

13/24

Patrick McGoochan: A Genuine Original

BFI Southbank celebrates the cult star of The Prisoner



Wednesday 20 June 2013, London.

Throughout August **BFI Southbank** will celebrate **Patrick McGoochan** with a season of film and television dedicated to this mercurial acting talent. McGoochan's most famous role was undoubtedly as Number Six in **The Prisoner** (1967-68) (a role he reprised in an episode of *The Simpsons*, arguably a true indication of cult status) but his career was more than just this one iconic role. This season will offer audiences the opportunity to reappraise an actor who famously turned down the roles of **James Bond** and **The Saint**, and was dubbed by **Orson Welles** 'one of the big actors of his generation...[with]...unquestionable acting ability'. The season will include screenings of film and television productions such as **Armchair Theatre: The Man Out There** (ITV 1961), **Ice Station Zebra** (1968) and selected episodes of **Danger Man** (ITV, 1960-68). The season will also include **Patrick McGoochan and The Prisoner: Oddities and Rarities**, a bespoke compilation of rare and precious footage relating to *The Prisoner* and the wider world of McGoochan's career, showcasing this unique and uncompromising talent.

McGoochan's career actually started backstage at the Sheffield Playhouse Theatre, but before long he was making on-stage appearances and proved to be a natural. During the 1950s he appeared in several productions in London's West End, where he was spotted by Orson Welles who cast him in *Moby Dick-Rehearsed* (1955). McGoochan's big break came just a few years later in **Brand**, which was filmed for BBC TV in 1959. **Henrik Ibsen's** powerful play about a single-minded priest and his impact on those around him played perfectly to McGoochan's trademark strengths: brooding intensity, vibrant physicality and almost overwhelming stage presence. Small parts in films and TV followed before he made the transition from character actor to star with his role as the globetrotting spy in *Danger Man*. During the run of *Danger Man* he still appeared in a number of film and TV productions: **Armchair Theatre: The Man Out There** (ITV, 1961) told the story of a Russian cosmonaut stranded in space, **All Night Long** (1961) was a restaging of Shakespeare's *Othello* in

the context of a fashionable London party while **The Quare Fellow** (1962) was a brooding social drama on the evils of the death penalty.

However, it was his next work for television that ensured he would forever be a star in the cult firmament. *The Prisoner* was a barnstorming adventure series with high production values, intelligent scripts and a bravura performance by McGoohan in the lead. *Patrick McGoohan and The Prisoner: Oddities and Rarities* will be a bespoke compilation of rare and precious footage relating to *The Prisoner* and the wider world of McGoohan's career. Also screening will be the cold-war thriller **Ice Station Zebra** (1968) and one of McGoohan's best late-period works **Best of Friends** in which he plays George Bernard Shaw. This season will offer audiences a chance to see exactly why Orson Welles thought so highly of McGoohan and discover his work beyond 'The Village' of *The Prisoner*.

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Screenings taking place in the season:

BBC Television World Theatre:

Brand

BBC 1959. Dir Michael Elliott. With Patrick Wymark, Peter Sallis. 90min

McGoohan's great stage success was (thankfully) filmed by the BBC. Ibsen's powerful play about a single-minded firebrand priest and his impact on those around him played perfectly to McGoohan's trademarks strengths: brooding intensity, vibrant physicality and almost overwhelming stage presence. Simple sets and basic filming techniques ensure the eye is taken by the tour-de-force performances.

Thu 8 Aug 18:30 NFT2

Armchair Theatre: The Man Out There

ITV 1961. Dir Charles Jarrott. With Katherine Blake. 50min

Airing a month before Yuri Gagarin did the real thing, this play starred McGoohan as a Russian cosmonaut stranded in space whose only contact – due to freak sun spot activity – is with a Canadian trapper's wife cut off in a blizzard. This tense *Armchair Theatre* play is a prime example of how an actor of McGoohan's capabilities adapted to the one-off studio dramas of 1950s and 1960s.

+ Rendezvous: The Executioner

ITV 1961. Dir Pat Jackson. With Michael Gough. 50min

Shades of *Danger Man* in this episode from the filmed anthology series. McGoohan plays a lawyer investigating the death of an old friend from the days of the French Resistance. Giving a typically powerful performance, McGoohan guest stars in a series that featured different leads for every story.

