

WILD WILD WEST TV RETROSPECTIVE

The behind-the-scenes story of the imaginative '60s TV action series that inspired the feature film.

By Craig Reid

From 1965-1969, Secret Service Agents James T. West (Robert Conrad) and his clever partner Artemus Gordon (Ross Martin) rode into our lives on the smash TV hit *THE WILD WILD WEST* (WWW). Together, the dapper, brave Jim and the resourceful master of disguises Arte, would battle a menagerie of psychotically intelligent or blindly baneful villains that were planning to take over either America or the world.

The 1950s and early '60s was the heyday for TV Westerns, but they soon started to be outgunned by a new genred hero on the block: the spy show. It's only logical that WWW's creator and first producer Michael Garrison's interest in spy drama began when he and his partner at the time, Gregory Ratoff, purchased the rights to Ian Fleming's first James Bond story for 20th Century-Fox, *CASINO ROYALE*. When Ratoff passed away, the project also died but Garrison's interest in the spy genre lived.

As the Bond craze grew so did Garrison's interest in developing a similar project. He mentioned to his friend Hunt Stromberg, Jr. (head of CBS programming) an idea: Bond on a horse. This developed into the concept of a post Civil War President Grant having to deal with international spies and his weapon in the struggle was his own secret agent, Captain James T. West. CBS' president Jim Aubrey gave them the green light.



Robert Conrad in "The Night of the Watery Death," preparing to throw a knife at a force field "off" switch, James Bond action wedded to Jules Verne sci-fi.

Originally entitled *THE WILD WEST*, when the pilot, "The Night of the Inferno," was written by Gil Ralston, West initially didn't have a partner, rather he'd meet a travelling peddler who would deliver messages and make devices for West. Artemus' name was derived from a book about early Greece that Ralston owned entitled *Artemicio*. His use of devices grew from Ralston's experience in the armed forces boot-camp school.

At the time, Robert Conrad was working on a film called *YOUNG DILLINGER* with a young Nick Adams (*MONSTER ZERO*). "We had no budget on that film so I was doing all my own stunts," Conrad recalled. "I was asked to cast for the WWW, everyone in town had heard of this but I thought, 'Oh, it's during my lunch break [of *DILLINGER*], got nothing

else to do.' It had a \$750,000 budget, which was extraordinary for TV back then. So I went, got tested and got the part right then, and not later."

Conrad's test was being viewed on close-circuit TV by Aubrey and Stromberg. "I thought my scene was average but it was my demeanor off camera that they liked. I was complaining because they had me wearing elevator shoes and they were very uncomfortable. They were actually Alan Ladd's and his feet were smaller than mine. I was making sarcastic remarks about the casting process and I was on camera all the time. So when I went down to the dressing room, they said, 'Suit up, you're the man.'"

And suit up he did. With his high tailored vest-like jacket, tight pants and raised boot heels, West's get-up looked like something a bullfighter might

wear. Said Conrad, "You know, I've always thought that I might have made a decent matador. In fact, during some of my time in Spain I actually studied some flamenco dancing. I also studied martial arts and used those in my fights with the dance and martial art stances and postures. I would just put all these things together."

Ross Martin was sought for the role of West's partner, Artemus Gordon, but was turned down the role four times until certain changes were made to the character. CBS was so enthralled with his ability to do different dialects and characters, they knew he was the man for the role. Martin actually spoke seven languages and could do 52 dialects (except his Scots accent needed some

Man of action Conrad with Ross Martin as partner Artemus Gordon, scientist and master of disguises.



ROBERT CONRAD

“I thought my scene was average but it was my demeanor off camera that they liked. . . When I went down to the dressing room, they said, ‘Suit up, you’re the man.’”



Conrad and John Van Dreelan as Marquis Philippe, examining Philippe's fiery dragon torpedo invention in second season's "The Night of the Watery Death."

work). Artemus was originally intended to be more of a supplier of information and gadgets, changes were made to make Gordon West's partner, a man who comes across like Burt Lancaster's RAINMAKER and Robert Preston's MUSIC MAN wrapped around a blanket of Lon Chaney's MAN OF A THOUSAND FACES.

