

# THE SWEENEY

Forget *Dixon of Dock Green* and *Z-Cars* - the grittiest and most entertaining police drama ever produced for British TV was *The Sweeney*. Robert Fairclough gets his trousers on for a definitive look at a show that made TV history!

Photographs courtesy of Network Distributing

Right: John Thaw as Detective Inspector Jack Regan and Dennis Waterman as his partner, Detective Sergeant George Carter. You don't want to run into these lads when they haven't had any dinner!  
Above: Jack and George take on a blagger in the opening scenes of *Sweeney 2* (1978)

# 'YOU'RE NICKED, SUNSHINE!'

**"Regan. The cop who won't cop out. No matter how many rules he breaks. Or people" - Thames Television press release, 1974.**

**G**angsters, Strangers, The Professionals, Hazell, Target, Shoestring, The Chinese Detective, Bergerac, Dempsey and Makepeace, Bulman... all 1970s-1980s crime shows, all involving plenty of action, and all made entirely on film, or with a high ratio of location filming in urban settings. By the time *Inspector Morse* and *A Touch of Frost* arrived on screen at the end of the 1980s, the template was set for British crime shows, now devolved to the provinces, to be made solely on film.

The series that had set this whole revolution in TV crime fiction in motion - and, ultimately, TV production generally, as over the last forty years British TV drama as a whole has gradually transferred to a film-making model - was Euston Films' *The Sweeney* (1975-78), run by Lloyd Shirley and George Taylor as an offshoot of Thames Television.

Named after the Cockney rhyming-slang for the Flying Squad - 'The Sweeney Todd' - the colourful argot also delivered such evocative terms as 'poppy' (money), 'bottle' (courage) and 'grass' (informer), slang which has remained part of British TV's fictional criminal landscape ever since.

Currently being repeated in the afternoon on ITV 4, with *Minder* (1979-1994) and *The Professionals* (1977-1983) (and what a great three hours that is for men of a certain age), it's remarkable to see how many firsts there are in *The Sweeney*.

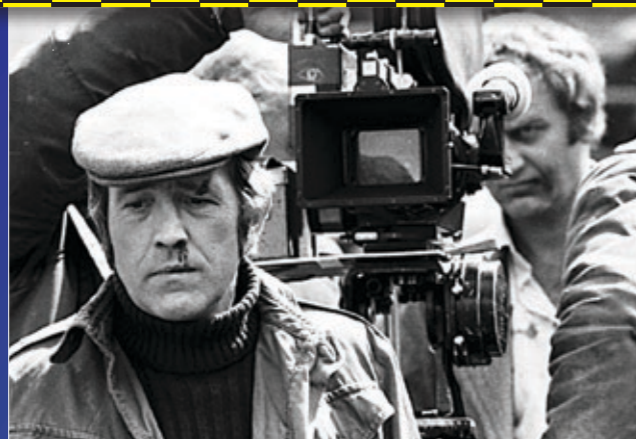
It was shot entirely on 16mm film, abandoning TV studios for both exterior locations such as disused warehouses and city streets, together with real interiors, such as the Pinter Tower tower block, Heathrow Airport and numerous houses, banks and offices across London.

*The Sweeney* was also the first UK TV drama to be made by a dedicated, freelance film-making unit, paving the way for the modern market place of independent TV production companies. The series was - arguably - the first British crime series to really show how fallible and flawed the police were, with stories shining a light on the lack of co-operation between police departments, and unafraid to show criminals getting away. Finally, and most memorably, *The Sweeney* presented a cinematic level of violence and action, in the realistic vein of the Michael Caine gangster film *Get Carter* (1971) and the *Dirty Harry* movies - car chases, fist fights and shoot outs - previously unseen on British television.

