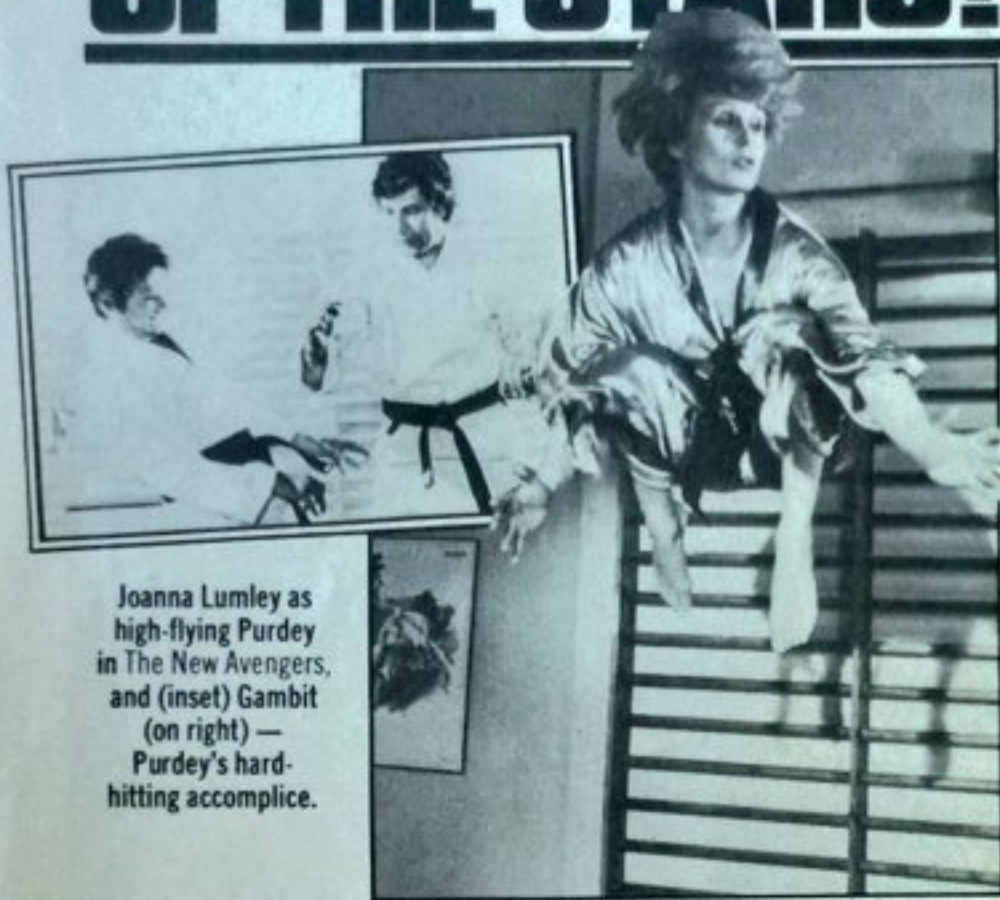


The spotlight has recently been turned full on the sport of judo, with Britain gaining silver and bronze medals at the Moscow Olympics in the considerable shapes of Neil Adams and Arthur Mapp. The art of self-defence has been mastered by these two experts — Adams in the Middleweight section and Mapp in the Open weight — but it's not just in sport that disciplined exertion asserts itself.

In the world of TV, too, self-defence plays an important role, and here we assess the tough guy — and tough-pal — parts that are so popular on the small screen...

## IN DEFENCE OF THE STARS!



Joanna Lumley as high-flying Purdey in *The New Avengers*, and (inset) Gambit (on right) — Purdey's hard-hitting accomplice.

**W**hen **KITTY O'NEIL** sets off for work, she's never quite sure what the day ahead may bring. She may be leaping from the top of a tall building or diving over a moving car — or even smashing her way through a plate-glass window. It's certainly not a dull life for 'Calamity Kitty', who is stuntwoman for Lynda Carter, TV's **Wonder Woman**.

