Ian and Barbara are replaced by new characters. Foxy posh actress Jill Curzon (*Smokescreen*) plays Dr. Who's niece Louise, who is basically the same as the first film's Barbara with less to do. Comedy and kid's TV legend Bernard Cribbins, long before his appearance as Wilf on the BBC's revived *Doctor Who*, plays Tom Campbell (a vague recollection of the original serial's heroic David Campbell). Tom is a bumbling but well-meaning police officer, fulfilling the comic relief / hero role that Ian has left vacant. Cribbins performs very well given the fairly limited part; Curzon, however, is pretty wooden – not that she has a great deal to work with either. The returning Whos are more impressive - Peter Cushing actually gives a superior performance to his first, toning down the old man whimsy and making the character a good deal more intense (he's still not a patch on Hartnell, though), and Tovey remains impressive and likeable as young Susan, despite spending much of this film being carried around with a twisted ankle.

Starting in an unusual but very effective manner, the film introduces Tom as our viewpoint character, failing to stop a jeweller's shop heist. The moment when he spots a police box on the corner supplies the tingle that we need, knowing that the adventure is about to begin. Stumbling into the apparent police box, he is confronted by the Who family. TARDIS now boasts a redesigned interior, far more plausible and practical than the mish-mash of the first film, but still nowhere near as effective as the televisual control room.

After a bland title sequence (with at least an attempt at the swirling visuals of the television series, even if they fail miserably), we're straight into the main adventure, materialising in the desolate London of 2150. Disappointingly, the images of a derelict city seen here are no match for those of the original television serial. It looks like a set, and not a particularly impressive one, either – a shame after the excellent sets of the first movie. Whereas The Dalek Invasion of Earth television serial could make its viewers believe that this really was a ruined London, despite its painted backdrops, *Daleks: Invasion Earth 2150 AD* fails to convince at all, in spite of the greatly increased budget. The numerous billboards promoting Sugar Puffs don't help – they intrude appallingly upon the atmosphere in a dreadful example of early product placement.

"Whereas the original serial showed the true horror of robotisation...here we have a comedy skit with plenty of slapstick, silly music and naff robot acting"

Where the design does work, however, is in the portrayal of both the Dalek spacecraft and their Robomen servants. The former, the "flying saucer" as Tom describes it, is a wonderfully retro bit of space hardware and, while it doesn't look menacing in any way, it does at least look like a spaceship – a far cry from the pie tins of the original! The Robomen are similarly improved, both in design and the actors' delivery of the robotised lines. They actually come across as a potential threat, not as a bunch of somnambulistic no-hopers – no doubt their impressive guns help.

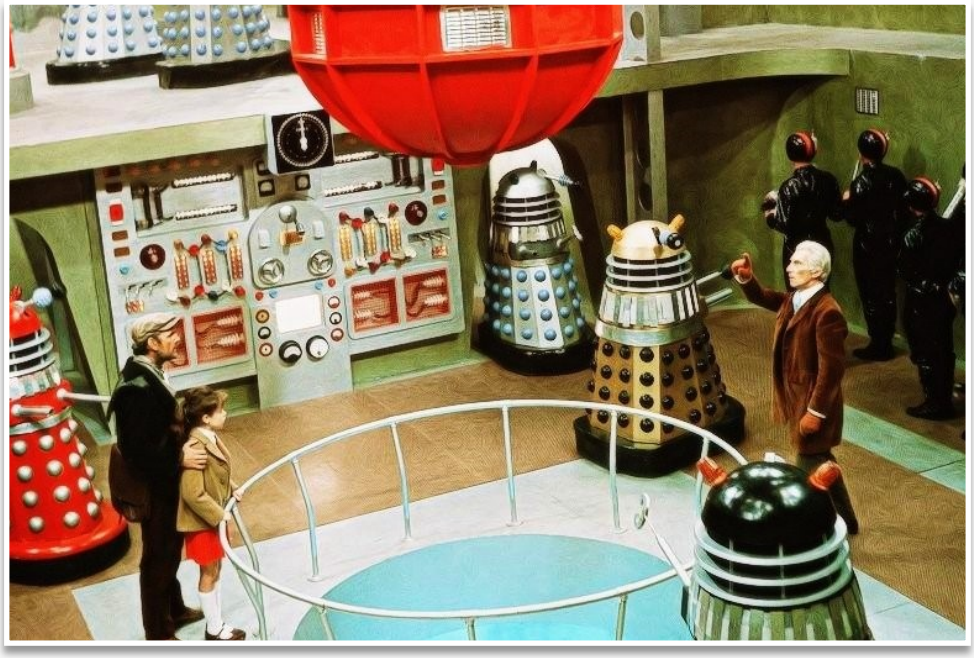
Like the first film, this production tries to use its original blueprint as a source of impressive set pieces. Sadly though, they don't all come out particularly well. The first of note, the Dalek emerging from the Thames, is over with so quickly there's barely time to notice it; whereas the original was an effective, tense cliffhanger, this version is simply a prop in a pond. The plot develops much as expected; a streamlined version of the televised original. While Louise and Suzie are taken in by the resistance (including movie Quatermass Andrew Keir as an impressively gruff and hardened Wyler), Dr. Who and Tom are captured by Daleks and sent for robotisation. We are quickly at the resistance's attack of the Dalek ship, but this is undermined both by the design of the ship's interior – again, too clearly a rather small set – and the terribly naff attempt at 'exciting' music that dogs the soundtrack. Nevertheless, the Daleks are damnably impressive when they finally arrive en masse, massacring the majority of the rebel army.

We then get an interminable chase scene, in which the survivors of the massacre, Wyler, David, Tom and Dr. Who, flee in their separate ways. Wyler's struggle across London, hiding from Daleks in darkened alleys, is effective, but as for Tom's attempt to hide in the saucer… one asks 'why?' We then get a drawn-out scene in which Tom pretends to be a Roboman. Whereas the original serial showed the true horror of robotisation, when a rebel fighter was forced to take down his own processed brother, here we have a comedy skit with plenty of slapstick, silly music and naff robot acting, which is far too long and, crucially, not very funny.

David and the Doctor escape into the sewers. David's a pretty shallow characterisation in this version, and it seems odd that a movie version would scrap the romantic subplot – it's usually the reverse in an adaptation of this kind. Naturally, Susan is far too young to be the recipient of his affections in this version, but Louise could have been substituted. It would have been a chance to give both characters some much-needed depth.

Things improve greatly in the film's second half. Without dwelling too much on an already well-known plot, we're given a far faster-paced, grittier portrayal of life under the Daleks, with some highly-effective location filming taking place of the endless set work. Keir and Tovey are particularly good together as they make their way over countryside (had a third movie been made, when Patrick Troughton had taken over the television series, Keir, in more of a Quatermassy style, would have been an excellent movie Doctor). Philip Madoc, a familiar face from 1960s and 1970s television including *Doctor Who*, makes an appearance as a sinister smuggler, and events move quickly on, with the leads reunited in time for the final incursion into the Daleks' mothership.

Keeping the television serial's wonderfully batty idea that the Daleks plan to remove the Earth's core and to replace it with a motor, in order to turn the planet into a vast spaceship, the movie takes this a step further, using the magnetic properties of the Earth to defeat the Daleks. The sequence of Tom going down the mine shaft is much more impressive and convincing than Ian's turn on television, and the sight of Daleks being pulled backwards up ramps and crashing through walls is one of the few genuinely amusing images in the film. Altogether, the film just about succeeds, with the second half considerably more involving than the first, although the final moments do feature an act by Dr. Who that his Time Lord counterpart would never approve of, as he drops Tom back a few moments early to foil the opening minutes' heist. It's a fun adventure, altogether, and while it's a slicker affair than the first film, it loses something along the way. The gritty setting (by kids' movie standards) just isn't as fun as the luminous outer space nonsense of the first film.



Both of the Dalek movies were hits, coasting on the wave of Dalekmania that swept Britain in the mid-sixties, and *Dr. Who and the Daleks* was the best performing British film of 1965. *Daleks: Invasion Earth* didn't do as well as its predecessor though; on television, the Doctor had just survived the twelve-week escapade *The Dalek Invasion of Earth*, and it's entirely likely the British public were a little Dalek'd out. Since the budget for the second film was considerably more than the first, and its takings much lower, the odds of a third film were unlikely. Neither film had made an impact on the American market either; without a television series in the US to back them up, the films were trying to break an unprepared and unreceptive audience. Preliminary plans for a third Dalek film (most likely based on the Nation's third serial, *The Chase*) were shelved. Over the years, many attempts have been made to bring *Doctor Who* back to the cinema, the closest run being in the 1990s, which eventually ended up as the 1996 TV movie starring Paul McGann. For the fiftieth anniversary of the series, the feature length special *The Day of the Doctor* was simulcast in cinemas worldwide, by far *Doctor Who's* biggest cinematic event. This was followed up a year later with the cinema broadcast of "*Deep Breath*," the first episode to star Peter Capaldi as the Doctor.

Strangely enough, the closest thing to a third "Dr. Who" movie is *At the Earth's Core*, a 1976 adaptation of the 1914 novel by Edgar Rice Burroughs. Produced as a follow-up to 1974's *The Land That Time Forgot*, it was Subotsky's last film for Amicus, and featured Cushing as one Dr. Abner Perry. Barely ever referred to as anything other than Doctor, Cushing's character is virtually identical to his Dr. Who. It's just a step away from being the third Dr. Who film, just with dinosaurs and pterodactyl men instead of Daleks. It was even shown in a double-bill with *Dr. Who and the Daleks*. **TVH**

Callan at the Movies

by John Winterson Richards

Like many great many television shows, *Callan* owes its inception to feature films. Unlike most, it seems to have an enduring influence on cinema.

