

Questions are a burden to others

Where am I? Whose side are you on? What is today's flavour of ice cream?* Key to it's enduring appeal is The Prisoner's ability to ask questions of the viewer; each story poses a philosophical conundrum which encourages the audience to think for themselves and question authority. In this quizzical spirit, every issue we too will ask pertinent questions about Number Six's sojourn in The Village on an episode-by-episode basis. Just to be awkward, we start at the end - or is it the beginning? - with Fall Out...

THE KEY TO THE KINGDOM by Dave Barrie



Illustration: Cooey Pad 5

"I hoped there would be a bit of an outcry..." - Patrick McGoochan

"There has not been all that much debate about 'Fall Out', which is odd..." Six-of-One member Gez Crotty.

Imagine: You are Patrick McGoochan. You are the highest paid actor in the Country.

Courtesy of a TV series that millions sit

down to watch each week, you have the world at your feet. But, and there is a but... You have ideals. You are passionate about certain things. Principles for one thing. On a handshake and a blank piece of paper you then created the TV series that you wanted to make. However, there has to be an ending. Being you, it had to be so final, a second series could never be. So emerged 'Fall Out', scorching a trail across our screens and sealing the series longevity.

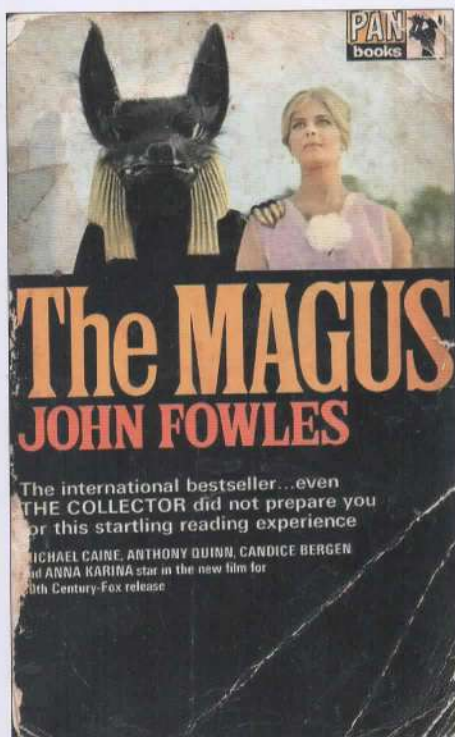
Each week, the viewing audience, hooked by the star's charisma, and by the enigmatic and baffling plots, got drawn further in. Everyone wanted to know: What was it all about? As the weeks went by the stories got more surreal, more puzzling, more bizarre. And the big question everyone was asking was, 'How's it going to end?'

'Fall Out' has been discussed many times in our various journals - script to screen, production¹, memories of the actors and technical staff, the reception and consequent outrage from the audience, all providing endless comment. Elements of the episode have been dissected and examined, particularly the unmasking of Number One, the symbolism, (particularly Christian,) and whether he escapes; if all that happens is a dream, or his thoughts as he drives to tender his resignation. Further interpretations have speculated that all that occurs might be a near-death experience, a nervous breakdown, or a highly subjective view

of reality similar to that portrayed in the films 'The Cabinet of Dr Caligari' (1919) and more recently, 'Shutter Island' (2010) amongst others. Although there has been much comment regarding various isolated aspects, the number of comprehensive in-depth articles debating the whole can be counted on the fingers of one hand. Considering its pivotal role, there is far less coverage of 'Fall Out' than one might imagine. Even the title, 'Fall Out' has failed to draw interpretation. My first guess would be its origin is the army command, to 'fall out', to cease to obey orders, the end of authority, to regain freedom. In 'In The Village' issue 24, member Géz Crotty drew attention to the 'Fall Out' deficit. He says he has been a member for over 20 years and, "There has not been that much debate about 'Fall Out' which is odd considering the fact that this is the episode which resolves it all." As true now as it was then.

Consequently I want to explore the inspiration, the ideas, the imagining, the intent, the resulting imagery, in short, what Patrick McGoochan's ultimate aim was, as he determined to combine and resolve all the various strands that had tantalised the audience throughout this captivating and compelling series. Whatever we may think of others who claim a degree of creative input, it was ultimately the drive of one man to put his reputation on the line, to bring this inspiring, remarkable, thoughtful, and thought-provoking series to our TV screens.

