The Silver Archive #7

SURVIVORS

Mad Dog

By Rich Cross

THE SILVER ARCHIVE
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For Theo (who likes dogs and books)

and Autumn (who will make up her own mind about both such things)

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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: 7.42m[1]

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 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*]

[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).

Synopsis

In search of the missing farmer and settlement leader, **Tom Walter**, plague survivor **Charles Vaughan**, alone and on horseback, is savagely attacked by a pack of wild dogs. Rescued by **Dr Richard Fenton**, Fenton explains to Charles that the district is continually under threat from packs of increasingly vicious rabid dogs.

Charles fears that the dog bite he suffered in the first attack might be deadly, an anxiety worsened by Fenton, who explains that transmission of rabies is not difficult, and that the incubation period can be anything from a few days to more than a year. Charles has no way of knowing if he is already a dead man walking.

Fenton reveals that he has been keeping 'notes' on each of the travellers through the Peak he has met. Charles, preoccupied with the effort for reconstruction and economic revival, finds such a documentary trail interesting, especially when he discovers one of the entries in Fenton's log describes his encounter with a 'fanatic' named **Greg Preston**.

Charles agrees to accompany Fenton on his return home, stopping overnight en route at his halfway house, where they discuss their conflicting perspectives on the future. Fenton revels in his certainty that humanity faces quiet oblivion, needling Charles with his refusal to do anything other than amuse himself whilst waiting for the end. In the night, Fenton is suddenly been taken ill. Convinced that this is just a routine fever, he cautions Charles to keep his distance while he sweats it out.

Fenton rebuffs the fresh water Charles brings him. As the implication of his 'fear of water' sinks in, Fenton recognises that he has contracted rabies and is doomed to die. He asks Charles to fetch him his rifle so that he can end his suffering, but Charles' instead prepares to set off in search of help, Fenton bursts from the house in the throes of delirium and falls unconscious. Charles ties him up in the house, and sets off to find Fenton's neighbours, hopeful that Fenton's cache of automatic rifles might be enough of a bribe to encourage some among them to help a stranger such as himself.

Charles encounters **Sanders** and **Jim,** who are suspicious of Charles' story, and show no interest in assisting him. Only when Charles explains that the sick man is Fenton do they agree to help.

On arrival at the halfway house, the three men discover that Fenton has escaped from his bonds and is in the full throes of the contagion. He lunges at the men and they flee downhill to the relative safety of the riverbank. With no alternative, Fenton is shot dead by Sanders and Jim.

Sanders interrogates Charles on his contact with Fenton, and Charles is forced to reveal his own bite mark, but says that he suffered it months earlier. Sanders makes plain that a renewed outbreak of rabies in the district is not a risk they can countenance. For the good of their community, they cannot let Charles, a potential carrier of the contagion, go free. Sanders insists that it is better, and more humane, for Charles to die at their hands now than to succumb to the agony of the illness days or weeks from now.

Charles knocks Jim to the floor and escapes on his horse. Sanders fire a shot at the retreating figure, appearing to hit his target. A desperate chase across barren wintry countryside begins.

Fearing that he will be unable to outrun the pair, Charles climbs down from his horse and urges it on riderless. He attempts to find cover in the ravine below, hoping that his pursuers will ride past above. The gambit fails and, nursing a painful gunshot wound, Charles presses on, stealing an unattended racing bike from a local man, **Phil**, but is soon forced to abandon it, as it develops a puncture.

An exhausted Charles finds shelter in an outbuilding adjacent to a farm, but again he is discovered, this time by a **young girl**, who raises the alarm when he asks for directions to Fenton's house.

Forced to flee once more, Charles cauterises his wound with a hot knife, and continues his journey on-foot. Charles overhears Sanders, Jim and Phil reveal that, by chance, he has found himself adjacent to Fenton's home.

With Sanders certain that the residence is empty, the men leave, planning to return later to remove the rifles in Fenton's armoury. Charles enter the house and locates Fenton's notes. He reads the section detailing Fenton's meeting with Greg Preston.

Charles hears the barks of an approaching dog pack, and hides underneath a nearby river bridge. The dogs menace him from the bank, but flee at the crack of a gunshot. Above him, Sanders, Phil and Jim pause on the bridge to discuss their search plan, unaware that Charles is just beneath their feet. Once they have walked on, Charles wades through the freezing water to the far bank of the river.