For all their obvious differences, David Callan is a direct descendant of James Bond. In *Doctor No*, an effectively unarmed man is killed in very cold blood by a man who knows his victim has no bullets in his gun, talking to him about it first for a few seconds, making it clear that he knows he is helpless, taunting him, prolonging the moment of his inevitable death - and never showing the slightest hint of remorse, then or at any other point in the film. This is the action of a borderline sadist or psychopath, and the shocking thing to audiences in 1962 is that it was also the action of the hero, Bond himself.

While it is true that the victim was himself responsible for the murder of Bond's friends, the idea that the pitiless State executioner was a protagonist with whom we were meant to sympathise went against almost the whole tradition of cinema until that point. It was always the villain who gloated over his victim and then killed without mercy.

James Mitchell, who wrote *Callan*, seems to have been struck by this notion that the State might sometimes employ such a man in peacetime - the 1962 audience understood better than today's that such things happen in war - but he took it a stage further by asking if he could really just walk away from what he did without any psychological consequences.

Bond also had an indirect influence, in that his transformation of the spy from a seedy figure in the shadows to a glamorous "superagent" of almost unlimited competence - prompting a tidal wave of "superagent" shows on 1960s television such as *The Avengers* and *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* - provoked a realist reaction of which *Callan* was later part.

That reaction started very quickly in the cinema, in 1965 when two films came out that seemed determined to debunk Bond and which influenced *Callan* even more than 007 did.

The first was Sidney J Furie's adaptation of Len Deighton's novel *The Ipcress File*, with Michael Caine as the protagonist, unnamed in the book, called "Harry Palmer" in the film. The public school educated "gentleman" Bond was replaced by a Cockney chancer, and the secret service was revealed as a particularly petty bureaucracy run on a tight budget.

It is not difficult to spot similarities between Harry Palmer and David Callan. Both are working class, intelligent far beyond their formal education. Both have tainted military service records as NCOs and criminal records. Both are reluctant members of the secret service.

There are also many points of similarity between the film and the television show. Both adopt a downbeat style and a subtext of class conflict. Both emphasise the squalor and bureaucracy of professional espionage. Both have discordant modern jazz themes expressive of the urban thriller. Curiously, the theme from *Callan* by Jack Trombey - the familiar alias of Netherlands composer Jan Stoeckart - who also wrote *'Eye Level,'* the theme from *Van der Valk*, was later released under the title *'This Man Alone,'* which seems to reference *'A Man Alone,'* the title of a major theme from John Barry's score for *The Ipcress File*.

The film and the television show even have the same plot at one point: in the highly rated second season finale of the show, *'Death of a Hunter,'* Callan is brainwashed as Palmer was in *The Ipcress File*. Both Palmer and Callan get to live out the working class dream of shooting the boss - even if in both cases it is not the boss they might have preferred to shoot.

There is, however, a huge difference between Palmer and Callan. From start to finish, Harry Palmer is unreservedly a hugely likeable character. He is cheerful, entrepreneurial, and aspirational. He has a developed taste for the good things in life, notably gourmet cooking, clothes, and Classical music. Above all, while he is competent when violent situations are forced on him, he recoils at the idea of killing to order - the sort of thing which is Callan's bread and butter.

The second of the 1965 anti-Bond films, *The Spy Who Came in From the Cold,* based on the novel by David Cornwell writing as John le Carre, went a stage further by taking away this likeability from its protagonist and increasing the seediness quotient even more. Richard Burton, in arguably his best big screen performance, is totally convincing as the self-hating Alec Leamas, a man who does not seem to care how he hurts innocent people and endangers the life of a naïve young woman in order to engineer the death of a man he rather likes - except, in the end, fatally, he does care.

It is a deeply corrosive film - and never feels anything less than wholly authentic. Cornwell had first hand experience of the people about whom he wrote and it comes across as true even now, despite the author's claim that he only got clearance to publish because it was not.

David Callan is therefore basically Palmer without the amiability, but with Bond's propensity for homicide and Leamas' ruthlessness, seediness, and self-hatred. He lives in a world somewhere between Palmer's and Leamas,' except with one radical innovation...

Where the secret services of Bond, Palmer, and Leamas use subversive methods such as blackmail and, on occasion, assassination at need as standard tools of the trade, James Mitchell proposed the existence of a specialist section dedicated to them.

To a 1960s audience, that was as much a fantasy as anything in Bond. It is perhaps difficult to convey these days, when cynicism and paranoia about the State are almost universal, how naïve and trusting most people were back then. Of course, there were a lot of people around who had taken an active role in the Second World War, and in the rather messy winding up of the British Empire - not least in Malaya, where the young Callan got his hands dirty - and they were under no illusions about the nastiness that was often perpetrated in the name of Queen and Country, but even they seem to have assumed that, at home and in peacetime, Britain was still a land of laws, decency, and fair play.

If few would make the same assumption today, it is only because we have the advantage of the knowledge of dozens of major scandals that were still in the future in 1967 when Callan was first shown. It was Watergate, and the subsequent Church Committee investigations into the CIA, that changed everything. Americans, understandably, became more suspicious of their own Government and their changed attitudes crossed the Atlantic via Hollywood conspiracy thrillers.

Britons then began to look more critically at their own secret State, and since then it has provided ample justification for them doing so, from the Churchill Matrix "arms to Iraq" scandal to the "dodgy dossier" that served as a pretext for British participation in the Second Iraq War. All this is reflected in a growing tradition of British conspiracy thrillers, from *Edge of Darkness* to *Killing Eve*. We now take it for granted that our "security" services are up to no good in the name of keeping us safe.

Mitchell was therefore well ahead of his time, and was to a certain extent swimming against the tide. The very idea of "the Section" seemed unbelievable to most people then. Only now do we know that he was only exaggerating, and not by that much.

Callan debuted in *A Magnum for Schneider,* a freestanding one hour play in the long running *Armchair Theatre*. This was in effect what would now be called a "pilot." A full season of six episodes had already been commissioned and was shown a few months later. They did not hang about in those days.

Three more seasons followed over the next five years, with longer than usual gaps due to the other commitments of its in-demand star, Edward Woodward. The first two seasons were filmed in black and white: sadly, ten of their twenty one episodes are now missing, presumed wiped, and the picture quality of the survivors is variable. The last two seasons were made in colour and are happily intact.

The plot of *A Magnum for Schneider* is of particular interest because it contains elements that recur time and time again in Mitchell's subsequent dealings with Callan. A jaded and disillusioned Callan is out of "the Section" but is offered the chance to come back in if he murders a man he comes to like after they bond over a mutual interest in wargames and militaria.

Although *'The Good Ones Are All Dead,'* the first regular episode of the series proper, is a direct sequel to *A Magnum for Schneider,* and references it specifically, in many ways it feels like a remake. The difference is that Callan's mission this time is to keep his victim alive and they do not bond over a shared interest. Instead, Callan develops a strange sympathy based on his own wish that he could leave his past behind him. In the end it is the reverse of *A Magnum for Schneider*, but Mitchell is clearly playing variations on the same theme.

Mitchell also returned that to theme when he issued a faithful novelisation of *A Magnum for Schneider* in 1969 as *'Red File for Callan.'* A superior example of the genre, it was in turn adapted into a full feature film, also titled simply *Callan*, in 1974, two years after the series ended.

Watching the two, it is astonishing how closely the filmscript follows the original *Armchair Theatre* teleplay. This really should not be so surprising, given that the novel is a faithful adaptation of the play and the film a faithful adaptation of the novel. Even so, the main sequence of events is basically the same, as is much of the dialogue.

The main difference in the dialogue is that it sometimes seems to reference events in the series. Yet there are inconsistencies in this, allegedly for legal reasons. For example, the shady psychiatrist Snell (Clifford Rose) is introduced as if Callan did not know him.

The differences in the sequence of events are relatively minor inserts to open up the story a bit for cinematic purposes. The most memorable is a particularly well staged car chase sequence - director Don Sharp really knew his business there, so one can forgive the fact that the pretext does not stand up to scrutiny. An extended subplot about the acquisition of a magnum enables Callan to show off his unarmed combat skills, and its consequences provide a convenient excuse for the terrifying cameo by Rose, who steals his scenes effortlessly. They really add nothing to what is really a thin story, suitable for a one hour play rather than a trip to the cinema.

There are some nice exteriors of London in the early 1970s, and one of them is used very cleverly to show how to spot and ditch a tail. In general, however, the production values, while far superior to those of the television series, would not pass muster today in episodic drama, never mind the big screen. It was a notoriously bad time for the British film industry, and budgetary constraints are obvious. It also must be said that 1970s notions of style and glamour have not aged well.

Some money was evidently splashed out on a strong cast, including Carl Mohner, Catherine Schell, Eric Porter, Peter Egan, Kenneth Griffith, Nadim Sawalha, Dave Prowse, and Don Henderson in a small supporting role. Even this was not necessarily to its advantage: although Porter and Egan both give fine performances, one rather misses William Squire and Anthony Valentine in their respective roles as Hunter and Meres. Apart from Woodward and Rose, the only thing the film cast has in common with the series is Russell Hunter as Callan's fixer "Lonely" - because he is simply irreplaceable.

The film had a polite reception, but it was obviously never going to crack the American market and it did not do well enough commercially to launch a film franchise - a concept that was in any case then out of fashion.

Instead Callan had a rather undignified ending in the form of a distinctly odd "television movie" called *Wet Job* in 1981. One might think the title appropriate in more ways than one.