This largely accurate depiction of a London Flying Squad officer's work and social life in the mid-1970s was appropriated by what became known as 'Lad' culture, particularly in *Loaded* magazine in the 1990s. It's easy to see why: according to *The Sweeney*, in the 1970s a Flying Squad officer could sort out some villains in the afternoon, celebrate in the evening with a lock-in - where he pulled the barmaid, naturally - roll into work the next day with a chronic hangover and smoker's cough, take the edge-off at lunchtime with a whisky and a meat pie (preferably Fray Bentos) then, in the afternoon, chat up the bird who did his typing.

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Above: Ian Hendry in Trevor Preston's *Ringer*

Left in descending order from top: Writers Ian Kennedy Martin, Roger Marshall and Trevor Preston, directors David Wickes and Tom Clegg and *Sweeney* producer Ted Childs



### BLOODY GREAT!

*The Sweeney* arrived fully formed at 9pm on 2 January 1975 with the episode 'Ringer' and was an immediate hit. "I remember when it first went out I was listening to Radio 1," says the series' film editor Chris Burt, who would go on to produce *Inspector Morse*, *Lewis* and *Endeavour*. "I was going to work and Johnny Walker's breakfast show had a huge audience. The first thing he said that morning was, 'Have you all watched *The Sweeney*? The best thing I've ever seen on British television. It's bloody great!'"

In a highly unionised era, Euston Films, based for the duration of *The Sweeney* at Colet Court opposite the Red Cow pub in Hammersmith (where mod punks *The Jam* played some of their early gigs), soon attracted the ire of the Association of Cinema and Television Technicians (ACTT) union. The Euston

approach was defiantly non-union, thanks to the British Film and Television Producers' Association (BFTPA) agreement which enabled all artistic input – from actors, writers, directors and musicians – to be covered by a one-off payment i.e. so no residuals were subsequently owing. "The argument \_that the ACTT used was that we were exploiting their members and making them work in appalling conditions," says *The Sweeney's* producer and occasional director Ted Childs, who worked with John Thaw on most of his future TV drama projects. "(But) everyone enjoyed it, we could do what we liked, there was a piss up every night, and nobody gave a toss."

When the ACTT were eventually satisfied that Euston didn't constitute a threat to productions being made in the Thames Television studios, Euston commenced production on its first film series in 1973, a revival of the Thames drama *Special Branch*. Although Euston's new approach was quickly vindicated by high ratings, the production team were dissatisfied with the series' lack of authenticity. Childs remembers, "We'd finished dubbing an episode of *Special Branch* so we went and had lunch in Pizza

investigation drama *Redcap* (1965-66), in which Thaw took the lead as Sergeant John Mann and the writer was script editor. "He was very funny," Kennedy-Martin remembers fondly. "One of the luckiest actors in the world – extremely talented." David Wickes, who directed six episodes of *The Sweeney*, remembers Thaw being "100% professional. More than anything else in life, he wanted (to get the performance right)... He was magic to work with from that point of view, because he was always thinking."

Thaw himself, 32 in 1974, found the character of DI John Albert 'Jack' Regan fascinating because he was "a loner, a very stubborn man... He's marvellous at his job and can't see himself doing any other work... And because of that attitude of making his work his whole life, he loses out on a lot of things." Reagan was paired with



Express and then decided we'd go see *The French Connection* (1971). We came out, all excited, and said 'Yeah! That's what we should be doing!'"

The actor chosen to front *Special Branch's* replacement – initial titles were *McClellan* and *The Outcasts*, before *The Sweeney* was settled on – was Mancunian John Thaw, (1942-2001), a close friend of Ian Kennedy-Martin, author of the pilot TV film, *Armchair Cinema: 'Regan'*. The two had become close working on the military

investigation drama *Redcap* (1965-66), in which Thaw took the lead as Sergeant John Mann and the writer was script editor.

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## REGAN RETURNS

In 2008, the same year that Gene Hunt was transferred to the 1980s in *Ashes to Ashes*, it was announced that *The Sweeney* would be returning to the big screen under the directorship of Nick Love, director of such tough fare as *The Football Factory* (2004) and *The Firm* (2009), with John Hodge, the writer of the equally hard-bitten *Trainspotting* (1996), supplying the script.

