



Detective Drama **GEMS...**

Mid-1940s to the Mid-1980s

Issue #1 July 2020

Exhibits from Radio and TV (sorry, no books or movies)

DD Gem #4 — "The Lorcoe Diamonds Matter" **From YOURS TRULY, JOHNNY DOLLAR (CBS Radio, 1955)**

Lorcoe Limited of Amsterdam has a big problem in North Africa. Their U.S.-based insurer needs someone to go there, today. Johnny Dollar gets the phone call.

Dollar is an insurance investigator. He is familiar with Lorcoe: "Diamond-cutters, an old firm; big-time deals, all over the world." Right after walking into the Algiers Airport, their courier died suddenly. His briefcase and \$100,000 worth of "top-grade diamonds" are missing. That's the intro we get. Theme music follows.

"Johnny Dollar" was a New York cop who joined the Marines during World War Two. He traded those high-stress roles for the relative calm of a free-lancer serving various insurance companies. The cases are hard or just plain screwy. They also make for good radio. And, in certain situations, a firearm still comes in handy.

As for Johnny's luck with women? Spectacularly bad. The great majority of the ones he falls for turn out to be swindlers or murderers.

Seven different actors gave a radio voice to Dollar over close to twice as many years. Only one matters for this publication: [BOB BAILEY](#) (1913-83).

Bailey was "Dollar" from 1955 to '60. His post-'56 episodes are not Gem candidates, as they seem thin and rushed. Instead, it's the first 13 months of Bailey being Dollar that have enriched detective history. Using FIVE prime-time episodes to roll out a SINGLE radio script did wonders for characters and their complications.

"CBS Radio revived [Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar](#) in October 1955," Wikipedia tells us, "with a new leading man, a new director, and a new format. The program changed from a 30-minute, one-episode-per-week affair to a 15-minute, five-nights-a-week serial (Monday through Friday, 8 to 8:15 pm EST) produced and directed by radio veteran JACK JOHNSTONE."

Understanding Johnstone's genius as a producer starts with his credits (although no extensive web bio exists). [That list](#) of credits also offers live links to near all the Johnstone "Dollar" serials. Voices, sound effects, musical cues for scene and mood shifts — it's a mix that allowed a typical Dollar saga to excel.

"Saga"? Always liked that word! A terse definition: "Narrative of heroic deeds."

Bailey's "Dollar" was in unequal parts respectful and demanding; analytical and visceral; skeptical and judgmental. He was also able to narrate his fist-fights retroactively while the listeners heard him slugging out each fight in real time.

The only irritant was built-in: Cornball horn and droning strings as the THEME music. The opening notes of every Johnny Dollar episode starring Bob Bailey had the pretentious air of a fox-hunt kickoff. The closing theme had all the luster of a 1934 horror-movie soundtrack spun on a [Victrola](#) with a warped platter.

Various websites celebrate "Johnny Dollar" and Bob Bailey, who had done well in other detective roles pre-'55. But GEMS is about outstanding episodes and scripts, and the way to understand them is through **scenes, characters, and dialogue**.

In each GEMS write-up, you'll find scenes being spotlighted. When you call up the episode, you'll know what to look for and why; you'll be able to walk in with certain expectations. If you're an actor or actress, or an editor (of any type), or perhaps a media historian, this publication helps you "map" the episode and grasp its design beyond the story line, the vintage references, and the sidebar stuff.

Meanwhile the conclusion — how each loose end gets clipped, tied, or fried — remains able to surprise. That's because a GEMS analysis never spoils an ending.

The AUDIENCE for this publication's methods and exhibits will reveal itself **SLOWLY**. The next issue appears in October 2020 and you can find it via...

<http://www.ExactingEditor.com/Detective-Gems-2.pdf>

— Frank Gregorsky, Editor and Curator <<>> FrankGregorsky@aol.com

The Only Weak Character is Lying in a Hospital Bed

Best way to approach the "Lorcoe Diamonds" event-swirl is through its characters. All but one — a Customs Property Agent we hear from one time (he's groggy in a hospital bed from a head injury during the Airport robbery) — are outstanding.

(1) **Inspector Pierre Marcus** is a more finicky version of [Captain Louis Renault](#). Played by Claude Rains, Renault was the wily French Lieutenant in *Casablanca*. Though separated by 13 years, that immortal motion picture and this GEM detective radio episode have similar atmospherics (except for the Nazis).

Monsieur Renault was a master survivalist who excelled in quips: "I am making out the report now. We haven't quite decided yet whether he committed suicide or died trying to escape" (uttered as the Nazi Major is taking notes). Renault also tells Humphrey Bogart's character: "I've often speculated why you don't return to America. Did you abscond with the church funds? Run off with a Senator's wife? I like to think you killed a man. It's the Romantic in me."

That was 1942, with the world in flames. The German dictatorship ruled half of France, even as the French maneuvered to hold their North African colonies. Dollar has no choice but to slice and dice with Inspector Marcus. Much like tavern-owner Bogart did, with Renault, in the movie. Except Dollar has never been in Africa.

The Inspector meets Dollar coming off the plane. He, too, is under pressure to find the Lorcoe diamonds. At times Dollar suspects Marcus might've been an enabler of the Airport heist. Marcus will have police officers tracking Dollar; they'll even bug the next character's apartment ahead of the brash American's arrival.

When the Inspector later tells him about that bugging, and how he "found your conversation this evening MOST entertaining," Dollar says evenly: "Inspector — you are a rat." Marcus retorts with mock indignation: "I am a Frenchman!" I guess that means *we French respect your need to avoid scandal as we watch you risk it*.

Marcus's soaring politeness is laced with sarcasm. But he'll also pass along vital medical findings. The Dollar-Marcus relationship adds the vital but overlooked spice in skillful detective dramas: A turf battle. Collaboration, but with clenched teeth.

(2) **The Countess Maria D'Tolia**. She's the one who ordered the diamonds; and one of the very few who knew how and when they would arrive in Algiers. It soon emerges that she has no money and hangs out flirtatiously at parties scooping up edibles. How did she get to be a Countess? We never do learn that part.

Though dazzled by her looks, Dollar starts off all business. Armed with info from the U.S. Consulate on her financial woes, he means to flush out her confederates.

"Italian by birth. Title inherited. Old family. Goes back through one line in fact to [pause] Lucretia Borgia..." "I did NOT poison the courier," the Countess interjects dryly. She has sources all over; that's a reference to the police autopsy. It showed that the dead Lorcoe agent had been doomed even before the plane landed.

You might end up concluding that this "Countess" sounds too unreal to be realistic. Then again, how many Countesses have YOU known?

(3) An oafishly headstrong American named **Charles K. Barrett** — also his name in real life. Every mid-century story about Americans in an exotic overseas setting needed one like Barrett, oui? He runs a Chicago meat-packing plant that has gone beyond processing "everything but the squeal." Beyond in what way? By making money *from the squeal*, he tells Dollar with a metaphorical poke in the ribs.

Must be plenty to spare — money as well as squeal: Barrett is residing on a yacht while vacationing in Algiers. As part of pursuing the Countess, he agreed to buy her \$20,000 of the \$100K diamond assortment, with the rest going back to Lorcoe in Amsterdam. Now the ENTIRE shipment is missing.

Barrett and the Countess had a spat. But no way will he give up on her. And Dollar first hears of him while cross-examining the Countess about the mechanics of the diamond order and shipment. He's "a fellow countrymen of yours," she tells him, as well as "an overbearing, spoiled, middle-aged little boy..."

And jealous to boot: Barrett is parked outside the Countess's apartment building when Dollar shows up at her door.

Dollar has heard much about the Countess's charm and good looks. Armed with evidence that she is broke, he treats her as a fraud. "Ever think of working?," he inquires rudely. "Ohh forget it, Johnny," she counters wearily. "All I know how to do is be highly ornamental and say the right things to the right people; do the right things at the right time; and eat by stealing caviar at cocktail parties."

(4) "**BOBO**" — more Caricature than Character, he is a soulless mastermind from the no-cop's-land of the Casbah. But that's part of its survival requirement. If you truly want to understand this five-part Dollar Gem, scan Craig Smith's [July 2006 article](#). Reviewing Algiers over the centuries, Smith tells that us *casbah* is Arabic for "fortified place." Such areas were often turned into monuments...

[They] exist across North Africa, and many have been beautifully restored. In

Algiers the word once referred only to the citadel built above the old city, but it came to mean the old city itself. When people speak of the Casbah, they are referring uniquely to this crowded hillside between the fortress and the sea.

Usually a step ahead of Dollar, the Countess and the Inspector are relentless operators. Algiers is, after all, their world, not Johnny's.

Those two characters might remind you of a colleague, or an Uncle, or an old girlfriend (but not TOO old). The type? Wily. Joyful Deceiver. Instant Explainer.

Don't be surprised when a guest actor in a great detective episode can suddenly floodlight an associate or intimate you, up to now, have never QUITE understood.