It is obviously intended as another of Mitchell's variations on his theme in *A Magnum for Schneider*. Callan is again out of "the Section," except this time he seems happy about it and has to be blackmailed, rather unconvincingly, to do the traditional "one last job." Again, he meets his prospective victim, played by George Sewell, through his interest in militaria - he is now running a somewhat dodgy looking shop where the man just happens to turn up - but they never bond, or indeed develop much of a relationship of any sort.

There are some good things in *Wet Job*. Above all, there is a nostalgic delight in seeing Callan and Lonely reunited one last time. Lonely has an unexpected new business, the name of which may raise a smile, and it is pleasant to see him given a happy ending after years of abuse - not least by Callan.

However, the director seems to have been under the impression that he was directing an Alan Ayckbourn play rather than an action thriller, the soundtrack is intrusive, and, it has to be admitted, the seven years since the film had made a big difference to Woodward. In 1974, he still looked like a hard young man, but by 1981 he was distinctly middle aged, halfway to his avuncular character in *Common As Muck*.

The fifth retread of Mitchell's *A Magnum for Schneider* plot - play, episode, novel, film, and TV movie - was therefore one too many, and any thoughts of extending the franchise ended with it.

The real legacy of *Callan* was already being established elsewhere. In those American conspiracy thrillers, the Callanesque ruthless but conflicted State sponsored assassin was already becoming something of a trope. In Sydney Pollack's 1975 *Three Days of the Condor*, the contract killer Joubert - a masterly performance by the great Max von Sydow - is shown relaxing by painting a model soldier, a direct reference to Callan's favourite pastime.

Incidentally, Callan's interest in wargames and military modelling was shared by Woodward himself, who became something of a "cult" figure in his own right in wargaming and modelling circles during the 1970s.

Since wargaming was a very expensive hobby in its pre-computer days, Woodward still had to earn a living to pay for his model soldiers. Although his film roles, most impressively *Breaker Morant*, tended to attract high praise, he never became the big movie star many assumed that he would. This is probably why he accepted *Wet Job*, but its predictable failure to relaunch the franchise left him with limited options in his homeland.

So he crossed the Atlantic to considerable commercial success with *The Equalizer*, one of the first examples of what is now a huge subgenre of "black ops" specialists trying to build a new life. In many ways Robert McCall, the hero of *The Equalizer* is an older, more stylish Callan, Americanised and sanitised for major US network consumption.

Very much a product of its time, *The Equalizer* was a smoothly produced show, far more polished than *Callan*. It earned Woodward some serious American money, a Golden Globe, and four Emmy nominations. A prophet is not without honour except in his own land.

For *Callan* was beginning to look prophetic. Mitchell's invention of a "dirty tricks department" may have seemed like fantasy in the 1960s, but it was accepted as fact by 1980s audiences watching Iran-Contra unfold. They might have been a bit premature, because the astonishing thing about Iran-Contra in retrospect is how amateur it was.

That has now changed. Ironically it was in the aftermath of the Cold War, and its replacement by asymmetrical warfare, that "black ops" became more official. The War on Terror turned into *Callan* on an industrial scale. The United States military alone is estimated to have over 60,000 people employed in various special operations roles, in addition to the CIA's paramilitary Special Activities, the DIA's battalion sized Clandestine Service, and private military contractors.

There are therefore thousands of real life Callans and McCalls out there, and not a few on film and television. The *Taken* films are a good example, and the cinematic rebooting of *The Equalizer* with Denzel Washington is obviously an even more direct descendant. The subgenre is now so well established that it includes satires of itself such as *RED*.

There is a generally accepted basic pattern. The retired "black ops" specialist wants to put his past behind him, but finds that his special skills are still useful - because he needs to earn a living or because bad people intrude on his peace or simply because there is nothing else he can really do.

He usually has flashes of guilt to make him more sympathetic, but they never get in the way of his turning into a remorseless killing machine when required. His former employers, if seen, are invariably ruthless and untrustworthy. As often as not, they are the bad people intruding on the hero's peace. Either way, he is never going to be allowed to enjoy that peace, because repentance does not mean escaping the consequences of the sins of the past. That seems to be the moral of all these projects. There really is no rest for the wicked.

It may be the defining story of our time, and it all began with a British television show over fifty years ago. So far it has rarely, perhaps never, been done better. **TVH**

Three of a Kind - The Films of Morecambe and Wise

by Brian Slade

When asked about Morecambe and Wise's greatest moments, most people will instantly recall encounters with Andre Previn, Shirley Bassey, Glenda Jackson or one of the boys' own song and dance routines. However, long before the BBC got hold of Eric and Ernie and paired them with writer Eddie Braben, the pair had been hugely successful with ATV in *Two of a Kind*. It was off the back of this success that Britain's finest double-act were given a three movie deal in the 1960s with Rank Organisation.

Rank had already struck gold using a British comedian with the chain of Norman Wisdom films released in the 50s and 60s. Across the two decades, Wisdom became one of the most popular box office draws for the company and so it was no surprise that they went on the hunt for further commercial success as Wisdom gradually wound down his movie adventures. Morecambe and Wise, having been written off as failures with their first series in the 1950s, the fortunately lost *Running Wild* had been given a second chance with ATV and the boys had grasped it with both hands. Under the expert writing of Sid Green and Dick Hills, their 1961 series – despite a few initial teething problems – established them as firm favourites and it was somewhat unexpectedly that *Two of a Kind* came to an end when the boys jumped ship for the BBC in 1968.

Ernie Wise had always dreamed of being a Hollywood movie star. He loved the big song and dance stars and wanted to be up there with them. Eric was of course more grounded in the domestic comedy scene, far more concerned about success on British TV than cracking Hollywood – Life's not Hollywood, it's Cricklewood as he often said. But when Rank came calling in 1964 looking for new talent, the pair were at the height of their ATV success and so it seemed like the perfect time to test their comedy on the big screen. Despite their stardom, these were the days when aside from television work, panto and summer seasons were the norm to supplement a performer's income and Morecambe and Wise were no different. Ernie would later write that the three films, '…should have turned out to be pleasant, leisurely interludes in our careers, a break from the predictable round of TV, variety and pantomime, and permanent records of our comic achievements.'

First of their movies was *The Intelligence Men* in 1965. Ernie is a nobody at MI5, while Eric works down the road in a flamenco café. It's here where Eric is mistaken for a Major Cavendish, a recently deceased MI5 agent, simply because the song he is humming is the same as a secret code agreed with the evil Schlecht agents. He's told to go to a reception at the nearby Cosmopolitan Hotel and MI5 agree that he should still go along with the intent of protecting a delegation from Russia. After an hour of the film the bad guys realise that the incompetent Eric is not the Major and therefore decide to kill him.

The movie got poor reviews but did moderately well at the box office. Its failings were two-fold. Firstly, the weak storyline. Despite using their TV writers Sid and Dick, the premise of the film is uninspiring and what we get is a selection of routines that had already been used on their shows, or would go on to be used at a later date, strung together to support the storyline. That could have been forgiven but for the second issue – the director and production team simply didn't know how best to capture Eric and Ernie at their best. Director Robert Asher had worked with Norman Wisdom in movies across seven years, but seemed to want to utilise Morecambe & Wise in a similar fashion. Nonsense slapstick, running up and down stairs at many times real pace are fine effects for Wisdom who was all about physical comedy, but a double act needed a different touch and the interplay between the pair was wasted.

The Intelligence Men may have been a miss with critics, but it did have enough to suggest that the subsequent films would improve. Routines such as Eric looking at one person while another talks, resulting in him saying, 'you said that without moving your lips', the attempt to tell the 'Two old men in deck chairs' joke, the efforts to outfox Ernie when using the trusted 'get out of that' gag all suggested better would follow.

The second movie was *That Riviera Touch* and it was definitely a step up. Eric and Ernie are traffic wardens who decide to urgently take a holiday on the French Riviera having tried to give the Queen a parking ticket. They are spotted as potential patsies at the airport by jewel thieves and are directed to an old stately home instead of their planned hotel. The first twenty minutes of the movie are convoluted as the bad guys seem to multiply to the point where it's hard to track exactly who Eric and Ernie are really trying to avoid. But things do improve. The pair again have television routines involved – short, fat and hairy is how Eric describes Ernie, as he would for most of their career, the 'two old men in deckchairs' joke reappears, and there are previews of the glorious counter melody sketch made most famous with Elton John as Ern' tries to teach Eric to mime to his singing when trying to woo a lady.

That Riviera Touch has a better feel to it, despite the confusing plot, and reviews of the time placed a great deal of the improvement down to the change of director, with Cliff Owen replacing Asher. Ernie sings the theme tune which was released as a single and there are less supporting players, keeping the boys far more of the focal point than they had been in the previous film. The movie also outperformed its predecessor at the box office.

The final movie of the three film deal was *The Magnificent Two*. The insistence on having the stars as a comic element in a crime or spy scenario did it no favours, and it ended up being a backwards step. Budget was low, allegedly less than one volcano set in the Bond film being filmed at the time. Eric and Ernie are toy salesmen who manage to become embroiled in a dictatorship, with Eric pretending to be the guerrilla leader, once again a character that had already met his demise. Still Eric manages to successfully oversee a revolution and become president, where his public-pleasing plans make him target of an assassination attempt. The sad reality is that *The Magnificent Two* missed its target. A huge amount of characters meet their demise, even though the movies was passed as a U certificate, and the scene most remember above all others was the scantily clad women charging across the terrain in only bikinis but armed with machine guns.

That the movies are not looked back on with five star reviews is almost inevitable, given the success that followed at the BBC. Their shows were unrivalled in critical appeal and viewing audience sizes and even now their popularity seems to show no signs of fading. The second was that the style of comedy needed for the movies just didn't suit what Morecambe and Wise were like at their best. So much of their humour is based around their banter aimed at the audience. The awkward looks at the camera, the looks into the stalls for the Ernie Wise fan club ('is he in tonight?') and the sometimes scripted but always hysterical adlibbing – these were elements always doomed to be lost in the movies. Eric later believed that they could have been successful on the big screen, but the writing and directing just hadn't been right.