Problems with funding meant release of the film was delayed until 2012. By then, a neat piece of casting had put lovable hard man Ray Winstone – who had appeared as a young tearaway in the 1976 episode 'Loving Arms' – in the shoes of a 21st century Jack Regan, with the actor/musician Plan B taking on the role of Carter.

Although the film was praised for its action sequences and a dramatic shoot-out in the National Gallery in particular, the overall impression from the critics was, as *The Guardian* bluntly put it, of "a brainless joy-ride that ends up spinning its wheels in macho cliches."

Nonetheless, the film was considered commercial enough to be remade in France as *The Sweeney: Paris* (2015), with Jean Reno taking the lead role of 'Serge Buren', in effect the third actor to portray Jack Regan.







## THE GENE GENIE

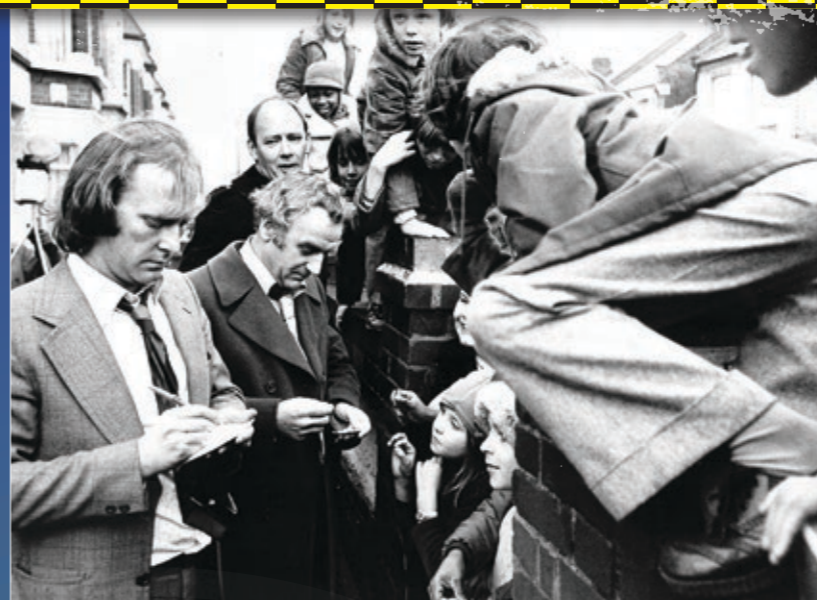
In 1998, a boozy weekend in Blackpool by writers Matthew Graham and Ashley Pharoah, charged with devising a new TV series for the production company Kudos, resulted in what became a desire to recreate *The Sweeney*, their favourite cop show. "It was the first idea we had," says Graham, "realising that, although it was the last thing we

wanted to do, [Kudos] would probably want a cop show."

A wish to retain the more unacceptable aspects of Regan and Carter's exploits, at the same time making them palatable with a disapproving modern voice, resulted in *Life on Mars* (2006-07). In tribute to its source material the show was originally called *Ford Granada*, which the mismatched duo of DI Sam Tyler (from 2006) and DCI Gene "The Gene Genie" Hunt (from 1973) drove in the series. *Life on Mars* even had *The Sweeney*'s Peter Brayham arranging the stunts.

Dean Andrews, who played the thuggish DS Ray Carling, was well aware of the series' heritage: "I'd grown up with *The Sweeney* and *The Professionals* so they were etched in my memory", he says, while director David Drury, who worked on the *Life on Mars* sequel *Ashes to Ashes*, remembered "as a kid, watching *The Sweeney* and being blown away by it. It came on and I was riveted, because it was SO different and SO fast."