Martin once said of Arte, "He hates to fight not because he's a coward but because he's a complete con man. If he can't talk a man out of it, then he's failed. His two major weaknesses are booze and women."

Noted series writer Ken Kolb, "Ross was in love with himself, an actor's actor. Ross could not figure out why he was the second banana because he was obviously the better actor and just as handsome as Bobby."

Throughout the tenure of the show Gordon donned himself in 124 different disguises that would arise from not only his own ability to do makeup but from the makeup man Don Schoenfeld, later to be replaced by Ken Chase. They had a set of five different noses to work from, as well as a plaster cast of Ross's head which you can see proudly displayed in the "The Night of the Brain."

It proved difficult, however, to integrate Martin into the show's action format. Noted producer Fred Freiberger, "Bobby was playing Gary Cooper and he knew his limitations, and he knew Ross was a better actor than he was, so when I asked Bobby how could

we get Ross involved in the fight he said, 'Just keep him out of my area. I don't want to get into his area.' But Bobby was always cooperative and said they would find a way to put him in and they did."

One problem was that Martin was no match for Conrad's physical prowess. Recalled stunt coordinator Whitey Hughes, "Ross had a difficult time getting on horses and would have to hang on for dear life at full gallop. He kept screaming 'Whoa, whoa,' to the horse."

So what was Conrad and Martin's off camera relationship like? Admitted Conrad, "There was some friction but we were both mature men. I had respect for his talent. I'd say, 'Ross, you have the greatest co-stars in the world, Academy Award winners, you do the acting and I'll do the stunts.'

"We were on the JOHNNY CARSON SHOW together and Johnny kept talking to me about the fighting and stunts. When

Johnny got to Ross he asked, 'So Ross, do you do your own stunts?' He just looked at him and answered, 'I do my own acting.' The next day on set I just said to Ross, 'You can't top that.'"

Just as the pilot was supposed to be shot, the director was fired, so Richard Sarafian, who had worked on such classic shows as BRONCO, MAVERICK, 77 SUNSET STRIP and LAWMAN, came to the rescue literally at the last minute. Sarafian musingly recalled, "It was December in 1964 and I came in at the eleventh hour. I was agreeing to do the thing but a deal hadn't been made yet so my manager told me not to show up. But they had a plane waiting for me and I was threatened that either I direct the show or I would never work in Hollywood again. I showed up, went to Sonora, shot some of the pilot there because they had a railroad station for the opening. I basically directed the show with no prep."

Sarafian had worked with Conrad on HAWAIIAN EYE and recalled the producer Garrison received a demotion after the pilot. "For whatever reason he was banished to a room somewhere on the lot where he'd watch dailies but couldn't make any contributions to the