Charles collapses and **Ron** appears. A man in his twenties, he is laughing and jumping around excitedly, poking at Charles with a stick in childlike mockery. Suddenly agitated, Ron announces that he must 'tell Ellen', and runs off towards some nearby farm buildings. Unable to rouse himself or escape, Charles slips into unconsciousness.

When he comes to, Charles is chained up on the floor of a barn. **Ellen**, the farm owner and Ron's carer, has secreted him on her property while she investigates the threat that he might pose. Charles reveals that he was bitten by a dog, but Ellen concludes that he is unlikely to have the disease.

Sanders and his compatriots arrive at the farm as they continue their hunt. Ellen denies any knowledge of the whereabouts of Charles, as does Ron. But when Sanders says that Charles might be carrying a deadly disease, Ron is obviously unsure whether he should continue to keep Ellen's secret.

After a few days' rest, Charles leaves the farm, on a borrowed horse. But Ron has told Sanders where to find Charles and the chase begins anew.

This time, Charles attempts to unrun the other horsemen, but tumbles from his saddle when jumping a wall. He hides as his pursuers clear the wall and continue on. Although unintended, this second attempt at a diversion has succeeded, and Charles makes his escape.

He sees the billowing steam of a train engine and pulls himself up into an empty wagon where he again passes out. After the train pulls into a station, the **driver** and his **mate** discover their unconscious and injured passenger, and help him recover.

Several days later, Charles, his arm in a sling, joins the driver on the station platform. Excited at the progress that the settlement has already made, Charles encourages the driver to 'get a national network going'. It turns out that Charles is the second survivor to make such a suggestion – an earlier visitor, Greg Preston, had tried to enthuse them with the same sense of ambition. Charles is heartened by the news that Greg had pledged to return to this rail community in the future. In the meantime, this train will carry Charles south, out of the area and away from immediate danger.

Introduction

Back in the 1980s, if you'd asked a group of TV viewers who had even a fleeting memory of the third and concluding series of the BBC's post-apocalyptic serial **Survivors** which episode or storyline they could recall, one answer would recur time and again: 'the one with the rabies.' Many members of the cast and crew would agree. For lead actor Denis Lill, *Mad Dog* was 'the episode which sticks in my mind more than any other.'[2]

The drama of *Mad Dog* was so memorable and so chilling because it offered such a powerful 'what-if' reflection of a popular anxiety that was threaded through the contemporary *zeitgeist*: the fear of rabies, a horrifying and deadly disease with an appalling mortality rate, for which there was no dependable cure once the virus was coursing through the bloodstream. In the context of **Survivors**, that fear was manifest in a post-apocalyptic setting in which there was no possibility of even palliative medical care for the sufferer struck down by a terminal infection.

Survivors has long since secured its status as a landmark drama in what has increasingly come to be recognised as a golden age of British television. Across its three series and 38 episodes, the creative team bringing the show to the screen explored a wide range of scenarios and what-if situations, each based on the idea of the world being plunged into a new medieval present by the impact of a global pandemic that devastates the planet's population and lays waste to human civilisation. Only a tiny minority of survivors, those with a natural genetic immunity to the virus, emerge from the calamity to inherit a country without power, transport, communications, or industry. The series follows a handful of UK survivors who attempt to band together to secure a viable future for themselves and their descendants.

Rounding out the first quarter of the final series of **Survivors**, *Mad Dog* is arguably the show's last great adventure story. Full of the motifs and story dynamics of the Western screen genre, it combines a superbly crafted high-stakes pursuit with an exploration of two completely incompatible worldviews about humanity's fate. One protagonist insists that the revival of society and the economy is in the survivors' grasp. The other dismisses such talk as fanciful, seeing it as a refusal to recognise that the human race is sliding inexorably towards extinction. That wider existential, philosophical clash means that the adventure elements of *Mad Dog* are imbued with additional metaphorical meaning about the nature of hope, community, altruism, selfishness, and sacrifice.

Although those watching the episode on BBC1 in 1977 may not have given it a second thought, the making of *Mad Dog*, on location on the Severn Valley Railway and in the 'White Peak' in January 1977, using the BBC's solitary OB (Outside Broadcast) unit, was an extremely arduous business for everyone involved in the production. That they were able to bring to the screen not simply a finished 50-minute piece, but an exemplary, compelling post-apocalyptic drama is a testament to the commitment, resolve, determination and focus of a

[2] Author interview with Denis Lill, 3 June 2004.

dedicated production team working to an extraordinarily challenging and ambitious timetable.

