

The Silver Archive #7

SURVIVORS

Mad Dog



By Rich Cross

THE SILVER ARCHIVE
SURVIVORS: MAD DOG
ISBN: 9781913456221

Published by Obverse Books, Edinburgh

Range Editor: Stuart Douglas
Cover Design: Cody Schell

First edition: February 2022
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Text © 2022 Rich Cross

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means without the prior written permission of the publisher, nor be otherwise circulated in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

A CIP catalogue record for this title is available from the British Library.

For Theo (who likes dogs and books)
and Autumn (who will make up her own mind about both such things)

Current Titles

The Christmas Box – Paul Magrs

#1: **Sapphire & Steel: Assignments 1 & 2** – David and Lesley McIntee

#2: **Sapphire & Steel: Assignments 3 & 4** – Cody Schell

#3: **Sapphire & Steel: Assignments 5 & 6** – James Cooray Smith

#4: **Stranger Things: Season 1** – Paul Driscoll

#5: **Dark Skies** – Matthew Kresal

#6: **The Strange World of Gurney Slade** – Andrew Hickey

#7: **Survivors: Mad Dog** by Rich Cross

Contents

Overview

Synopsis

Introduction

‘You’ve Never Had It So Good’

Those Days are Over

‘Everything All Gone To Pot’

The Forward March of Charles Vaughan

‘Rabies Means Death’

The Making Of *Mad Dog*

The Sounds Of Survival

The Meanings Of *Mad Dog*

The Series’ Last Great Adventure

Bibliography

Overview

Title: Mad Dog

Writer: Don Shaw

Director: Tristan de Vere Cole

Original UK Transmission date: 6 April 1977

Running Time: 49m 25s

UK Viewing Figures: 7.42m¹

Regular Cast: Denis Lill (Charles Vaughan)

Guest Cast: Morris Perry (Dr Richard Fenton), Bernard Kay (Sanders), Ralph Arliss (Jim), Max Faulkner (Phil), Jane Shaw (girl), Stephen Bill (Ron), Heather Canning (Ellen), Eric Francis (train driver), Robert Pugh (Terry)

Responses:

'*Mad Dog* is not only a great **Survivors** episode (possibly the very best in the series' three-year run), it's also a superb piece of dramatic television. [...] Denis Lill [...] is in top form and Morris Perry turns in a superb performance as the doomed Fenton. Tristan de Vere Cole's direction is stunning – and the

¹ Viewing figures for all episodes of **Survivors** were compiled in the 1990s by Kevin Marshall during his research for his sourcebook *The Making of Terry Nation's Survivors*, self-published in 1995. The numbers for *Mad Dog* put the episode on a par with the third series' opener *Manhunt*, but behind the series finale, *Power* (with 7.52m), and the best part of a million viewers short of this final series' best performer, *Bridgehead* – broadcast the week following *Mad Dog* (with 8.23m). Overall, the viewing figures on the third series of *Survivors* were the lowest of three (with Series Two being the strongest cumulative performer).

appalling weather conditions only add to the sense of emptiness engendered by the marvellous rural locations.'

[Paul Mount, *The Making of Terry Nation's Survivors*]

Community And Independence

Another of the themes that **Survivors** revisits through different narrative prisms is the relationship between the individual and the community. The question of how a person's status and rights in relation to others have been impacted by The Death is integral to the plot of *Mad Dog*.

From its earliest episodes, **Survivors** returned time and again to the 'need to settle', exploring different approaches to the practicalities of survival that recognise the need for shared human endeavour. It's arguably the show's most cyclical go-to question. The question of communal organisation in the new world surfaces as early as the second episode of Series One. While others are still coming to terms with the new realities, Arthur Wormley is already establishing a new fiefdom that will be answerable to him alone. The attractions of a more humane, democratic alternative are already being discussed by the new trio of Abby, Greg and Jenny in the following episode.² Other options appear in quick succession: *Corn Dolly* features a hard-working kibbutz, built around the imperative to procreate to repopulate; *Gone to the Angels* features religious hermits who eke out a subsistence existence up in the hills, while devoting themselves to spiritual reflection; while *Garland's War* explores the battle for control of a large stately home and its grounds (the 'rightful' aristocratic inheritor has been ousted by a

² *Gone Away*, BBC1, 30 April 1975.

cabal of usurpers).³

Each of these options requires, in some way, that the individual submit to the control of a higher 'guiding' authority. Seventh episode *Starvation* reframes the question of community, and functions as the key transition episode of Series One. When scattered survivors are brought together at The Grange through a shared conviction in the benefits of being with others, Greg and Abby recognise that they have the nucleus of a viable settlement. 'I think we're home,' says Greg to a relieved Abby. And while the pair are soon operating as the community's leaders, The Grange is much less of a doctrinaire, top-down settlement than its evident rivals. In the episodes that follow, other survivors see its advantages and throw in their lot with The Grange's approach to collaborative survival.