In contrast, Bobo, "Citizen of the Casbah," is one-dimensional. He is an eel able to operate in human form and is at home with poison. You can evaluate Bobo's contribution to the Lorcoe serial if you play the audio files; the links are on page 9.

As for Dollar's take? Bobo might appear to be "a man of action, of accomplishment — but he'd CHOSEN to be a smuggler, dope-peddler, thief, and killer."

And Bobo's lady friend *happens to be the Countess's maid*. Seems that the Countess D'Tolia's apartment is its own center of intrigue in Algiers — even when she is somewhere else. And Johnny Dollar walks in assuming he can get her to confess just by citing some financial rumors collected by the Consulate??

Rarely has a single scene in a small space been fortified so lovingly with explosions. This script is dynamite (in fact, the Countess's apartment will come close to blowing up). Last but not least, and the MOST when it comes to hilarity, is...

(5) **Hans Zeindorf**, the Lorcoe agent in Algiers. Inspector Marcus introduced him to Dollar at the airport. Zeindorf did not want to depend on either. He's searching for the diamonds in odd ways. He is hiding (where else?) in the apartment of the Countess — UNCONSCIOUS — when Dollar arrives to compel a confession.

Four Sources of Tension and a Set of Believable Voices

A jittery corporate agent hiding in the closet. A police "dictaphone" transmitting Dollar's interaction with the Countess, including his impulsive kiss. A jealous suitor waiting (he'll later tell Dollar resentfully) for two hours and 40 minutes for him to exit her apartment. A maid loyal to a Casbah criminal rather than her employer.

And the Countess herself, lauded as beautiful, exquisite, *magnifique* by Marcus as well as the Property Agent whose head was gashed during the robbery. All manner of tension, which is good. Without tension, your audience does not PAY attention.

The balance is exquisite. Disorientation is low. Details come out when they need to. The vocalization and the pacing are deftly handled. And right here's a good place to acknowledge the "Lorcoe" scriptwriter: [LES CRUTCHFIELD](#) (1916-66), from the NED NORRIS website. Now let's say more about tension as a structural imperative.

Every detective script should exhibit at least three types of modulated tension...

- The first is 100% expected: Good Guys versus the Opposite. With an Inspector who could be either, or both, during an average day, "Lorcoe" adds an extra dimension to the standard divide.
- Man versus Woman: Between anger, tears, a smashed plate, and the impulsive kiss, the Countess will edge Johnny Dollar in her apartment.
- Then comes the mundane but never disposable — because it stands for professional survival *and income* — battle over turf. In "Lorcoe," this is mainly Marcus versus Dollar, with Zeindorf being an irritant to both.
- In this saga, we find a fourth source of tension: A magical and shady foreign realm steeped in intrigue. In fact, Algiers is about as far away from North and South America as Johnny Dollar will ever get.

Just before Dollar left to meet the Countess, Inspector Marcus had interrupted his dinner: "I will drink to your success," Marcus told him jovially, "with your brandy of course." He then offered advice in the form of disapproval: "You will learn nothing which has any bearing on this matter [by] questioning the Countess D'Tolia."

"As a matter of fact, she phoned me and inquired about you." It's their world, not the American's. "A remarkable woman, talented, beautiful." *Yeah, yeah.* "And she's really not the type" to be part of an intricately coordinated diamond theft.

Dollar scoffs at how the Countess has conned the locals. At the same time, he strains to keep up with the worldly-wise ways of the manipulative Inspector.

What Marcus does not know is that the U.S. Consulate briefed Dollar about the Countess. The Inspector knows every inch of his territory; but Dollar had put the Consulate to work right away. Which means it's not quite so lopsided a contest.

Marcus's men will spot the boorish Barrett parked outside waiting for Dollar's whatever-it-is to conclude. By the way, that's a FIFTH source of tension: Man versus Man — specifically, American versus American, in a foreign land — with a woman maneuvering between and around them. Inspector Marcus likes her too.

Dollar is Welcomed Warily into the Countess's Apartment

A forthright 1950s American, Dollar is compelled to spell out what he knows.

"Your family estates were confiscated by Mussolini. Family migrated to Bizerte [in nearby Tunisia], and then to Lisbon for three years. You left them there and went on to London. Since the war you've lived in Paris, on the Riviera, [then] back to London, Majorca, and finally here."

Without sounding frail, the Countess tries moderation: "It's not very pleasant to be dissected while one is still alive." Johnny Dollar can't stop. "As a matter of fact, you're flat broke. You've been living on credit for the past four months. And yet three weeks ago you ordered \$100,000 worth of jewelry sent to you on approval. How did you plan to PAY for it?"

"Get out," she whispers. The lady's quietly seething command over network radio is a marvel of 1950s broadcasting. (Think of the quality we've lost 55 years later. Computer microphones plus a virus from Red China have media pros and TV guests sounding like they're using tin cans with long wires adding delays. Disgusting.)

Barrett, fuming in his car, assumes Dollar is wooing the Countess. He had no such intention. But he is turned on by her — and probably by her resilience in parrying. Any steel-trap hunter has grudging respect for the targets that keep dodging.

In the apartment and during other encounters, the Countess will have an answer for everything. She'll even get by with "I have no idea why [fill in the blank]."

By the time "The Lorcoe Diamonds Matter" produces Dollar's closing memo to his client, this cash-poor Countess will be one of the very few females he never got the better of. If Sherlock Holmes could be bested by a female — that being [Irene Adler](#), whose portrait he later cherished — why not Johnny Dollar?

But we're STILL not ready to leave the Countess's apartment. What changes the mood so drastically after the Countess and Dollar exhaust their swordplay?

His realization that the oven's gas has been left on. One flick of a light switch in or near this kitchen could blow the place up. So Dollar smashes a patio window to let gas out, then fumbles for the gas valve in the dark. He finds it. He tells us what he did while we hear him doing it (another leap for radio crime fiction).

He also tries a door that opens a closet. The danger of a gas explosion receding, Dollar discovers none other than Hans Zeindorf — hiding in this closet, unconscious, and perhaps dead. This delightfully dramatic moment closes "Lorcoe" Episode #2. It also opens Episode 3 on the next night: November 9th, 1955.

"[A]nd When I Have Waking I Am DIED Almost"

Lorcoe agent Zeindorf still has a pulse. But what the hell was he up to in the Countess's closet? To find out, they revive him with smelling salts.

ZEINDORF: *Cough, choke, gag, cough.*

COUNTESS: Johnny, he does not like it. Should I go on holding them under his nose?

DOLLAR: Yeah, sure. Keep shoving 'em at him until he's strong enough to fight ya off. That's how [smelling salts](#) work: A person has to come to in sheer self-defense.

ZEINDORF: Nein. NEIN, stop! Is more too plenty already. My nose is killed, dead. No more —

DOLLAR: Maybe you've been poking it into the wrong places! What were you doing in that closet, Mr. Zeindorf?...

ZEINDORF: Nobody is find dis beautiful diamond. Nobody is DO anything. So I'm come looking for mine own self.

DOLLAR: In that CLOSET?

ZEINDORF: *Neeiiinnn* — is only for HIDING. I am wait for everybody going away, going at sleep. THEN I am going to looking.

COUNTESS: In MY apartment. What made you think they would be here?

ZEINDORF: You are please to forgiving me, Fraulein. But I am not taking the chance; I'm think to looking everyplace.

DOLLAR: Who turned on the gas out there?

ZEINDORF: Do not ask it [he speaks with resignation, not defiance]. I know nothing, I — I think I have sleeping some, maybe, and when I have waking I am DIED almost.

DOLLAR: Yeah. Well, apparently somebody was out to get ONE of us at least.

PARLEY BAER (1914-2002) was Herr Zeindorf. A radio great, he also appeared on TV sitcoms and crime shows [all the way to 1995](#). He does his part to make "Lorcoe Diamonds" a sonic delight. We hear a crafty Italian female, a self-assured French chief *gendarme*, and a befuddled German all speaking English, and in Zeindorf's case mangling it. (No part of the above dialogue was a transcriber goof.)

The Countess was brought to life by LILLIAN BUYEFF. I've only seen her on M SQUAD, where she played a stern yet anguished mother. Crooked Temptress is a role she could pull off on radio. Buyeff has no entry ("article") on Wikipedia, and the IMDB dot-com bio is minimal. But her [list of credits is respectable](#), and interestingly it fails to mention Buyeff's front-and-center role in "Lorcoe."

And who played Pierre Marcus? Not a Frenchman! The [actor giving voice to Inspector Marcus](#) "specialized in playing ethnic types, sometimes Spanish, Greek or Mexican but usually Italian — not surprising, since his parents were Italian immigrants and he grew up speaking the language before he learned English."

Chicago-born [JAY NOVELLO](#) (1904-82) "came from a very diverse neighborhood... [H]e got a job acting with various theater companies...and his facility with languages got him work in radio as a dialect specialist." IMDB dot-com's account of his TV and movie credits is vast, although the French character roles are rare.