Despite the perceived failings in the films, the reality is that when compared to a body of work as adored as theirs, Morecambe & Wise's movies are always going to struggle. But it doesn't make them bad films. The box office returns were very healthy: maybe not to the levels of Wisdom at his prime, but still enough to keep the accountants at Rank happy with their investment, modest though that was. Were it not for Eric's heart attack in 1968, there is no guarantee that they wouldn't have had another stab at film success, but then of course we would have been robbed of the glories of the 1970s comedy gold. But the Eric and Ernie movie adventures remain a fun reminder of the style of humour they had early in their television career, and surely any level of Morecambe & Wise still available to us should be cherished for the joy the pair brought us. **TVH**

The Real Ghostbusters

by Daniel Tessier

In 1984, *Ghostbusters* took cinema by storm. One of the first blockbusters, it successfully combined wry humour, sci-fi adventure and cutting-edge special effects in a way that no film had ever managed before. Although an adult comedy (very adult in some places), the film's spooky shenanigans made it a big hit with kids. Merchandising for films was still in its infancy (the huge merchandising machine that followed *Star Wars* being the main example at the time), but *Ghostbusters* was quick to capitalise on its unexpected family audience. A hurriedly completed home video game and two novelisations of the film had some success leading the merchandise wave, but it wasn't until 1986 when it truly became a winning franchise with the launch of an animated TV spin-off. Called *The Real Ghostbusters*, it remains one of the best kids' animated adventure series ever.

Today, animated kids' cash-ins to hit movies are common, even when the film itself was aimed at a an older audience. *The Real Ghostbusters*, though, was one of the first attempts to spin a film off into a cartoon world, and one of the most successful. Such spin-offs are commonly poorly written and often bear little resemblance to the film they are based on. *RGB*, as its handy abbreviation goes, was a series of a far higher quality than most, at least to begin with. The name of the series was a necessity of marketing. A legal dispute with Filmation – the animation studio behind *He-Man and the Masters of the Universe, The Adventures of Superboy* and the animated *Star Trek* – meant that the animated version couldn't exactly share the title of the film.

Filmation had produced a children's sitcom under the title *The Ghost Busters* in 1975, and Columbia Pictures had neglected to check if the name was available when they produced the *Ghostbusters* film. As such, they settled with Filmation to licence the name for a tidy sum, and Filmation immediately set about trying to ride the film's success by producing their own animated series based on the film. Columbia refused the rights, so Filmation just produced an animated follow-up to their old series, titled simply *Ghostbusters*. Columbia elected to work with the Franco-American animation studio DiC (hilariously marketed at the time as "The Wonderful World of DiC!"), but the legal wrangling over the name meant they had to distinguish their series from Filmation's efforts. The cheeky solution was to name their series *The Real Ghostbusters*, making it clear who's cartoon was the genuine follow-up to the film. In fairness to Filmation, their approach worked, and merchandise for their inferior series sold well off the back of the movie and *RGB*. I'm sure I wasn't the only child to receive toys and colouring books relating to the wrong Ghostbusters from well-meaning family members.

DiC's prior output included *Ulysses 31, The Mysterious Cities of Gold* and *Inspector Gadget*, fun and idiosyncratic animated shows released with both French and English audio. *RGB* was one of the studio's earliest tie-in productions, of which there would be many more over the coming years. In the case of *RGB*, audio recording and initial design was completed in LA, before being sent to DiC's Japanese extension and various Japanese animation studios, where the episodes were completed. The result is a definite anime style to the series, particularly the earlier episodes, and many of the weird and space-age sound effects continue to crop up in Japanese anime to this day.

The series began with a five-minute pilot, more of a promotional video, to illustrate the potential of the series. Never aired in full, this was finally released on the complete DVD collection in 2008, but elements of it made their way into the episodes and promotional material. The short cartoon sees the film's four Ghostbusters – Ray Stantz, Peter Venkman, Egon Spengler and Winston Zeddemore – battling various spooks around New York City as Ray Parker Jr's hit theme song plays. The pilot was more clearly based on the film, with the 'busters dressed in beige overalls and chasing a clearly villainous Slimer, and much of this would be tweaked for the eventual series.

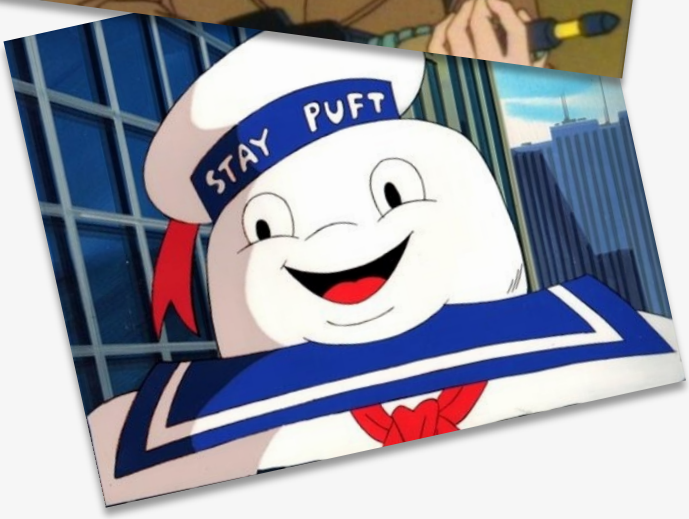
The series began airing in September 1986 (a mere five days after Filmation's show), kicking off a season of thirteen episodes. The set-up was much as in the film, with the four Ghostbusters working out of a firehouse, called out on jobs to catch ghosts as a commercial venture, but often having to save the city, or the whole world. They would hop in their trusty hearse, Ecto-1, armed with proton packs and ghost traps and all manner of gizmos just waiting to be made into toys. Episodes would often begin with the boys already finishing up on a routine bust, before the main events of the story started. Each Ghostbuster was designed to be distinctive and immediately recognisable, and none of them looked much like their live action counterpart. Ray was portly, ginger-haired and endlessly enthusiastic. Voiced by the legendary Frank Welker (too many credits to list, but you've heard his voice in many a film or cartoon), Ray had a childlike demeanour at odds with his mechanical genius. Egon was tall and thin, sporting an improbable blond quiff, and was a supreme intellect. Obsessed with his work and his collection of spores, moulds and fungus, and with limited social skills, he was voiced by the prolific Maurice LaMarche. Best known today as the voice of Brain on *The Animaniacs*, LaMarche completely disobeyed instructions to not do an impersonation of original film Egon actor Harold Ramis, and the character is easily the most like his live action alter ego.

The promo version of Peter looked rather like the original actor Bill Murray, but this was changed at the actor's request. The brown-haired Peter was now a more classically handsome charmer, and in the absence of his movie romantic interest Dana Barrett, tried to woo every attractive woman he encountered. Peter was voiced, initially, by Lorenzo Music, a writer and comedian who was by now already best known for his laconic voice work as *Garfield* the cat. Winston, the sole black character, needed less work to distinguish him from the other 'busters, and like in the film, was more of an everyman character, more worldly wise and practical than the others. Although Ernie Hudson auditioned to continue his role from the film, Winston was voiced to begin with by Arsenio Hall. This was something of a coup, as Hall was already a notable actor, writer and TV personality; by 1989, he'd have his own talk show, *The Arsenio Hall Show*. To further distinguish the characters, the Ghostbusters had ditched their old uniforms and each wore a jumpsuit in a signature colour: Ray still in beige, Egon in blue, Peter in brown and Winston in a pale turquoise.

Of course, there was more to it than just the Ghostbusters. As in the film, they were supported by their long-suffering secretary, Janine Melnitz. Voiced by Laura Summer, Janine was every bit the outspoken Noo Yoik broad she was in the film – perhaps even more so. She was still besotted with Egon, and the will-they/won't-they flirtation between them continued on-and-off through the series. And then there was Slimer. Every kids' series needs a cute, trouble-making sidekick, and *RGB* was no different. The green ghost was the Ghostbusters' first successful catch had become one of the most recognisable visuals of the film. Between the promo pilot and the series proper, the decision was made to make this minor villain into a hero. He was named Slimer (the film script preferred "Onionhead") and became the mascot of the team, ostensibly kept around for tests. Also voiced by Welker (as were numerous other creatures throughout the series), Slimer was every bit the gluttonous hooligan he was in the film, but he was also firmly on the side of the 'busters.

As with most kids' animations, the main cast provided voices for multiple characters, but guest voices weren't unheard of. Unusually, the voice cast always recorded together in studio, rather than being edited together later. The series was visually arresting – absolute heaven for small children with a liking for the weird, gross and macabre. From the opening titles alone (with its new arrangement of the theme song) we had a legion of bizarre goblins and ghouls, headed by the Stay Puft Marshmallow Man himself, and it only got stranger in the episodes. While sometimes we'd meet spirits that could recognisably be called ghosts, most of the spooks in the show went with the sort of odd creatures that appeared in the film and upped the strangeness from there. The majority were designed by cartoonist Everett Peck, and my word, something strange was afoot in that man's imagination.

