

# THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE PRISONER

*(Converted from publication article with tables, so not original layout)*

Leaving aside editors and other crew members - all of course highly important - the main planning and production of *The Prisoner* was in the hands of more than two dozen men, who, one way or another, created the series, or contributed directly to it. What follows is a revealing and retrospective look at those involved, presenting an overall view of the series' gestation and birth. *Feature © Roger Langley.*

## Introduction



Studio production was housed in the Borehamwood Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer complex, situated fifteen miles north of London. The principal personnel were Patrick McGoohan as executive producer, occasional writer and director, with David Tomblin as series producer and, briefly, director. Tomblin, who had been born in Borehamwood, worked previously with McGoohan on *Danger Man* and together they were the sole directors of Everyman Films, the *Prisoner* production company.

Also on board was George Markstein, as writer on *Arrival* and series script editor, except on four late episodes. The McGoohan and Markstein collaboration produced the idea for the series, based around the use of British wartime internment camps. Markstein created an initial synopsis after McGoohan declared that he would do no more *Danger Man* episodes. The new *Prisoner* series was to be a blend of espionage and sci-fi fantasy, but with its roots set in fact, leading to seventeen episodes being eventually produced for television. Don Chaffey and Pat Jackson each directed four episodes, being outdone by McGoohan, who headed five.

Markstein, who had also worked with McGoohan on *Danger Man*, had a circle of known writers. He approached several of them, explaining the general theme of the proposed new *Prisoner* series and providing an idea of what was expected from them. As the weeks passed during 1966 several prospective scripts were submitted, with some being rejected.

Moris Farhi was one of the writers who found his script, *The Outsider*, being rejected by McGoohan, because of a scene in which the main character is seen to be perspiring under torture. McGoohan told him sharply, "Heroes don't sweat", although in the star's own written script for *Free for All* he included a night club scene with him singing and the description "He is perspiring".

Terence Feely's script *The Schizoid Man* was accepted, although he too encountered a difficulty with the star. The story required McGoohan to kiss his co-star Jane Merrow, but the actor refused to do so. Similarly, Vincent Tilsley found a scene he wrote, involving McGoohan romancing a new woman in the Village, being severely watered down.



Another unfiled script was entitled *Don't Get Yourself Killed*, by Gerald Kelsey, who did at least see his *Checkmate* story being filmed as one of the main Portmeirion-based episodes.

Jack Shampán recalled being engaged as art director for the series: “I was just going on holiday and they gave me five incomplete scripts to work from. So I took them with me and that was my holiday, sitting in the hotel sketching out ideas for *The Prisoner*.” However, Shampán later affirmed that McGooohan had everything clearly in his mind in advance, down to the smallest detail. As for David Tomblin, Shampán had great admiration for the producer: “An introspective quiet man who knew what film making was all about.”

Bernard Williams was production manager and a founder *Prisoner* producer was Leslie Gilliat, although he left the production after only two months. Together with other production team members, the two men went to Portmeirion in the summer of 1966, to make a sixteen millimetre reconnaissance film, taking in the resort and local geography. This included the nearby Minfforrd cemetery, which was being considered for the funeral scene in *Arrival*, but was later rejected, in place of Portmeirion’s beach.

Gino Marotta was assistant director on all but one episode, *Many Happy Returns*, which was handled by Ernie Morris. As for the director of photography, Brendan Stafford, McGooohan demanded from him new lighting techniques, never tried before. The star’s hands-on approach even extended to overseeing selection of actors, leading to casting director Rose Tobias-Shaw describing some of his choices as “off-beat”. Later on, McGooohan took to redirecting footage completed by other directors, if he was not satisfied with their work.



After filming got under way, even crew members made plot suggestions and McGooohan injected many of his own, later ones reflecting his values and autobiographical aspects. An initial batch of seven episodes was envisaged from the outset and work was started on these, commencing with major location filming in Portmeirion, during the autumn of 1966.

According to stunt double Frank Maher, “We got to Portmeirion and, with Don Chaffey, we were making it up as we went along. We just did assorted pieces, which were put together later. We all chucked in ideas.”

The *Prisoner* was originally to be made as a first season of thirteen episodes, ending with *Degree Absolute* (the story which became known as *Once Upon a Time*). The rest of the production’s unfolding history and the involvement of its writers and directors can be told through the sequence of episodes, applying the usual screening order, as opposed to the shooting order, or time of completion.

## Arrival

*Director: Don Chaffey; writers: George Markstein and David Tomblin*



Don Chaffey first met McGoohan during production of the film *The Three Lives of Thomasina*, which he directed.