The relationship between humankind and nature, and the resilience of the latter in the context of the near eradication of the former, is one of the recurrent themes across all three series of **Survivors**. As the storyline of *Mad Dog* unfolds, the place of the natural world, particularly in its most rugged and 'untamed' forms found within the UK, has huge significance. The terrain of the hills, valleys, fields and waterways of the Peak District become a character all of their own in *Mad Dog*, and with the episode filmed in deep winter conditions, the nature of the environment takes on particular meaning: vistas that would, in high summer, look verdant and inviting, here appear cold, unforgiving and threatening. That sense of this being a rugged, untamed place in which humans are struggling to put down roots also enhances the sense of these survivors' isolation from the wider world. It's a predicament that allows the intimate life-and-death conflicts of *Mad Dog* to embody the series' wider themes.

There are many things which make *Mad Dog* an episode without peer in **Survivors**. But while its distinctiveness is a key component of its success, it's also the very thing that made its making a risky dramatic endeavour.

The position *Mad Dog* occupies in the final twelve-episode series of **Survivors** is in itself significant, because eight further episodes follow it as the series reaches its conclusion. This allows the conflicting optimistic and pessimistic worldviews presented in *Mad Dog* sufficient space to be put to the narrative test. From the show's endpoint, in the concluding episode *Power*, it's possible to look back and judge how the perspectives of the different protagonists have stood up to the stress test of the fast-developing post-Death UK.

The dramatic evolution which occurs between the events of *Mad Dog* and those of *Power* confirms the extent to which the world of **Survivors** (and of the world's survivors) changed in the series' last outing.[3] Yet the journey from the very first episode *The Fourth Horseman*[4] to the drama of *Mad Dog*, the thirtieth episode, itself reveals a country irrevocably transformed.

Understanding the nature of that transformation, and therefore of the context in which the story of *Mad Dog* unfolds, means putting first **Survivors** and then the episode *Mad Dog* under the focus of the televisual and societal times in which they were brought to the screen.

Before sinking our teeth into the meanings of *Mad Dog*, it's important to establish (a) the televisual context in which **Survivors** came to the screen; (b) the distinctions of the third series of the show from its two predecessors, and (c) the cultural and political representation of the threat posed by rabies in 1970s' Britain.

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[3] *Power*, BBC1, 8 June 1977.

[4] *The Fourth Horseman*, BBC1, 16 April 1975.

‘You’ve Never Had It So Good’

Premiering on British TV screens in April 1975, **Survivors** could not have made its debut at a more fitting time. Looking back from the perspective of the twenty-first century, it seems ever clearer that **Survivors** had to have been made in the 1970s. It was a show that ‘captured the pessimism and paranoia of mid-70s’ Britain,’[5] to impressive effect. As a reviewer in *The Guardian* observed in December 2006, 31 years on from the show’s transmission: ‘Arriving in the bleakest years of the mid-1970s, somewhere between the oil crisis and the onset of punk, it caught the nation’s mood perfectly.’[6]

The seventies was the decade in which the UK was convulsed by change on almost every level: economic, political, cultural and constitutional. The ‘post-War consensus’ that had shaped the recovery of Britain after 1945 had underpinned the revival and expansion of the economy (driven by extensive state investment and nationalisation) and the emergence of the welfare state and a belief in the progressive role of government provision in the areas of health, housing and public services. In the resurgence of the 1950s, as mass consumerism and the phenomenon of teenage and youth culture combined to reshape the domestic lives of those living in Britain’s fast expanding suburbs, the British Prime Minster declared with evident pride that ‘our people have never had it so good.’[7]

The 1960s saw the loosening of many of the staid, traditional assumptions of the previous decade, as an era of experimentation and innovation opened up new opportunities and challenges. Harold Wilson, by now the Labour incumbent in Downing Street, promised to remake Britain through the ‘white heat of technology’[8]. That sense that scientific advance would be the agent and guarantor of human progress reached its apotheosis in 1969 with the Apollo moon mission, and Neil Armstrong’s ‘one giant leap’.