Perhaps *Life on Mars*' most significant endorsement came from the gunner himself, Dennis Waterman, who said, "I really enjoyed it. It did take me back to *The Sweeney* days – they even had a brown Granada car like we had."



later with a story more recognisably like the TV series, even though the film was not as financially successful as the first.

critics. 'Regan' moved The Guardian's TV reviewer to praise "John Thaw and Dennis Waterman as a particularly strong left-hook and right-cross combination", while the morning after 'Ringer', *The Daily Telegraph* recommended "a very superior police thriller" that was "beautifully cast at all points."

There were some dissenting voices, however. Clive James in *The Observer* found the series "boring and unsettling at the same time", while the *Sunday Times* put forward the view that in *The Sweeney*'s "implicit admiration of the coarse and the crude there is something naive about (the series), and something distinctly disagreeable about its gratuitous brutality."

Gratuitous or not, for such a realistically violent series the show had a surprisingly big following among children

Conversely, Waterman's view of the two movies is the opposite of their performance at the box office. "*Sweeney!* was all outside our remit," he reasons. "It was oil barons and sheikhs, and we suddenly had to have pictures of Big Ben and Tower Bridge. It was like when they film a (TV) comedy and move it into a totally different place. The second film was an absolute *Sweeney* job through and through. We were chasing blaggers and they were very, very tough blaggers. We had a fantastic cast, and I thought that film was infinitely better than the first one. I thought it was terrific."

### A SEASONAL INSTITUTION

A telling sign of how much of a massive success *The Sweeney* had become came at the end of 1976, when Thaw and Waterman were invited on to the BBC's seasonal institution *The Morecambe and Wise Christmas Show*.

"We were ITV and they were BBC – those sort of crossovers didn't often happen then," Waterman observes. "While we were doing it, John and I said, 'Alright, we've done this, why don't you do one of ours?' It was Ernie who picked it up immediately. 'What?' he said, 'You mean come on *The Sweeney*?'"

When the comedy duo defected to Thames Television in 1978, a rematch was duly arranged: in the episode 'Hearts and Minds'. "Once we got it written and started doing it it was hilarious," Waterman remembers, laughing. "John and I found it hard to keep straight faces a lot of the time."

"We thought the best thing was to let Eric and Ernie play themselves," Childs recalls. "Don Churchill and I wrote the script. It was a hoot; we were all on the floor with our legs in the air." "That was when we knew we'd won," Wickes believes of the legendary comics' participation with the Euston Films Flying Squad. "These were the great icons of comedy in the country and you get them to come to you."

At the beginning of filming on the fourth series in 1977, Thaw and Waterman had a fateful conversation: "John said, 'I don't know about you, but I'm gonna call it a day.' And I said, 'Yeah, I'm with you.' Had it been down to me, I'd have said, 'Yeah, I'll do another series,' as it was fantastic fun. But John was absolutely right; there's nothing sadder than seeing a great programme go downhill quickly."

Childs was in agreement with his two stars: "I think it was right to end it when we did. I did try to bring in new writers and directors to refresh *The Sweeney*, (but) I think it was running out of steam." ➔

Right: Ten *Sweeney* novels were published, all by Futura Books in the UK. The very first book published in 1975, as the first of a numbered series, was done so with the main title mis-spelt (missing out the 'e') on both the cover and the spine (but not inside)! Needless to say, the book was hastily re-published. There followed eight further numbered books, and then the novelisation of the movie *Sweeney 2*

Previously a stunt man on ITC's roster of action adventure shows that included *Danger Man*, *The Prisoner* and *The Persuaders!*, Brayham was chosen because of his first hand experience of the London underworld.

"I used to run with a crowd of guys who were all boxers and some of 'the chaps'," he recalled. "I used to get involved in fist fights more than anything else... (On *The Sweeney*), I always wanted to show what would really happen: you kick a guy in the bollocks, pull his jacket over his head and give him another kicking so he can't see what's coming."

On the right side of the law, the transport Regan and Carter's team used required a compromise, as BMC, the company who supplied Triumphs to the real Metropolitan Police used, wanted paying. "So we went along to Ford and they said 'Fine, you can have what you like,'" Childs reveals.