He had also seen him on stage and was aware of McGoohan's acting prowess. Surprisingly, the director at first declined the actor's invitation to helm *Prisoner* episodes, but later relented.

Chaffey had also directed several *Danger Man* episodes and now stepped into the important position of being the only *Prisoner* director to be on the main location shoot in Portmeirion, apart from McGoohan.

The director recalled, "Pat's not an easy person to get on with, but he knows what he wants. There were some bitter arguments, but out of them came what I think is one of the best television series ever made."

David Tomblin recalled how McGoohan told him one day, "I've seen Lew (Grade), we've got the money, we've got the series. So write the first story."

Tomblin had never written before and immediately contacted George Markstein. Together they came up with *Arrival*, but more writers were needed for additional episodes. Markstein already knew all the writers, but Tomblin reflected, "When we interviewed writers, no matter how much detail you gave them, they came back with an entirely different story, although this was only because the series was so different. So in the end, detailed storylines were the way to approach it, to keep it all in the same sort of style."

Tomblin had overall management of the series, with McGoohan giving his all-round input as executive producer. More people moved from *Danger Man* to *The Prisoner* and they were all well used to the filming pressures. Tomblin regarded fifteen to twenty set-ups a day as being usual, yet on *The Prisoner* the daily average exceeded thirty and in one forty-eight hour period over a hundred.

Markstein claimed that *Arrival* was made as a longer pilot episode for the series, lasting up to ninety minutes. He wanted to play up the espionage side of the series, while McGoohan tended to accentuate the allegorical and symbolic aspects of the series, particularly towards the end of the production. It was as a result of their differences over the raison of the series that they eventually parted company.

### **The Chimes of Big Ben**

*Director: Don Chaffey; writer: Vincent Tilsley*

Vincent Tilsley wrote *Chimes* and one other episode, *Do Not Forsake Me Oh My Darling*. He wanted a spy story, in the way that George Markstein envisaged an espionage series. *Chimes* was one of the original batch of seven stories, filmed after the initial four episodes, *Arrival*, *Free for All*, *Dance of the Dead* and *Checkmate* (the two others being *Many Happy Returns* and *Hammer into Anvil*).

Apart from its opening, no other original Portmeirion footage was used in *Chimes*, apart from a glimpse of the beach scene from *Checkmate*. Although the location footage is minimal, there is some 8mm cine film and several 1966 photographic slides capturing the helicopter landing on the lawn, with the hospital porters stretchering away the new female inmate. Thus, the eventual positioning of *Chimes* straight after *Arrival* at least maintained the theme of a prisoner being brought to the Village.





Although Don Chaffey directed the early Portmeirion stories, there is less of the stamp of the director in Chimes, possibly because there was such a distinct story from Tilsley and a cast of strong actors. Tilsley devised the story's non-alcoholic spirits as the ultimate punishment for residents, being given an indoor drinks cabinet, but containing only a harmless alcohol substitute.

Chimes featured for the first time in the series the opening dialogue, although the lines were never used within any episode. The story also presented the first appearance of the MGM backlot in Borehamwood. This other outdoor location would, from now on, regularly be used throughout the series, with filming footage being switched between Portmeirion and the MGM backlot.

### A. B. and C.

*Director: Pat Jackson; writer: Anthony Skene*



Anthony Skene had a long career writing for television. His script for A. B. and C. started life with the working title Play In Three Acts, reflecting the story's play-within-a-play trio of scenes. For some reason this

later was changed to 1, 2 and 3, perhaps because there was a final fourth 'play' in the closing scenes. However, the new title presented another problem, as there were No. 2 characters, plus the unseen No. 1 figure. Thus the episode name was changed again, using alphabet letters this time, instead of numerals.

In Skene's mid-sixties TV play *The File On Harry Jordan*, the main character finds that the lift in a building only goes to the twelfth floor, although a number thirteen appears on the lift buttons. When he visits the top floor, he is greeted by a silent dwarf butler and meets "the man behind the big door" before learning that he can never leave.



Director Pat Jackson had worked with McGoohan on the TV series *Rendezvous* and *Danger Man*. He had first seen the actor on the London stage in *Moby Dick* and was hugely impressed. In fact the director claimed to have brought McGoohan to the screen, having immediately called his agent after seeing the actor in the theatre.