For a work of art to survive, assume status, to possess longevity, it must transcend its constituent parts; it must have an elusive quality, a Mona Lisa smile, which continues to enthral the audience. It must in addition possess qualities that may be indefinable, intangible, ethereal. In this, 'Fall Out' qualified.



The 1968 movie tie-in paperback of John Fowles' novel, originally published in 1965.

McGoohan has stated that *The Prisoner* is an allegorical conundrum, and 'Fall Out' crowns the series, going beyond the power of words, relying on imagery rich in both symbolism and ambiguity.

In an interview² David Tomblin said, "Pat had lots of ideas he never explained, so you took them on face value". Referring to 'Fall Out', he added, "It was things we had discussed over a long time, that stuck in his head. I understood it better than most because I knew Patrick and the way he thinks...it was oblique because Pat is an oblique person."

In *Number Six* magazine issue 22, member Peter Preston had indulged in some detective work. Apparently the author John Fowles and McGoohan were in the same Carl Jung philosophy/psychology group in the 1960s. Fowles' very influential book 'The Magus' (which is very Prisoneresque.) was published in 1965, and in 'Fall Out', McGoohan's own interest in the work of psychologists Freud and Jung is easily detected.

More than any other episode, 'Fall Out' operates on a number of levels, and certainly is the most complex and deepest of all, as McGoohan confirmed, "This was not an action adventure show, it was an allegory." As a whole the episode may appear confused and confusing, undisciplined and bewildering, surreal and symbolic, it is despite these factors riveting, deliberately ambiguous and hugely ambitious. It remains one man's daring and virtually impossible dream to reach the unreachable. To many it is both majestic and triumphant.

The obvious qualities that come to mind when analysing this episode are both these allegorical elements and the symbolism employed to illustrate them. The evidence? Descending into the depths of The Village, (Orpheus' descent into the underworld,) corridors, doors and keys are all prominent symbols in the writings of Jung and psychoanalysis. The use of archetypes, a judge, three different facets of rebellion, the butler - representing Everyman - as further examples.

But before we take the next step, there occurs a hugely symbolic scene. "We thought you would be happier, as yourself," intones the robotic voice of the supervisor. As Number Six begins to remove from a dummy (there's symbolism for you) wearing a mask of McGoohan's face, the suit taken from him in *Arrival*. But don't miss the rows of coat hangers on rails. Is this indicative of other previous seekers? Maybe there's further symbolic meaning in the shape of the coat-hanger hook, a question-mark, that McGoohan will again reference in his 1984 home movie known as the LA tape, when he draws coat-hangers in the sand, which are then washed away by the incoming tide...as so many of our questions are by time and a lack of answers.

Three (the magic number) characters; one who serves, (the butler), one who governs, (the supervisor), one who strives to attain freedom. The sign of three is then repeated to emphasise this pattern with the three rebels on trial. Calvary anyone? Along with the day of judgement, resurrection, the 'Dry Bones', escape to a better world, the 'Be seeing you' salute, (supposedly a sign early Christians made, but also used by followers of the Moon Goddess, Selene).

The greatest evil, that one has to fight constantly, every minute of the day until one dies, is the worsser part of oneself. And that is what I did. And I would do the same again."

- Patrick McGoohan

Until the corridor lined with jukeboxes, we can be forgiven for thinking that the law of logic still applies. Certainly we have veered into surrealism in Number Six's journey, but in general, until now, there has been order in the drama. The jukeboxes sing 'All you need is Love', but here a definite line has been drawn, in effect they signal to the viewer 'You are embarking on a roller-coaster'. The key to the cavern door, (remember the key in A, B, and C fulfilling a similar purpose,) into perhaps another level of the unconscious, revealing the febrile nerve centre of The Village. This is where surrealism and symbolism take centre stage.

What I find significant is that in this episode McGooohan has little dialogue. Even given the opportunity, the delegates - literally faceless bureaucrats - hiding behind authority, drown out and muffle his words. His "I" is answered in the script by "Aye". The ambiguity is that both words sound the same. Why "Aye"? Simple agreement, acknowledging a power. But this is the sole moment in the entire series that we see the strength of Number Six ebb away as he registers confusion. He wants no power over others. He is not heard. Besides, the throne, the fawning speech, the delegates not caring what Number Six has to say, is I suspect a reflection and wry comment on McGooohan's own view of his fame, as a man who sought to shun that side of things, preferring to let his work speak for itself.