"As time went on, the series became known as the Ford Squad! There was an advert in *Ad Weekly* and they'd used a picture from *The Sweeney* with the headline 'Ford Squad.' The villains in *The Sweeney* all used one Jaguar 3.4. – the car of choice for real criminals because of the fast acceleration – which was constantly being repaired.

After a falling out over artistic control of the series between Ted Childs and Ian Kennedy-Martin during the making of 'Regan', the latter left the production, taking some proposed storylines with him. In the creative gap, the main writers on *The Sweeney* became Ian's brother Troy (1932-2009), who'd written the film screenplays for *The Italian Job* (1969) and *Kelly's Heroes* (1970), Roger Marshall, who'd co-created Thames' private



eye drama *Public Eye* (1965-1975), together with Canadian Randal Graham (1941-2010). The younger Kennedy-Martin had a gift for comedy. Marshall had a talent for social drama and Graham specialised in stories that dealt with Regan's character.

By far the most influential writer on *The Sweeney*, though, was Trevor Preston (1938-2018). Writing twelve episodes, more than any other contributor, his scripts were authentic because his South London family were involved in the capital's underworld.

A graduate of the Royal College of Art, Preston's stories defined the tough but intelligent style *The Sweeney* became known for. "In its own context, *The Sweeney* was truthful," he believed. "Real men, and women with no make-up. I think that's why people still talk about it with enormous feeling, because you took them in as pals. People felt involved in it. I think there are about six or seven really great episodes... and there are moments in them that are razor sharp and (capture) what policing in this country is like... I think the series said more about our society than any play."

They may not be among the episodes Preston had in mind, but notable stand outs are his own 'Ringer' and 'Abduction'. The first established the fast-moving, gritty and



This image: John Thaw and Dennis Waterman on *The Morecambe and Wise Show* in 1977, with Eric Morecambe, Ernie Wise and actress Kate O'Mara

witty style of the show while the second, the last episode of the first series, is unbearably tense, as Regan's daughter Susie (Jennifer Thanisch) is kidnapped by criminals.

In Marshall's sombre 'Hit and Run', Carter's wife Alison (Stephanie Turner) is mistakenly killed. Her death results in one of *The Sweeney*'s most affecting scenes, as Regan calls round to see a bereaved Carter with a bottle of whisky, promising to drink it "down to the label" with his sergeant. Marshall also wrote the series' only linked episodes, with two apiece for guest villains Col (Patrick Mower) and Ray (George Layton), a double act of wise-cracking Australian gunmen, in 'Golden Fleece' and 'Trojan Bus', and Tim Cook (George Sweeney) – a psychopath loosely based on the Black Panther – in 'Taste of Fear' and 'On the Run'. Delivering challenging drama until the end, one of the fourth series' stand-out episodes was Richard Harris's 'Trust Red', in which Regan empathises with an ageing robber, Redgrave (John Ronane), who wants out.

### GRATUITOUS BRUTALITY

Right from the start, *The Sweeney*'s combination of authenticity, action and social observation was so well crafted it won over even highbrow



"It was sad, but there were other things to do," Tom Clegg reflected. "Dennis would have gone on but nobody blamed John... I mean, four and a half years on one programme? He was a young, ambitious actor. I think it was about the right time... If it had been an American series, it would have gone on for at least another five years, it was so popular. They would never let a series so popular die."

After being cleared of corruption in the last episode 'Jack or Knave', Regan angrily admits to Carter and Haskins that he's had enough. As Regan is driven off in a taxi, Haskins says, "He'll be back. He needs the job like an alcohol needs booze." "Yeah?" Carter responds cynically.

#### SWEENEY LEGACY

The immediate legacy of *The Sweeney* could be seen in the BBC's tough police thriller *Target* (1978-79) and London Weekend Television's crime/espionage hybrid *The Professionals*. Both were directly inspired by *The Sweeney*, and most of the directors and writers who'd worked on the formative series helped shape both of its successors, with Peter Brayham arranging stunts for both.