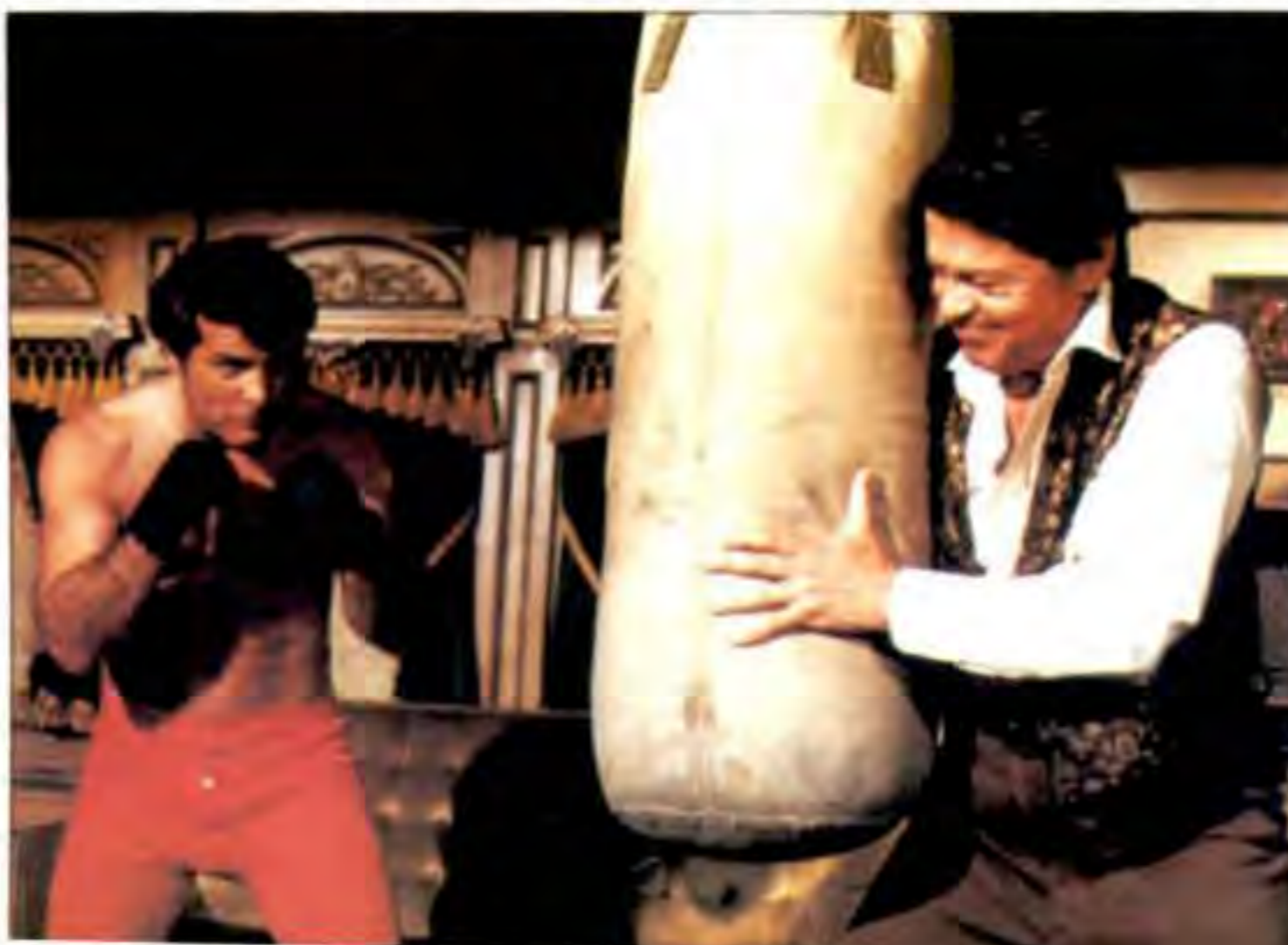
show," said Sarafian. "Fred Freiberger and Richard Landau came in. I'd worked with them on BEN CASEY. I was *persona non grata* with Conrad. I was pretty hard on him. In those days he was not as professional as he ultimately was later on. He was a cocky guy. I even slept on the soundstage so I could run lines with him so he could be prepared the next morning.

"Ross was the ultimate pro and between the two of them at the time, they were vying for position and ultimately they found a balance and with that, the show matured and Conrad became more dependable and comfortable as an actor. After the pilot, I was called back for a second episode by Freiberger, the 'Thousand Eyes.'"

Although the show went through eight producers during the first season, besides series creator Garrison, only four had any real impact on the show, Collier Young (episodes 2-4), Fred Freiberger (5-14), John Mantley (15-21) and Gene L. Coon (22-27). Fred Freiberger brought in two of the show's most important writers, Henry Sharp, who eventually became the story editor and John Kneubuhl, the man who created Dr. Miguelito Loveless.

Noted Freiberger, "The show wasn't working for them and they wanted a different approach and gave me a script to look at. When I gave it to Richard Landau, my story editor for years, he tossed it into the garbage. I told them I'd rather avoid period and geography and focus on the bizarre, which is what they wanted. I hired writer George Schenck and partner William Marks. We created a story about a killer train ('The Night of the Deadly Bed') and re-introduced the Bondian feel. At the time we came in, morale on set was low and people were scared because

Conrad and sparring partner Ross Martin. The leads split up the series chores whereby Conrad got all the action and the girls, and Martin did the acting.



