

Tuesday, 17th April 1984

Programme News

Week ending Sunday, April 29

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

The time-honoured legend of Robin Hood, basis for no less than forty different film treatments, finds new fire and a fresh inspiration in the version now created by HTV, in association with Goldcrest, for the ITV network.

Gone are the pristine, newly-tailored tunics of Lincoln green beloved by Hollywood, and gone too, much of the tinsel.

Robin, played by Michael Praed, star of the West End production of Pirates of Penzance, appears as a man forced by implacable destiny to lead a band of young guerilla fighters in a desperate stand against Norman oppression. It is a portrayal that owes not a cap feather to Errol Flynn, Richard Green or any other Robin of yesterday.

The violence is there, the slaughter and the mayhem, but interwoven with a mediaeval mysticism. Folk lore and the ancient tales of Herne the Hunter, god of the forest, figure significantly in this story. So, too, does the black magic of the evil Baron de Belleme (Anthony Valentine).

The five-part-series opens with a two-hour episode (Saturday, April 28 at 6 p.m.) in which Robin becomes a reluctant outlaw and inherits the task of inspiring native born Englishmen with the courage to defy and withstand their Norman masters. (Subsequent episodes are screened each Saturday at 6.30 p.m.)

It is Herne the Hunter, met by night in the depths of the forest, who points the path of duty: "They are all waiting for you," Herne tells Robin. "The poor, the dispossessed - all wait."

The series was filmed on location in woodlands in the West of England, at Alnwick Castle and Bamborough Castle in Northumberland, within the remarkable cloisters of Wells Cathedral, and in an ancient tithe barn at Bradford-on-Avon, setting for a riotous feast.

The young cast (average age 23) includes Judi Trott as an ethereal Lady Marion; Nickolas Grace as the scheming and ruthless Sheriff of Nottingham; Robert Addie as the cruel oppressor, Guy of Gisburne; Ray Winstone as Will Scarlett; Clive Mantle as Little John; Phil Rose as Brother Tuck; Peter Williams as the simple Much the Miller's Son, and Mark Ryan as the Saracen servant of the black-hearted Baron de Belleme.

The producer was Paul Knight, whose past successes include Dick Turpin, The Adventures of Black Beauty, and HTV's Smuggler. The director was Ian Sharp whose television productions include Minder and The Professionals. Executive producer was Patrick Dromgoole.

The author is Richard Carpenter, creator of Catweazle, Black Beauty, Dick Turpin, Smuggler and The Ghosts of Motley Hall.

"We set out to create a Robin Hood that will last another thirty years before it's re-made," says Paul Knight. "That will be the test of our success."

"There is an enormous appetite world-wide for this, the most famous of all myths. Or was it all myth? We have had an unprecedented reaction in terms of pre-sales with twelve countries buying the series before we had finished production."

HTV's faith in the programme is reflected in the decision to go ahead with a second series.

Paul McNichol Publicity

ROBIN OF SHERWOOD

SHORT SYNOPSES

ROBIN HOOD AND THE SORCERER

A reluctant young man is suddenly cast in the role of Saviour of the common people. Herne the Hunter - god of the forest seals Robin's fate, "They are waiting for you", says Herne, "The poor, the dispossessed - they are all waiting" - the legend becomes a reality.

ROBIN HOOD AND THE SORCERER/Part II

The band having been formed makes its first move against the Sheriff, battles against de Belleme's (ANTHONY VALENTINE) sorcery and rescues the Lady Marion. The band with the power of the sword 'Albion' is truly united.

THE WITCH OF ELSDON

Robin saves a local white witch (ANGHARRED REECE) and in doing so accepts Marion as a fighting member of the band.

SEVEN POOR KNIGHTS FROM ACRE

The outlaw band is terrorised by Seven Knights Templar returning from the Holy Land. Their emblem has been stolen and they believe Robin Hood is the thief.

ALAN-A-DALE

A glib love-lorn minstrel seeks Robin's help in rescuing his lady love from an unsavoury demise - marriage to the Sheriff of Nottingham!

THE KING'S FOOL

King Richard, returning from imprisonment in Germany is rescued by the band from vagabonds - Robin is a little gullible and the King's gratitude is short lived.

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