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GARETH HUNT

WHY DO LOUDES ALWAYS PICK ON ME?

BY ALEC DAVIES

AT the time when Gareth Hunt was a merchant seaman he wasn't averse to a bit of bar-room fisticuffs. Not that he always came out on top. The broken nose was something he could have done without when he decided to sail to the top as an actor.

But the ruggedly good-looking Gareth found he became a target for violence again as *New Avengers* star Mike Gambit.

There was always a lout, charged up on liquid courage, waiting to see how tough he really was.

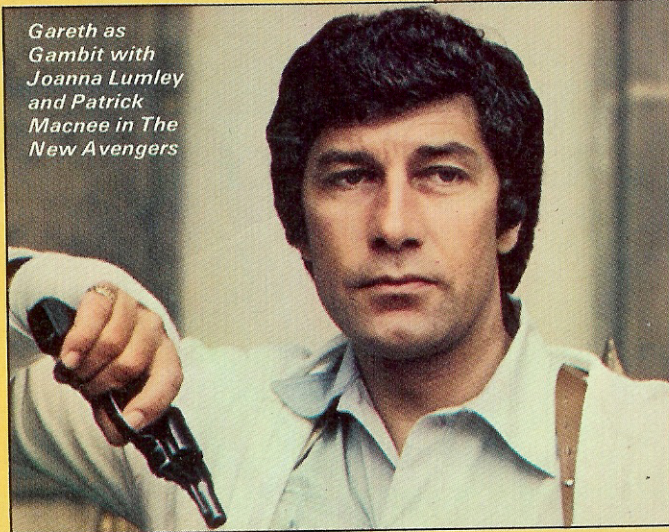
One night in a pub he refused to smile and head for the door. 'Gambit' stood his ground . . . and finished up in court. Now, he confesses, he's happier playing the coward.

Swing

"You can only take so much," says Gareth. "Guys would come up and push you around. They would nearly always be trying to prove something to their girlfriends."

"What got me was they could somehow never see what complete fools they were making of themselves. I

Gareth as Gambit with Joanna Lumley and Patrick Macnee in *The New Avengers*



thought I had got the situation under control until I did *The New Avengers*. Then just about every Tom, Dick or drunken Harry wanted to put me to the test.

"One evening, I'm chatting away in a pub in the East End. I could see this young lady out of the corner of my eye grinning at me.

"Suddenly, she's mouthing abuse, claiming I've said something I haven't—and her boyfriend is in there as well.

"Before I could defuse the chaos this chap takes a swing

at me and his girl puts a set of tramlines down my face with her nails.

"I can handle myself. I learned in the Merchant Navy and in my training for *The New Avengers*, but I wouldn't use those kinds of tricks in a public bar.

Series

"I'm not the sort of actor who goes looking for trouble. It always seemed to find me."

Gareth was later cleared in court of assault. But the injuries left a lasting scar.

At the time he was due to sign up for a series of instant coffee TV commercials worth £20,000.

"The company involved

took one look at my face and said they would have to have a rethink," he says. "They went ahead with the contract in the end, but no one can afford to lose that kind of money."

Gareth, now 38, went straight into the Merchant Navy after leaving school at the age of 15.

As an actor his career didn't take off until he appeared as Frederick the footman in *Upstairs, Downstairs*. The part of Gambit in *The New Avengers* gave him the kind of acclaim he used to dream about.

Even though the series is over, he still sees a lot of mileage in a TV reunion be-

tween the lovely Purdee, Joanna Lumley, and I in the near future.

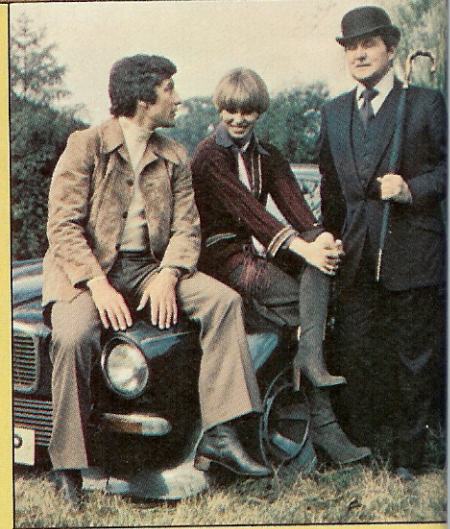
"I was disappointed show came to an end did," he says. "No, what the critics said went down well with the view

Sequel

"Joanna and I established really good rapport and it up to the brains behind series that they ought the two of us in a sequel

"I'm sure it would I've got dozens of ideas up just waiting to go for bit and Purdee."

Gareth is married to Swede Annette Wall who was rock star



IT'S A FACT

Marlon Brando was paid £120,000 for his role in *The Godfather*—plus a percentage of the profits. The film has now earned him over £750,000.

Gareth with wife Annette and baby Oliver



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tween the lovely Purdey, alias Joanna Lumley, and himself in the near future.

"I was disappointed the show came to an end when it did," he says. "No matter what the critics said we went down well with the viewers."

Sequel

"Joanna and I established a really good rapport and I put it up to the brains behind the series that they ought to link the two of us in a sequel.

"I'm sure it would work. I've got dozens of ideas stored up just waiting to go for Gambit and Purdey."

Gareth is married to blonde Swede Annette Walter-Lax, who was rock star Keith

Moon's fiancée when he died from a drugs overdose three years ago.

They live in Effingham in Surrey, with half an acre of land surrounding their large detached Victorian cottage.

Gareth has a son Gareth Jnr, aged 13, from his first marriage. And last year Annette had a boy called Oliver.

Gareth was at the birth and said: "It was the most fantastic moment of my life. I was wary about marriage, let alone becoming a father, again.

"But I'm older now and more responsible. Before, I felt trapped and insecure and finally ran away. That won't happen again.

"I've mellowed. It suits me wandering around in wellies checking the vegetable patch. It keeps me out of trouble. I like to think I've got everything I want."

GOING, GOING

FORMER journalist Margaret Mitchell had second thoughts about her first novel and asked the publisher to return the manuscript. But the Southern belle's book had captured his heart and it was