WILD WILD WEST

RICHARD DONNER

The superstar director looks back on his TV days and how the West was fun.

By Craig Reid

Features director Richard Donner went on to direct three episodes of the WILD WILD WEST after being brought in to "fix" the pilot. "Back then I was known as the pilot doctor. Around that time I had redone about five pilots, like GILLIGAN'S ISLAND. I got along with everyone and enjoyed working on the show and I thought it was a clever show. I remember there was a big battle scene to do. They gave me a good two weeks to do it."

Donner remembered working with producer Gene Coon on "The Night of the Bars From Hell" where we see the first electric chair and West being its first victim. "Coon was a wonderful man, good producer and writer, very creative and inventive and really gave me free rein on my work."

The pilot's credited director Richard Sarafian apparently didn't get along with Conrad, so what was Donner's view? "We had met before socially and had a good time but I'd get upset at him because he wanted to do all of his own stunts himself. In that prison show ['Bars From Hell'], he ran down a corridor and flew through this wall smashing it to pieces and landed on a card table with a bunch of guys playing cards and he landed too far. He got carried out."

One of the other shows Donner did was "TNOT Murderous Spring" fourth in the Dr. Loveless saga. It was the first without Loveless' giant sidekick Voltaire, but his new sidekick was instead a very large lady named Kitty Twitty (Jenie Jackson) and a mute attendant played by Conrad's father Leonard Falk. Donner remi-



Donner, West alum turned movie auteur.

nised, "Michael Dunn, ah, he was a delightful, stimulating and charming guy. I'm six foot one but in a sense he was much taller than I, and back then he knew nothing of his size. I remember that Bob and his boys were very protective of him and made sure he didn't exceed his bounds. He was a tough kid but he was also pretty fragile."

"We did the end scene first where Dunn had to come running out of a chicken coop. He tripped over the coop and hurt his leg so we had to rewrite all the other scenes with him in a wheelchair. So in the beginning the big, fat lady, a wonderful woman, he would hide between her legs and we had him hidden in her carrying bag also. Did that show at Radford, just off of Ventura Boulevard. It was a tiny lot, had a little Western street, and that's where we did GILLIGAN'S ISLAND. That was also with Gene Coon."

The last show Donner directed was "TNOT Returning Dead" which starred Sammy Davis, Jr.,

and Peter Lawford. "After the show, Peter and Sammy and I became good friends," he said. "They asked me to come up with a movie for the two of them to do together. I came up with SALT AND PEPPER. We got Michael Pertwee (DR. WHO) to write it and we shot it in England. After that we started, with Paul Newman, Pierre Salinger and a few others, our own discotheque in L.A. called "The Factory." It was world renowned and the most exclusive one in L.A. But with the picture, I had a terrible falling out with Lawford and Sammy—that was years ago. They fired me from the final cut. There were a lot of drugs and alcohol in those days and I didn't get along. Being involved with THE WILD WILD WEST really helped my career, becoming a filmmaker."

Donner noted that he had a lot of fun working with WWW creator and producer Michael Garrison. "Garrison was a wonderful, flamboyant and crazy producer," said Donner. "He was gay but it wasn't too tough for him to handle it back then. I remember once we went to a big dinner party at his house and my date was very upset because he was dressed in a prettier dress than she. I'll never forget that. He was very outgoing about it and just delightful."

"I was very saddened when I heard that he died. My girlfriend and I were at his home and we noticed that under a rug on a flight of stairs he had these incredible Spanish tiles. He removed the rug. So when he fell down those stairs, if the rug had still been there, he might not have broken his neck. He made working on the show delightful." □

they knew the show was in trouble. We worked day and night and got things done on time.