Continual growth, expansion and greater industrialisation would power a future of irreversible progress and improvement. Despite the ideological differences separating Labour and Conservative governments in what was essentially a two-party system in which the governing pendulum swung from one to the other, ‘one nation’ politics lay at the heart of a common discourse about how the country should be run.

As domestic black-and-white TV sets[9] began to appear in the front-rooms of the more affluent families, the status of cinema and of radio as the dominant forms of mass entertainment began its steady decline.

Many of the earliest science fiction and genre programmes to grace British TV were repackaged versions of the cinema serials that had been the mainstay of the Saturday morning kids’ sessions at the local fleapit. Classics of

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[5] Sandbrook, Dominic, ‘Goodbye Great Britain, 75-77’.
[6] 'The Cult of *Survivors*', *Guardian*, The Guide, 2 December 2006.

[7] MacMillan, Harold, speech at Bedford, 20 July 1957.
[8] Wilson, Harold, speech to Labour Party Conference, 1 October 1963.
[9] Colour TV sets eventually outnumbered black-and-white sets in the UK only in 1976.

bombastic, high-camp space opera, typified by the likes of **Flash Gordon**, grabbed the attention of a generation of youngsters, now able to enjoy such treats in their own homes. Such dramas reflected the action and adventure motifs, the gleaming space rockets and the bug-eyed monsters, of the weekly comics now within easy reach on the newsagents' shelves, for those prepared to part with their pocket-money.

The BBC had experimented with science fiction productions, such as the 1949 adaptation of **The Time Machine** (broadcast from Alexandra Palace on 25 January). The six episodes of Nigel Kneale's **The Quatermass Experiment** were first broadcast in the summer of 1953, with its sequel **Quatermass II** screened two years later, and **Quatermass and the Pit** was shown between December 1958 and January 1959. Kneale had also adapted George Orwell's critique of Stalinism and totalitarianism, **Nineteen Eighty-Four** (transmitted live in December 1954). It proved to be as compelling and disturbing to viewers as it was of concern to the authorities. The BBC resisted the pressure to cancel a live repeat. These early TV sci-fi works were bold demonstrations of how effectively this style of drama could translate to the small screen. Yet, though impressive on their own terms, they remained isolated interruptions in the routine rhythm of the BBC TV schedule, and were not part of a wider movement or sense of momentum shift.

It was not really until the 1960s that TV executives began to explore the potential for creating ongoing genre serials and series for the small screen. In the UK, much of that wave of genre TV was bright, fun-filled, upbeat, and filled with cool gadgets and even coolers heroes and heroines. Simple clear-cut morality and victory for the forces of good, epitomised by the house style of ITC, and shows like **Danger Man** (1960-62), **Man in a Suitcase** (1967-68), **The Protectors** (1972-73) and of course the surreal whimsy of **The Avengers** (1961-69). The debut in 1963 of the adventures of a time-travelling grandfather, the owner of an impressive blue police box, demonstrated just how well a flexible sci-fi premise could excel in the format of a children's TV serial. But the tone remained positive, and however pernicious the peril facing the Doctor and his companions, the triumph of the forces of good was never in serious doubt in 1960s' **Doctor Who**.

It would over-extend the argument to suggest that genre TV in the 1960s was unrelentingly upbeat. There were exceptions to the expression of resilient optimism. Dramas like **A for Andromeda** (1961), and its follow-up **The Andromeda Breakthrough** (1962), had a more unsettling, less reassuring timbre. But these shows stood out precisely because they were atypical. Even the consummate 1960s' tale of dystopian totalitarianism **The Prisoner** (1967-68) was defined as much by its celebration of absurdity and ridiculousness as it was by its evocation of menace and threat. However oppressive life in The Village remained, the bright, pastel colour schemes were anything but dark grey.

Those Days are Over

Since the emergence of TV as a mass cultural experience, the best British small-screen science fiction has reflected the wider cultural temper of the times in which it was made with impressive consistency. Successful genre television has always been able to speak (either directly or through more oblique sci-fi metaphor) to the condition of the world in which its viewers are watching. If 1960s' genre television spoke to a time of optimism, rising expectation, increased leisure time and social reform (especially addressing injustice and inequality in the fields of race and gender), a new era of 1970s' sci-fi TV gave fictional expression to the mood of a far more troubled, less upbeat, more-self-doubting society.