Survivors' second series pivots around life on the Whitecross estate, depicting Greg's and Charles' efforts to cultivate a viable, sustainable smallholding sufficient to support its residents. But Series Two also delivers insights into more diverse and geographically distant communities. Two-parter *The Lights of London* illuminates the political and generational power struggle underway in the capital, as relocation plans fall victim to tyrant Manny's megalomania and the devastating 'London sickness'. Ninth episode *The Chosen* reveals the existence of an isolationist settlement of quasi-fascist religious zealots, riven by faction and intrigue. Both of these anti-

³ *Garland's War*, BBC1, 21 May 1975.

democracies strengthen the survivors' belief in the utility of the more open and inclusive Whitecross 'way'. Tenth episode *New Arrivals* brings upset to Whitecross when young agricultural specialist Mark Carter draws up plans to industrialise the settlement's ways of farming. While Greg and Charles see value in the plan (Jenny, Pet and Hubert disagree), it's revealed that Carter's insistence on the 'rule of experts' corroded to destruction the morale of his previous community.⁴ Throughout the series, Whitecross is challenged to defend (in both a literal and an abstract sense) the community's sense of its own utility, morality and durability. It is the shock of closing episode *New World* that finally delivers an unanswerable riposte to Whitecross' sense of self belief. The settlement is accused of insularity, parochialism and a lack of ambition, as the arrival of the Carlssons ignites a new pan-European perspective, at least as far as to include exploration of the Nordic countries.

With its restless and mobile motifs, **Survivors'** third series extends the focus on alternative settlements (as it moves closer to a 'community of the week' format). Opening episode *Manhunt*, with its military-controlled compound and top-secret goings on, shows producer Dudley's intentions to 'go different' writ large. Second episode *A Little Learning*, reveals a thriving community run by and for free-spirited children, determined to resist adult interference; while third story, *Law of the Jungle*, focuses on a 'tribe' that

⁴ *Lights of London I*, 14 April 1976; *Lights of London II*, 21 April 1976; *The Chosen*, 26 May 1976; *New Arrivals*, 9 June 1976 (all BBC1)

spurn any attempt to build civilisation afresh, lorded over by the bullying and bombastic Brod.

The episodes that follow *Mad Dog* – from *Bridgehead* to *Power* – all revisit the question of community in one way or another. The community in *Mad Dog's* area of the Peak District is very different to any other seen on the programme. These are not settlements naturally in tune with Charles' wider ambitions for federation, association and interdependence. These are settlers that *could* band together, taking over larger farms to form communities and combine labour in collective endeavour. It's clear that they have actively chosen not to do so, in preference to a more solitary existence as shepherd and scratch farmer.

Charles is too busy fleeing for his life to reflect much about the consequences of this lifestyle choice for his wider plans for reconstruction and revival. It's possible that the survivors of the Peak District are akin to Alistair McFadden from *Face of the Tiger* in one important respect: that they place little to no value on the currency of companionship and community. Although it's never referenced directly, it seems likely that Jim has come to help out Sanders in fixing his leaking barn roof (Hubert rebuffs Jack when he attempts to offer the same service at Whitecross in *Face of the Tiger*) as a part of an informal barter of labour. A neighbour needs some extra help, so (as 'round here it's your own, and no-one else's') Jim has volunteered to help out, knowing that his credit will be repaid in due course.

In contrast to Eagle's settlement of children in *A Little Learning*, there is only

one young person seen on screen in *Mad Dog*, a nameless young girl who races off to alert her 'family' about the intruder hiding in the family barn.⁵ She does run past an old-school high pram, out in the garden behind her house. That might suggest the existence of an unseen younger sibling. But as the next episode makes clear, the make-do-and-mend philosophy of some survivors can involve the reappropriation of prams for other purposes.⁶ In any case, no women of child-bearing age are seen on screen which, given the mean age of the scattered survivors visible in *Mad Dog*, suggests that a question mark hangs over the long-term future of this disparate group of settlers.

The train community are a different type of operation altogether. Open, welcoming, non-judgemental, outward-looking, expansive, trusting, interested (though cautious) about the potential to extend their network in the direction of a national operation. The inverse of the directness of Sanders, those working on the train and at one of the crew's station provide shelter, aid and recovery. Their instincts are to trust and care for the injured traveller even if, as he recovers, they doubt he is telling them the truth about the cause of his injuries and misfortunes. 'Bad fall from a horse; worst I've seen,' says the train driver, with a wry tone, making it clear that he and his friends don't believe a word of Charles' explanation, but offering him shelter

⁵ Played by Jane Shaw, the (then young) daughter of script writer Don.

⁶ In *Bridgehead*, one survivor uses an old-style pram as a means to transport a young piglet.

and protection regardless. The episode begins with Charles being rescued, but having his openness and friendship spurned and deconstructed, and ends with him being saved once again, but this time by a community whose instincts are those of charity, openness and affinity with others.

Biography

Rich Cross first became fascinated by the post-apocalyptic BBC TV series **Survivors** in April 1975 when, at the age of 12, he declined the entreaties of his mates to 'play out' and instead settled in on the living room couch to watch opening episode *The Fourth Horseman*. It was an experience that left, as the saying goes, an 'indelible impression'. Two decades later, when **Survivors** resurfaced on satellite-cable station UK Gold, and the first series was released on VHS by BBC Worldwide, Cross became part of the small community of active **Survivors'** enthusiasts online.

Cross has since written extensively about **Survivors** for genre magazines including *Action TV*, *SciFiNow* and *Starburst* and for the print and online fan press. He assisted with the special features of all three of the original *Survivors* DVD boxsets, convening episode commentaries (including one for *Mad Dog*) and appearing on-screen in the Series Three documentary *New World Rising*. He co-authored the first commercially published book on the series in 2005, and in 2010 followed up with a single-author book on the BBC's 2008-10 remake. He's written about the Big Finish original audio series

of **Survivors** and also published features on **Doomwatch**, **The Day of the Triffids**, **The Guardians**, **Planet of the Apes** and many other fictional tales of dystopia and human folly. Yet, more than 45 years later, his singular enthusiasm for one post-apocalyptic BBC TV series in particular remains undiminished.