

# STAR PORTRAIT

Avon paces the Scorpio flight deck, glancing about at the unfamiliar machinery. Tarrant settles himself in one of the command seats, takes in the instrument lay-out like the trained space pilot he is, and seems confident.

"Can you fly this ship?" demands Avon.

"It's just a Wanderer Class planet-hopper. Mark II by the looks of it. Obsolete but functional."

"I want it flown, not catalogued," snaps Avon irritably.

"No problem," smiles Tarrant.

With that, the trained pilot of Blake's 7 takes command of the Scorpio's first flight under new management, propelling himself and the rest of the cast into the fourth series of this exciting programme.

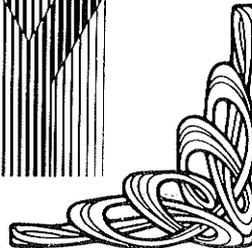
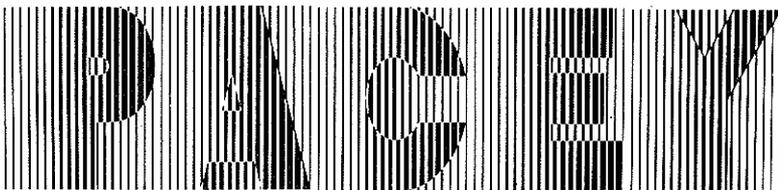
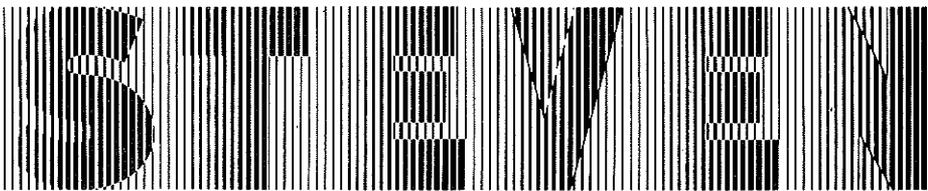
"It's a shame Monday nights (transmission night for the series) are such bad nights for the Scorpio crew," comments Steven Pacey. "There's always some dramatic and tense moment just around the corner and it's not very easy to smile when the Federation are hot on your heels. I'd love to see just a few more laughs injected just to break the tension now and again."

Steven's remarks hint at a degree of comedy acting in his background and, believe it or not, the grim and efficient space pilot loves to do nothing better. Having tackled many things in his career, making an audience laugh is the thing he enjoys most of all.

"I decided I wanted to be a comedy actor at the age of six," smiles Steven. "At that time I was living with my parents in Brighton and my brother, Peter, was already starting in the business. By the age of eight, I was taking drama lessons at the Florence Moore Theatre Studio in Brighton where we put on one or two productions. I thought it was terrific. I loved having an audience to play to."

Steven's professional career really got underway when, at the age of eleven, he secured his first part.

"My brother was assistant stage manager at the Intimate Theatre, Palmers Green. When he heard they were looking for a 'lad' for their next production, he immediately thought of me. I auditioned then got the part.



Steven Pacey as Tarrant . . . the Scorpio's pilot.



"Suddenly I found myself acting alongside stars such as Bill Frazer and Peter Jones in the farce 'Collapse of Stout Party' by Trevor Peacock (who also acted in the performance)."

Steven's appearance in such a production did not alarm him. "When you're that age you have no fear, no nerves about acting in front of an audience. All the phobias come later when your career really starts to develop and you worry about the future. At that time, however, I found the whole thing very exciting and it made me determined to make acting my life.

"As with all the best stories," continues Steven, "there was an agent in the audience during my first performance and from then on I had myself an agent. It was the start of a short but dazzling childhood career," he laughs.

Before his problems began, Steven secured the part of 'Lucius' in the film 'Julius Caesar' — a fellow actor among the many international stars in the film being Michael Keating.

"Being propelled into the world of films at the age of eleven, I can understand how so many child actors can become spoiled brats. The world is so unreal. I remember one incident in particular," continues Steven. "I had walked on to the 'set' of a film Sammy Davis Junior was making, 'One More Time'. I should never have been there and was standing in the way of the lights and generally getting under everyone's feet. Then, when an electrician had to move a light he accidentally backed into me then apologised. 'Sorry, sir,' he said. 'Sir?' — to a boy of eleven! I should have had a clip round the ear then been booted off the set but that's how unreal the whole

film business is as far as children are concerned."

By the age of twelve, Steven was appearing in a play at Studio 68. "It was virtually a 'two-hander' where I had almost every other line. I remember sitting outside the theatre in my parents' car reading the script and memorising my lines. I managed to learn over sixty pages in about half-an-hour! It's something I could never do now! At that age, though, it all seems so easy especially if it's something you really want to do."

At the age of thirteen, however, Steven's childhood career was drawing to a close — through no fault of his own.

"I was playing opposite Kenneth Moore in 'The Winslow Boy' in the West

End production. There was the marvellous cross-examination scene where Kenneth Moore bullies the boy trying to get him to admit he has stolen a five shilling postal order. The climax is when he stands and announces, 'The boy is a liar and a thief!' I protest my innocence and burst into tears. A very dramatic moment. However, I was at the stage in life where I was growing fast and, by the end of the run, Kenneth Moore was having to LOOK UP to me which made the whole thing seem ridiculous. At the age of thirteen I was five-foot-seven — and out of work!"

For Steven, it was back to school until he stopped growing. "All I wanted to do was get back into acting. By the time I was sixteen I was bursting to get back into the business. I visited my former Agent — to find out he'd moved and changed to a literary agent. Was it something I said?"