There had already been forays into the realm of dystopia and near-disaster on British TV screens, but the 1970s announced the arrival of this new strain of post-apocalyptic and near-apocalyptic storytelling.

The Changes (1975) explored the consequences of a wholesale rejection of technology by adults now convinced that machines were their enemy. In contrast, members of the younger generation demonstrated resilience in the face of the irrationality of their elders, with the story's young heroine trying to make sense of the catastrophe.

Based on John Rowe Townsend's novel of the same name, **Noah's Castle** (1979) shared a focus on the tensions between familial generations in the context of the collapse of society. Anticipating the worst, one paternalistic father sets up a new home to protect his family, amassing the resources he thinks they will need to endure the calamity. The stash soon attracts the attention of criminal gangs and anti-hoarders and the family are quickly plunged into a crisis of their own. Both of the series presented young TV viewers with challenging and unsettling storylines that unfolded in fictional (but wholly recognisable) versions of 1970s' Britain.

Dystopia also became a recurring premise in contemporary adult TV drama. **1990** (1977-78) offered an alternative take on George Orwell's seminal treatise on the nightmares of totalitarianism, *1984*. The two series of **1990** depict life in a then-future Britain that has isolated itself from the world and slid into tyranny. With freedom of speech outlawed and surveillance of citizens all-pervasive, small groups of dissidents find ways to outwit the authorities and undermine 'the system'; even if that means slipping through the country's sealed borders in the hope of finding a freer life abroad. The show's creator, Wilfred Greatorex, was keen to ensure that **1990** could not be pigeonholed as either a 'left-wing' or a 'right-wing' critique of dysfunctional Britain. That intention was reflected in the decision to make the show's anti-hero, Jim Kyle, a journalist and organiser in the resistance, so flawed. Kyle was no-one's rebel icon, and a disappointment even to himself.

Similar concerns with totalitarianism and resistance had previously surfaced in ITV's provocative serial **The Guardians** (1971). Set in an imaginary '1980s Britain' controlled by a quasi-fascist junta, **The Guardians** explored the complex morality of resistance (including armed resistance) to authoritarianism and oppression. Created by Rex Firkin and Vincent Tilsley, the show placed particular emphasis on unearthing the moral ambiguities of both

the authorities' and the rebels' actions, and the factional divisions afflicting each side. Several episodes depicted acts of violent insurrection by those opposed to the state's rule.[10]

These and other expressions of 'troubled TV' were increasingly common on British TV screens throughout the decade. That same tonal shift was felt, although to a lesser degree, on the other side of the Atlantic. US film productions were on a scale, and backed by a budget, sufficient to meet an insatiable appetite amongst movie theatre audiences for the spectacle and body count of the new 'disaster movie' format. Films such as *The Poseidon Adventure* (1972), *Earthquake* (1974), *The Towering Inferno* (1974) and many others imagined the different ways in which human beings could be plunged into life-and-death jeopardy from which many of the movie's protagonists would not escape. Charlton Heston, who was a regular screen idol in such disaster flicks, including *Earthquake*, also starred in *Planet in Apes* (1968) and *The Omega Man* (1971), the then latest screen adaptation of the novel *I Am Legend*. Both of those movie's imagined humanity's total subjugation in conditions of near total extinction. Heston also fronted the shockingly dark *Soylent Green* (1973), while British actors Jenny Agutter and Michael York took the lead roles in *Logan's Run* (1976). Both these movies imagined different ways in which human greed and hubris could result in the most unspeakable treatment of fellow human beings by unchallenged authority. Even in the USA, however, TV budgets are not designed to replicate large scale big-screen disaster week-by-week. What did find reflection on US TV screens were those more readily replicable stories of dystopian futures, including short-lived TV incarnations of **Logan's Run** and **Planet of the Apes**. All of which suggested that, vicarious or otherwise, audiences and producers had come to see 'exploring the unthinkable' as an idea whose time had come.

In the UK, the calamitous prognosis of **Survivors** was part of that wave of new downbeat, dystopian and post-apocalyptic drama. **Doomwatch** (1970-72), an edge-of-disaster show, was effective because it was able to channel popular cynicism about the 'infallibility' of modern science and the claim that technology was a guarantee of 'progress'. The creators of **Doomwatch**, Gerry Davis and Kit Pedler, were determined that the drama of the series had to be based on 'sci-fact'. Its storylines should, they both reasoned, reflect contentious subject matter from the real world, and extrapolate from the news headlines of the day without overreaching plausible dramatic license.[11] There was no shortage of material for the series to address.

