

# Joanna Lumley longs to do some more TV 'Avenging'

By Mike Clark  
Associated Press

LONDON — Although it has been two years since "The New Avengers" ceased production, Joanna Lumley can't escape the shadow of her character, Purdey. But rather than complain about type-casting, she laments the two couldn't stay together longer.

Miss Lumley filmed 26 episodes of the series with Patrick Macnee, who played dapper super-sleuth John Steed, and Gareth Hunt, who portrayed agent Mike Gambit. The show was filmed on three occasions in the 1960s, with Macnee operating opposite female agents Honor Blackman, Diana Rigg and Linda Thorson.

"I'd love to have done another 13 and really cracked it," Miss Lumley said in a recent interview at her apartment in London's Holland Park area. "All three of us would have loved to — under very different circumstances. We wanted script control."

The cast was disturbed that "a lot of the spoofy humor" had been written out of the series, which began in 1963 with Macnee and Miss Blackman taking a highbrow poke at James Bond-type films.

There have been rumors aplenty that "The New Avengers" would be resurrected, but so far nothing concrete. CBS was said to be considering additional shootings for its "Late Movie" package, but later decided on "The New Saint," based on the popular 1960s series starring Roger Moore.

Macnee's Steed hasn't changed since 1963. He was always impeccably dressed, complete with cane and steel bowler, and abhorred weapons. "So that left Gareth and me endlessly blasting people's heads off," Miss Lumley said.

"I was awfully angry that we tried to kind of sneak into the 'Starsky and Hutch' area," she added. "'The Avengers' has got to be British and umbrellas and rain and OK behavior, and I thought we'd rather gone off the feeling that Diana and Patrick got, with very tight scripts and very bizarre sort of things."

It was the pairing of Steed and Miss Rigg's cool Mrs. Peel that rocketed "The Avengers" onto American television and still accounts for much of the interest in the show on both sides of the Atlantic. Although Miss Lumley longs for what might have been, the product with which she was involved was at least somewhat faithful to the

original concept of outrageous plots and dry British wit.

Some 1,000 actresses, models and assorted starlets auditioned for the part in "The New Avengers" before the role went to Miss Lumley, the striking, 5-foot-8 daughter of a Gurkha major in the Indian Army.

"I think because Honor and Diana had such an immense impact, it'd become rather like a James Bond role," Miss Lumley said. "You'd be dumb not to do it. Sure, you get typecast, but what a nice way to be type-cast."

"I decided right away that she (Purdey) was a complete professional," she said. "She didn't care about being pretty or trying to attract men, because that seemed to happen all the time, anyway. I thought she'd be a very cool head, very bossy and organized — and unapproachable."

Because of the shotgun shooting schedule sometimes employed, Miss Lumley found that Purdey finally became something of a mirror image of herself.

For instance, agent and actress alike opted for no-nonsense clothing and short hair because neither could spare the time for stores or beauty shops.