Of his involvement with *The Prisoner*, Jackson recalled, "Pat asked me to come over to MGM and said, 'I've got a proposition that might interest you' and he showed me location stills of Portmeirion and a rough outline of the story." Jackson quickly expressed interest in directing some episodes and recollected how McGoohan sent over an early script. "I tore open the envelope and started to read. I was absolutely thrilled. I didn't know what the hell it was all about, but I thought it was a fascinating, absolutely wonderful idea, very interesting. So down to MGM I went for the first day's shooting and there was Pat ready."

Interestingly, A. B. and C. was later screened in Canada on 12th September, 1967, being its first ever broadcast and with the story being shown there immediately after *Arrival*. Clearly the *Prisoner* production was simultaneously being pitched to North America, but with no stated episode order.

### Free for All

*Director: Paddy Fitz (McGoohan using his mother's maiden name, Fitzpatrick); writer: McGoohan*

Already the star was taking on more than just the lead acting part. McGoohan set about writing an episode and adopted the role of director, having helmed a trio of *Danger Man* stories. It could be argued that even early on in the series he was seeing *Free For All* as a precursor to *Fall Out*, with its 'McGoohanesque' plot and dramatic elements: ordeal, spirited 'role-playing', improvisation and eventual elevation to a higher position. Strangely, for a man on record as publicly denouncing violence on screen, McGoohan wrote into the episode a cave scene with a sadistic and brutal beating of No. 6.

The actor was in charge of the second episode being filmed in Portmeirion and at one point was having to contend with the new Rover replacement.



It is not known who came up with the original idea for a mechanical beast, which was ambitiously supposed to travel on land and water, but McGoochan claimed that both he and Tomblin (or Bernie Williams in another version) saw a weather balloon in the sky and chose this as the new Village guardian. However, the call sheets showed a requisition for weather balloons and so somewhere between the star's script and the crew's arrival in Portmeirion, the Village watchdog switch had been made. Indeed, the earlier Arrival call sheet carried the instruction for the team to "test Rover balloons for beach buggy chase sequence" and so the name of the entity had been chosen from the outset, although it was only spoken in one episode.

Nevertheless, it is interesting to consider McGoochan's challenging script directions for the speedboat escape scene after No. 6's capture by the original motorised version of Rover:

*P. floats on his back. Unresisting. His eyes stare unblinkingly into the sky. (There is) the brief sound of a wailing siren. 'Rover' ejects from its rear a lifebelt attached by a nylon rope. 'Rover' turns and sets off towards the Village towing P. in the lifebelt home to the Village. His eyes unblinking. He talks passionately to the air. P.'s voice can be heard across the water: Be seeing you. Be seeing you. Be seeing you.'*



The star cleverly allowed the wide use of his publicity photo in the episode, fuelling speculation that his character was the earlier John Drake from *Danger Man*, who had dramatically resigned. In the opening sequence and on the election placards his face appeared. The same picture was used by McGoochan when answering fan mail and was even distributed by ITC as a publicity card.

This was an ingenious way to avoid copyright issues and dues being raised by the rights owners and writers of the previous long running TV show, which had, after all, made McGoochan famous.

### The Schizoid Man

*Director: Pat Jackson; writer: Terence Feely*

Terence Feely had enjoyed a long TV writing career and he also penned the later Prisoner story *The Girl Who Was Death*. The scriptwriter had been producing teleplays for several years by the mid-sixties, including the long running police drama *No Hiding Place*, fantasy series like *The Avengers* and action shows like *The Saint*.

Additionally, as an assistant producer on the espionage-themed show *Callan*, story editor during the *Armchair Theatre* run of plays and script editor on the *Mystery and Imagination* series, Feely was experienced in the construction of TV show frameworks, gaining also writing credits on *The Persuaders!*, *The Protectors*, *UFO* and many other series during the coming decades. Perhaps, therefore, for Feely *The Prisoner* was just another job, but his *Schizoid Man* story stands out among the seventeen episodes. A review in a past *Six of One* mailing observed:

*When one looks at all the elements of this episode and the separate elements of the other stories, one can see how a number of different scriptwriters produced plots which did not really create a 'series' at all. Many of the Prisoner's episodes are one-off, separate dramas, using the same setting and central character. The Schizoid Man is one example of this and what occurs in this episode does not occur in the other stories. It is as though we are not watching the 'proper' Prisoner at all, but its identical twin.*

Director Pat Jackson, mentioned earlier in connection with A. B. and C., was also retained to helm the later Prisoner stories *Hammer Into Anvil* and *Do Not Forsake Me Oh My Darling*.