'When I wrote for **Doomwatch'**, scriptwriter Don Shaw recalled many years later, 'no-one knew about pesticides and the dangers to the environment. Birds were falling out of the sky; rabbits were dying of myxomatosis… Rachel Carson had written *The Silent Spring* in the fifties – the first book that highlighted ecological problems.'[12] With greater awareness of 'green' issues beginning to percolate through society, author Andy Sawyer heralds **Doomwatch** for 'bringing ecological awareness into the living room' and for its effective exploitation of the

[10] The political perspectives explored in **The Guardians** were seen as so incendiary that the series was not broadcast on Ulster Television, the ITV region covering Northern Ireland, where the violent conflicts of The Troubles had erupted two years earlier.
[11] See the discussion in Cross, Rich and Andy Priestner, *The End of the World? The Unofficial and Unauthorised Guide to Survivors*.
[12] Author interview with Don Shaw, 3 March 2005.

'sense of uncertainty and pessimism about the future' which preoccupied British TV audiences in the early 1970s.'[13] '**Doomwatch** may have added a new word to the language', Dudley reflected in 1975, 'but also it did make a point.'[14]

Amongst the many ills of the industrial age that menaced society in the era of **Doomwatch**, the threats posed by pestilence and disease were recurring reference points. In *The Web of Fear* the Scilly Isles is struck by an outbreak of Yellow Fever. The celebrated *Tomorrow, the Rat* focuses on the emergence of a new and vicious breed of super-rodent, that bursts forth from the sewers of London to attack the unsuspecting residents of the capital. The opening episode of the third and final series, *Fire and Brimstone*, penned by series producer Dudley, focused on the risks of a deliberately engineered viral pandemic. It introduced a sharp reorientation in the ethos and focus of **Doomwatch** – in the face of implacable (if ultimately futile) resistance from the show's original creators. Intriguingly, in *Fire and Brimstone*, a frustrated (and mentally unbalanced) John Ridge threatens a co-ordinated release of vials of anthrax virus, purloined from the Porton Down facility, unless the British government takes seriously the need to save the world from ecological catastrophe. Ridge insists that unless this generation accept that they have to 'grow up and deal with population, ionizing radiation, to clean up the rivers and the seas, to stop sweeping the muck underneath the carpet, plant more trees, to recycle the earth's resources' then the planet is doomed. The dramatic potential of a deadly virus, and the fragility of the modern world: these were themes in the mind of Dudley-the-scriptwriter years before he picked up the producer's commission for **Survivors**.

But **Doomwatch** can properly be seen as a precursor of **Survivors**; and **Survivors** a descendant of **Doomwatch** because of both show's shared fascination with the idea of a world-on-the-edge (and a world-pushed-over-the-edge) and the confidence that 1970s' British TV audiences would share the same vicarious curiosity in the idea of 'what would happen *if*...'. Without the experience of **Doomwatch** to draw on, **Survivors** would not have been conceived in the way that it was, or have evolved into the show it became. Indeed, had the travails of the **Doomwatch** team not found a sizeable audience and widespread critical acclaim, it is hard to see that the commissioning editors at the BBC would have warmed to the idea of a post-apocalyptic drama with an *even darker* premise than that proposed by that set of eco-evangelists: evangelists who repeatedly *prevent* exactly the kind of calamity that Terry Nation would go on to explore with **Survivors**. But the production techniques used on **Doomwatch** and **Survivors** were also similar, utilising a mixture of in-studio VT and on location film; at least to begin with. Don Shaw reflected 'We were not yet in the 'film age' for television. We were still in that transitory world between studio drama and film.'[15] **Survivors** stories like *Mad Dog* demonstrated just how far it was possible to push the ground-breaking capabilities of the BBC's only Outside Broadcast unit, even within the

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[13] Sawyer, Andy, 'Everyday life in the post-apocalyptic future: Terry Nation's *Survivors*', in John R Cook and Peter Wright (eds). *British Science Fiction Television: A Hitch-Hiker's Guide*, p135.
[14] Terence Dudley, quoted in: 'People and their programmes: Terence Dudley', *The Stage and Television Today*, 1 May 1975.
[15] Author interview with Don Shaw.

confines of a tight episodic budget.