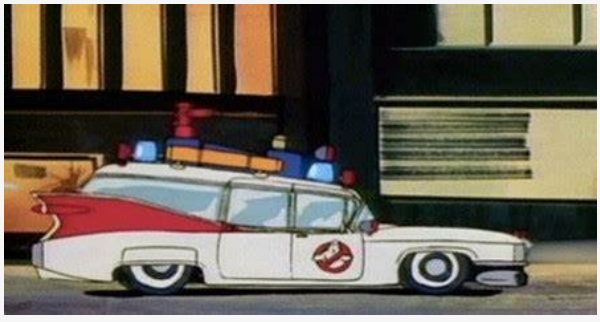
As well as the excellent design and voice work, what really set *RGB* apart from its various animated rivals was the quality of the writing. It's fair to say that in its earlier seasons, *RGB* was a family show, rather than merely a kids' diversion. The scripts were genuinely witty, with clever variations on the ghost-catching plot, brilliantly drawn characters and some cutting one-liners. The sprogs could enjoy the flashy blasters and monsters, while for the grown-ups, the jokes made it bearable, even enjoyable – at least enough to put up with the sheer row the ghosts made. The series' chief writer and story editor for its first few seasons was J. Michael Straczynski – later the creator of *Babylon 5*, *Sense 8* and *Jeremiah*. He never treated the series as throwaway kids' stuff, and it shows. The first season is particularly good, the thirteen episodes gently poking fun at the concept and the film. "*Citizen Ghost*" shows us the immediate aftermath of the film, telling us how Slimer came to be part of the team. "*Take Two*" is cheekier, taking the name of the series as its starting point and having the "Real" Ghostbusters attend the premiere of the movie based on their experiences – complete with footage from the film. The first season, broadcast across the last months of the year, cannily included both a Hallowe'en and Christmas special. The latter, "*Xmas Marks the Spot*," worked on the ingenious premise that the Ghostbusters exist in the same reality as Dickens' classic *A Christmas Carol*, and sees them transported back in time, whereupon they bust the three Ghosts of Christmas and destroy Christmas forever. It's delicious.



A year after the first season's premiere on ABC, the series went to syndication, with a huge run of new episodes broadcast across multiple networks in the US. Fans tend to consider this the second season, but the actual second season of thirteen episodes was broadcast on ABC at the same time. Confusingly, this season underwent a number of tweaks that set it apart from the syndicated run. Ray was made slimmer (apparently an overweight hero being unacceptable), and Slimer was slightly redesigned, and his speech made more intelligible. Bill Murray is said to have complained about Lorenzo Music's voice for his character, saying it made him sound like Garfield (ironically, Murray would voice Garfield in two movies starting in 2004). He was replaced by comedian and impressionist Dave Coulier (*Full House*) who put on an awful impersonation of Murray's voice. More drastically, Janine was completely reinvented. The network hired a consultation firm, who considered the character as she existed to be too brassy, too sexy and a poor role model for girls. She was redesigned and rewritten as a softer, more motherly character, and Kathie Soucie (*Mighty Max, Captain Planet and the Planeteers*) took over as voice actor. Before, Janine had been a back-up Ghostbuster in her own right; now, she was nothing more than the help. Arsenio Hall left the role of Winston for his own show, replaced by Buster Jones (*Transformers*), and the consultants decided that the character should be relegated to being little more than the team's driver. The blatant racism of this attitude was the last straw for Straczynski, who walked.

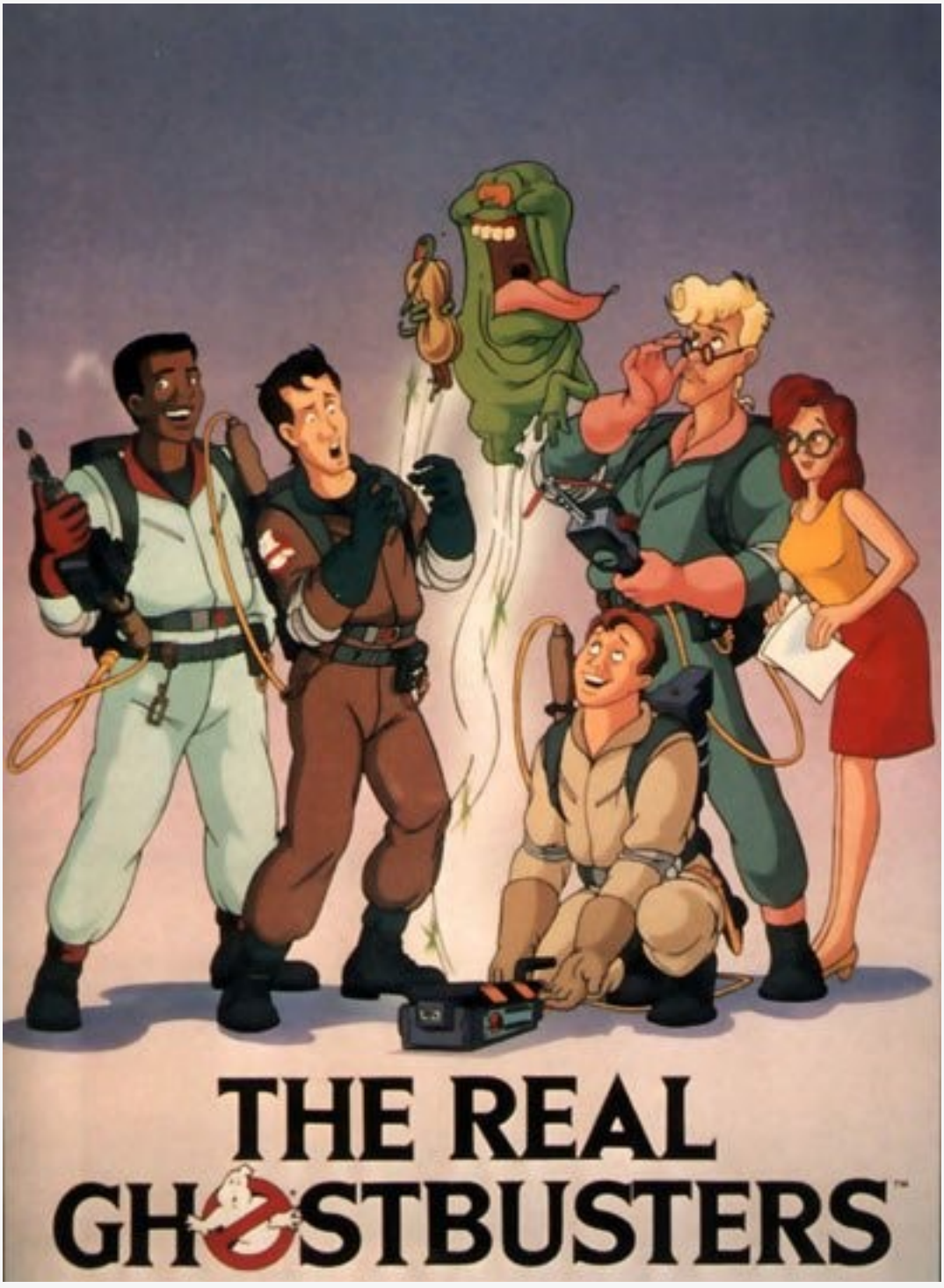
To compound the confusion of having two somewhat different versions of the series airing together, several of the syndicated episodes were later dubbed over with Soucie and Coulier's voices for reruns. The studio gave the series a major rework for its next season, and this would mark a notable drop in quality. Renamed officially as *Slimer! and the Real Ghosbusters*, the series was made far more kid-focused, with tweaks to the running time and general format. In its initial run, each instalment would involve an episode of *RGB* and an episode of *Slimer!* The latter was aimed in particular at small children. The change in tone from the clever and sometimes genuinely unsettling series to the now safe and cuddly version was gradual, but severe, and it only got worse.

By this stage, the series had been exported worldwide (UK broadcasts beginning in 1988), with its own enormous array of merchandise, from comics to board games to a creative range of action figures. In 1989, *Ghostbusters II* hit cinemas to middling returns (it's far better than commonly remembered), itself made more suitable for a family audience. The series had shown the occasional link directly back to the first film in its run, but these were made a little more overt with the release of *Ghostbusters II*, and the nebbish Louis Tulley – played by Rick Moranis in the films – was introduced as a recurring character, voiced by Rodger Bumpass (*Spongebob Squarepants*). As the series' best years were broadcast overseas, it limped to an end in the States, with two more seasons (the last only four episodes long) becoming more childish still. Straczyski was tempted back to write a few more episodes on a freelance basis, including the rather good "*Janine, You've Changed*" which suggested Janine had made a deal with a ghost to change her appearance and make herself more appealing to Egon.



While its latter days were a dire drop in quality, at its height *The Real Ghostbusters* was a truly excellent series. At its best, its creators remembered that children enjoy being scared, and some of the episodes were genuinely chilling for a small person. Episodes like "*Knock, Knock*" which saw the 'busters up against the encroaching of a nightmarish spirit world into the world of the living; "*Ragnarok and Roll*," which saw a suicidally depressed man almost destroy the world; or "*The Grundel*," with its frankly horrifying child-predator bogeyman. Others were truly bizarre comedies, such as the Agatha Christie parody "*Boo-Dunnit*" and its cast of grotesques; and the ingenious "*Chicken, He Clucked*," in which a madman makes a deal with a demon to rid the world of every chicken. My favourite remains "*Night Game*" where Winston takes part in a baseball game between the forces of good and evil, for the fate of a human soul.