As for *The Prisoner*, the director gave his recollection as to the series' inception: "A Home Office official, perhaps a little the worse for drink, intimated that such places as the Village existed. Patrick was inspired and commissioned script writers, directors and ideas. He approached me and the scripts I was offered were interesting, new and original."

Jackson expressed great pride regarding the filming of his segments. However, the director was not alone among the many people working on *The Prisoner* who did not fully understand the concept, or grasp it at all. "I'd love to be able to say yes, I saw the significance of the series, but I didn't. I took it as a drama and I was thankful that one could do it with conscience and do it with pride and it was a fascinating project".

Jackson remembered how he tried to shoot six minutes of film a day, being twice the normal amount for a TV feature, although quality was not allowed to drop.

Of the *Schizoid Man* script, the director described how he read it, analysed it and worked out the shooting plan. "I had no brief at all, you just analysed it as a conductor would a score." His conclusion was, "Not that I knew what it was all about, and I don't think McGoohan did really. But what a concept!"

McGoohan always claimed that our worst enemy is our self and so *The Schizoid Man* might be seen as a visual example of what he was advocating. Respected editor Geoff Foot had the challenging job of matching together the split sequences, while other scenes simply showed Frank Maher from behind.



### **The General**

*Director: Peter Graham Scott; writer: Joshua Adam (Lewis Greifer)*

Peter Graham Scott had a long film and television background, as a producer and director, leading to his being chosen to direct some *Danger Man* episodes. He had begun working in films at Elstree, a stone's throw from the Borehamwood studio where he would direct his *Prisoner* episode. He was surprised one Friday night to receive a call from McGoohan requesting him to take on the episode and film it on the Monday. The script arrived on the Saturday morning, giving just forty-eight hours to prepare direction.

Several members of the *Danger Man* crew had signed up to work on *The Prisoner* and *The General* was completed in ten days under Graham Scott's supervision. Of McGoohan, Graham Scott revealed, "I found Patrick McGoohan a demanding leading man to work with. He would sometimes confront us with a completely rewritten script. But it was usually much better."

The director revealed that he found the project fascinating, as, according to him, it coincided with McGoohan's real-life situation of having been 'trapped' as a 'prisoner' in the *Danger Man* series. He felt that the actor had for many years been "working seven days a week, twelve hours a day, without any intellectual or physical release." Graham Scott therefore believed the true origin of the series to have been a simple progression of *Danger Man* into the later format.



The director was convinced that it was McGoohan's forceful conviction which gave the episodes their power. "Patrick had this intensity, which is what makes him such a remarkable actor."

However, the director had a much different view of the series. “If you look at the stories, they are tosh. And the one I directed was tosh.” He believed that it was nothing more than McGoohan’s penetrating blue eyes which commanded attention, telling viewers “this is the truth, be sure this is truth.”

Of the series, Graham Scott later declared, “The Prisoner is still remembered and even taken seriously more than (forty) years after its inception.” He added that McGoohan carried the whole pressure of the production, rewriting scripts and toiling relentlessly every day of the week.

Writer Lewis Greifer, like some of his Prisoner scripting colleagues, had enjoyed a long career in scripting for the screen. His credit in the series, Joshua Adam, was a pseudonym, made up of the first names of his two sons. According to Greifer it was Markstein who came up with The Prisoner, from his own pet idea and knowledge of wartime spying. However, for The General, McGoohan and Greifer extended the concept to present a ‘computer scare story’.

### **Many Happy Returns**

*Director: Joseph Serf (McGoohan, using his middle name); writer: Anthony Skene*

Dealing with the director first, Michael Truman was the initial choice, he having directed the recently produced colour Danger Man story Koroshi. However, he was removed by an unimpressed McGoohan, who then directed the episode himself, using the pseudonym Joseph Serf (see also the sections on It’s Your Funeral and a Change of Mind as to removal of directors).

Truman was familiar with several members of the cast and crew of The Prisoner and had already become used to working with McGoohan. However, the new production was clearly not a continuation of Danger Man and it may be that this led to the director being unable to continue with the format, or grasp the unusual concept.

The director had enjoyed a film editing and directing career during the previous twenty years and it is likely now that the full story will never emerge. In fairness to Truman, perhaps the plot was too packed with ideas and goings-on, so that he was not able to arrange for the planned events to be included. McGoohan clearly then simplified the screen action when he took over the reins. He also did a good job in directing Returns himself and this was the only episode helmed by him which he did not also write.

Writer Anthony Skene has been mentioned earlier in connection with his A. B. and C. script and his third story follows in the next section below. Both Many Happy Returns and Dance of the Dead have lengthy sequences with no dialogue being spoken.