"Taking my courage in both hands, I went back to the company which had produced 'The Winslow Boy' and asked if there was anything going. Looking back, how I ever had the nerve I shall never know! It proved to be the start of a whole new career for me, despite the odds being stacked against it. They told me the musical 'Godspell' was about to go on tour and an understudy was required. I jumped at the chance. Very shortly, I was given a part in the production then, before long, found myself playing the part of Jesus. I discovered I was the youngest person ever to have played the part and was thrilled with the success. There I was, on the road at the age of sixteen, earning £100 per week and life couldn't have been better. "from the age of sixteen until now — I've had a ball! I've been extremely lucky with the parts which have come my way."



Tarrant is part of the crew and must fulfil his role according to the mix provided.

*I would like to find myself in more dangerous situations . . .*



Steven's first introduction to television was in the series 'Mother Makes Five' for Thames TV. "I played the friend of one of the sons and I had to wear a massive coat which once belonged to Liberace. It was a large furry one and, with the collar pulled well up, I had to chase a girl round the garden pretending to be a gorilla!"

"I found the whole business of television fascinating. There was so much to learn and a different acting style to adopt. I found I wanted to know everything about the technical side of production and my thirst for knowledge still keeps me interested in that side of the business."

So well did Steven settle into television that, at the age of seventeen, he completed seven television productions in one year. One of those he remembers with particular affection.

"Granada produced a series under the 'umbrella' title of 'Red Letter Day', I was given a leading role in an episode entitled 'Match Fit'. It was about a Scottish football manager, played by Roddy McMillan — a lovely man who has since died. I played his friend and the whole film was seen through my eyes as I narrated the story. It was a super change for me and I thoroughly enjoyed it."

Such 'voice-overs' then became one of Steven's main lines of work. He has completed well over three-hundred broadcasts for radio and has made many commercials.



*That tender moment as Tarrant and Servalan draw close, a cube of Earth Spring Water helping to form a bond between them.*



*Young autograph hunters appear as if from nowhere each time the cast film on location.*



"I enjoy working for radio and doing 'voice-overs' because voices are not too easily identified and, if you have the technique, are quick and easy to do. When I first heard my voice on radio, I cringed and wondered why I acted the part the way I did. I'm still critical of the way I work and hope I will always be hard with myself. I believe the day you stop being self-critical is the day you allow your acting talent to slide into the doldrums. I hope I never permit that to happen."

Performances in 'Cuckoo Waltz' (Granada), 'The Sweeney' (Thames), 'Parables' (ATV), 'Leave Him to Heaven' (BBC), 'Cedar Tree' (ATV) and 'Purple Twilight' (ATV) all led Steven towards 'Blake's 7'. But it was a chance encounter which really secured him the part.

"I was visiting the BBC where my brother was playing in a television performance and we arranged to meet afterwards in the bar. During the short time there, I met Chris Boucher, Script Editor for the series, who, unknown to me, was looking for someone to play the part of Tarrant. It was he who mentioned me to those in charge of casting and I was offered a test.

"When I saw that Tarrant was supposed to be in his mid-thirties — and I was barely twenty-four — I thought there would be no chance for me at all. I took the test, however, playing the role as tough and mean as I could with a gruff voice. I then heard nothing for weeks until finally confirmation arrived. I couldn't believe it. So I've been stuck with this silly voice in the series ever since!"

As a character arriving into an already established series, Tarrant and the way he fitted-in with the rest of the crew was something left very much to the script-writers.

"There's very little scope for developing a character like Tarrant on your own," says Steven. "He is part of the crew and must fulfil his role according to the mix provided. One area I would like to expand is that of danger. I enjoy doing my own stunts and fight scenes and would like to find myself in more dangerous settings. Also, we seem to ignore the fact that we have two super girls in the crew and, after three years in space, surely there must be some kind of romance in the air!"

Tarrant does get a chance to show the more tender side of his nature when he is thrown together with Servalan in one episode and Steven's performance is well worth watching.

"Actually," admits Steven, "that episode also provided a lot of laughs. I was approaching Servalan with a small, glass cube filled with 'Earth Spring Water'. I had to sit on the edge of a bed with her, say some lines which would draw the two characters together in such a way as to indicate a spark of love between them. Then at the crucial

moment when I passed the cube to her — it broke! The pair of us were soaked!"

Needless to say, that incident is not the one used in the final version!

When Steven has time to himself, he loves to go sailing off the South Coast of England in the boat he part owns with his brother. "Photography is also one of my hobbies." "I have a movie camera with sound which I love to use. If anything moves, I shoot it. I also like to use the slow-motion setting on it to record such things as people diving etc."

As a Gemini, Steven is supposed to have a dual personality. Does he believe in such things? "I'm afraid not. I don't really believe you can divide the world into twelfths. Some people may exhibit the traits associated with their star sign but, in general, I don't believe such things should — or do — rule your life."

One area where Steven does reflect at least some Gemini traits is in his 'all-round' ability in the theatre and on television. Apart from his love of dramatic acting, he also likes to sing.

"As a kid I did the usual thing of standing in front of the mirror with a hairbrush acting as a microphone and giving my version of the latest Frank Sinatra or Tony Bennet hit. Since then I've been in quite a few musicals and thoroughly enjoyed them. At least no-one's complained about my singing voice yet!"

When time permits, Steven is a keen squash player. "It helps balance the other side of my life — because I also love to eat and drink!"

From having a dream of becoming an actor at the age of six, Steven Pacey has come a long way from the boy who attended the Florence Moore Theatre Studio in Brighton. He has realised his ambition and has gained an amazing wealth of experience in the acting business in just a few short years. Now, with 'Tarrant' in 'Blake's 7' to add to his long list of successful parts, he is well on his way to stardom... and not just at the helm of the Scorpio either!\*



*A photo for the family album. these lucky youngsters manage a starring role with the stars when they find them on location in Dorset.*