The brilliance of the early years makes it all the more disappointing that the last few seasons became so simplistic and childish, finally ending the series due to a drastic drop in ratings. The series remains beloved by those of us who were children at the right time, to whom the movies looked like the spin-off. In 1997, six years after the series ended, a sequel was produced. *Extreme Ghostbusters* lasted for a single season of forty episodes, and brought back Egon (Maurice LaMarche again) and Janine (Pat Musick) leading a new team of young Ghostbusters (and Slimer, of course). *Extreme Ghostbusters* lacked the wit of its predecessor, but upped the horror – the writers and artists often seemed to be trying to see how much they could get away with on children's television. The Ghostbusters franchise continues in new forms to this day, and its only a matter of time until a new animated version arrives... but I bet it won't be half as good as *The Real Ghostbusters* was at its height. **TVH**



Barbara Bates

by Andrew Coby

You know how it is. You go your whole life without ever hearing of an actor or actress and then, thanks to the TV schedulers, two films featuring the previously unheard-of performer appear on screen in quick succession. In this case, the previously unheard-of artist is Barbara Bates, an American actress who didn't have much luck. That's as good a reason as any to review *Town on Trial* and *Apache Territory*, both of which were shown recently on Film4. In *Town on Trial*, Ms Bates has John Mills as her co-star. I have been a fan of his (and Sylvia Syms, albeit for different reasons) since watching *Ice Cold in Alex* on the BBC one Sunday afternoon when I was a kid.

Town on Trial was made in 1957 and was directed by John Guillermin. It concerns what lies beneath the respectable surface of the residents of Oakley Park, a quiet town somewhere in the Home Counties, following the murder of a local girl. The type of town we're dealing with is revealed at the start when the main protagonists are shown driving past a sign that states 'No accidents please'. It doesn't take too much imagination to picture the person who painted this sign wagging his finger as he did so.

Mr Mills plays Detective Superintendent Mike Halloran, called in from London to solve the crime. With its urgent opening shot of a police car discharging a handcuffed suspect and the police rifling through the suspect's coat pockets, the film wants to be a tough US-style thriller. This would explain the unusual casting of American stars Charles Coburn and Barbara Bates and John Mills's sporadic, and ultimately unwise, adoption of an American twang. It's fair to say that his accent in this film sometimes leaves much to be desired. The producers should have gone the whole hog and recruited a visiting American actor to play a tough New York cop, over here to show the Limeys how it's done.

Still, if Mr Mills had played it a l'Anglaise we would have been denied the pleasure of listening to him recite a suspect's statement early on in the proceedings. 'I walked alarng the high sdreed. Id was deserded', he recounts to a police typist who deserves a promotion to Chief Constable for keeping a straight face.

His trusty sidekick, Detective Sergeant Beale tries to half-heartedly muscle in on his American action by announcing to Halloran at one stage 'Here's the dope from the air ministry'. Delivered by solid English character actor Harry Locke wearing a sports jacket, a cravat and a fedora, the line doesn't quite work and nor does the film's attempts to be something it isn't. Let's look at the evidence: the action takes place in the Home Counties, John Mills is as English as walking into a red phone box and dialling 999 in an emergency, and the police drive those lovely black Wolseley cars with bells on. This is England of a certain vintage and that's a fact. If you take it from here, sojourn past Railway Cuttings and on beyond the blue lamp, you'll still find it tantalisingly out of reach because it's a place there's no going back to.

The murder victim is Molly Stevens, strangled by a nylon stocking late one night. Played by Magda Miller, she is first seen playing a game of doubles at Oakley Park tennis club wearing an outfit that, if worn today by the ladies during Wimbledon fortnight, would certainly make this viewer pay more attention while they pootle through the sets.

There are suspects galore in the murder of Miss Stevens because she was a game girl. Disappointingly, no one uses the phrase 'no better than she ought to be' but her murder would have had most of the male members of the club very worried indeed. A fruity girl, then, with no shortage of male admirers or female detractors and it is no surprise when the pathologist announces to Halloran that she was two months pregnant when she died. Raymond Huntley must have had an afternoon free because he puts in a fleeting appearance as the said pathologist.

While searching through Molly's belongings, the police find a Biblical quote on a piece of paper referring to Ahola playing the harlot and being slain with a sword because of it. At the moment, this quote seems a bit woolly and out of focus but remember it because it'll come in useful later on.

The chief suspect for the murder is Mike Roper, the tennis club secretary who is linked to Molly by his school scarf, from Harrow no less, found by the police at her flat. The fact that he was the one who got her pregnant doesn't help his position much, either. Played by Derek Farr, Roper walks the tightrope of respectability, outwardly successful but furiously juggling this with affairs, blackmail and possibly murder. It's the first time I've seen Mr Farr but he does outstanding work here. Roper's claims that he was a Wing Commander during the war are soon demolished by Supt Halloran who learns, courtesy of Sgt Beale, that he rose no higher than an RAF sergeant who was discharged after helping himself to the mess funds. He is also overdrawn at the bank and has debts at every store in town. Why I'd like to bet the cad didn't even go to Harrow, either.

Solid Charles Coburn plays Dr John Fenner, a Canadian doctor with something to hide and this could well be the fact that he is the murderer. He has brought with him Nurse Elizabeth Fenner, his niece.

The other main suspect is Peter Crowley. Played by Alec McCowen, he is an unstable boy bullied by his mother, played by a terrifying Fay Compton. The victim of a short-lived affair with Molly he becomes a person of interest after the police discover a volume of Rupert Brooke's poetry that he had given to Molly as a present.

Supt Halloran is, of course, a maverick who is not afraid to stand on anyone's toes. Being an old-fashioned policeman, Halloran likes his corruption up front because there is less digging to do. He is appalled at the goings on of Oakley Park and wants nothing more than to tear down its cloak of respectability.

Charles Dixon, a local bigwig played with his usual forcefulness by Geoffrey Keen, takes exception to his attitude and attempts to pull strings to have Halloran thrown off the case. There's a lovely resulting cameo from Newton Blick as Assistant Commissioner Beckett, speeding in from the big city to warn Halloran to watch his step. I love the way Beckett steps out of the car outside the police station and pauses to survey the surroundings. It is a gesture of which Commander Gideon of Scotland Yard would have been proud.

Regardless of being warned off by his superior, Halloran is an outsider who would like to invite some of the town's residents, particularly Messrs Roper and Dixon, outside with him so that he can give them a damn good thrashing.

Played by lost soul Barbara Bates, Elizabeth Fenner is also an outsider and this probably explains the strange attraction between the two. The viewer knows Halloran is keen on her because he doesn't give the poor woman room to breathe. He sticks to her like a piece of plaster, as Morecambe and Wise used to sing and, if he were to try such a tactic nowadays, he would be had up on a charge of police harassment.

There is minimal chemistry in Halloran's relationship with Nurse Fenner, not helped by an age gap which looks every one of its twenty-odd years. Nurse Fenner is a bit of a blank canvas but perhaps she is just annoyed at being dragged across the Atlantic, to a grey and alien land, by her Uncle John. The highlight of her involvement in the proceedings is when she threatens to make a chicken salad for her Uncle (and I dread to think what she would put in it).

Halloran's relationship with Nurse Fenner helps to show that he is not some sad loner who spends his off-duty hours in sinister thoughts about an unbilled Dandy Nichols masquerading as his landlady. It also highlights the gulf in values between Halloran and the town. While its citizens are enjoying a midsummer ball at the tennis club, he is at the pub with Nurse Fenner having a jolly old game of darts and being upfront with all and sundry. Darts is a frustrating game but it teaches you a lot about life. The only time you're going to hit a double twenty is when you're aiming for a double one and if that's not life then I don't know what is.

This is followed by a funny encounter with the local bobby who takes exception to Halloran tooting a car horn after 11pm and ignores the reek of alcohol surrounding his superior. There's a good scene too at the boating lake where Halloran, worn out by rowing, is gently advised by the good nurse that it may be easier if he doesn't row against the current. He is too experienced a policeman not to understand her meaning but, being the loose cannon that he is, he is determined to see the case through to the end, and if that means catching a few crabs along the way then so be it.

Outwardly the head of the most respectable family in town, Dixon's big problem is his daughter Fiona. She likes a good time, was a friend of Molly's and, as Dixon sees it, threatens to stain the family linen with her involvement with such a trollop. After the shame of Fiona being brought home by Halloran, fresh from her involvement in a drunken car accident outside an unsavoury den called the Hot Spot, Dixon threatens to send her away to the country to straighten her out. Good country air and jodhpur wearing would sort anyone out.

Fiona is played by Elizabeth Seal, another of whom I was ignorant until Inspector Google's enquiries revealed that she was a song and dance merchant, and a skilful and lithe one at that, operating in the 1950s and 1960s. This would explain the splendid dance that Fiona carries off at the Midsummer Night's ball at the tennis club. Billed as Fiona's Mambo in the opening credits, it's a confident and sexy expression of individuality designed to attract attention and drive her father mad. Sadly, Fiona pays for her freedom of expression by becoming the murderer's second victim, strangled with a nylon stocking in the grounds of the tennis club. The quote about Ahola playing the harlot is also found in Fiona's handbag which shows that there is a serial killer on the loose with a dislike of women and a knowledge of obscure biblical quotes.

Mark Roper's problems are brought to a head when he is ridiculed at the ball by Harry Fowler as possibly the sliest, and least convincing, bandleader ever. Roper's wife has had enough of the ridicule and disowns him, leaving him with nothing better to do than get more drunk and go into bankruptcy.

After an impromptu spelling bee with the main suspects, Halloran deduces who the murderer is. There be no spoilers here so I'll say only that he manages to get a confession out of the murderer while both are perched precariously on top of a church spire. Thankfully, they are brought down to earth by the ever-dependable fire brigade, using one of those extendable ladders that everyone should have a go on at least once before they die.

At the end, the precarious love affair between Halloran and Nurse Fenner is left unresolved. There's an unconvincing declaration from Halloran that he will be back to see her but the last we see of him is when he is speeding back to the smoke in his police car. He is off to deal with a 999 call from a Mr Dickie Valentine who rang to complain that someone broke into his heart and stole a beat or two. An arrest is expected soon. Ish. And if, dear reader, that breaking news leaves you unmoved then I would respectfully suggest that this article may not be for you.