There were in fact several more scenes written into Returns, but which were not filmed. Originally No. 6 would look round the hospital and hear a sound, revealed as a laboratory rat running in an exercise wheel and he would also hear ‘voices’ from a tape recorder.

Surprisingly, in the original script, the truck in which No. 6 escapes was to be seen driving through the Village and there were many other script differences relating to the London sequences. Interestingly, the Village newspaper was to run a headline “Plane lost over sea. No hope of survivors” and there was to be a volcanic eruption on the island on which the Village was based. Clearly the episode would have been much different and longer if Skene’s script inclusions had been retained and filmed.

A second Portmeirion shoot on the episode occurred in the spring of 1967 (see also Hammer Into Anvil). Director Pat Jackson was present at the time to film fill-in shots and more exteriors, with Frank Maher standing in for McGoohan in some shots. The earlier 1966 raft filming had been done off the Abersoch shore, about twenty miles from Portmeirion.



## Dance of the Dead

*Director: Don Chaffey; writer: Anthony Skene*



Both Chaffey and Skene have already been mentioned in this article. The scriptwriter's Dance Of The Dead story was originally intended for the second episode to be transmitted. According to editor John S. Smith, McGoochan had rejected the first cut of Dance Of The Dead and had the episode shelved. However, he later agreed to having Dance re-cut and he subsequently approved the results. This could explain why the episode was not shown in its intended second position.

Skene was given much latitude and this might be regarded as surprising, so early on in the series, which is another possible reason why Dance was moved until later. The writer remarked, "I was allowed virtually to show No. 1 even if he was an telex machine. But... a week in television is a long time and people forget, particularly when the next episode starts. As long as you don't kill or cripple your hero, or give him a wife or kids, the world stays open".

In the original script No. 6 was to pen a note, "I'm going to be murdered. If I can't escape, I must know my killer will be brought to justice. You'll find him hiding in a village by the sea. I don't know its latitude or longitude. I hope this rough sketch may help you find it."

However, the ensuing episode was made more surrealistic and less specific. Skene observed that in producing for television there was "too little time", although the team making The Prisoner felt that it was to be something special. "It had a life of its own, even in the early days," the director affirmed.

The photograph in the story, taken from the dead man's wallet, was actually snapped in Portmeirion's square during the filming, showing two members of the production team. This was the first, but very slender, clue as to the series' 'secret' location. There would be two more hints, from the underside of a tea cup, with its Portmeirion pottery name brand visible and an envelope addressed to "Portmeirion Road", both items seen in later stories.

Dance of the Dead premiered on screen in November, 1967, meaning that over a year had passed since filming of the episode had taken place, back in the autumn of 1966.



## Checkmate

*Director: Don Chaffey; writer: Gerald Kelsey*



Gerald Kelsey, like several other Prisoner writers, enjoyed a long career in television. His episode was originally penned under the title *The Queen's Pawn* and pictures taken at the 1966 Portmeirion shoot show the name on the front of director Don Chaffey's copy of the script. However, the screenplay was rewritten extensively and the episode title was changed to *Checkmate*.

Filming the chess action was a lengthy process, with many set-ups and cuts. Other plans evolved, such as No. 2's residence being changed from Portmeirion's Unicorn cottage to the Green Dome. Back in Borehamwood, studio scenes were being rewritten in the November of 1966.

From looking at *Checkmate* it can be seen that the Prisoner standard opening sequence was created after the episode.

As No. 6 walks across the lawn during the initial cast credits, marks on the grass, left by the chess squares, are visible.

Some scenes from *Arrival* were reused in *Checkmate* and the story was the last of Chaffey's quartet of episodes to be screened. Kelsey wrote another Prisoner script entitled *Don't Get Yourself Killed*, but it was not used.



### **Hammer Into Anvil**

*Director: Pat Jackson; writer: Roger Woddis*





Hammer into Anvil was the last of the 1966 original batch of seven episodes, but used extra Portmeirion location footage, filmed in the spring of 1967, when director Pat Jackson was present (see also Many Happy Returns). The episode was another of Jackson's quartet of stories and the director has already been covered earlier. Hammer also meant the end of Portmeirion location work for McGoohan, it being his third time there, including the previous Danger Man visit, which first gave him the idea for using the resort.