More widely in popular culture, the tough, conflicted, loner copper archetype *The Sweeney* established has been referenced in productions as varied as *Citizen Smith* (1977-1980), *Screenplay: The Black and Blue Lamp* (1988), *Thief Takers* (1995-97), and *Black Books' The Blackout* (2000). In 1993, the *Comic Strip* revealed 'Shouting' George of "The Weeny", one of the 'Detectives on the Edge of a Nervous Breakdown', in a remarkably accurate, and affectionate, impersonation of John Thaw by Jim Broadbent. *The Sweeney* had made such a lasting impression that were two attempts to revive it, one in 1983 and the other in 1998. The first, proposed by Roger Marshall, had Regan seconded to the Hong Kong police.

"John was keen, and I had Ian Kennedy-Martin's blessing," Marshall reveals. "I got David Stirling, a major shareholder in Hong Kong television, interested, but ultimately nothing came of it." In the 1990s, Regan's creator himself pitched a revival of the series to ITV in which Carter would have been a Commander in the Flying Squad. The idea again came to nothing, but in 2003 Dennis Waterman successfully revived his *Sweeney* persona in the BBC's *New Tricks* (2003-2015) as Gerry Standing, an old-style copper into boxing, rock music and women.

This 21st century nostalgia for an un-PC era of policing reached a logical conclusion in 2006 with *Life on Mars* (2006-07), when a modern cop found himself working for a "guv" of the old school (see box out). In the wake of *Life on Mars*' success, plans to revive *The Sweeney* itself eventually came to fruition in 2012 (see box out).

That a TV series screened for only four years over 40 years ago continues to create this level of interest is testament to a once only, perfect storm of perfect casting, dynamic writing and an innovative production style, which still looks fresh today when DVD releases or repeats of *The Sweeney* are appraised.

"It was a joy to do, it really was," Dennis Waterman happily considers in conclusion. "When you know you're doing good work, and you're having amazing fun doing it – and you're getting paid – what more could you ask for?"



## MURDER IN THE STREETS\*

As the two feature films based on *The Sweeney* finally make it to Blu-ray, Robert Fairclough talks to director David Wickes, who directed Jack Regan's big screen debut.

Forty-plus years on, David Wickes' memories of transferring "the roughest, toughest men from London's greatest crime squad" from television to the cinema screen in *Sweeney!* (1976) remain remarkably clear, vivid and detailed.

"In those days, we were a kind of family of gypsies," he reminisces about Euston Films, who made *The Sweeney*. "We wore scruffy anoraks, hadn't had a haircut for a long time, hadn't shaved for a week. The actors we had, bought into that. They were our kind of people; they were very willing, and not worried about having blood bags exploding and things like that... Shooting on 35mm for the film, with surround sound, instead of on 16mm for people's little television screens, was all brand new to the technicians at Euston, but they got into it very well."

Production began with a meeting with EMI Films in 1976, who expressed interest in making a film version of the top-rating TV series. "Lloyd Shirley, the founder of Euston Films, and his partner George Taylor were there, together with quite a lot of people from Thames Television. They were saying, 'Look, they've been several of these TV film

