

# THE ARISTOCRATIC AVENGER

"I'm wildly excited. It's the culmination of my dreams. I wanted that part more than I've ever wanted any other but I never thought it would happen. The news that I had been chosen stunned me."

Joanna Lumley speaking.

The 29-year-old actress was recently selected from 1,000 actresses to play the heroine in the new TV series, *The Avengers*. She will follow in the footsteps of Honor Blackman, Diana Rigg and Linda Thorson and will play opposite veteran actor Patrick MacNee—known to millions of viewers as the bowler-hatted champagne-sipping and oh-so-sophisticated John Stead.

I spoke to Joanna in between training sessions at Pinewood Studios (training, among other things, how to throw a man).

She told me she met Patrick at a dinner party about four years ago and was enchanted by him.

"He's charming, delightful. I'm so looking forward to working with him."

She has been described somewhere as being a "suspnders-and-stockings" girl. Is she really?

## Awful hoarder

"Definitely. I love them, have a huge collection of them. You see, I'm very easy on footwear and have an assortment of pale blue, yellow, pink and striped stockings which I bought about 10 years ago and they're still as good as new. I'm an awful hoarder."

Will she wear them in the series?

"No. The television company will probably provide what I need."

I've read too, that she's a tough, fighting lady. Is that true?

No, no. I can't stand violence in any shape or form. I hate it. I'm not aggressive at all. I'm tough only in that I can carry huge, heavy bags of washing to the laundrette."

Then what about the part she'll enact in the series... Purdy, a slightly aristocratic lady with good connections

## Actress Joanna Lumley is this week's Star Choice. She talks to Monica O'Hara.

That amused her. She laughed, shrugged her shoulders, then laughed again.

"I was born in India. My father was in the Indian Army. As a family we moved a lot around India and Malaya so I was sent to boarding school—an Anglican convent in Hastings."

Joanna's eight-year-old son Jamie is excited about the idea of seeing his Mum in a new series.

"As it's seven years since the last series of *The Avengers* was screened he's too young to remember it," Joanna explained. "But, when I told him there would be a certain amount of fighting in it, his eyes lit up. He was a little depressed that it wasn't *Space 1999* I'd been chosen for—I think he fancied seeing me as the Bionic Woman."

Did Joanna herself watch any of the previous series?

"Yes, during the school holidays I loved to follow Honor Blackman's escapades."

Fans of Coronation Street may remember Joanna's brief appearance there about two years ago. She played the part of the headmaster's daughter with whom Ken Barlow fell madly, passionately in love.

"He asked me to marry him and showed me the house we'd live in but I turned him down because he was so boring. In real life, I like him very much and I kept pleading with the producer 'Do I have to say these awful things to him' but he insisted."

In her spare moments, this attractive actress is very fond of music.

"I switch on Radio 3 first thing every morning and tune in again when I'm washing, ironing and doing my housework. I love good music; always carry pencil and

paper with me and scribble down names and opus numbers. Then I make for the nearest record shop, humming, and buy the record or cassette I'm after."

She is, she says, an avid TV viewer, too.

"I love late night films but have a habit of falling asleep just when they're getting exciting. I love quiz programmes too — isn't Bamber Gascoigne marvelous? he never ages."

"Who Do You Do—I used to watch that like a hawk. Then I love travelogues, films about insects and animals, and programmes like *Survival* and *The World of Jacques Cousteau*. Like any other actress, I'm very fond of plays — always looking out to see if any of my friends are performing in or directing them."

## Feel helpless

"I don't normally go for police programmes — apart from *Police Woman* and *Police Surgeon*—and I can't stand fighting in any shape or form."

"I hate documentaries for that reason. Anything dealing with death, killing or bomb blasts depresses me. I feel so helpless watching films of people starving."

"I prefer television to be an entertainment. Comedy shows I love—particularly the two *Ronnies*, John Cleese and Les Dawson, even if he is vulgar."

"I quite like dog racing and ice skating. John Curry is dreamy. But I can't stand football or wrestling."

What does she think she'll be watching during the coming week?

**TONIGHT:** *GI Blues*—Elvis Presley is a must for me. He's the greatest screen hero and singer of all times. Clever, hysterical and he does such wonderful send-ups. Yes, I'll be glued to that. *Cilla*, I'm very fond of and may well watch. *Cannon*, definitely. *Upstairs, Downstairs*, I can't resist that series. *The Long Haul*—I wouldn't miss seeing Victor Mature either.

**TOMORROW:** *Barney Bear*, maybe. I like cartoons but I've never seen that one. *Going for a Song*—I love beautiful things but am hopeless at guessing prices. *Raging Moon*, yes. *They Came to Cordura* (BBC-2 film conflicts with *That's Life*). Hmmm...I don't know which to watch. *Esther Rantzen* is funny nice — most entertaining.

**MONDAY:** *Nationwide*, because I've been on it a couple of times. *Opportunity Knocks*—they have some quite good acts. *Coronation Street*. *Police Woman*. *Tales of Terror*—I find Vincent Price's velvet voice irresistible.

**TUESDAY:** *Bugs Bunny*. *Suspense Movie*—*The Deadly Hunt*, *Rock Pollicies* (I have some friends in it). *Play for Today* conflicts with *Man Alive*. I think I'll probably choose *Play for Today*. Again, *60 Seconds of Hatred* conflicts with *Tonight*—and I like Sue Lawley.

**WEDNESDAY:** *University Challenge*, *This Is Your Life* (it's great fun, that programme—I was a guest, recently, when they featured Alfred Marks), *Morecambe and Wise* conflicts with *Benny Hill*. Think I'll choose *Morecambe and Wise*. *World Champions on Ice*. *Oneupmanship* (I just love Stephen Potter), *Royal Film Performances*. *What the Papers Say*. *Wrestling*? No, no, no.

**THURSDAY:** *Top of the Pops*, *Clayhanger*, *Limbo*, and *The Good Old Days* (I cried when Kenneth McKeller sang last week).

**FRIDAY:** *Police Surgeon*, *Sale of the Century*, *Wodehouse Playhouse*, definitely. (I watched the last series avidly. I think John and Pauline are brilliant. Wonderful).