The episode's script, from Roger Woddis, was submitted early on, but the story was held back for later screening. There were a fair number of script revisions, which generally removed comments which were too specific, as the Village and its location and practices had to remain fairly undefined. Woddis, also a poet, humourist and crossword compiler, wrote a few other television scripts at the time and in future years would contribute a weekly piece to a television listings magazine, 'Woddis On', plus articles for periodicals, as well as continuing TV writing and working in radio.

### **It's Your Funeral**

*Director: Robert Asher; writer Michael Cramoy*

Portmeirion in It's Your Funeral looked more bleak than in earlier stories, its foliage and blooms being sparser by the time of the later shoot. Local people were again 'in the Village' in 1967 for a few processions in certain scenes, but the richness of the 1966 parade and carnival sequences was missing, as was McGoohan.

Director Robert Asher had a long television and film directing career. He had directed episodes of The Saint and The Baron, plus The Champions, The Avengers and The Strange Report. Dramatically, the star dismissed Asher and took over the final direction, although Asher's name was retained in the screen credits. Thus McGoohan's directorial pseudonym Joseph Serf did not have a third outing (see also the Many Happy Returns and A Change of Mind sections, as to removal of other directors).



Michael Cramoy was a screen writer for many years. As well as being engaged on film undertakings, Cramoy had worked in television, on series such as The Invisible Man, The Saint, for which he penned several episodes, plus The Baron and so his path had crossed with that of Asher in the past. Cramoy may have only written one Prisoner episode, but he came up with some novel plot ideas.

Working from Cramoy's script, Asher, before being fired, presented a very different vision of the Village. From the resulting story, it seemed perhaps that the two men had set out to confuse viewers completely. Indeed, It's Your Funeral actors Derren Nesbitt and Mark Eden lamented that they did not know what was going on. Nesbitt claimed that he confronted McGoohan, saying, "Bob Asher, the director, doesn't know what's going on. I don't know, nor do the others. Even you don't understand what's happening."

Actor Annette Andre felt that McGoohan was very rude to Bob Asher and her co-star Mark Eden recalled, “There was a bust-up on the set one day and Patrick McGoohan took over direction of the piece.” In the editing suite, John S. Smith remembered, “I cut the film, put the scenes together and showed it to (Asher). I asked (him) what he thought. He said he didn’t know and to ask Pat.” Clearly that was a mistake and an angry McGoohan promptly dismissed the unfortunate director.

Taking on the direction of Funeral might not have been a good idea for the stretched star. Chris Cook from the studio’s art department related how, during the shooting of the episode, he found McGoohan at one point sitting on the studio floor: “He was so tired, he had to stop filming, he was just so whacked.”

### **A Change of Mind**

*Director: Joseph Serf (McGoohan, using his middle name); writer: Roger Parkes*

For a third and final time, the series’ autocratic star and executive producer dismissed the appointed director. Roy Rossotti’s previous screen credentials had been varied: assistant art director, set dresser, second unit director and finally director on one episode of The Avengers. However, he had been selected to helm the episode A Change of Mind, but was later replaced by McGoohan. Thus the directorial screen credit became Joseph Serf for a second time, using the actor’s middle name (see also the Many Happy Returns and It’s Your Funeral sections as to removal of directors).

Writer Roger Parkes revealed that the plot of his story, his first actual script, was influenced by the film The Manchurian Candidate, in which a brainwashed war ‘hero’ is



programmed to kill a politician. This was the only Prisoner script contributed by Parkes, but he had already provided storyline ideas in other productions and had edited episodes of several television series.

After The Prisoner, Parkes wrote more than a hundred and fifty scripts and a dozen books, as well as taking office as a magistrate. As for his Change of Mind plot, he found it amusing that McGoohan would not allow viewers to see him being kissed on screen, but they could watch him being lobotomised

### **Do Not Forsake Me Oh My Darling**

*Director: Pat Jackson; writer: Vincent Tilsley*



The Forsake episode was devised to cover McGoohan's absence while filming Ice Station Zebra in the US. By now, with the star absent and a new crew in place at the studio, a tried and trusted director was needed and so Pat Jackson was invited back for a fourth and final stint in the directorial seat.

Also, an established writer was chosen to write the story, in the form of Vincent Tilsley. Series script editor George Markstein was no longer on board, but Tilsley had penned one of the early scripts, The Chimes of Big Ben.

Do Not Forsake Me was originally entitled Face Unknown, but for whatever reason the much longer title was substituted. Also, departing from the standard format, Forsake became the only episode with an opening 'tag' scene, plus some voice-over narration from McGoohan (apart from the astronomy scene, removed from the 'alternative' version' of The Chimes of Big Ben).