"During his film career," [adds Wikipedia](#), "Novello's roles often alternated between pompous or fussy professionals and assorted ethnic characters, such as Italians, Spaniards, or Mexicans." In Algeria, of course, Novello is more scheming than fussy.

Reasons to Spend Time with Johnny Dollar in French-Run Algeria

As your Curator, I find that delving into the first half of a radio or TV exhibit, and introducing key characters AHEAD of your meeting them, is "just enough." We can analyze and celebrate a masterful episode this way. Then? Say very little about the SECOND half. The relative silence preserves the surprises that resolve.

Go to <http://www.otrfan.com/otr/ytjd/lorcoediamonds.html> and click on **Part 1**. Then face the fact that "Lorcoe" is **FIVE separate dot-mp3 tracks** totaling 70 minutes. That's nowhere near as clean as watching a 50-minute TV episode on a DVD, or relying on a website that streams single-file audio programs.

If you're curious but restless, SKIP Parts 1 and 2 of this five-part Dollar and open Part 3: <https://www.oldtimeradiodownloads.com/crime/yours-truly-johnny-dollar/lorcoe-diamonds-matter-ep03of05-1955-11-09> — this URL takes you straight to the smelling-salts revival of the hapless but honest Zeindorf.

IN SUM — three reasons to experience mid-1950s Algiers with Johnny Dollar...

1. The dazzlingly intricate scene in the Countess D'Tolia's apartment. It feeds backward and forward into *every other factor* controlling the action in "Lorcoe."

2. The pervasive turf tension between Dollar and Marcus. Adding "turf battle" to your script, or to your awareness as an editor/reviewer, is worth the struggle.
3. The environment, especially the ultra-dark passages of *The Casbah*. This factor deserves one more footnote, [from Wikipedia](#), adding meaning to "sordid past"...

Formally part of the Ottoman Empire but essentially free from Ottoman control, starting in the 16th century Algiers turned to piracy and ransoming, [facilitated by] its location on the periphery of both the Ottoman and European economic spheres ... Repeated attempts were made by various nations to subdue the pirates that disturbed shipping in the western Mediterranean and engaged in slave raids as far north as Iceland. The United States fought two wars (the First and Second Barbary Wars) over Algiers' attacks on shipping.

DD Gem #5 — "Flight 307" — March 29, 1963

From [77 SUNSET STRIP](#) (ABC, 1958 to '64)

We'd catch this show on Friday nights. Its home was the American Broadcasting Corporation — ABC — which typically trailed NBC and CBS in viewership.

STRIP went beyond, around, and beneath the specs of "detective drama" and "police procedure." A 1970s account called it "the prototype for a rash of glamorous private-detective teams." Unusually, the five regulars remained constant and likeable for half a decade. In most other ways, consistency was absent.

The series tried to be different things to millions of viewers. A season consisted of up to 39 episodes, an amazing workload by today's standards. During that stretch, 77 SUNSET STRIP might be solemn, hip, psychologically rich, eerie, warm-hearted, glitzy, or noxiously flaky. A few scripts are so spoofy and far out they could've been dry runs for *Get Smart* (1965-71) and its lampooning of spy culture.

At the other extreme: Cold War thrillers featuring "Stuart Bailey." Red-loathing conservatives of all ages and eras can admire these episodes. The script would leave no doubt as to whose global dictatorial agenda is governing the black-hat operatives. In these no-nonsense plots, Bailey is usually the lead character. During the sixth and final season of "77," he'll be the sole survivor of the founding five.

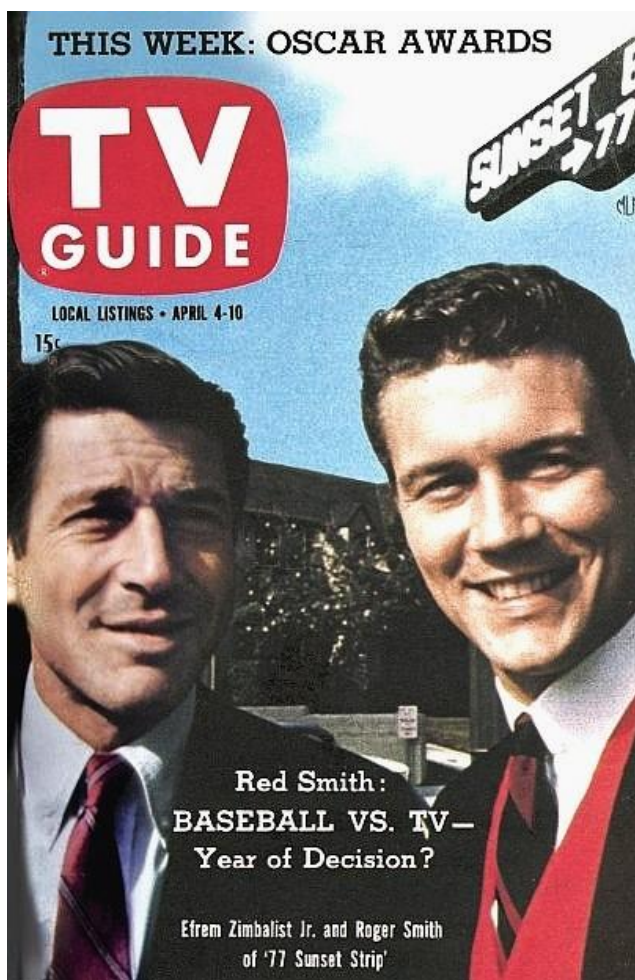
But "Flight 307" has nothing to do with Communists. It's here because of how much it achieves in only 50 minutes. It also shows how "77," as a side contribution, flood-

lighted acting, Hollywood and PR operatives — the professions who were then striving to represent southern California as Dreamland.

The "glamour" factor attracted viewers of all ages; but — even when the characters were acting sincerely shallow — the story-lines and portraits could be deep.

Bailey & Spencer, Private Investigators, Suite 101-102

Stu Bailey — portrayed by [EFREM ZIMBALIST JR.](#) — ran a Los Angeles detective agency whose address named the series. His founding partner — "Jeff Spencer," played by [ROGER SMITH](#) — was a tall, boyish sort even more appealing to women than Zimbalist in that pre-feminist era.



This *TV Guide* is from April of 1959. Six months earlier, when the series launched, Smith was two months away from turning 26; and Zimbalist had made it all the way to 40. (I'm using each actor's birthyear here; their age gap seems far narrower on TV.)

But STRIP's real debut came on October 17, 1958, one week after ABC had run the overwrought pilot episode. This second episode carried the title "Lovely Lady, Pity Me."

Stu Bailey has been set up to take a murder rap. Complete with a mug shot, the circumstantial evidence hits the late edition. Bailey dodges the police for most of the night. Spencer doesn't arrive at his hideaway until almost daylight.

BAILEY: Took ya long enough.

SPENCER: Had to lose a TAIL. I leave town for a few days and what happens [tossing him the morning newspaper]. Now really...

BAILEY: Mmmmp — they spelled my name right.

SPENCER: Dixon's, too. Who killed him?

BAILEY: What makes ya think I didn't?

SPENCER: Well, let's see: Stuart Bailey — Phi Beta Kappa, Phd in languages, six years with the [OSS](#) — punctures a man with a paper knife in his OWN office after a public quarrel. No Stu, I don't say you couldn't-a-done it. But you'da done it NEATER.

Notice how Spencer was scripted to sum up his older partner, right at the start of their long run? Sequences like that endear scriptwriters to their viewers.

Wikipedia tells us: "Smith appeared in 74 episodes of the Warner Brothers series. Due to his popularity on the show, Warner Brothers released one L.P. Album by Smith titled *Beach Romance*...in June 1959." Detective Jeff Spencer playing guitar and singing pop lyrics to a calypso rhythm? For balance, Stu Bailey smoked a pipe.

Dozens of STRIP scripts dip into parody. Aspects of life in and around Hollywood are lightly ridiculed. An episode from 1961 goes over the edge to SELF-parody. It's flat-out comedy: Three absurdly differing versions of how Spencer, Bailey and [junior partner "Kookie"](#) came together are acted out. There NEVER could've been a McGarrett, Mannix, or Marlowe equivalent of "[Once Upon a Caper](#)."

For five straight years, the writers, performers and producers got away with all of this bobbing and weaving, sleuthing and spoofing.

This issue lacks space to profile the other regulars — [JACQUELINE BEER](#), EDD BYRNES, and [LOUIS QUINN](#) — but future "77" GEMS will acknowledge all three.

In any case, [Stu Bailey](#) is the only "77" regular who matters in "Flight 307." And there's a striking quality to it that took a lot of episode-viewing to perceive...

It's the rare TV episode that can deliver all the wonders of an evocative movie but none of the downsides. This kind of episode...