Barbara Bates is a bit more animated in *Apache Territory*, possibly because her love interest in this is Hollywood bad boy Rory Calhoun and not some strange Englishman in a raincoat who invites her back to his digs for cheese and mustard sandwiches. The film is based on the novel *Last Stand at Papago Well* by my dad's favourite author, Louis L'Amour.

Made in 1958 and directed by Ray Nazarro, *Apache Territory* stars Rory Calhoun as Logan Cates. He is a wandering loner on his way to Yuma who makes it his mission to save a disparate band of cavalry soldiers and civilians from marauding Apaches, whether they like it or not. He must have missed the 3.10, which is just as well as its most recent passengers aren't a patch on Glenn Ford and Van Heflin.

Ms Bates plays Jennifer, a young lady with whom Cates has history. Currently affianced to an older man played by John Dehner, she spends most of the film trying to resist the passion that still smoulders between her and Cates. To keep the younger viewer interested there is also a simmering, but chaste, love affair between a couple of young'uns played by Tom Pittman and Carolyn Craig. Just to show that not all indigenous Americans are bad people, their band is joined by Lugo, a friendly Indian scouting for gold.

The cavalry includes tough Leo Gordon, as Trooper Zimmerman, a disaffected soldier desperate to escape the Apaches and Cates's authority. There is the obligatory fight scene in which Calhoun's fists get the better of Gordon. This is suspending disbelief a little too far because every fight fan knows that, in a bout between the two, ex-armed robber Gordon would have kicked Calhoun's saddlebags all the way to Yuma and back again. Calhoun no doubt viewed his victory as one of the perks of being the film's producer and star.

There is a good cameo from Myron Healey as the trooper who goes stir crazy and breaks cover to face the Apaches, only to be captured and tortured by them. The scene in which his plaintive cries echo coyote-like over the nocturnal desert is hard to forget. In the end, John Dehner shows himself to be the duplicitous coward that the viewer knew all along he would turn out to be and attempts to make a getaway on his own, leaving his fiancée to the tender mercies of the blood thirsty Ai-patch. A bullet in the stomach soon puts him right, though, courtesy of Lugo, the friendly Indian.

Calhoun gets the better of the Apaches by filling canteens with gunpowder and using them as Molotov cocktails to blow the troublesome varmints to smithereens. This must be the most innovative and imaginative method of dispatching Red Indians, sorry, Native Americans, of any tribal denomination, ever committed to celluloid. The cavalry troops can return to the fort and the love-struck young'uns are now free to pursue happiness in California, thanks to Lugo's generous donation of a few chunks of gold. Of course, after their brush with death, Logan and Jennifer realise that they were made for each other and they ride off into the sunset, doing their best to avoid the dead bodies as they go.

I don't know much about Rory Calhoun but I think he must have been a decent chap. In a more altruistic example of producer's perks, he secured the role for Barbara Bates in this film, at a time when her career was on the wane and she was suffering from mental illness. She had recently attempted to resurrect her career in England, leading to her appearance in *Town on Trial*, but this was not a success. Sometimes good friends aren't enough and she met a self-willed end in 1969 through carbon monoxide poisoning. She was 43.

Town on Trial and *Apache Territory* are two likable films, with nothing in common except that they were both made by Columbia Pictures and starred Barbara Bates. They are shown quite often on Film4, TCM or Talking Pictures so if you get the chance to watch either of them, you should put aside your iPhone, direct your satnav towards the TV and do so. **TVH**

Croft on the Big Screen

by Brian Slade

Writer and producer David Croft had the Midas touch when it came to comedy. Aside from the odd flop, like *Come Back Mrs Noah*, the shows that he created and wrote with alternating creative partners Jimmy Perry and Jeremy Lloyd were comedy gold for the decades where British comedy was at its greatest. Croft was an expert in writing, character building, producing and most definitely casting, sometimes working with somebody in a most minor role and then returning to that actor years later with a role that he though perfect for them. But on top of that creative genius, Croft was also a shrewd businessman and he knew how to get more from his successes than just commissions for further series.

For comedy performers in the 1970s, summer seasons and panto were still the norm to supplement the income from any successful television shows. With the array of hit tv series at his disposal, David Croft was more than happy to exploit his on screen success with stage versions. *Dad's Army*, *Are You Being Served?*, *It Ain't Half Hot Mum*, *Hi-de-hi!* and *'Allo 'Allo* were all despatched to theatres, with most of their casts intact, and all were as much of a success as their television versions. However, for the first two of his successes, Croft went one stage further and attempted to transplant his success to the big screen, resulting in movie versions of *Dad's Army* and *Are You Being Served?*

The two attempts to convert sitcom success into movie box office winners had very different approaches. For *Dad's Army*, it was tried and tested – the same cast and characters in exactly the same situation as the television series, while *Are You Being Served?* took its cast into completely new territory.

The television series of *Dad's Army* had been going strong for three series by the time the movie version came along. Filmed in 1970, the movie version tries to strike a balance between fans of the show and new audiences. It retained the same cast, but the storyline establishes the reason for Captain Mainwaring and his platoon coming into existence. The rehash of *The Man and the Hour*, the first Dad's Army episode in 1968, isn't the only selection of borrowed material. In fact the film collects a number of stories and exchanges from the first three series, unsurprising given that the show's writers were behind the screenplay.

Differences were inevitable between the movie and the television series given that the feature had a budget afforded to them by Columbia Pictures. Hardly in a position to object, one cast member was switched as regular Carry On star Liz Frazer took over the role of Mrs Pike. Despite being a minor character, it's not a change that was particularly necessary and certainly not one that worked. Perhaps of greater divergence from the show though was the introduction of the Germans. To that point, and indeed for the vast majority of the television series run, the Nazis were a hidden enemy. Part of the appeal of the show is that the platoon were continually coming up with ways to thwart the arrival of the Nazis despite the fact that they never actually showed up. The movie went a step further as we not only saw the Germans, but we also got an insight into what they thought of their potential opponents, which does rather take the shine off the Walmington-on-Sea tale.

Dad's Army was a success at the box office. It didn't have to fight too hard as despite the feel of it at times being a stitched together 'best of' compilation, we still loved the ragtag collection of heroes and the vast majority of the audience would never turn their back on them. That said, the penchant for turning sitcoms into movies shows that the British movie audiences were quite content to watch any of their television stars at the cinema…*Dad's Army* shared the top 10 British box office successes of 1971 with *On the Buses* and *Up Pompeii*, and more would follow throughout the decade.

David Croft had achieved immense success with *Are You Being Served?* despite it having been rushed onto screens to avoid dead air during the Munich Olympics massacre of 1972. It had been on screen for five years when the movie version was released. With his alternative writing partner Jeremy Lloyd, Croft was once again behind the screenplay, but this movie took a very different turn. The television show was of course about the people of the menswear and womenswear counters of ageing department store Grace Brothers. The movie took them out of their trusted situation, a brave move in stark contrast to how Croft had approached *Dad's Army*.

In an episode of the second series of the television show, young Mr Grace had planned on decorating the shop floor, offering an incentive to the staff to take holiday while the works go ahead. The staff refused, whereupon he tried to convince them by offering them a holiday in some rather unappealing destinations, resulting in them taking holiday and money during winter, an unpalatable result of their negotiations in the days before continental travel was commonplace.

It is this story that Croft returned to for the movie version. Again, the department is being decorated, but this time the group do go on holiday, ending up in tents in Costa Plonka as their hotel doesn't have room for them having thought Grace Brothers were two people. Lots of interplay follows as the plot becomes ever more bizarre: Mrs Slocombe becomes the object of desire of a terrorist, who in turn holds out in the hotel which comes under attack during his revolutionary plans, with the Grace Brothers staff innocent victims caught in the crossfire. It all ends when young Mr Grace comes charging through the hotel walls in a tank to utter his immortal words, 'You've all done very well.'

Despite the ropey plot, there is plenty of time for the same bawdy goings on that happen in the department store. Mr Lucas, long desiring to try his luck with Miss Brahms, is now clear of the hierarchy of the department and attempts to woo his opposite number, but the pursuit of Mrs Slocombe by Cesar the terrorist ends up in multiple cases of mistaken identity and subsequent failures of amorous intentions.

Croft and Lloyd pull some gags from the show, and the movie benefits from that. That said, it suffers because its arrival in 1977 was at a time when the movie versions of sitcoms were losing their appeal. *Are You Being Served?* has long been debated over since its demise in terms of its humour, perceived stereotyping and appropriateness, but its popularity ensured it stayed on television until 1985. It's perhaps in part due to the movie that Croft and Lloyd decided that the characters could be accepted outside of the department store and created the 1991 spin-off, *Grace and Favour*.

Despite the success of the television shows and stage versions of them, Croft never ventured into film versions of his other successes. It's hard to see that a movie of *Hi-de-hi!* would have worked, and given the speed with which *It Ain't Half Hot Mum* has disappeared from view, it is perhaps not disappointing that it never received the big screen treatment. *'Allo, 'allo* would perhaps seem the one Croft success that might have been best suited to a movie adaptation, but by then times had changed and Croft was tiring of the BBC's changing approach to comedy.

Dad's Army did of course make a reappearance on the big screen in 2016, some years after Croft and Perry's death. With the Croft family's approval and involvement, the Home Guard were reborn with a new cast of Britain's finest. For so many years people had said it was the actors that made the show, and of course they were remarkable to a man, but there is a charm about the likes of Toby Jones, Bill Nighy, Michael Gambon and a host of others that make the modern version palatable. Once again the German's are a very visible and real threat, and it is amusing to see spy Catherine Zeta Jones send Jones's Mainwaring into a spin. But unlike the original, the women are powerful in the new version and come to Mainwaring and the gang's rescue on the beaches.