Kitty is one of an elite band of men and women whose job it is to risk life and limb for the superstars of the small screen — and it's the superstars who get all the credit! Being a stuntman, or woman, requires first and foremost physical fitness — almost to the standard of an Olympic athlete. Miss O'Neil, in fact, was a champion diver but broke her arm at the Olympic trials. Nevertheless she holds 22 world speed and stunt records, including driving a hydrogen-powered vehicle at 524 mph and water-skiing at 104 mph!

The only other requirement of a stuntperson is, as you've probably guessed by now, **GUTS!** Though **COLIN SKEAPING**, one of Britain's top stunt actors, says a stuntman is just "a trained coward".

Most of the action and adventure programmes on TV have their own stunt crew, ready to step in at a moment's notice, but some top stars do a lot of their own stunts. One of the most notable is **New Avenger JOANNA LUMLEY**, who took a commando training course to knock herself into shape for the series. Like Gareth Hunt, who plays Gambit, she does the majority of **Avenger** fight sequences — and her athletic high-kick would put a ballet dancer to shame.

All the fights are worked out, blow by blow, in advance with director Ray Austin (a stuntman himself). Ray had the enviable honour of teaching all the previous **Avenger** girls how to knock a



A floating James Bond (Roger Moore). (Inset) Roger in *The Saint*.

man senseless: Honor Blackman, Diana Rigg and Linda Thorson were all taught how to stage a realistic punch-up.

Another much-acclaimed star is **ROGER MOORE**, who is prepared to do every stunt himself, no matter how dangerous. He's usually stopped by his producer, though, who is afraid of what will happen to the filming schedule if Roger lands himself in hospital for a few months! Mr. Moore was well known for his stunts as the original **Saint**, but still finds plenty of use for his skills as the big screen's **James Bond**.

No well-known star, however, does anything *really* dangerous, like falling from an office block or staging a car crash. That's when a professional stuntperson is called in — at a rate of pay that ranges from £69 to £75 per day, and up to £200 for anything really hair-raising.

Good stunts aren't just done on the spur of the moment. Car crashes, for example, take about two days to set up. The car is strengthened with tubular steel, the petrol tank is removed and the exact movements of the car and filming sequence are worked out in consultation with the stuntman. When an actor falls from a building, he lands on a specially-prepared bed of folded cardboard boxes and foam mattresses.

Stunt actors wear protective pads on their elbows, knees and often behind their kidneys. In some cases, a whole padded suit is worn. And for stunts involving fire, a fire-proof set of underwear is compulsory! A lack of protective clothing can be a problem for the girls, as **ROBERTA GIBBS**, one of Britain's top stuntwomen says: "We wear dresses and skirts and can't protect large areas of our body with hidden padding the way men do," Roberta has played stunt roles for stars such as Wendy Craig, Gayle Hunnicut and Britt Ekland.

Colin Skeaping has worked as stuntman for Ian Ogilvy in **Return Of The Saint**. He says he gets scared *before* doing a stunt — he has conditioned himself to be totally calm while actually performing it. If he didn't, this could result in his losing his nerve and possibly injuring himself.

A lot of stunts *look* a lot more dangerous than they actually are, thanks to TV's props department. Chairs that are smashed over people's heads are, in fact, made of lightly-glued balsa wood; windows that stunt guys crash through are made of so-called "toffee glass" which shatters easily. Bricks, rocks and heavy instruments can all be made from harmless expanded polystyrene, skilfully spray-painted so they look realistic.

But no number of props can make up for a stuntman who isn't skilful in his job or physically fit. He has to keep his muscles toned-up, even during periods when he's not working. There are no substitutes for experience, timing or constant rehearsals when you're in a potentially-dangerous business such as this.

But even when things *are* properly planned and rehearsed, they can sometimes go tragically wrong. Like the fall of 300 ft. that Albert Bakunas had to do from the top of a giant building, in 1979, for the film **Steel**. He died when the giant airbed he fell on burst on impact. Proof that stuntmen are paid to take risks where, sometimes, the odds are stacked against them.

**BOB BARTON**