- Doesn't take you 2 1/2 hours to watch. On a DVD or web-stream with the commercials taken out, it'll run between 48 and 51 minutes. Yet great scripting will offer content and conflicts worth twice that much of your time. The effect becomes: "How did the producers convey all of this drama, complexity, and realism in under an hour?"
- Doesn't save time by abandoning quality. Somehow, each key character is given just enough space and depth so that an intuitive viewer is able

to imagine what kind of person they'd been a decade or more earlier.

- Doesn't need bizarre "special effects." Jarring big-screen moments that slam you against the wall with sonic booms or brain-spilling skulls are for juveniles and juvenile tastes. Evocative characters and sparkling dialogue end up much more effective than garish murder or crash scenes.

All of those positives — along with the negatives avoided — take hold during "Flight 307." And, to complete the setting, let's bring back the **TV Guide** from late March 1963. Check the (inaccurate: Eames isn't the pilot) third column, halfway down...

FRIDAY

MARCH 29

Evening

8:00 ③ ⑥ ⑫ ⑬ POLITICAL TALK

[SPECIAL] The Liberal and Progressive Conservative parties are represented on this half-hour telecast.

"Country Hoedown" will not be seen.

⑦ ⑬ FATHER KNOWS BEST

Jim tries to help his former gardener get a job. Jim: Robert Young. Margaret: Jane Wyatt. Charlie Garrett: David White. Frank: Natividad Vacio.

⑨ DAKOTAS—Western

Telly Savalas in "Reformation at Big Nose Butte." Deputy J.D. Smith was once an outlaw and now his new way of life faces the test—his former gang leader, Jake Volet, has been released from prison and has summoned his men to rejoin him. Ragan: Larry Ward. J.D.: Jack Elam. Del: Chad Everett (60 min.)

⑪ MR. SMITH—Comedy

"The Senator and the Page Boy" are respectively Senator Smith and a bellicose teenager named Eddie Barton. Smith makes a start at straightening out Eddie by taking him on as his personal page. Fess Parker. Eddie: Marc Cavell.

⑫ HAZEL—Comedy

See Thurs. 9:30 P.M., Ch. 2, for details.

⑬ SHAPES OF MUSIC

8:30 ② ⑧ SING ALONG WITH MITCH

[COLOR] Leslie Uggams, Gloria Lambert and Louise O'Brien join Mitch Miller. Leslie sings "Cabin in the Sky." and "Who?" Gloria does "Wonderful Guy." Louise sings "Bali Hai." Elevator sequence: "I'm Sitting on Top of the World," "Shooting High." Barbershop: "Moonlight Bay," "Mandy" and "Old Mill Stream." (60 min.)

Meet the Sing Along gang in next week's TV GUIDE.

③ ⑥ ⑫ ⑬ TRUE—Jack Webb

"The Tenth Mona Lisa." In 1911, two men ask Vincenzo Perugia an unemployed picture-frame maker, to help them steal a valuable painting from the Louvre in Paris. Perugia agrees on one condition—that they steal the Mona Lisa. Perugia: Vito Scotti.

④ ⑩ ROUTE 66—Drama

"Narcissus on an Old Red Fire Engine." Tod and his buddy Lincoln Case are working in Galveston, where Linc meets a

chick named Janie in a tavern and falls hard—but she feeds him a Mickey Finn. Tod: Martin Milner. Linc: Glenn Corbett. (60 min.)

Guest Cast

Janie Anne Helm
Mr. Nickerson Alan Hale
Mrs. Nickerson Phyllis Hill
Paul Pat Renella

⑦ ⑫ ⑬ FLINTSTONES

[COLOR] "Swedish Visitors." When Fred decides to stay home during his vacation, Wilma uses the vacation fund to purchase a fur piece—secretly. Then Fred decides to go on a trip after all.

⑪ PANIC—Drama

"The Suitcase." A couple make a frantic effort to locate a stolen suitcase, which contains a live cobra. Hugh Marlowe.

⑬ TOOLS FOR TEACHING

"Opaque and Special Projectors."

9:00 ③ ⑥ ⑫ ⑬ TOMMY AMBROSE

Tommy's guests are singer Sandy Stewart and comedian Jackie Kannon.

⑦ ⑫ ⑬ DICKENS ... FENSTER

"Table Tennis, Anyone?" The carpenters form a team to compete in an industrial ping-pong league—and choose Harry as their captain. Harry: John Astin. Arch: Marty Ingels. Kate: Emmaline Henry. Mulligan: Henry Beckman. Mel: Dave Ketchum. Roger: Alan Hewitt.

⑨ SAM BENEDICT—Drama

Paul Lukas in "Season of Vengeance." After Rose Hanchen tries to murder Karl Messerman, a fine old gentleman with an unblemished reputation, she isn't even interested in finding a lawyer to defend her. Sam: Edmund O'Brien. (60 min.)

⑪ MOVIE—Comedy

"Hot Shots." (1956) Sach and Duke, two of the Bowery Boys, pick up child TV star Joey Munroe. Huntz Hall. (60 min.)

⑬ TURN OF THE CENTURY

See Wed. 10:30 P.M., Ch. 17.

9:30 ② ⑬ PRICE IS RIGHT

③ ⑥ ⑫ ⑬ EMPIRE—Drama

"The Tiger Inside." Monte Clifford needs money, so he attacks and robs his boss Al Pope. Monte runs away with his girl Betty, unaware of the seriousness of Pope's injuries—and the posse that's tracking him down. Redigo: Richard Egan. Tal: Ryan O'Neal. (60 min.)

Guest Cast

Gerald Wormser Harold J. Stone
Sid Keller Philip Abbott
Betty Wormser Joyce Bulifant
Monte Clifford Richard Evans

④ ⑩ ALFRED HITCHCOCK

Tony Randall and Jayne Mansfield in "Hangover," a rerun. Advertising executive Hadley Purvis has been drinking heavily lately, and this morning a king-size hangover has blotted out the events of the previous evening. A gorgeous blonde named Marian is in his living room—and his wife is nowhere to be found. Script by S. Ballinger. (60 min.)

Cast

Hadley Purvis Tony Randall
Marian Jayne Mansfield
Sandra Purvis Dody Heath
Bill Hunter Robert P. Lieb

⑦ ⑫ ⑬ 77 SUNSET STRIP

On "Flight 307" from Madrid, actress Barbara Adams learns that her boy friend is married and pilot Max Eames is told that his flying career is at an end. Stu: Efrem Zimbalist Jr. (60 min.)

Guest Cast

Barbara Adams Gena Rowlands
Max Eames Jack Warden
Charles "Brick" Garrett Philip Carey
Henry Cook Bill Williams

⑧ DEATH VALLEY DAYS—Drama

"Preacher with a Past." Reformed outlaw John Wesley Hardin moves to a new town. Neville Brand.

⑬ AGE OF KINGS—Drama

"The Road to Shrewsbury." Acts 3, 4 and 5 of Shakespeare's "Henry IV, Part 1." Having refused the King's offer of a peaceful settlement, Hotspur and his rebel army meet in open combat with Prince Hal. Tom Fleming. (75 min.)

10:00 ② ⑧ JACK PAAR—Variety

[COLOR] Guests include Edward G. Robinson, French actor-singer Charles Aznavour, British comedian Harry Secombe and Brooks Hays, President Kennedy's special assistant on international affairs. Hays, who is about to embark on a six-country African tour, discusses the humorous side of politics. (60 min.)

Tight Script for the "LAX" Terminal and Inbound [Flight 307](#)

Stuart Bailey is at Los Angeles International. So is Max Eames, the flamboyant manager of singer/actress Barbara Adams. She is played by the richly talented [GENA ROWLANDS](#). Eames is played by [JACK WARDEN](#) (1920-2006). In real life, each builds an acting track record that will go on for decades beyond this episode.

Bailey is heading for Hawaii and a vacation. The P.A. system calls him to a phone. A tipster wants to meet him in Mexico City. Why? To turn over stolen securities this thief now realizes can't be fenced in the U.S. A call to the insurer — *will they hire him to retrieve those securities in Mexico?* — gets Bailey hired. Forget R&R in Hawaii.

Bailey then crosses paths with "[Banks](#)" Miller, a guy he helped jail. They exchange pleasantries. Only later does Bailey realize that Banks is part of the securities theft.

Flight 307 will touch down later. It's coming from Spain, where Adams became engaged to Larry Knight. The married Knight has been posing as unattached while romancing Adams. Awaiting their arrival, Max Eames hears about Knight's double life. That ruins the media splash planned for the couple's entry into the terminal.

To his facile aide, Warden as Eames ruminates about their star: "Couple of million men lookin' at her, all thinkin' the same thing... [T]he WOMEN too: Watching her, studying her, envying her. Maybe some of 'em even HATING her a little. Too much money, too much work, too much play, too much everything." He snaps out of it and begins to plot damage-control; it starts with lying to a nearby press mob.