David Croft and his writing partners were relentlessly successful across four decades on television, and perhaps *Dad's Army* and *Are You Being Served?* were doomed to be held up as inferior to their television originals. But for fans of those shows, they both carry enough humour and nostalgia to justify their existence. Seeing the Grace Brothers staff out of their safe environment is a jolly if predictable novelty and the chance to have a full 90 minute run of Walmington-on-Sea's finest…well what could be better than that? **TVH**

Man of Mystery - The Tales of Edgar Wallace

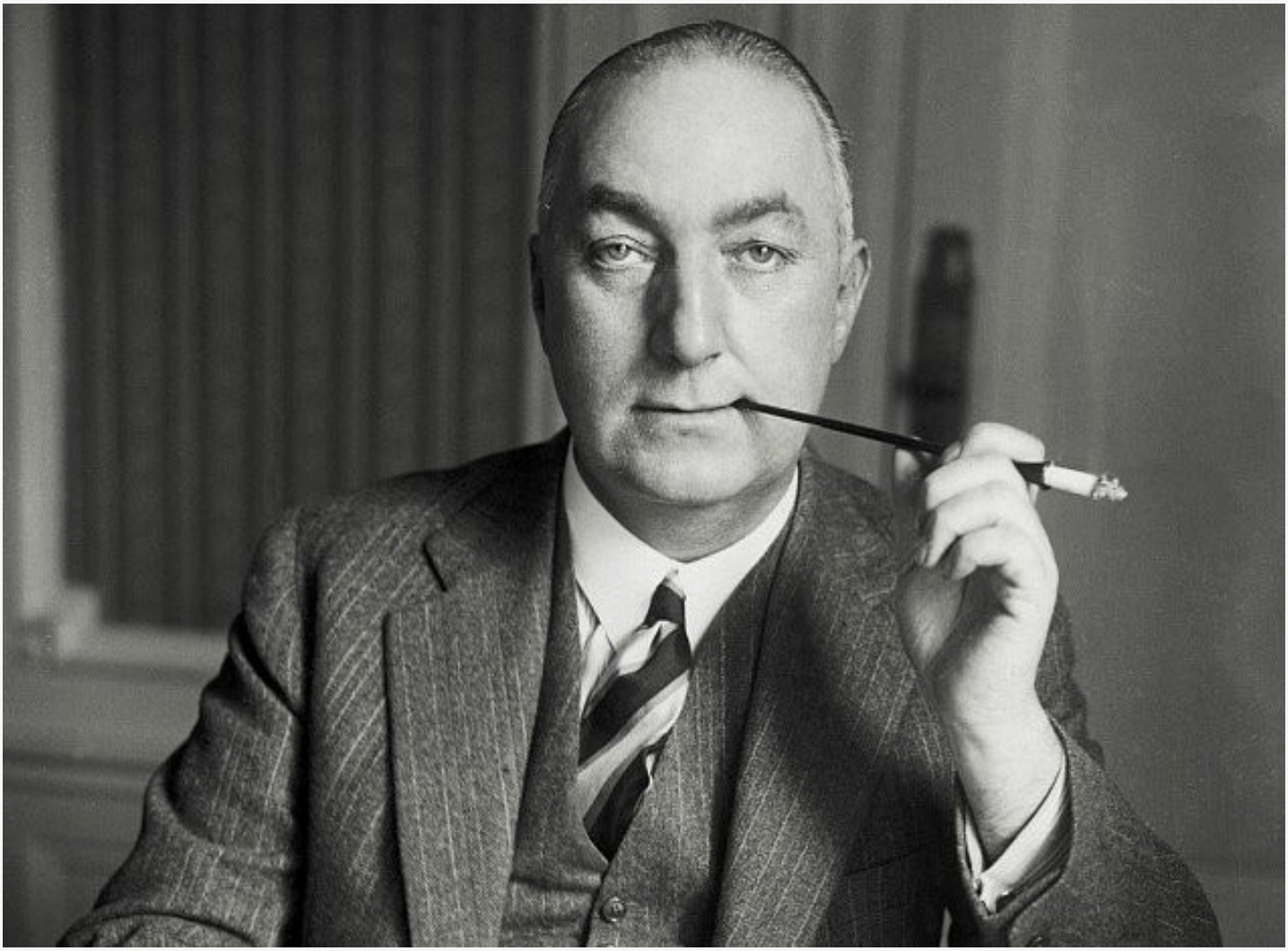
by Marc Saul

Richard Horatio Edgar Wallace was a prolific British crime writer, journalist and playwright, who wrote 175 novels between 1898 and 1932.

Wallace was born in Greenwich, South East London, on 1 April 1875. His unmarried mother, Mary, lived in poverty and things didn't change after Richard's arrival. Unable to find a foster family for her baby, Mary was forced to consider placing the child, at the age of three, in a workhouse. It was at this point that adoptive parents, Richard Freeman and his wife Clara, stepped forward. Freeman was determined that the boy have a decent education and when Wallace was old enough he was placed in a boarding school in Peckham. But Wallace was not a good student and continually played truant. At the age of twelve he left full time education. He took a job as a milk-delivery boy but was dismissed for stealing money. Other jobs fleetingly came and went and in 1894 Wallace registered for the British Army under the name of Edgar Wallace, hoping the name change would help him avoid a charge of Breach of Promise.

Posted to South Africa, Wallace became interested in writing after meeting Rudyard Kipling in Cape Town in 1898. A move to the Army Press Corps further increased this interest and he published a book of ballads entitled *The Mission That Failed*. The following year, Wallace bought his way out of the Army but remained in Africa as a freelance war correspondent, first for Reuters and then the Daily Mail. It was whilst writing for the Mail that he began writing detective stories. Unable to find a publisher for his first book, Wallace set up his own publishing company, Tallis Press. Despite good sales of his first book, *Four Just Men*, his mismanagement of the company left him in debt. To compound matters further, Wallace was fired from the Daily Mail after libel cases were brought against the newspaper as a result of Wallace's inaccuracies in reporting. No other newspaper would employ him.

However, the years 1908 to 1931 were the most prolific of Wallace's life. Writing initially to satisfy creditors, his books began to sell with great success. In 1921 he signed a contract with publishers Hodder and Stoughton who dubbed him 'King of Thrillers'. At the beginning of 1932, Wallace began suffering from sudden, severe headaches and was diagnosed with diabetes. His condition deteriorated rapidly and he slipped into a coma. On 10 February Edgar Wallace passed away in Beverly Hills where he was being employed by RKO Pictures to work on the movie King Kong.



Edgar Wallace had left behind massive debts at the time of his death. He led an extravagant lifestyle often living well beyond his means and lost many thousands gambling.

In 1959, Nat Cohen and Stuart Levy, managing directors of distributor Anglo Amalgamated (UK), acquired the film rights for the entire Wallace library. Over the next four years (1960 - 64) 40 *Tales of Edgar Wallace* stories were filmed. Because they have been shown as *The Edgar Wallace Mystery Hour* (or *Theatre*) on US TV and also been used in the UK as late night fillers, many viewers believe the Edgar Wallace series to be have been made for television. But they were originally produced for the cinema screen.

Produced at Merton Park Studios in South West London, the Edgar Wallace films were of the low-budget variety, often filmed in the space of a week in the studios and the neighbouring streets and starring mainly British actors who were paid on a daily basis. They were B-Movies which often accompanied the main feature in the days when you got two films for the price of one. Responsible for producing the films was Jack Greenwood who had churned out similar productions such as the *Scotland Yard* series (1953-61) introduced by criminologist Edgar Lustgarten. The Edgar Wallace films are also remembered for their distinctive opening guitar theme, Man Of Mystery*, over a revolving bust of Wallace, although less than half of the films originally opened like this.

The first film to go before the cameras was 1960s *Clue of the Twisted Candle* starring Bernard Lee, and this, like all subsequent Wallace tales had to be updated to bring it into the 1960s. (*Twisted Candle* for example was originally written in 1916). It should also be noted that not all of the filmed Edgar Wallace Tales were written by Edgar Wallace.

When shown on US television the films were edited down to fit into a sixty-minute time slot. Due to the way the TV series was packaged there is some confusion as to how many Edgar Wallace Tales were told. On US TV (and later in the UK) some British B-Movies not made for this particular series simply had the Edgar Wallace titles and theme added to them (this may be true of some films originally released under the *Scales of Justice* series - 1962 to 1967). The last film to be shot under the *Tales of Edgar Wallace* banner was *Face of a Stranger* in 1964. Many British stars appeared throughout the series including Harry H. Corbett, Paul Daneman, Jack Hedley, Patrick Allen, Michael Gough, Alfred Burke, John Le Mesurier, Jack Watling, Rosemary Leach, Dawn Addams and others, many appearing in more than one film.

The Nat Cohen and Stuart Levy contract was not exclusive and the Danish/German company Rialto also obtained film rights from the Edgar Wallace estate although these met with little commercial success. So although not strictly a TV series, the US TV syndication and the films often repeated appearance on British television adequately qualifies the *Tales of Edgar Wallace* a place in Television Heaven.

** It is unclear if the version of the theme tune "Man of Mystery" played over the credits was recorded by The Shadows. It is certainly a different version from the one that appeared on the 'b' side of their 1960 hit single 'Apache.' The theme was written by Michael Carr (1905 - 1968), real name Maurice Alfred Cohen, best remembered for the song 'South of the Border (Down Mexico Way)', written with Jimmy Kennedy.*

Among Carr's other compositions was the Shadows' hit 'Kon-Tiki' and he co-wrote the theme song to the TV series The White Horses. **TVH**

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