As mentioned in this article's introduction, The Prisoner was originally to be made as a first season of thirteen episodes, ending with Degree Absolute (the story which became known as Once Upon a Time). Evidently a second series was commissioned, only to be curtailed after a few more episodes were made. Once Upon a Time had to be carried over, to join up with Fall Out as a two-part finale and so Do Not Forsake Me became placed in thirteenth position. In this way, the series was able to continue without a break, but if there had been a second series, Forsake was intended as the opening story.

### Living in Harmony

*Director: David Tomblin; writers/idea: David Tomblin, Ian Rakoff*

Living in Harmony allowed producer David Tomblin to don the Prisoner director's hat for the first of his two such undertakings and he was able boldly to create an episode in the form of a western.

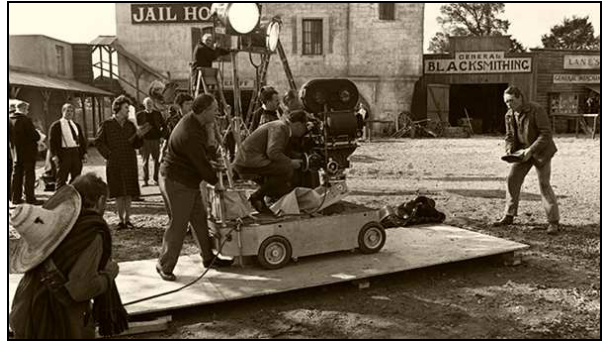
Ian Rakoff had already worked in editing and providing dialogue, but had taken on an assistant editing role towards the end of the Prisoner series. An idea he had for a cowboy story was turned into the Living in Harmony episode and he received a screen credit under the name of Ian L. Rakoff, with Tomblin as writer, producer and director.

However, the original idea behind Harmony was claimed by stunt double Frank Maher, who recalled saying simply, "Let's do a western". He did, at least, secure a cast screen name credit, for the first and only time in the series. McGoohan and Tomblin also later laid claim to the idea, as well as others at MGM who submitted their own plot suggestions. According to McGoohan, his order to a confused Tomblin, in demanding that the cowboy story be fitted within the framework, was simply "Work it out!"

As with Many Happy Returns, Dance of the Dead and Fall Out, Living in Harmony has sequences without dialogue. The episode also has its own revamped 'opening sequence', parodying that of the standard sequence. Harmony was one of the very last episodes to be made and, as with The Girl Who Was Death and Fall Out, was barely finished in time to meet the screening schedule during the first UK run.

At the 1967 Prisoner press conference at the MGM studios, McGoohan was still filming Harmony and presented himself to the journalists in his cowboy costume, a holstered gun on his waist.





## The Girl Who Was Death

*Director: David Tomblin; writers/idea: Terence Feely, David Tomblin*

By the time of the pre-penultimate episode, it seemed that the original premise of *The Prisoner* had long been cast aside. Following the departure from format made by *Do Not Forsake Me* and *Living in Harmony*, *The Girl Who Was Death* now really turned *The Prisoner* on its head.

Terence Feely was another scriptwriter brought back for an end-of-run episode. However, he asserted that initially a two hour special was being planned. Feely recalled being on holiday in Cannes when McGoochan and Tomblin turned up at his hotel.

The writer claimed that they announced to him, “We want a two hour special. To be honest we’re getting sick of *The Prisoner* always being in *The Village*. We’ve got claustrophobic about it. Now we want to get him out and we have this idea that we play a con trick and get him out by having him read a children’s story to some kids, then break out of the story into the story he’s actually telling. And by this device we get him out of *The Village* and do a kind of weird out-of-the-Village episode.”



Feely, who had obviously impressed his visitors with his earlier story *The Schizoid Man*, remembered being asked to write the new script, adding, “But at the end of the day Lew (Grade) would not stake us the money for two hours. He said ‘No, I don’t care how good it is. I don’t even want to see it. I can’t fit it into the

series. I can't sell it as part of a package. It's got to come down to an hour and just be like any other episode.' And so it came down to an hour."

Feely later worked with McGoohan and Tomblin again on a few proposed productions after *The Prisoner*, but the plans were never taken to the screen and McGoohan left Britain and eventually went to reside permanently in the US.

## Once Upon a Time

*Writer and director: Patrick McGoohan*

*Once Upon a Time* was written by McGoohan and directed by him, although the episode had been shot several months earlier, long before the final episode, *Fall Out*. Originally entitled *Degree Absolute*, the penultimate story was based around the 'Seven ages of Man' speech from Shakespeare's *As You Like It*. The story was meant to provide an ending for the first thirteen episodes, as a first 'season'. However, the episode was much later grafted onto the final two-part climax of *The Prisoner*, so that at the time *Fall Out* would appear to follow on directly from *Once Upon a Time*.