Flight 307's pilot is Charles "Brick" Garrett, played by [PHILIP CAREY](#) (1925-2009). His co-pilot has been radio'd by their boss at LAX to "watch" Garrett. What's the issue? Medical tests confirm a heart condition that will require grounding. Ever since the Korean War, Captain Garrett has flown civilian aircraft. This "Brick" is all business, unflappable, and with a [knowing half-smile](#) not far from Mona Lisa's.

The viewer is undecided about whether Captain Garrett or Barbara Adams — they are completely different personality types — will become this story's tragic figure. We have been shown enough to feel danger for both. We also have no idea what Stu Bailey is getting himself into. Is he REALLY going to Mexico City?

None of that is a complaint. The first half of a great detective episode HAS to serve up plausible characters and knife-edge tension. All the better to help us viewers think about what will likely play out during the SECOND half. If the characters are only cardboard cut-outs, we can't begin to weigh options the way they might.

SETTINGS — for the "77" Series, and Also for this "307" Episode

Oh yes, about those *TV Guide* images from 3/29/63... As a nationwide enterprise, the "Guide," and with no desktop computers, delivered localized viewing menus, in the mail, fairly detailed, ahead of each new seven-day period.

Except for six months of reruns during its final season, 77 SUNSET STRIP was always a Friday night event. The pages you see are from the Lake Ontario Edition. Channels with white numbers on black background are U.S.; channels with black numbers on white background are in Ontario, Canada. Living near the border let U.S. viewers see the same episode of their favorite series twice during a normal week.

The setting for "307" was Los Angeles International Airport, known as "LAX" starting in 1947. But, here in 1963, the novelty and collapsing-distance sensation are still fresh. This plot lets us experience or at least imagine business people and an elite "Jet Set" acclimating to international travel.

LAX had just completed a construction full of Space Age dreams. We can't escape Wikipedia: "The distinctive white Googie Theme Building" — that's GOOGIE, not Google — resembles a [flying saucer that has landed on its four legs](#)."

"A restaurant with a sweeping view of the airport is suspended beneath two arches that form the legs... Visitors [can] take the elevator up to the Observation Deck of the Theme Building..." But no dining: The restaurant closed after 9/11/2001. Security-related delays were irksome.

And do you know how LAX labeled men's bathrooms five decades ago? MENS, HOMBRES, CABALLEROS.

A few more details round out "Flight 307" historically. The two creatives who came up with this episode and held it together are [BORIS INGSTER](#) and [ARDEL WRAY](#).

As for Gena Rowlands? Born on June 19, 1930, in Madison, Wisconsin, she is with us today, at age 89, living in Norway. She was Robert Lansing's wife in 87th PRECINCT, and won acclaim for TV and film roles well into her seventies.

At the age of 33, during her high-altitude "307" interaction, first with a phony suitor and then a no-drama pilot, Gena as Barbara Adams is utterly convincing. Good for her. And even better for us. Although "Flight 307" is a 50-minute television episode, as a creative work it achieves cinematic sweep.

"Afraid...Most of All of Being Found Out"

A few hours from LAX, Barbara Adams is radio'd what Eames has verified: Larry Knight is already married! Forget everything she thought was genuine back in Spain...

You let me tell the world that we're engaged. But Knight stays cold: "Why not? As long as they spell our names right." ***What about your wife?!?*** "She stayed out of the picture so that I could get ahead. Why should she object to a little ADDITIONAL publicity?"

Adams instantly changes from hurt bafflement to rage. Larry the Lout then tries to re-seduce her.

She tells him to get lost and goes into seclusion. (On an airplane? Well, somehow. Could be that business class was much roomier in '63...)

Adams is soon found next to a half-empty bottle of sleeping pills.

Panic ensues on the part of Max Eames, though not his jaded assistant. Eames demands that Airport Chief Henry Cook land the plane — anywhere is fine, just do it right away. Cook does not budge. That first radio alarm is soon voided. The co-pilot and pilot radio back that no one is suffering from any overdose.

Captain Brick leaves the cockpit anyway. "I know what you must think of me," Adams tells him quietly. "I'm sorry I did it. I'm SORRY I made trouble but — please don't leave me. Please," as her voice descends to a whisper. Brick poses a question with an inflection that pretty much deletes the question mark, and so I'll go along with that deletion in this transcript...

BRICK: What are you afraid of, Miss Adams.

BARBARA: Ohhh — a number of things, Captain. Most of all of being found out. See, I'm a FRAUD. I was never good at anything. Not at school, not beauty contests, not romances. I flunked them all. Becoming "Barbara Adams" was a crazy accident — a FLUKE.

BRICK: Everybody feels like that sometimes.

BARBARA: Not sometimes. I'm ALL phony. All fake. Even this [half empty bottle of sedatives] is. I didn't take these. I took a few of them and lost my nerve. Threw the rest away. An EMPTY bottle is so much more dramatic.

BRICK: Well, at least you're being honest.

BARBARA: Why not? Soon as anyone gets to know me, finds me out — but I have to get close to somebody. Cause I'm freezing to death.

It was either profound, or brilliant marketing, for the SUNSET STRIP scriptwriters — along with various guests — to showcase the torments of actors and actresses. In most OTHER prime-time shows of the time, the professionals were trying to act like normal people. What's "normal" in Hollywood made for better ratings.

Cook Prepares to Tell Brick Garrett His Flying Days Are Over

In "Flight 307," at least three plot lines are at work and we viewers have already been shown enough to get a grip on each of the three...

(1) Max Eames's handling of his star is falling apart. All he can do in the short term is con the press, pay for drinks, and make demands of the top man at LAX.

(2) Stu Bailey is going to Mexico City to meet a securities thief who now realizes he probably can't get out of L.A. because a fresh crime has just been discovered;

and (3) an airline pilot's career is about to end even as he projects strength to a singer/star who feels her own career has been a decade-long fraud.

Brick Garrett, the no-drama Captain, while his co-pilot is handling the controls, does what we guys all need to do when comforting a shaken female...

You didn't look a fraud when I saw ya in Korea in '52. One night in Pusan. It was raining so hard we were sure you wouldn't show... Some officer threw a slicker **[rain coat]** around you. You got up there and you started to sing. After a couple of bars in — you stopped. You looked around. And suddenly you threw that slicker off — and ya stood there in the rain in that silly dress and that strapless top. And the guys let loose — a yell you could've heard in Tokyo.

She objects, limply: "Don't give me any credit for that; that was Max Eames' idea. Part of the BUILD-up — 'Barbara Adams, All Heart.' I didn't even want to go!"

Brick then comforts more firmly: "And don't tell me EAMES told you to do that or anybody else. That came from the INSIDE OUT — because you saw LOTS of people in big trouble; and you KNEW you were part of them."

Brick tells Barbara he was scared every single day of his time in Korea. One afternoon his buddy "had to hit the silk in the middle of a dogfight. And then it happened. I was so busy keepin' the buzzards off his tail that I didn't realize until it was all over [pause] that I'd stopped being scared."

"You were never scared again?" Back home in the States, sure, he was "scared" about this or that, here and there. "But it didn't MATTER any more — I just stopped paying attention to it."

Carey wasn't even 38 as he portrayed Captain Charles Garrett — yet he projects the sturdiness and seasoning of a man of 50. Which will be needed, because...

The buddy whose life Brick saved from those Red buzzards is now boss of LAX: Director Cook, played skillfully by [BILL WILLIAMS](#). Somebody has to facilitate this finale on the ground, and that's Henry Cook — flexible yet firm, thoughtful and stern, in equal measure. Cook and Brick are the adults in the room (or in the air), while Jack Warden as Max Eames makes one confident blunder after another.

Henry Cook will soon have to tell Brick Garrett his flying days are over. It's not exactly a fourth story line; but it's one more source of tension. Brick can confront

Cook and any other hurdle on the ground. For now, this pilot has at least turned back a favorite actress's despair. Now it's time to return to the cockpit. "Captain?," Adams says with a smile — "Go ahead, fly us home."

Just one episode, but plenty to focus on: Stu Bailey with a securities thief and now murderer who needs him in Mexico City. Barbara Adams having to face reporters without looking like a shattered schoolgirl. And Max Eames discovering that some PR trash fires can't be solved by bluster, blather, and picking up bar tabs.

All of that needs to be resolved inside the LAX Terminal, once "Flight 307" empties.

Now for the Bad News: It's Difficult to Keyboard this Flight

I didn't know it until most of this issue of GEMS was in place, but "Flight 307" can't be called up with a few clicks, or by going to YouTube with the magic words.

On the Web it's described, the cast and crew are duly credited, and all the rest — but not viewable for free. Where's the official and nicely labeled DVD array?

Problem might be copyright wrangles. Otherwise, it's hard to explain why the SUNSET STRIP episodes haven't become a Warner Brothers DVD package. Until they are, collectors purchase "77" seasons as privately produced assemblies.

The no-cost avenues, like this one from Side Reel dot-com, are like waiting rooms. The Side Reel home page says: "Track & Watch TV Shows Online. Welcome to SideReel, your TV tracking tool. Sign up and track your shows for personalized TV calendars, notifications, recommendations, and more!"