Total Running Time 100min

Tue 13 Aug 18:20 NFT3

Danger Man: The Lonely Chair

ITV 1960. Dir Charles Frennd. With Hazel Court, Patrick Troughton. 25min

+ Danger Man: A Date with Doris

ITV 1964. Dir Quentin Lawrence. With Jane Merrow, Ronald Radd. 50min

Relating the exploits of a globetrotting security agent, *Danger Man* made McGoohan a household name and (at the time) the highest paid actor on British television. These two episodes, one from the earlier half-hour series and one from the later hour-long seasons, neatly encapsulate the changing styles and strengths of the show.

Fri 16 Aug 18:30 NFT2

Patrick McGoohan and The Prisoner: Oddities and Rarities

We present a bespoke compilation of rare and precious footage relating to *The Prisoner* and the wider world of McGoohan's career. *The Prisoner* was a defining moment in 1960s television, originating in Britain but delivering a truly global impact. Baffling, daring but always entertaining, it virtually kick-started the continuing obsession with certain cult television titles as fans round the world entered into heated discussions about the meaning behind its surreal complexity.

Total Running Time c100min

Wed 7 Aug 18:15 NFT1

The Best of Friends

C4 1991. With John Gielgud, Wendy Hiller. 100min

One of McGoohan's best late-period roles was as fellow Irishman George Bernard Shaw in this TV movie adapted from letters and journals, which portrays the unique 25-year friendship shared by Shaw, Benedictine nun Dame Laurentia McLachlan and museum curator Sir Sydney Cockerell.

Fri 30 Aug 18:10 NFT3

Hell Drivers

UK 1957 Dir Cy Enfield. With Stanley Baker, Herbert Lom, Sidney James, Peggy Cummins, William Hartnell, Sean Connery. 108min. PG

A vigorous, violent and thoroughly enjoyable ride, *Hell Drivers* is saved from the B-movie graveyard by taut plotting, tense direction and potent performances. Stanley Baker is impressive as troubled ex-con Joe, haunted by a driving accident, who drifts into a new job and finds himself in lethal danger. Equally powerful is McGoohan, playing Joe's murderous rival Red. They are supported by a terrific cast.

Sat 3 Aug 18:10 NFT3

Thu 8 Aug 20:40 NFT2

All Night Long

UK 1961. Dir Basil Dearden. With Marti Stevens, Betsy Blair, Paul Harris, Keith Michell. 91min. 15

Much disparaged by the *Monthly Film Bulletin* in 1962, *All Night Long* is an enjoyable curio from today's perspective: a not entirely successful but thoroughly entertaining attempt at restaging Shakespeare's *Othello* in the context of a fashionable London jazz party featuring real-life celebrity guests: Charles Mingus, Dave Brubeck, Johnny Dankworth and nearly a dozen other jazz musicians. Patrick McGoohan is a suitable malevolent Johnny Cousins, a character in reckless pursuit of a doomed dream.

Sat 3 Aug 20:30 NFT3

Fri 9 Aug 18:10 NFT2

The Quare Fellow

UK 1962 Dir Arthur Dreifuss. With Sylvia Sims. 90min. 15

Powerful adaptation of Brendan Behan's first play (which debuted in 1954) with McGoohan affecting a change of tone and pace from his role as John Drake in *Danger Man* for his portrayal of Thomas Crimmin, a thoughtful man gradually finding his pro-capital punishment views eroded by his involvement with an upcoming execution. Shorn of the darker gallows-humour of the original stageplay and avoiding most of its Irish slang and folk music, the film instead scores as a brooding social drama on the evils of the death penalty.

Sat 10 Aug 18:20 NFT3

Wed 14 Aug 20:30 NFT3

Ice Station Zebra

US 1968 Dir John Sturges. With Rock Hudson, Ernest Borgnine. 145min. U

Terrific adaptation of Alistair MacLean's slow-burn, cold-war thriller set on board a submarine. McGoochan is David Jones, a secretive British agent spirited aboard the US submarine Tigerfish III to hitch a ride to Ice Station Zebra, a British Arctic research encampment which has been sending out distress signals. The film is currently being remade by Warner Bros (with writer-director Christopher McQuarrie); this is a rare chance to catch the brilliant original on the big screen.

Wed 21 Aug 20:15 NFT3

Mon 26 Aug 15:30 NFT3

NOTES TO EDITORS:

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- Growing the next generation of film makers and audiences

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