McGoohan's penned script pages showed many sequences without any true dialogue and so a good deal of improvisation was envisaged. Time has blurred the tale of whether it was *Once Upon a Time*, or *Fall Out*, which drove the star to lock himself away for a straight thirty six hours - with pen, paper and bottle of whisky - to complete what was to be the script for a 'season closer'.

The star decided to try out the script on members of the production team by concealing his identity and putting the pen name "Archibald Schwarz" on the front. The cast and crew were surprised to see less completed pages than usual, with some sheets containing many single repeated words, or lines from the nursery rhyme *Pop Goes the Weasel*. There were even places where the characters would just shout "Pop" at each other, or recite numbers aloud to themselves.

Props master Mickey O'Toole particularly noticed the shortfall in the number of pages as well as the the name of the unknown scriptwriter on the front. Not knowing the true identity behind the name, O'Toole went to McGoohan, telling him that the script length was inadequate and that the content was "rubbish."

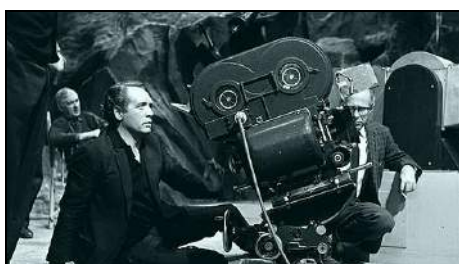
However, the eventual script played out on TV was quite different from the shorter, original written version and the dramatic effect was greatly enhanced by the strong performances given by the star and Leo McKern. This was also the only episode to show a No. 2 Village leader being killed.



## Fall Out

*Writer and director: Patrick McGoohan*

This was the last *Prisoner* script to be written. McGoohan undertook the difficult task of not only winding up the series, but also connecting the episode to the previous week's story. However, not all of the script was penned by the star as the President's speech was composed by the actor who played the part, Kenneth Griffith (late of the recent episode *The Girl Who Was Death*).



The finale's episode title borrowed from 1960s concerns over nuclear war. One of Britain's best-selling newspapers at the time, the Daily Mirror, reviewed the final episode: "It was originally planned to run for a further thirteen instalments. Why the abrupt finish to this series...?"

According to art director Jack Shampan, the series was ahead of its time, with its own philosophy, but came to a halt because McGoohan took on too much, as executive producer, writer, director and star.

Shampan recalled, "The Americans were clamouring for us to deliver more episodes, but it became impossible for Pat to keep going, doing so many different jobs. He was wearing himself out."

The former production manager, Bernard Williams, had left after thirteen episodes, during McGoohan's 1967 USA absence. He had moved to another assignment and so was replaced by Ronald Liles. Williams later observed, "I thought the series looked so classy for its time. Sadly, after consultation with Lew Grade, a decision was made to film no more Prisoner episodes following the seventeenth story."

And so, Fall Out was made and screened within a short period. The finality of Fall Out and the series was accentuated by having end credits appearing over the closing scenes, something which no other episode had featured.

David Tomblin said of Fall Out, "It took rather a long time, longer than it should have done. We were all a bit punchy by that time but it was worth it. We worked seven days a week, sixteen hours a day, and tried to make every episode one thousand per cent. Eventually it became obvious we couldn't maintain the pace or the quality in the time that was left. The showing dates were fast approaching so it was decided to finish at seventeen episodes."

The series' producer showered praise on his Everyman Films co-director and commended the Prisoner series: "I think Patrick's a very good writer and a very good director. Being the man he is and being the person I try to be, we put everything into it."

## Conclusion

Around thirty names have appeared above, relating to the men who were in various ways instrumental in bringing the concept of The Prisoner to the screen, some of course more than others. Along with the camera operators, studio editors, technicians, composers and various crew members, the dedication and commitment of the entire production team meant that a quality production would in future years stand the test of time and become regarded as a television classic.

It might have been difficult at times to pinpoint who was in charge, or had individual responsibility, but, fortunately, owing to the looser production constraints and purse strings of the time, there was enough latitude to allow all concerned just to 'get on with it'.

The question posed by this article at the start was "Who's running the show?" Most people would answer that overall it was 'Number One', the star, part writer, rewriter, executive producer, part director and even occasional editor. In short, Patrick McGoohan *was* The Prisoner.