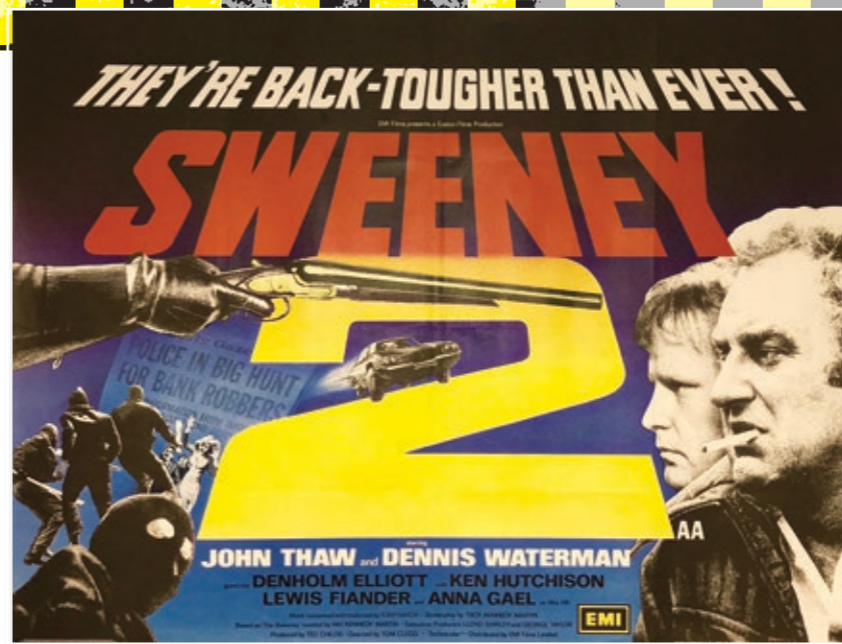


spin-offs and they've nearly always failed.' You can see it from the point of view of the punter: 'I can see this on television, why should I get in the car out and go down to the cinema?'"

"I was present at that meeting, and after all the executives said what they had to say, I – as someone innocent in the ways of senior management – said, 'I think you're absolutely right. I know *The Sweeney* audience by now, and we should put in the film what they won't let us show on television.' Everybody looked up. I'd made a lot of commercials, and this point was known in the commercials world as the 'nerve point' – the moment you hit the nail on the head. I said, 'That's how you should advertise it, and I'll make damn sure I get an 'X' certificate.'"

To achieve this explicitly adult classification, David devised the graphic shooting of a

Left: 'Dull it aint!' An assassin in police clothing prepares to ventilate some nosy criminals in *Sweeney!*



policeman in a London street. "That was so nasty!" he laughs. "I met Frank Maher – a lovely guy – the stuntman who wore the police helmet we exploded a few years later, and he said, 'I'm still deaf, y'know!' I knew that one scene would get us the X."

"Nat Cohen, the head of EMI, was so keen on the film he agreed to provide finance for the whole enterprise and Thames didn't have to pay a thing," David explains. "After that, we had a nice lunch to celebrate with just about everybody from Euston. John Thaw was there and Dusty Miller, the director of photography... the Euston lads were hugely excited. Their attitude was, 'C'mon, we'll really show 'em in Hollywood!'"

Although Randal Graham is credited with the screenplay for *Sweeney!*, David insists the truth is rather different: "Randal – he's passed on now – had worked extensively on *The Sweeney* TV series. Ted Childs, *The Sweeney* producer, brought him in, as he felt he had a cinematic sensibility. Truthfully, though, Ted and I wrote the film. All three of us were on a commentary we did for *Sweeney!* a few years ago and, at one stage, poor old Randal couldn't answer a question and said, 'Listen, there's not a word of mine in this script.' Ted and I looked at our shoes and thought 'Oh my God, this sounds dreadful', but the truth is, as I say, that we wrote it."

The script looked to an international market in mining the popular vogue for 1970s conspiracy thrillers, such as *The Parallax View* (1974), *Three Days of the Condor* (1975) and *All the President's Men* (1976). "Ted's and my background, quite separately, was in documentaries and current affairs," David says, "so I knew what the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) was. From there, we developed a big conspiracy based around the oil business."

Pitching the film at a global audience also explained the inclusion of London landmarks such as the Houses of Parliament and Westminster Bridge, largely absent from the TV series. "It's no good setting something in Paris and you never show the Eiffel Tower," David notes, "or you never show the Louvre, or you never show the Arc de Triomphe... Just a minute – why are you there?"

