

Ian Dickerson talks *The Saint* on TV—Past, Present, and Future?

Spywise.net has had the opportunity to showcase the Honorary Secretary of The Saint Club, Ian Dickerson, in several previous features. Long before Ian wrote a book, we interviewed him about why *The Saint* matters; then he wrote an article for us about British Spy Shows from 2000-2009; and then Wes Britton reviewed Ian's long-awaited first book, *THE SAINT ON TV* in the fall of 2011.

We've long known Ian was busy working on a biography of Leslie Charteris, but Ian surprised a lot of folks by putting out a *Saint* TV book first. Why? What's in it? When will we see *The Saint* again on TV? In the movies? Any plans for new editions of *Saint* books? When will the Charteris bio appear?

The answers are—

What inspired you to write this book?

Arc Scott Zicree's book, *THE TWILIGHT ZONE COMPANION*. I absolutely loved *The TWILIGHT ZONE* when Channel 4 ran it in the 1980s and it didn't take me long to discover the *COMPANION*. I loved it. I thought it was exactly how a book about a TV show should be, more than just an episode guide, a full look at the history and origins of the show combined with plenty of details about the people who made it.

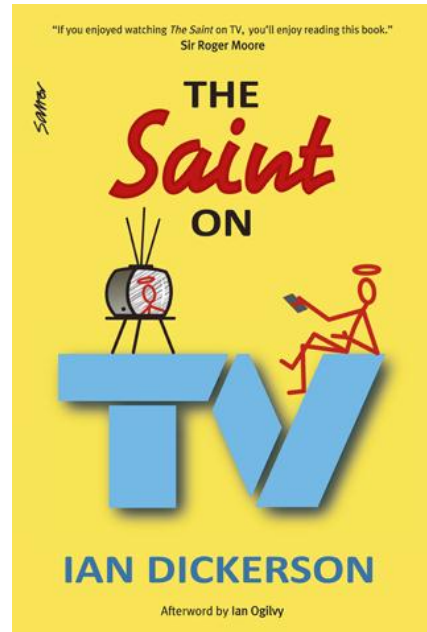
I've long wanted to do something like that for *The Saint* and over the years I've acquired so much information and so many stories about attempts to get *The Saint* on TV that it became obvious that such a book would be possible. I also wanted to bring people up to date as to what's been going on with the *Saint* over the last few years, with all the false starts and strange rumors.

So why write a book about the *Saint's* TV career, hasn't it been done before?

Well yes. And no. Most of the other books that focus on the TV *Saint* are nothing more than glorified episode guides. And with the advent of the ubiquitous DVD box sets and the constant reruns, everyone who wants to will have seen the show. The last thing you want is yet another detailed recount of what went on in every single episode. And as I've said above, I wanted to do more, to look at the production in detail and to recount what went on behind the camera as much as what went on in front.

So what new material is in your book?

Where do I start? The first chapter is devoted, not just to filling in the back story of Leslie Charteris and the *Saint*, but detailing every last attempt



to get the Saint on TV prior to the long-running success with Roger Moore. It looks at Charteris own attempts to get the show on the road as well as rumors attaching the likes of Louis Hayward to a TV Saint. The coverage of the first two series goes behind the scenes and includes fresh material on locations, quotes from co-stars and crew etc. The later chapters include a detailed behind the scenes look at the failed pilot starring Andrew Clarke and the six TV films that starred Simon Dutton. And the final chapter brings us up to date, detailing some of the wacky proposals that have been made in recent years to get the Saint back on TV. Plus there's two scripts, both unproduced, one written by Leslie Charteris himself.

Who is your favorite Saint on TV?

I'm a firm believer that every Saint, much like every Bond, is a product of its times. So as someone who's formative years were in the 1970s, my favorite TV Saint is, unsurprisingly, Ian Ogilvy, for I grew up watching him on TV.

What's happening with the plans to get the Saint back on TV?

We've taken our time getting the Saint back on TV because we want to get it right. All of us involved firmly believe that there's a place in the 21st Century TV landscape for someone like the Saint, a hero who relies on wits, not weapons, a hero who's not afraid to go out and have some fun. It's been a tough course, the last chapter of my book illustrates some of the weirder ideas that have been thrown at us (Liz Hurley as Simone Templar anyone?) But We've stayed the journey and we seem to be converting financiers and network executives one by one as to the magic of the Saint (all it's taken is some of Roger's episodes and several of Leslie's books). As it stands I'm optimistic we might finally see something in production later this year.

What's with the recently announced RKO film?

RKO, or what's left of them, have rights to remake all eight of their old Saint movies. But they have no TV rights—the films have to be shown in the cinema, and they're quite restricted in what they can do creatively.

It's not the first time they've tried this. Shortly after the deal was struck for what eventually became the Val Kilmer film, they tried to jump on the Saint bandwagon by commissioning writer Larry Cohen to write a revised version of THE SAINT IN NEW YORK. He didn't do a bad job, but it was strictly a movie of the week script and wouldn't have stood a chance in the cinema.

Quite what they'll do this time, I don't know, but I look forward to seeing what happens.

So what's next for you?

Aside from working with the producers to ensure the return of the Saint on TV I'm well into writing my next book which currently has the title of The Saint

on the Radio. I'll let you try and guess what it's about.

And I am finishing up—honest!—my long in the works biography of Leslie Charteris. This will, I promise, be worth the wait, for I've recently discovered such things as his first published work—a poem that was published in the Straits Times when he was just nine and a half years old.

I'm also working for The Estate of Leslie Charteris who will be publishing the almost complete adventures of the Saint across a variety of digital platforms later this year. And we have some exciting additional material to complement the original texts.

After that, well we'll see. I have some ideas...

Check out ordering details about THE SAINT ON TV at:

http://www.hirstpublishing.com/The_Saint_on_TV_by_Ian_Dickerson/p384445_1157211.aspx

For more on Ian Dickerson and The Saint, check out these articles in the "Spies on Television" Files here at Spywise.net:

Review: The Saint on TV by Wesley Britton

A Decade in Review: What We Brits Saw And What We Didn't (2000-2009)
by Ian Dickerson

And check out these features in our "Spies in History and Literature" files:

"A Saint I Ain't": Q&A with Ian Dickerson of the Saint Club

"The Saint" in Fact and Fiction: An Interview with Historian and Novelist Burl Barer

All these items right here at—

www.Spywise.net