"Richard [Landau] and I also created a writer's checklist we called the 10 Commandments. It was just reminding writers that each script needed certain attributes, things like creating a strong adversary for Jim, gorgeous girls and at the end of the second act, a writer shouldn't know how to get West and Gordon out of the trouble they had ended up in. That would give the designer headaches like when we had Bobby in that little cage ('The Night the Wizard Shook the Earth'). He said, 'How do we do that?' I said, 'We do the impossible.' He went away shaking his head. So later we had this stage coach where the top flies off and someone flies out. Someone asked the designer, 'How are we going to do that?' He replied, 'We do the impossible.'"

The ultimate villain of THE WILD WILD WEST was none other than the childlike, psychotic, dwarf-sized madman Dr. Miguelito Loveless. Beautifully portrayed by Michael Dunn, Loveless had a giant-sized anger against the world for mistreating him, against God for creating him, and especially Jim West, for being Jim West.

When writer John Kneubuhl was flicking through an issue of Time magazine, he saw a picture of Dunn, a singer, and had a brainstorm to make Dunn West's next opponent. He told producer Fred Freiberger and hopped on a plane to New York and tracked Dunn down to a nightclub where he was performing with his singing partner Phoebe Dorin. Dorin signed on as Antoinette, Loveless' singing sidekick. Each time they appeared on a show they'd perform a duet.

Noted Freiberger, "As usual, I had big problems from the network about having a dwarf being the lead villain but I was truly fascinated with the idea of a dwarf owning half of California and then demanding it back. Even though our first episode with him ['The Night the Wizard Shook the Earth'] did really well, the network didn't want me to hire him again. But William Pailey [founder of

WWW

ACTION STUNTS

How Robert Conrad was the Evel Knievel of TV.

By Craig Reid

Action and stunts made THE WILD WILD WEST a pure, visual, pugilistic spectacle, the likes that have never been seen before on American TV. The man in charge of the stunts and labeled as a "flyer," was an unassuming country boy from Oklahoma who came to LA at the age of 16, seeking to become a stuntman and ride on the open plains with his heroes. Throughout his 50 year career as a stuntman and stunt coordinator, Whitey Hughes has been touted as the top stuntman in Hollywood.

Hughes was originally called in to work on a stunt by first season coordinator Bill Catching. "Bill called me one day to see if I could replace another boy who was supposed to work on the show saying, 'I got a job for you.' I went over and

Hughes with Ross Martin as Artemus, in makeup as the butler to Midas in "The Night of the Burning Diamond."



dreamed up a gag with one of the few boys who doubled Bobby back then, Chuck O'Brian. Had three or four guys in the gag [see "The Night of the Steel Assassin" in episode guide]. So I told Bobby that at the right time I'd yell 'Bob' and you just put your hand up and I'll be there. We did it, he put his hands up in time, turned his body and knocked the guy back down. After that I was talking with the makeup man and Bobby came over and the guy said to him, 'Do you know Whitey Hughes?' Bobby said, 'I've worked with him all day but never been introduced.' We shook hands and he said, 'You'll be back.'

"Sure enough, he called me back and one night we went out to dinner, me, his girlfriend and my wife Dottie, and he said to me, 'Whitey, how would you like to coordinate the action on WWW?' I sat up and said that would be a dream come true but it could never happen and...he cut me off saying, 'I asked you, how would you like to coordinate the action?' I said, 'I'd love it, but there are guys ahead of me and CBS might not give me the job.' Well, apparently Bill was on his way out and going to work with Chuck Connors on BRANDED, so I got the job and formed this group."

That was Red West, bodyguard for Elvis Presley. He just came onto the set one day, went up to Conrad and asked for work. Conrad directed him to Hughes and he became part of the crew. Dick Cangey was second in the group, a former fighter and became known as the "catcher" (the one that breaks the fall for others). Jerry



Conrad catches Whitey Hughes (l) in "Night of the Steel Assassin," a daring leap that earned Hughes promotion to stunt supervisor.

Laveroni came in later and Tom Huff, who was working with the carpenter gang. There was Bob Herron who doubled for Ross, who had worked with Conrad on HAWAIIAN EYE. Others would come and go but one of the other originals was Jimmy George, the wardrobe man who was the perfect body double for Conrad. Considered one of the nice guys of the group, he would double for Conrad as needed. On that subject Hughes noted, "Bobby told me he hated having doubles, but if it was something extremely dangerous, a crash or burn, we'd get a guy from outside to do it. He could've done it but I told Bobby that I didn't want CBS to give me marching orders before I started."