A similar set-up for "Flight 307," from a better branded website, seems to exist at TV Guide dot-com. The user will need to accept ads — and then wait??

If these "tracking" options have no appeal, and you decline to pay moderate prices for individual seasons from unbranded sources, dozens of "77" episodes can be found on YouTube. They're just not the one saluted in this issue. Again, my goof — and not cool for Issue One of any publication. Yet don't overlook the bright side...

You have discovered, or rediscovered, and perhaps re-experienced, a TV series from your youth. "77" was a rollicking media enterprise that won acclaim for blending dreams, schemes, parody...and Cold War fundamentals. Those six years offer many entertaining episodes — way more than I think earn GEM status!

DD Gem #6 — "Blind Mirror" — January 24, 1970

From MANNIX (CBS, 1967 to '75)

In the early 1960s, at the top (or bottom) of the hour, the detective-drama viewer saw not a beginning, but a nerve-jangling preview. It might not show any of the series regulars. *What does this scene mean? Who are these people? Have we got the right channel?* You'd see it again, this time with context, in 20 to 30 minutes.

By the late '60s, certain shows got serious right away. MANNIX was one of them. No previews. The episode BEGAN before the viewer saw any text or heard the opening theme. This is how "Blind Mirror" opens: THREE minutes, showing a whole sequence. The unusual part: The sequence will be retold, with striking twists, again and again.

That's the genius of "Blind Mirror": Repetition and recollection from several vantage points. Better than novels or other text-only media, this episode uses video (aided by binoculars!) to demonstrate how and why no two individuals can experience or recount a critical sequence objectively. It subtly locks in a gut-level principle that will stabilize you during various real-life disagreements.

Depiction and Description, With Few Words Spoken

Opening image: Ocean waves. Second image: A beachfront residence, shown to us from the road and a somewhat higher elevation. At Minute 0:14, a red Dodge Dart (typical late-'60s compact) is heading for the driveway. This convertible has a white horizontal stripe on each side. Background music is subdued though not downcast.

The driver is a young woman in a red dress. Business attire. It's Friday, probably afternoon. She parks in front of what Joe Mannix later calls a "beach house." But this is a full-blown coastal residence — the complete opposite of "shack." Whoever carries the deed has arrived: Oceanside, southern California, at the crest of a nine-year economic expansion. The national jobless rate — 3.5% when this episode first ran — will not be this low again for 50 years (in other words, until six months ago).

The girl is cheerful. "George," she calls, smiling, as she gets out of the car. It's Minute 0:33. The music is now a bit dreamy. "Darling, I'm here!"

The girl could be 24, though in real life she is 30. She loves and respects this man to whom she is bringing a stack of papers. Contracts to be signed, we hear later.

Front door is unlocked. George isn't inside. Nor is anyone else. She heads for the patio. More ocean waves. The skies are clear. We see a round work table full of

publisher-type papers for sorting or mark-up. Glasses have been taken off, in part to stop pages from blowing away.

George Diamond is now in sight, but out of earshot. He has his back to the house. He's near the water, in a small area well down from the patio. THIS part of ocean-side has some kind of sheer drop. That's a very odd feature of what otherwise is a conventional, easily accessed beach: Someone could fall into the water yet not be banged up by rocks. (Looks like geology has given way to the need for camera footage that enables the visuals to stick to the script.)

Something's going on down there. Mr. Diamond is with his wife, Stella. She's in a red bathing suit. He's in shorts and a loose shirt. Only later will we hear their radically differing version of what is spoken. At Minute 1:25, the music turns urgent. *Let go of me, George.* Can't tell whether the young woman has heard these words.

But she sees the conflict. She turns to another outdoor table — not the one with all the papers — and picks up a pair of binoculars: Now we're seeing just what the young woman sees. That's all we see. That's all we're *supposed* to see.

Unlike later versions, no one is narrating or recollecting here. These opening minutes will become comprehensive, as we group our way to grasping a superb script. Ultimately we'll see that FIVE of the six GUEST ACTORS — they're listed on page 24 — are present at the episode's start.

Who's missing? Joe Mannix. We'll watch him try to piece together the truth from unreliable recollections. We'll also see him fill in gaps we already sense. The great detective episodes make skillful use of this factor — call it the "thinking voyeur" side of those of us ready to participate in the resolution, or at least the hunt.

George seems to have pushed Stella backwards into the sea. Or allowed her to stumble and drop. A riptide carries her away from the shore. We keep viewing through the binoculars. Precious little dialogue accompanies these three opening minutes. But the young woman mutters, at Minute 1:55: *Why don't you help her?*

Eight seconds later, a young man is in view. He tears off his T-shirt and sets out to rescue Stella. George Diamond has been standing there. Around Minute 2:30, he has seen enough. He turns his back on the scene, to walk back up to the house. He then sees Winifred Hill, his secretary, *watching him through those binoculars.*

Other than cars and Diamond's handgun, the binoculars turn out to be the most pivotal piece of gear in the whole episode. They are a big help to us viewers.

To Winifred, George's face looks angry. Or it might be disgust — at the melodrama

he has been dragged into by his estranged wife (who, we've already seen, is NOT drowning). No matter. His behavior comes across as callous, if not violent. The girl runs back through the house. He can't get up the steep stairway to the patio fast enough. At Minute 3:02, the red Dodge Dart is screeching out of the driveway.

The markers have been laid down, yet the lines are foggy. THEN comes the theme music. (Yes, we've got the right channel.) Nice job of hooking us? It's *marvelous*.

The next scene, 2 1/2 days later, on Monday morning, has Joe Mannix being hired by George Diamond — to find his secretary. "I have contacted everybody, every place, I've — I even contacted the hospitals." He admits to seeing her just before she turned and ran from his patio.

He also tells Mannix: "I had to take my wife to emergency hospital — there was an accident." Your wife? "We've been separated for some time. As soon as I can get her to give me a divorce, I'm going to marry Winifred."

Mannix's low-key questioning falls short. He will soon go back to Diamond and display the intensity of exasperation. We'll get to that. And to Stella's version.

A methodical account of the opening three minutes of "Blind Mirror" helps make this point: Any admirer of detective radio and TV comes to see that people — your audience, and some of mine as a nonfiction text editor — require street signs and pacing. Modulation is vital to unfolding any complex story. Don't overwhelm.

And — with this Gem — the viewer has seen a whole lot before the lead character has any idea of the "blind mirror" images he'll need to process and test. A great script makes manageable — for those who absorb it methodically — most of the surprises, shocks and awkward choices that comprise the drama.

"Blind Mirror" is among the dozen or so finest MANNIX episodes from what became an eight-year-run. And this series wasn't cancelled because of ratings.

Countenances that Communicate: Mike Connors and Gail Fisher

For anyone not in front of a TV screen 50 years ago, it will help to explain the significance of MANNIX. We start with the star and his co-star...

KREKOR OHANIAN, known professionally as Mike Connors, was an American actor best known for playing private detective Joe Mannix in the CBS television series *Mannix* from 1967 to '75, a role which earned him a Golden Globe Award in 1970, the first of six straight nominations, as well as four consecutive Emmy nominations during 1970-73.

Back then I didn't understand why this series disappeared. Ratings? No. "The show was taken off the air due to a dispute between CBS and Paramount," according to another part of the [Wikipedia article](#) on Mike Connors.

Paramount had sold the rights to air MANNIX reruns to rival network ABC without informing CBS. When CBS discovered the deal, the executives quickly decided to cancel MANNIX to avoid losing viewership for new episodes to the reruns.

Four years later — and note how the to in its title should've been an of — the ***Directory to Prime-Time Network TV Shows*** said: "MANNIX was one of the most violent detective shows of recent years, and also one of the longest-running."

Longest-running — that part's true. But I take issue here: "The high point of every episode seemed to be a wild brawl," said the *Directory*, "and the body count even in the first few minutes of the show was sometimes appalling."

Really? Having watched about 40% of all the episodes, I found the fight scenes among the least significant factors pro or con. Most MANNIX episodes feature two or three drawn-out scenes; some make use of dream-like techniques. And Mannix's relatively gentle approach to questioning — except when he sensed the other person to be a liar — further cuts against the "brawler" stereotype.

The result: A series for people who enjoy subtleties. It isn't like the frantic and violent "action" movies of the 1980s, which overdid the special effects and gore. Unlike some modern-day crime productions, MANNIX **reinforces the attention span**. You look to be surprised, as opposed to slammed or ka-boomed. That makes these episodes a place to go when you feel thoughtful as well as moody.

The first season was unique. Unlike in the other seven, Joe Mannix worked for a large investigations firm that replicated 1960s big business. It was run by [Lew Wickersham](#), Joe's Korean War buddy and a control freak. Mannix hated being told to run each hunch through Lew's IBM mainframes. He would sit in his cramped office and aim paper airplanes at the TV cameras Lew trained on his detectives.

