

There's something about Gareth Hunt that makes him look the adventurer. He has that ruthlessly casual and yet dramatic appearance that says he has just stepped off a 'plane, jumped from a moving car or is about to take off for something exciting!

He is a guy who you are prepared to go anywhere in the world with and expect the unexpected.

'I've only just returned from Canada,' he says, slipping into his chair at the restaurant where we met.

'We've been doing some location work there for the *New Avengers* and I must say that I'm feeling good to be back.' If you'd been through what Gareth has in the way of tough times in recent weeks you'd agree with him.

For Gareth is one of those special actors who does his own thing on the film set.

'I think that it's OK having a stunt man for really dangerous acts, but most of the time, I like having a go myself.'

'I've always been a bit of a daredevil and it doesn't frighten me to get a few bruises and knocks. Maybe I'd draw the line at broken bones.'

But broken glass is something else.

'Oh, that was in a particular scene on the Canadian location,' he says, touching a small scar on his temple.

'They told me that they'd like to fake a fall through a glass window. In scenes like this, they don't use real glass, but a substitute called sugarglass. This breaks much more easily, but if you don't go through it with sufficient force, it doesn't make much difference to the real thing. You would find yourself stuck on jagged points!'

'The director wanted me to hurl myself through the window from about four paces,' he says, with a look of 'I told you so'.

'But I knew I would need to run across half the room to make the trip safely. In the end, I relented and did it his way. I didn't go through it hard enough and I ended up with cuts all over my face from tiny sugarglass fragments.'

'A nasty bit of work that was, I can tell you.'

'It would be easy for me to play Gambit in real life — but I need privacy.'

Why does he do it then?

'Well, I feel that it makes a scene look so much more realistic if, when the camera zooms in, it's me falling and not a look-alike.'

'I mean, I enjoy acting, and it's a challenge to have to do these stunts. I feel I'm doing my job

Gareth's the kind of man who enjoys being active!



GARETH HUNT

A very private guy!

As Gambit in TV's New Avengers, he's tough, ruthless and hard as nails — but underneath all that, as John Kercher discovered, there's a quiet, sensitive poet.

properly, really acting out a fall.

'Naturally you get special advisors who tell you how to do it, but so long as you listen and take advice ... things usually go all right.'

It comes as quite a surprise then, to discover that this adventurer is a bit of a poet on the quiet.

'That's true,' he says, a sincere and serious tone in his voice. 'I spend many a quiet moment

will be public!

Gareth has just made his first record album and many of the songs are ones which he has written.

'It was quite a nice experience going into a studio and becoming a singer for a while. Most of the material is ballad type stuff, I don't see myself as a budding pop star. And I know that people will be saying: 'Not another actor thinking he's a pop singer'. But then it's something I want to do as an additional thing to acting.'

'I mean people don't turn round to David Essex when he wants to make a film and say, 'Not another pop star trying to be an actor. They just see it as a logical extension of his career.' Gareth makes his point firmly and you realise that he has a secret longing to do a musical. 'A show or film like that really tests you on all fronts,' he says. 'I'd also like to have a crack at a

comedy in the near future.'

If you have been a studious observer of his role as Gambit in the *New Avengers*, then you will need no reminding that there is a subtle comedian trying to escape from behind that stern expression.

'I enjoy making people laugh, and also entertaining them. I'll be the first one to get up at a party or small dinner party and start doing impressions or reading out great monologues. I've had many a great laugh doing that.'

The question is, how much of Gareth Hunt has he managed to salvage from his world-wide success as one of the *New Avengers*? Surely it must lead to type casting in his private life?

'I think I've kept myself intact because I haven't allowed the character of Gambit to take over. It would be very easy for me to play the role in real life



and endorse product after product with the Gambit moniker ... but that would only destroy the privacy I do enjoy, and tend to engulf me. I could never escape the role then.

'Take for example, the fact that I went along to the launching of a new perfume recently. I thoroughly enjoyed myself apart from having to try a dab of this and a dab of that to put my verdict on it. I went home smelling as if I'd been dancing with fifteen different women. 'But there was talk of calling one of the ranges, 'Gambit'. I couldn't endorse a thing like that ... I'd much rather they call it 'Slush' or whatever other name they fancy.

One thing is certain, though, and that is that I found it quite interesting to be suddenly submerged in the world of perfumery. It was a whole new experience and something I might never have explored had I not been an actor in a successful television series.'

He says this as though, without his acting career, life would have been dull. This, from a guy who has seen most of the world several times over before most people have wondered what they're going to do with their lives.

'Oh, I've always had an adventurous spirit,' he says with a gleam in his eye.

'When I was fifteen I decided that I wanted to join the Merchant Navy. I got the taste for that after I'd made a trip abroad with my school.

'I just got the idea to travel and had to take off. I stayed there for six years, and covered most places I'd always wanted to see.

'But after that time, I decided it was time to quit and I jumped ship when we docked in New Zealand.

'You wouldn't believe the list of odd jobs I had, from washer-up to packer in a warehouse. I hardly had any money and eventually sold my watch to raise the fare to Auckland.

'It was there, after a bundle of laughs with a few guys I'd met who had also jumped their ships, that I was finally picked up by the authorities and stuck in detention for a while before being bundled off back to good old England.'

It was through this twist of fate that Gareth found himself doing back stage work as an odd job man.

'Just sweeping up and things in general like that,' he says.

'But I used to watch the actors at work through the drapes or from the wings and I realised that this was really what I wanted to do.

'Until then, the nearest thing I'd ever come to a stage was at school or mucking about the bomb sites with my school-mates playing cowboys.'

Gareth was 25 and a latecomer to acting. He realised things would be tough, but he persevered and channelled all his energies into repertory theatre and drama school.

Eventually, he was offered a role in *Upstairs, Downstairs*, and from that he landed the prize part of Gambit in the *New Avengers*.

But it is not a character he wishes to stay with for that long.

'A series can stifle you a bit, and I have so many other things I want to try.

'I'm the kind of guy who can't sit still for very long. I don't have any particular hobby or anything like that ... but I must keep active.

'I think that probably springs from my Merchant Navy days or even months without anything to do after you'd done your duties.

'I hate getting bored.

'You know, when my boat used to dock at these far off ports, I'd go off exploring the whole place ... not just the dockfront.

'I like to think that I still do that. Look behind the obvious, I mean.'

And if there are any girls who have their eye on the tough looking, but gentle mannered Gareth (which there are bound to be) then his taste in women is wide.

'The physical is only one thing ... chat to a girl and her personality might be irresistible.'

It seems all you need is the right gambit!