Despite the more ambitious scale of the

location filming, David remembers that the Euston crew filmed around on the London streets in exactly the same way as they did for the TV series i.e. illegally.

"Euston practised guerilla filming, as they called it. We put the camera in a plain Ford transit, bolted down to the floor, and we'd drive up, park it somewhere in the street, then bring past some motorcyclists going at 70 miles an hour. We had no permission at all, because the Metropolitan Police would never have authorised anything like that... What we'd do is use walkie talkies and say 'OK, go in 10 seconds. 9, 8...' then we'd open the doors of the van, they'd come past, wallop!, we'd shut the doors and drive off. Nobody could get the police on to us in time."

"The scene where John and Diane Keen are on the bus – if you were doing that today you'd cause a traffic jam. I must say that the great Billy Westley, the first assistant director, would say, 'I can't get you any more, you've got no second take – go!' because he knew we'd get closed down. His lads would go out there, wave all these cars past, apologise, and people would shout at us."

The other major difference from the TV series was in *Regan* – in the best traditions of the conspiracy thriller – becoming the lone, persecuted figure of reason. "I thought – and I discussed it with Lloyd, I think – that on television you can get away with a double act," David suggests, "because week after week after week, you need to answer the question, 'Who's your hero talking to: who does he unwind to, who reigns him in when he's gone too far?' He needs an oppo, a sidekick, and Dennis Waterman was the one. At that time, he made his living out of saying 'Guvnor!' in disapproval, which he was very good at that. Anyway, I said to Lloyd, 'Have a look at *Dirty Harry* (1971) and see what the difference is.' He agreed, so we toned down the sidekick idea and kept Regan going as the central character."

David and the Euston team's hard work was rewarded when John Thaw won the *Evening Standard* Film Award for Best Actor in 1977. "John was a very good actor – really good," David observes. "A lot of actors haven't got that emotional feeling inside them, but he did." Much to his (sardonic) amusement, Dennis picked up the award for



Best Newcomer, even though he'd been acting since 1960. *Sweeney!* was also nominated for Best Film and was up against some very distinguished opposition. "We lost the *Evening Standard*



Award for Best Film to Richard Attenborough's *A Bridge Too Far* by a fraction of an inch, apparently. Of course, Dickie had a thousand, trillion-dollar film, with all the Robert Redfords on Earth in it, and all we had was our little *Sweeney!* But, I must say, Dickie was a really nice guy. Although I was no longer of any importance because I hadn't won, he came over and said, 'The only reason I got it is because I'm older! Now, come and have a drink.'"

Despite this critical acknowledgement, the biggest vindication for David was in *Sweeney!*'s box office returns. "It made a fortune," he states unequivocally. "The profit made by EMI Films was 1000% – £10 for every quid they spent on it. It was the most profitable film they had made for many years, and on the back of it they were able to afford to make *The Deer Hunter* (1978). I've still got a little hand written note somewhere from EMI that says 'Pin this on the wall.' It was the first week's take from the ABC, Shaftesbury Avenue, where *Sweeney!* premiered. I can't remember the actual figure, but it was something like £120,000 – and that was only from one cinema."

All these years later, David is looking forward to seeing his work in high definition. "I will get the Blu-ray," he promises. "We've got a little cinema here, I'll get my kids in and we'll show it on the big screen." Reflecting on his pioneering work for Euston Films, and *Sweeney!* in particular, he says, "I'd like to close with four words – 'Those were the days.' It really was a golden time. We were very lucky."

\*This headline appears on the *Evening Standard* in the film.

Special thanks to Dennis Waterman and the cast and crew of *The Sweeney*, Dean Andrews, David Drury and Matthew Graham.

*Sweeney!* the film was released by Network on February 4. Robert Fairclough and Mike Kenwood are the authors of *Sweeney! The Official Companion*, published by Titan Books.

Above: 'Dodgy bit of parking here, guv'nor...' Jack and George at a robbery scene and on a 'jolly' to Malta in *Sweeney 2*