That structure cramped the MANNIX scriptwriters. If he hadn't set out on his own for the 1968-69 season, and found the right executive assistant, it could've been curtains for the series. The right assistant became Peggy Fair.

In real life 10 years Joe Mannix's junior, GAIL FISHER (1935-2000) as "Peggy" was raising a son as the widow of a police officer killed in action. Joe and Peggy became one of the history's outstanding detective-and-chief-aide pairings.

A New Jersey native whose father died when she was two, [Wikipedia tells us](#), Fisher "graduated from Metuchen High School in Metuchen, New Jersey..."

During her teenage years, she was a cheerleader and entered several beauty contests, winning the titles of Miss Transit, Miss Black New Jersey, and Miss Press Photographer. In a contest sponsored by Coca-Cola, Fisher won the opportunity to spend two years studying acting at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts. As a student of acting in New York City, she worked with Lee Strasberg and became a member of the Repertory Theater at Lincoln Center, where she worked with Elia Kazan and Herbert Blau. As a young woman, she also worked as a model.

Whether together or apart, Connors and Fisher had strikingly communicative faces. In the episode "The Mouse that Died" (October 17, 1970), Peggy sees her boss losing his balance. He has been dosed with a slow-acting poison, and the antidote is controlled by someone they might not find in time.

We see the tears welling up in her big eyes. Very few TV actors from 50 years ago could summon up tears. Or maybe it's just too hard for any performer to repeat during retakes. In the harsher and more mechanized movie and TV scripts of today, would such humanizing imagery even be allowed?



In MANNIX, with few or no words, the two lead characters convey states well beyond nervousness or suspicion. Ironically, this led to scripts where the dialogue was rarely the high point. That's because their faces conveyed substance as well as emotion VISUALLY. The camera crew knew what to frame, when to enlarge,

and for how long. Mix all of that with Mannix's tendency to avoid fierce cross-examination, and the series simply did not NEED sizzling dialogue...

I can't recall Joe Mannix on a courtroom witness stand (in those days the best venue for ornate or biting language). Peggy Fair wisecracked now and then, but

she wasn't a lady for speechmaking or run-on stories. It was mostly left to the GUEST actors to do the explaining, the info-dumping, and the sputtering.

One other big plus for MANNIX as a series: Not just the elegant and jaunty theme music, but nearly all of the orchestral background, for scenes of every type — it was superb. Credit goes to [LALO SCHIFRIN](#) and what must've been a wonderful group of associates. And, for "Blind Mirror" in particular, the Music Editor is [ROBERT H. RAFF](#). (What a treat — being MUSIC editor for a landmark detective series.)

One Scene, Many Perceptions — but the End View Has to Be Joe's

"Blind Mirror" features six guest actors. The lesser ones — CHIP FARRELL, ED GILBERT and [CRAIG LITTLER](#) — do what they need to do, and no more.

In contrast, this episode's primary three are so well-defined that a viewer could imagine them, backward and forward, during their respective life courses.

Winifred Hill is played by [LINDA MARSH](#). George Edward Diamond is played by ROBERT LANSING. And Stella Diamond is brought to life, and a mixed-up life it is, by [DIANE MCBAIN](#). (Hmmm. Has any character named "Stella" ever been grounded or predictable?) Marsh, Lansing and McBain were everywhere on TV during the 1960s. Marsh and Lansing also claimed fame and depth as theater performers.

Lansing's resilience served him as a character actor in dozens upon dozens of TV episodes, including some comedies. He also had season-long roles. He was the domineering Brigadier General during the first year of *12 O'Clock High*. Three seasons earlier, Lansing was Steve Carella, chief detective in 87th PRECINCT.

Diane McBain was a SURFSIDE SIX regular and appeared on SUNSET STRIP several times. She drove herself to perform but was deemed too attractive after realism became the desired look post-1965. McBain's 2014 memoir — brilliantly titled [Famous Enough](#) — is praised by *Sixties Cinema* website founder and editor [TOM LISANTI](#). He calls it a "harrowing tale of what happened to Diane (and probably a lot of other 1960s female contract players) once the studios tossed them out without fanfare during the mid-1960s when the studio system was collapsing."

For his chief-cop presence in the "87th," this publication will come back to [Robert Lansing](#) next year. But it's Linda Marsh who looks with fright into the "Blind Mirror" and has to flee. Those opening minutes turned her trust into vulnerability.

"Subsequent to her stage [performances], Linda underwent operations to reduce and reshape her nose. Already a lovely woman, she emerged from these surgeries

[a striking beauty](#)," explains John Paul Morris in [Marsh's part of the IMDB site](#). "She proved a compelling screen presence [in] *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* (1964), *The Wild Wild West* (1965), *It Takes a Thief* (1968), and *I Spy* (1965). Outside of her guest appearances, Linda would make four pictures for the big screen and three filmed for television." Later, "she applied her talents to television production and writing."

Marsh and McBain are still with us in 2020. Marsh was born in 1939, Lansing in 1928, and McBain in 1941. In "Blind Mirror," though, a catty McBain gets to dismiss the trusting Marsh — in real life 27 months her senior! — this way: "Sweet, dewy-eyed Winifred Hill — she has my husband acting like an oversexed schoolboy."

With Winifred Hill missing, Mannix gains access to her apartment, gets a lead or two, and then goes to see Stella Diamond. We're up to Minute 10:30. Phone records from the landlady show that, on Friday, the missing girl called Stella "three or four times" and "I understand she finally got through about 8 p.m." Really?

Turns out the beach boy — Jerry Smith — who RESCUED Stella from the riptide took the call. "Yes — a chick buzzed. Said she heard about [the] little dunking... When I said Mrs. Diamond was okay, she hung up."

And why was JERRY right there to do the rescuing? "I was just walking down the beach [and] heard her yelling for help." He accepted no reward. "A job was all I needed. Now I've got one." Stella tells Mannix she hired him, then and there. "Run along now, Lifesaver." Exit Jerry.

"[M]y Death Would Have Simplified His Life Considerably"

Stella tells Mannix she loves George and expects him to get over the "schoolboy crush." She had walked over to his place to (again) make this case. Thus begins her version of the oceanfront exchange with George....

More ocean waves and swirling music. They're near the edge of that drop. Quit "this little fling" and we can save the marriage. No, he loves Winifred. "All she cares about is your money." Stella is casting George as angry enough for violence: *Are you gonna give me a divorce or not?* "No! I won't let you make a fool of yourself." *Stella, I'm warning you, for the last time, you LISTEN to me.*

He grabs her. She loses her balance. We hear her scream on the way down.

"I don't know if it was an accident or not. I'm not sure if [pause] I fell or if I was pushed." Was your husband trying to kill you? (Again we see Connors' low-voltage approach when raising delicate matters.) "I don't know, Mr. Mannix, but my death

would have simplified his life considerably."

From this and one other meeting, Joe Mannix begins to doubt George Diamond. In different ways, both the wife and the girlfriend are telling Mannix that George is unstable. His first session with Diamond was low-key. This next one can't be...

DIAMOND: I told ya I didn't want any police when we started all this.

MANNIX: You told me a LOT of things, Mr. Diamond — including a pack of lies. Now I want to know what really happened on Friday... Winifred was at your beach house on Friday, wasn't she? You SAW her there [and] she saw something that made her run away. I wanna know WHAT it was and how it happened.

DIAMOND: I didn't tell ya this before [he sighs] because I was afraid that you'd misinterpret it the way Win did.

"Try me," says Mannix. We now have, at Minute 22, and for almost three minutes, the key character recounting the coastal sequence, to Mannix, for the SECOND time. And it's the FOURTH time we viewers will experience the blind mirror.

"I was working on the sundeck. Stella came by. I didn't want to SEE her, but [pause] she said we'd discuss the divorce, so — we took a walk down by the rocks." The haunting music kicks in. Stella stresses their nine years together and asks: "What if I told you that you mean everything to me? Would you believe me?" "Let's just say I think it'd be a little out of character, baby." "If I lost you, George, I really don't know what I'd do." "You'd muddle through," he recounts himself saying sullenly.

Then she utters words that hint at suicide. "C'mon, let's go back to the house." "You go ahead," she replies. "I'm going for a swim." "Don't be ridiculous!" She supposedly moves toward the edge of the steep drop. It's a hypnotic scene. The music churns mordantly. He's warning about the riptides. They tussle. She falls in.

MANNIX [Quietly now]: Why didn't you go in after her?

DIAMOND: [Pause] Well, I started to, but [here we see the images of Stella on her back struggling in the surf] something stopped me. Suddenly — I had the strange feeling that she WANTED me in that water. Stella's always been a good swimmer. It just wasn't like her to panic that way... And then I saw the young man swimming toward her. She'd be all right. So I started back to the house — to call the Lifeguard Station...in case she needed emergency treatment. And that's when I saw Winifred... I could tell from

the way she acted she had the wrong idea of what happened out there.

