

THE FIRST HORSEMAN PAL DVD 1995 - This is the first of 3 unique productions, featuring interviews, clips & location visits involving: Terry Nation's Survivors TV series (1975-77) This one includes Interviews with Director: (The late) Pennant Roberts, & two interviews with Carolyn Seymour (Abby Grant) + others. Note the technical quality is not great, but it is a labour of love. Running time 180 mins approx

THE SECOND HORSEMAN PAL DVD 1996 - This is the second of 3 unique productions, featuring interviews, clips & location visits involving: Terry Nation's Survivors TV series (1975-77) This one includes Interviews with the late LORNA LEWIS (Pet) & Kevin Marshall (compiler of "The making of Survivors" book) + others. There is also a comprehensive visit & tour of the "Hydro electric" locations from POWER. Note the technical quality is not great, but it was a labour of love. Running time 180 mins approx.

THE THIRD HORSEMAN PAL DVD 1997 - This is the third of 3 unique productions, featuring interviews, clips & location visits involving: Terry Nation's Survivors TV series (1975-77) This one includes Interviews with Paddy Nash (ex-headteacher of Peter's school) Ian McCulloch + others. There are even more location visits, inc MAD DOG locations in Derbyshire. Note the technical quality is not great, but it was a labour of love. Running time 180 mins approx.

SURVIVORS-one of the true 'classic television' series-was first broadcast on BBC1 in three seasons, from 1975-77. It gripped 7 to 10 million people every Wednesday night (including me when I was 25!), with its portrayal of life in the world after a huge loss of population, and consequently none of the technology, that most of us take for granted (UK pop about 10,000 according to Charles Vaughan).

It was, I believe, the first TV series to take video cameras and recorders to a drama location. It was an escape from the 'Coronation - Emmerdale - kitchen sink syndrome'. It was, and still is, very special to many of the people who helped to make it; some of whom I've met myself, and others interviewed in Kevin Marshall's great book: THE MAKING OF TERRY NATIONS SURVIVORS - now sadly out of print. Kevin, by the way, is a professional astronomer by profession.

As survivors was - for reasons best known at the BBC - never repeated, and as domestic Video recorders were almost unknown in the mid 1970s, all we had were lingering memories; and the book version, Terry Nation wrote with the series, also long out of print.

The lingering thoughts I had were of the basic outline story, and the quiet locations that were visited. Then, in 1993 BBC enterprises slowly released the first season episodes (thirteen in all) on video. This raised a lot of interest, including my own. UK gold also aired the first season, thankfully, continuing with the second and third seasons as well. I then discovered a fan club, which had been run by Carole Stevens for several years. Carole assisted me initially, to discover where the locations were. The first season's, were mostly close to 'Ross on wye'. In fact the very first one I visited, was the footbridge (Gone away), across the River Wye at 'Hole in the wall', now a hallowed spot for the many new fans of survivors! Hampton Court (see footnote), near 'Hope under Dinmore' - the castle lived in by the cast, was the next one to be admired not to mention videoed too. Others followed.

I've spent several holidays in the area, also in 'Mad Dog' country, in the Peak district and in Glen Lyon, Perthshire, where the last episode was made. In 1994 at the first Alex j. Geairns-helmed 'Cult TV festival', I met 'Abby Grant' or Carolyn Seymour, who expressed an 'extreme fondness' for survivors. This was my first hint that the series was 'special' to others beside myself. Lucy Fleming, (Celia Johnson's daughter and Ian Fleming's niece), played 'Jenny Richards'. Lucy stayed, with survivors, from the first classic episode (The fourth horseman) to the last (Power). Lucy, like her mother, loves stage acting; I've twice enjoyed her performances in the theatre. Lucy also, has done some minor TV work, but nothing as challenging as survivors. I first briefly encountered Lucy in Guildford. She could remember the scene shot near Eastnor castle, at a ford in a stream (Genesis). And the blue c&a coat she wore to keep her warm! A meeting with 'Pet', otherwise known as Lorna Lewis, followed. Lorna described some of the on and off screen activities at 'Whitecross', or Callow hill farm - to give it its real name - where much of the second season was shot. Some members of the cast very much moved into the location, helping with 'real' farming - along with other unprintable activities! 'Corn Dolly's message, was certainly alive and well! One memorable quote from Celia Gregory, who portrayed 'Dr Ruth'; 'Callow hill is a very special place. I don't think anybody can go there without feeling altered. Whenever you're sitting on a hill you get a lot of healing power'.

The last time I sat on callow hill myself, the thoughts occurring to me were what a sad state television has got itself into these days, with soaps, fly on the wall, cookery etc, and what a great example it would be, for TV makers in general. To produce a new series of survivors, with as many of the initial cast and crew as possible, made the British way. At the pace, and with the techniques of the original series, using D3 digital recording for the best technical quality. Could this 'heal' television's ills? I wait the funding, as does Ian McCulloch who played Greg Preston (also scripting three episodes). Ian had a similar idea a few years ago. In fact he took it to Scottish BBC. Who also were interested, but Alan Yentob said no! What was he afraid of? that 'SURVIVORS' would, if properly made, show up modern TV to be the trash most of it undoubtedly is? This is what I believe to be the case. Now, over to you Mr. Greg Dyke (the new D.G.), -what's your answer? What I do not want to see, is a new series made in the style that 'Poldark' was remade by H.T.V. with no original cast or crew involved, it was a highly paced mess in my opinion.

There has over the years, been some disagreement over who truly created Survivors. The late Terry Nation, always held the copyright, but 'Avengers' writer Brian Clemens challenged that. Also producer, the late Terry Dudley changed the concept during and following the first season. Whilst this was going on in the background, there was plenty of variety in the stories, which, for good or bad, held most of the viewer's interest. And for those of us, lucky enough to possess the all the episodes on videotape still does. Pennant Roberts - Director of 'The fourth horseman', and other episodes - was surprised that the episodes still existed at all! A very patient, kindly man who met myself and other fans, in December 1998 at a Terry Nation memorial weekend in Cardiff. Thanks to his help, other locations have now been found. It does seem odd that, with all Terry Nations work at the BBC, the corporation has never looked back on his work; i.e. Daleks, Blakes 7 etc. Is this another reason for their reluctance to make new Dr who episodes? There still seems very much interest in survivors, with several web sites on the Internet devoted to the series. Ask yourself this. Why? After all this time, I believe you may find the answer in the above article, somewhere.....

I wrote the above article in 1999, little has changed regarding present day TV since then – in fact it has probably deteriorated even more since then. I think in the U.K. multi-channel TV is a total mess, only being propped up by the License payer – would it not be a good idea for that individual, when he dutifully pays his or her TV License, is asked to fill in a questionnaire of how TV should be created? I think though, that the 'Powers that be' would not like the answer....

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