If you've watched the show, you see him just about every week, usually as the smallest stuntman that is always getting tossed around like a rag doll. But with the wonders of makeup, you can still tell that it's Whitey as the butler in "TNOT Burning Diamond," the red-headed screamer in "TNOT Vicious Valentine," the blind armyman in "TNOT Underground Terror," the head granny on a wheel chair, the Russian soldier, or the countless henchmen characters for every villain West of the Mississippi.

Hughes remembers the accident that sidelined Conrad for weeks. "We set up this gag

where he was supposed to jump off a balcony and land on this chandelier and he was supposed to swing into Jerry Laveroni. Jerry was new, we took him on as one of Bob's boys. Jerry was supposed to be there to stop Bobby's momentum from the swing by Bobby kicking him in the chest. The gag didn't work because the chandelier was hanging straight down when he jumped. If it had been angled towards him so he swung down at an angle, it would never have happened."

Hughes noted that if the bar on the chandelier had been taped, Conrad could have probably held on. It wasn't because Hughes was absent from the set moonlighting on a bread commercial. "He insisted saying, 'Whitey, take the commercial. We can cover for you here and it will be okay.' He was in the hospital for two weeks and I went to see him at nights. I was chewing my nails. Thought I'd be through. I was the coordinator, I should have been there."

Restrictions were imposed after that, but Conrad found a way around them. "One day he fooled me. We had this gag where Red West [from "TNOT Tycoons"] and Dick Cangey were chasing Bobby up a staircase, enter this room and then Jimmy George was supposed to come out as Bobby. He got his arm all tangled up and then they came crashing down out of the

veranda. I had dug a pit and put a catcher in there for all three guys but he fooled me. Bobby had told Jimmy, 'I am going to do this.' Christ, I almost had a heart attack when I saw the three flying down. Bobby got up and laughed and said, 'How'd you like that?' I said, 'Now Bob, you're gonna get me fired.' But he could do stunts like that. Bobby was a handy-man."

But getting hurt and taking the risk is part of a stuntman's livelihood. Hughes recalled how Conrad took it with the best of them. "Had a boy on the show, he's a brand name now. I think Bobby hired him. He had a fight scene on a podium. This kid was supposed to pick up this big Captain Chair. It wasn't a breakaway, so I asked him to raise it up but not hit Bobby with it and Bobby will give you a gut shot. Well, the fight started and he picked up this chair and whacked Bobby over the head. When I see this guy hitting him I'm going, 'Oooohhhhh.' I caught Bobby coming off the end of the podium. I had to hold him up and you can see him stagger around a bit, I don't know how he shook the cobwebs out, but he did and we finished the fight. That was his last appearance on the show."

If irony doesn't take the cake on this one, nothing does. That stuntman turned out to be Terry Leonard, the man stunt coordinating the new movie version.

Hughes was sad when the show was cancelled. "I didn't get into pictures for the money, it was for the love," he said. "As long as I could make a living, I was working and loving every minute of it. Even with all my injuries, I'd do it all again. It's been that good to me." □

Conrad, about to make his near fatal chandelier jump in "The Night of the Fugitives," hospitalized for weeks.



SERIES WRITER KEN KOLB

"Ross was in love with himself, an actor's actor. Ross could not figure out why he was the second banana because he was obviously the better actor and just as handsome as Bobby."



Conrad as West, under the spell of Christopher Cary as Tycho in fourth season's "The Night of the Winged Terror," the show's only two-part episode.

time and saw the show and told me to get out there and sign those people to a contract. Although Dunn appeared in only 10 shows, it was initially planned that he would do four per season, but as time went by changes in his personal life and health made that difficult. Nevertheless, he is still the show's most famous villain."

