

The Prisoner



In the late 60's we were in the Vietnam War and the Cold War with Russia still seemed like a serious threat. Spy shows and movies like the James Bond series and the Man from U.N.C.L.E. were popular. Patrick McGoohan was an actor in one of the more popular ones known as Danger Man in Great Britain and Secret Agent Man in the U.S. and he asked himself a question; "What would happen if an agent with very sensitive knowledge should resign from the service without giving a clear reason for his doing so?"

His answer became one of the most unusual programs of the 60's The Prisoner. The seventeen episode series starring Patrick McGoohan is low budget. Don't expect fantastic special effects even for the sixties. You will either love it or hate it. Personally I will admit I loved it. It was the first TV show that I ever decided to purchase for my personal VHS collection (remember VHS) back when the average cost per episode was over \$50 apiece.

In The Prisoner after the unnamed agent resigns he is knocked unconscious and is taken to a small town known only as The Village. His name is taken away and he is given the number "6". Every resident of The Village is known only by a number, some are former agents like himself, some are members of The Village government; which government is unclear. The village is ruled over by the mysterious Number 2, a leader who changes in almost every episode. Each new Number 2 takes their turn at breaking Number 6. Every episode has the same basic plot yet manages to be totally different enough to keep you on the edge of your seat. The new number 2 has a plan to break number 6 and in the process it is often Number 6 that breaks Number 2. Number 1 is referred to but never seen. The question looms through the entire series "Who is number 1?" While the episodes are numbered, you can really watch them in any order with the exception of three specific episodes. Episode one needs to be watched first and the last two episodes should be watched last since they answer many questions asked in the series while presenting many more.

The Prisoner likes to play with your mind and your sense of reality. It has the decided 60's look in dress and style because of its nature and it still seems relevant today. The clothes now bring an even greater sense of surrealism to the show which with its "pop goes the weasel" music and giant roving white ball as guard seemed very surreal even then. The location of the village is never revealed but you can visit it if you want. The series exteriors were filmed at Hotel Portmeirion in Wales. It still maintains much of the look that it had when then The Prisoner was filmed. You might enjoy checking out its website link to Prisoner Page. The hotel itself is expensive. I keep telling myself, "someday."

Posted by Keith C. on August 3, 2011

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