Of all the observations and recountings in "Blind Mirror," Diamond's second recollection is the most riveting. It's elongated, slowed down. The music is perfect. George Diamond sounds more and more dazed. Then he escapes the fog: "That's why I hired you to FIND her, Mannix; she's gotta know the truth."

MANNIX: This "strange feeling" you had while your wife was in the water — how do ya explain that?

DIAMOND: Well — I think Stella was FAKING, I think BAITING me. I think she wanted me in the water. Look, as a widow, she'd have the whole estate.

MANNIX: Ummm — I think she'd have a pretty tough time doin' that job alone.

DIAMOND: Yeahhh, but what about that beach boy who just happened to BE there? Between the two of 'em, I wouldn't have stood a chance.

MANNIX: You think HE was involved in all of this, huh?

DIAMOND: I don't know [exasperated], I don't know, could be. Stella's always got some kind of Young Adonis hanging around [he snorts]. Believe me, she can be very PERSUASIVE when she puts her heart into it.

MANNIX: That's very funny. She claims you tried to kill HER.

This man remains his client. Even stranger: Right before Mannix pressed him for clarity, he found Diamond with a head wound lying on his office floor. Mannix goes so far as to speculate that it's a ruse — a way to create an alibi. After a dash of muted scorn, Diamond calmly repeats that he has no idea who attacked him and, besides, he's "never had to kill anyone" to get what he wanted.

"I've told you the truth. All of it. I want you to believe me." "Maybe I will," says Mannix, "WHEN I hear the same story from someone else — your wife's beach boy." By Minute 30:45, Mannix seems ready to give up on this client.

With Peggy's contacts at City Hall, Mannix locates Winifred. Because he doubts Diamond's innocence, he is unable to make the pro-George case to her.

But he does get to hear HER version of George and Stella at Oceanside — yes, this is the FIFTH account, and the longest single telling in "Blind Mirror." Mannix also questions — VERY gently — whether Winifred might be misinterpreting George's behavior.

When he has to deal with a new emergency, she disappears for a second time. At this point things become extremely complicated. No complaint. A great episode always goes on to scramble much of what seemed reliable at the midpoint.

Then, in the final two or three minutes, it has to be made coherent. Not just in the present tense, but back to the start (of the hour, if not of the case). If news editors could lock in these skills, TV "news" wouldn't come across as propaganda spasms, and Twitter consumption would be confined to one message: Per person, per day.

Don't Look for a Moral or a Rule; DO Think About Methods

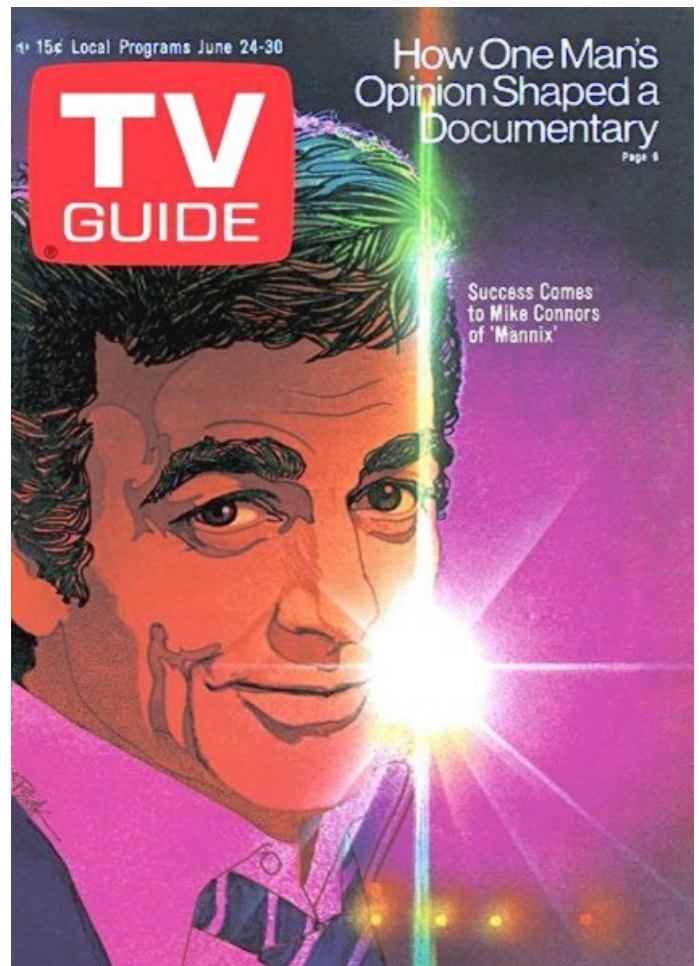
"Blind Mirror" was developed by [NICHOLAS \("Nick"\) WEBSTER](#). And the script was crafted by MANNIX regulars [RICHARD LEVINSON](#) and [WILLIAM LINK](#).

When you've made sense out of all the actions and motives, don't hold out for a moral. And blanket skepticism isn't the correct stance either — anyone pursuing the truth has to test one theory and then another. That's detecting.

DO think about methods. For looking into those occasional blind mirrors...

Have YOU ever been tasked to define the truth — or "just enough" of it — between two family members, or two business associates? Were they individuals who had no desire to be in the same room, or the same city?

Really? JUST two, you say?



- Buy Season Three of MANNIX — www.barnesandnoble.com/w/dvd-mannix-season-3-mike-connors/18042630
- Or view the whole 50-minute episode, with fairly good quality, using the three words **BLIND MIRROR MANNIX** on YouTube (unless, like me, you avoid all things Google. Those guys own YouTube and way too much else).

Understanding What Mike Connors Brought to Viewers

Cross him and you might get slugged. Otherwise, Joe Mannix was a friend for tough times. He was also a sucker for a sad story, especially those brought to his attention by Peggy. As noted, he was a restrained interrogator, especially with females. The questions were neutral and simple. Even by the milder standards of living-room drama 50 years ago, Joe Mannix was no hair-trigger operative.

His allies were police officers, old friends, and working stiff — security guards, reformed thieves. When he ran out of energy, he took a nap; no philosophizing about gloom or showing angst. And humor? Dry as opposed to biting or sarcastic.

Near the end of his long life, in a wide-ranging transcript, Connors said this about his most memorable role during a half-century career...

[T]his wasn't the usual cynical private eye *à la* Humphrey Bogart. It was more a show about an all-round normal human being. The character of Joe Mannix could be taken advantage of by a pretty face; he could shed a tear on an emotional level; he was very close to his father and his family — so he was more a normal personality with normal behavior.

To grasp what Mike Connors brought to viewers, you might peruse that 4,400-word interview for ***Film Talk***. The link follows these additional extracts. Seems to have been taped in 2012; the interviewer isn't named. Connors turned 87 that year...

I have no regrets as far as my career is concerned. Recently, my wife and I were watching something on television, and I said to her: "Do you realize how lucky we've been with all the success we had, being able to go to almost every country in the world, being recognized and people being nice to you, having as friends some of the funniest and wittiest people in the world, having met and dined with royalty like Grace Kelly in Monaco, and the top politicians in America, having had dinner at the White House? It's a fairy tale — I mean, how did that happen? How lucky we are, and were, to be a part of that?"

There was never a time when I took any of it for granted, thinking *Oh well, I deserve it*. The Good Lord has been good to me [and] that's been pretty much the formula of our lives. We've been married now for about 60 years and we've enjoyed every bit of it; we've had a great life.

Connors was also asked: Why was MANNIX cancelled in 1975?

You have to know that we didn't go off the air because of bad ratings. Every year around May, they announce the shows that are cancelled and those that are picked up. I was in New York one week before the new schedule was to be announced, at a CBS party on a Friday night, where they told me not to worry about a thing: "You're in; MANNIX was picked up."

But the following Wednesday, I got a phone call at about six o'clock in the morning from a writer in New York who said, "Mike, what have you got to say about MANNIX being cancelled?" I said, "What?!" "Well, they just announced the new schedule and you're not on it."

I couldn't believe what I heard. What happened between that Friday night and Wednesday [is that] Paramount had a dispute with CBS and that's why we went off the air. Even in our final year, we had a 34-show average, which means it still was a hit show.

I was sad, because we had been doing the show for eight years, five days a week, eight months a year, and you really become a family. Ninety percent of the crew members that started with the show were still there at the end. I felt very lost when it was over. I remember that I'd wake up and [think that] *I should be getting in the car and drive to the studio*. It took me a long time to get over the loss of that show.

FULL TEXT — <https://filmtalk.org/2015/12/22/mike-connors-i-didnt-want-to-just-walk-through-the-part-of-mannix-when-it-was-so-successful/>

Okay, that's it — Issue One is now "in the can." Anything else? Just this: You can forward or otherwise distribute this pdf file however you like. ***Detective Drama Gems*** is a no-charge quarterly publication. When you quote from it, please mention either the editor/curator or the name of the publication.

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