Born as Gary Neil Miller in 1934 in Oklahoma, Dunn was a child prodigy with an IQ of 178, who became a concert pianist at age 15. Afflicted with chondrodystrophy, a congenital, progressively crippling disease, his 3' 10" frame would constantly feel the effects of the disease, ending his piano career and later his life but not before making *Loveless* a household name with his contradictory childlike demeanor and diabolically evil ways. Dunn once said, "Secretly all he really wants is chocolate creams and women and a chance to sing. The *Loveless*' character was inspired by Philip Barry's *Here Come the Clowns* where a tormented dwarf blurts, "If there is a God, why did he make people like me?" A satanic apparition glares down laughing, "Would you deny Him a sense of humor."

Dorin, Dunn's singing partner once noted, "No matter how his life was apt to change, he was not going to get tall or handsome. Most of his problems would still be present, no matter how successful he was. That was a killer, and it destroyed Michael."

CBS wanted Freiberger to drop the show's comically animated opening credits and actending commercial breaks, which dared to take a different approach. DePatie-Frelling (PINK PANTHER) cartoons were hired to create cartoon boxes that reflected certain aspects of the West character. "The network wanted me to change all of that. I said no, fought for it and I won that fight."

Noted Freiberger, "I had heard that Bobby was hard to handle, but to me, I had never come across a star that was so cooperative, wonderful and as hard working as Bobby Conrad. I established a great working relationship not only with Bobby but also with Ross...[a respectful moment of silence later] he was a wonderful actor."

"I didn't do straight Westerns or gun fights. I'd bring in different things like a kid-

napped Albanian Princess ('The Night of the Dancing Death') or a deranged Harvard professor ('The Night of the Human Trigger') and, of course, John Kneubuhl's Dr. Loveless. I had written Westerns before but wanted to stay away from the conventional stuff, which is what they were objecting to. And in the days when it wasn't politically correct to be liberal, we were liberal in science fiction and Westerns and people didn't object to that. We could do anti-racism in a Western and it was easy not having anyone call you a Communist. I think that made the network afraid."

And perhaps it was that fear that came to fruition. CBS announced that Freiberger left WWC to move on to a better project. "You know what my answer to that was, don't you? I was fired because I succeeded in what they wanted me to do." Freiberger left to produce STAR TREK's third season.

The second season was shot in color and also focused on attracting marquee names to be the villains. Names like Boris Karloff, Ricardo Montalban, Carroll O'Connor, Sammy Davis, Jr., Ida Lupino, Agnes Moorehead, and returning favorites such as Michael Dunn's Dr. Loveless and Victor Buono as a new and improved villain Count Manzeppi, solidifying the Hollywood glitz appeal while maintaining a bizarre label.

Bruce Lansbury was the show's final producer and did a wide variety of storylines over the last 68 episodes. At the time of the pilot, he was head of CBS programming in New York and was responsible for rewriting the screen test for the casting of West's character. "It was a show that confused William Pailey [head of CBS]," said Lansbury. "Although grounded in the myth and lore of the West, it was a bizarre series. I like to do fantasy although we had straight action and Westerns. I tried some Jules Verne-type sci-fi and the show had a sort of tiffany look to it. So that was my approach. The show was screwed up so badly after the first season with all the different producers and I was brought in to make it a happy group of people. It was tough coming in after eight or nine producers be-

cause Leonard Katzman was a strong right-hand man and the crew wanted him to be producer and their noses were out of joint when I came back from New York. I had to just overcome that. Bob and I crossed swords in the beginning but we worked things out and became good friends.

"The show also featured imaginative stunts and of course Conrad's specialty, the fight sequences. Bob Conrad lived and breathed action and didn't care for dialogue.

"In the beginning, there wasn't a great deal of friendship between [Conrad and Martin], but they started to soften and they became good friends. They were very self-protective for the first year but after they knew their territories and stayed within that purview and certain lines were drawn you could see their friendship."

Henry Sharp wrote some of the best episodes of *THE WILD WILD WEST* and was the only writer to survive all four seasons and work with all the major producers. When Bruce Lansbury took over the reigns, he made Sharp story editor.