It is others who get the big speeches. In fact, in total, apart from his single abortive attempt to address the delegates, he only has 18 lines, a number of which are single words, such as asking 'Why?' four times, and the total word count is 41. We can read this as perhaps McGooohan feeling his verbal message is stifled by an increasingly vocal public.

In the cavern, the rhythmic pulses of vapour, surely initiated by Number One, hold both Number 48 and the late Number 2 captive. Consider the behaviour of these two rebels when confined in the transparent capsules. Why transparent? Maybe this represents the invisible prison we make for ourselves if we cease to have an open mind. Certainly I suspect the vapour contains a drug that befuddles their brains, for they are lost to the outer world. Confined, both physically and mentally. It takes action by Number Six to break the spell. Number One employed this tool when his henchman came for Number



Bust of Carl Jung on the corner of Matthew St. Liverpool, inspired by his famous 1927 dream of the city.

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Six at the beginning of Arrival, the gas then rendering him unconscious. When Number Two antagonizes Number One we see further evidence of this tactic.

And later, the guns. Ah, the regrettable bullet. Lots of shooting, but no blood. We recall McGooohan telling Kanner it was meant to be ironic when the latter pointed out the violence. It was round about now that this viewer began to realize that perhaps we are inhabiting a dream - or a nightmare:

Passing the ultimate test, based on his stance, and not on what he says, Number Six is invited further into the labyrinth to meet Number One. At this point any remaining thoughts amongst the viewing public they were going to be treated to a conventional ending were thoroughly dashed, as McGooohan emphatically ensured there could never be a second series. With the unmasking of Number One, McGooohan's core message is writ in blazing capitals. The shroud, suggesting a spiritual religious element, the tragicomic mask, then the ape, 'the monster from the Id', and then.... The Hidden Self. Layer after layer of symbolism. Now we have no pretence of accepted logic. We are going out with all guns blazing.

At the very crux of all is the timeless message that each of us is our own prisoner and warder. I remember discussing the unweaving of Number One with Prisoner writer Vincent Tilsley, and he said, "This is not new, but what is new is using this format". The idea of each of us being capable of both good and evil is timeless. Stevenson mined this theme when he wrote *Dr. Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, but McGooohan took the concept way

beyond anything previously devised. That was his genius.

The psychologist C. G. Jung felt his mind had two aspects, the objective and subjective. He called them Numbers One and Two respectively. Jung also wrote, "The individuation process - becoming who we could be - is sometimes described as a psychological journey... In the journey the traveller must first meet with his shadow and learn to live with that formidable aspect of himself. If he is fortunate he will find in the end 'the self'." Predating Jung was the author Thomas Hudson whose 1893 book *The Law of Psychic Phenomena* speculated we have two minds; again the *objective*, the part that deals with the external world, and the *subjective* that looks inward, is hidden, and concerned with feelings, sensations, and emotions. The acclaimed author, Herman Hesse, wrote an essay entitled 'Self Will', in which he says: "A self-willed man obeys a different law, the one law I hold absolutely sacred - the law in himself, his own will." In film the idea of a doppelganger first appeared in the 1913 German expressionist movie, 'The Student of Prague'. Perhaps most famously the theme of a monster from the Id was utilised to great effect in the 1956 film 'Forbidden Planet', whose script had its origins in Shakespeare's 'The Tempest'.

Again the symbolic tunnel is used to escape into 'our' World. How else could it be? You think they have escaped? Then why are they still in a cage rolling down the road?

The dance? "Well officer..." A tall story, and a wonderfully comic touch. We leave the past and run for not a taxi but a bus, the transport of everyman. Why does the door to Number Six's home open automatically? Why do we get the roll of thunder, 'Prisoner' (not 'The Prisoner') caption, the signalling cloud, the taut face against the wind? Deliberate ambiguity. Maybe, his task completed, he is heading to another village...

Our questions have been answered, but others posed. The Prisoner departs with a flourish, the cry, 'Question everything', and with a bang.

