



# COVER CLOSE-UP

## A TREND SETTER



*The faces—and the action—are the same when the team that made Mod Squad one of television's most popular adventure series in the 1960s reunites to settle some old business with a would-be killer in "The Return of the Mod Squad."*



Between 1968 and 1972, millions of Americans spent Tuesday nights glued to their TV sets following the exploits of three young detectives who called themselves The Mod Squad. A trend setter, The Mod Squad series led to a rash of imitation, youth-oriented programs but none ever matched the success or style of the original.

Now, seven years after the show left the air, Michael Cole, Clarence Williams III, Peggy Lipton and Tige Andrews are reunited in "The Return of the Mod Squad," a two-hour motion picture airing on The ABC Friday Night Movie at 9PM.

"This project literally came together overnight," said executive producer Aaron Spelling, who, with Danny Thomas, had guided the original series. "Tony Thomopolous, President of ABC Entertainment, called me one night to ask if I had a film that could be shot quickly to meet a May air date. I really didn't have anything ready but during the night I thought about bringing back The Mod Squad for a one-time special. ABC loved the idea and, after making sure everyone was available and willing, we put together a concept and a script."

To get the film off the ground, Spelling brought in director George McCowan, who had helmed 35 episodes of the series and many of the original crew members including

director of photography Arch Dalzell, who had photographed the series pilot in 1968. Most of the original sets had been dismantled, but an old "Woody" station wagon similar to the one driven by Michael Cole in the series was found to add to the authenticity of the project.

"We wanted everything to be just the way it was except seven years later," said producer Lynn Loring, who in her acting days, had guested on three episodes of the series. "We wanted to make sure, though, the audience knows where the kids have been for the past seven years and what they've been doing. We didn't want them just to come back cold."

Screenwriter Robert James' story picks up the trio seven years after they disbanded. Julie Barnes (Peggy Lipton) has married and has two children; Pete Cochran (Michael Cole) has taken over his father's business; and Linc Hayes (Clarence Williams III) is a school counselor in New York where he lives with an adopted son. They are called back together when a series of attempts are made on the life of their old boss, Capt. Greer (Tige Andrews). When clues suggest the assailant may be someone involved in an old Mod Squad case, Greer, now a deputy chief, asks the trio to come back to help solve the case.

"I don't think any of us thought we would ever get back together again," Michael Cole admitted. "I have been doing a lot of dinner theatre work the past seven years and people have constantly asked me if we were going to do the show again and I said no. It's been a great experience doing this film. I don't think I realized how much I missed my character and the show."

Peggy Lipton's involvement in the project was, at first, questionable. She had retired from acting following her marriage to composer Quincy Jones and the birth of their two children.

"I really didn't want to act again but when Aaron Spelling called me about doing the reunion I couldn't turn him down. My family was very supportive but I don't think I'll be getting back in front of the cameras again. I like being a wife and mother and have become too much of a homebody."

When the series left the air in 1972, Clarence Williams III and his wife, actress Gloria Foster, returned to his native New York to pursue a stage career. Returning to television was a thought far from his mind.

"This literally came right out of the blue," he said about the reunion with his old friends. "Seven years is a long time to be away from a character but I think we were all surprised how quickly we found the characters again. I think having a lot of the old crew around helped us feel more at home. It was great fun."

Of all of the original cast, Tige Andrews has stayed the most active in television. But he has never lost his special feelings for The Mod Squad.

"I always thought of my relationship with the kids in the series as an extension of the relationship with my own family," he said. "I have six children and I have watched them grow and mature much the way I watched the kids grow on the series. Now, like my own family, I'm dealing with them as adults. I don't think there has been any loss of interest in this show. I had 'the kids' over for dinner one night and there was a line a block long of neighborhood children wanting autographs."

At present there are no plans to revive the series. But the production staff and the actors are keeping their options open.

"I think audiences would go for a show like this again," Tige Andrews said. "Maybe not this one but something similar. People like to see close relationships in movies and television, so the basic appeal of The Mod Squad is still there. I'd love to do the show again. We'll just have to wait and see."