Noted Sharp of working on the show, "Ross [Martin] was eager to try something new and would measure up to whatever was written for his new characterization. Bob [Conrad] didn't want to do that, Bob felt that this show was as he put it, 'his

Conrad with Michael Dunn as Dr. Loveless in "Night of the Murderous Spring," directed by Richard Donner.



STUNT COORDINATOR WHITEY HUGHES

"Ross had a difficult time getting on horses and would have to hang on for dear life at full gallop. He kept screaming, 'Whoa, whoa,' to the horse."



Polar opposites: Martin and Conrad as Gordon and West. Conrad made the show the finest action series on TV; Martin could barely stay on his horse.

[Martin's] accent box' and he wanted to do it just the way he had always done it, with fighting and kicking.

"When CBS called us in, there was a big to do about an exaggerated degree of violence in all the shows. Bob didn't like giving up his fight scenes. I tried to devise methods where he could defeat odds against him not with his fists but with clever ways of undermining the opposition. I wrote action scenes put Bob would want to extend them. It was his show and you didn't argue with him because he was happy with his stunt team and they would always work on bits to stick into the show."

Sharp noted that Martin "had immaculate acting credentials that Bob with all his abilities didn't have. But that was okay because Bob did what he did best and Ross was capable of chameleon changes."

Sharp felt the series suffered because it was directed badly, "I watched each show with a great deal of pain," he said. "They weren't the best directors [33 different ones] and it seemed most were obsessed with getting things done under budget and fast, so it suffered."

The fourth season was a try-

ing time for Martin. During the filming of "The Night of the Avaricious Actuary," which aired June 26, 1968, Martin tripped on a rifle and broke his leg. Noted Lansbury, "It was actually a hairline fracture on his shin but it still required he wore a cast up to his hip. When he came back we rewrote the scripts so he could sit down or limp with walking stick."

During the filming of fourth season's "The Night of Fire and Brimstone," Martin fell ill on the set. The following day, August 17th, 1968, Martin suffered a heart attack. "We were all pretty devastated and saddened," said Lansbury. "Not knowing when he was coming back. So we started casting for guest replacement agents. We didn't change the scripts, just inserted different actors in where Arte would have been." Martin missed nine episodes but made a full recovery and by "The Night of the Pistoleros" appeared trim, in good spirits, new look and with a new hairstyle.

When the series ended, Conrad and Martin went their separate ways and on July 3rd, 1981, Martin had a second heart attack and died at the age of 61.

Conrad and Martin returned

to their roles for two TV movies in 1979, *THE WILD WILD WEST, REVISITED* and *MORE WILD WILD WEST*, directed by Burt Kennedy. "We all got along fine with each other when we did these," said Conrad, "but I wasn't happy with them only because CBS imposed a lot of restrictions on us. They never came up to the level of what we had done before."

Conrad's work on the show easily qualifies as the Jackie Chan of TV and even Chan acknowledges that Conrad is a fight and stunt icon. When Conrad and Chan once bumped into each other at an awards function they comically exchanged "You de man" phrases. Lansbury also sees that kinship. "When you watch Chan and Bobby, you can see that they are just going for it and you can tell that its them doing there own fights and stuff."

Sadly, such superb fight action is sorely lacking in the feature film remake. When Sonnenfeld hired one of the new generation of rising Hong Kong action directors, Andy Cheng, to shoot an ending fight for them. Apart from being one of Chan's right hand men for his past four films, Cheng is also one of the fight choreographers for *MARTIAL LAW*.

"It's true that the show had a lot of fights and action," Lansbury admits, "But to me it was more like a cartoon and I didn't see things as having gratuitous violence. I firmly believe we were the sacrificial lamb for Senator Dodd's committee on 'Sex and Violence on TV.' Plus, there were repercussions after Bobby's accident."

Conrad closes with these comments, "These new restriction handed down by the network were a result of this Violence on TV committee. I couldn't wear a gun and for the fights you'd only hear music and not the punch strikes. But you know, when the show was cancelled, I actually had a sigh of relief because someone was going to get carted out of there. I had already been carted out and so was Whitey my stunt coordinator. If it had happened beyond that and more serious, it would never have been the same." □