Of course, with such an emphatic statement it was inevitable that there was audience revolt. The wonder to me was that after months of gruelling work and resultant overload, struggling under immense pressure, McGooohan, in short order -

Danger Man or Prisoner?

BOOK REVIEW by Dave Barrie

Patrick McGoohan Danger Man or Prisoner?

Biography
revised &
updated
edition

* with new
foreword and
contributions by
Catherine McGoohan

& original foreword
by Peter Falk



roger langley

Patrick McGoohan: Danger Man or Prisoner?

Revised and updated edition.

Author: Roger Langley

250 Pages, £11.99.

When Roger Langley's biography of Patrick McGoohan first appeared in 2007 I couldn't praise it highly enough. Well, with this revised edition, a new benchmark has been set.

So, you have a copy of the first edition, why buy a second? Let me tell you, and recommend you do so.

I doubt anyone outside of McGoohan's family knows as much about the man; this is evident on every page. The very comprehensive research shines through. Roger has the sort of mind that can amass facts and present them in both a logical sequence but also bring them alive. Just as I did with the first edition I found myself unable to put the book down, and devoured it in three days.

My impression is that there is even closer collaboration with the McGoohan family. A new foreword and contributions by Catherine McGoohan, plus the addition of

several previously unseen family photographs. The 2007 edition's foreword by Peter Falk is also retained. Catherine has said about the new edition, "I think my father would be very pleased with this book. You have brought it into the next decade and beyond." No higher recommendation. Fittingly the closing remarks are by Joan McGoohan

"I am overjoyed by the recognition The Prisoner is receiving in this landmark year. I can't thank you enough for your contributions to his legacy and understanding him and shepherding his story."

- Catherine McGoohan

As might be expected, new information always emerges after a book's publication and during the years since the book first appeared this held true. Consequently Roger realised the time was right for this new, extended edition to appear.

Although it has fewer pages because of a different type, there are about 15-20,000 words more. Some 5-10,000 words have been removed from the first book in the form of episode synopses of The Prisoner, Danger Man, Rafferty and Columbo, also the episode order discussion etc., no longer needed as they are readily available online. Consequently, overall the new book is much longer, perhaps as much as 15-20%.

So firstly this new biography has updated and revised the 2007 content. Then an all new Chapter Thirteen comprises material that was not available at the time of the first edition, plus content relating to the period after the first book until the present day, with obituaries of the much missed actor and tributes; and his legacy. It also marks the fiftieth anniversary of the first broadcasts of "The Prisoner" in September 1967.

Finally, the biography runs to some 250 pages including colour covers. It retails at £9.99, which is £5 less than the original edition. **DB**

allegedly in some 36 hours - constructed a script that, under the guise of popular entertainment, promoted views on the nature of the world, our role in it, and what it was to be human.

But this pressure never showed on screen. No matter how great the workload, his watchword was professionalism. The Prisoner remains a high watermark, a triumph of ideas over convention, of ideals over predictability, of sheer artistic brilliance over the banal.

'Fall Out' debates the eternal conundrum: Does Number Six escape? Can we be free? It can teach us many lessons. All paths lead to the search for the inner self. Sooner or later, like Number Six, we too must make that journey. We too find ourselves in that room, being invited to be our true selves, the coat hangers as reminders of others who trod this way before us. From amongst the many who have 'got' 'Fall Out' I close with one voice. Listen to this from a Six-of-One member, "Truth is not absolute, we cannot tell the truth to another, for it may not be their truth. The prison we have to escape from is ultimately created by ourselves. Each of us, and each of us alone, holds the key. It's an irony of life that the more we understand our imprisonment, the freer we can become". The key to our kingdom. Amen to that.

¹ Utilising whatever was at hand; hence the recycled 'Girl Who was Death' sets and those used for a film just completed, 'Battle Beneath the Earth';

² Number Six issue 30

Editor's Note

Although I concur wholeheartedly with Dave's analysis of Fall Out, that McGoohan genuinely intended a symbolic rather than a literal reading of the series, there is nevertheless another less psychological way to interpret the events of that episode, which will form the basis of a future article.

CONTINUITY

For this feature we will be following the alternative running order proposed by Tony Sloman, film librarian on the show - but in reverse order, so that the later episodes get some attention for a change. Next issue's episode will therefore be **Once Upon A Time**.

*It's strawberry.