

Avengers on ITV *in October*

THE ITV network, through its film buying organisation, has acquired the rights in the new version of The Avengers now being made at Pinewood. The series will be seen on the network starting in mid-October and it is expected that different areas will show it on different days but in the same week, so giving it full networking for ratings purposes. At present the idea is to show it in London on Tuesdays and in the rest of the country on Thursdays.

The New Avengers, as the series is titled, is probably unique in co-production terms. It is being made entirely in Britain, at Pinewood Studios and on location, with British directors, actors and technicians; but the whole of the finance, placed at £4 million, comes from France. Unlike the previous series, made first by ABC and later by Thames, this is an independent production set up by Brian Clemens, Albert Fennell and Laurie Johnson, who are the creative minds behind the earlier Avengers.

Brian Clemens told Television Today this week that seven of the first 13 programmes are now complete, the eighth is nearing its end and the ninth started this week.

"Terence Feely, Dennis Spooner and I have written all the scripts so far," Clemens said. "I think you will find a subtle difference this time. You could say that the old series was a humorous spoof with dramatic undertones, while this one is dramatic, with humorous undertones."

Six directors have been working on the project — Desmond Davies, Bob Fuest, Ray Austin, Syd Hyers, John Hough and James Hill. Brian Clemens and Albert Fennell are

co-producing, and Patrick Macnee again plays John Steed.

Leslie Halliwell in charge of the ITV film buying set-up, has seen the first four programmes in the series and believes that they not only maintain the standards of the old Avengers but, through the interplay between the two new characters — Joanna Lumley (Purdey) and Gareth Hunt (Gambit) — love actually added something new and refreshing.

A note for connoisseurs. Purdey is the name of the most expensive shotgun in the world. It has been described (by its Bond Street maker) as "beautiful, sensuous, magnificent, incomparable — a thing of joy."