

The Avengers
Excerpt for Web Site

In the popular 1950s British television series titled *The Avengers* the protagonists were Mister John Steed (actor Patrick Macnee) and Madam (Mrs.) Emma Peel (actress Diana Rigg). Mrs. Peel appeared in fifty-one shows from 1965 to 1967. Steed and Emma were agents for an unnamed secret intelligence/law enforcement agency—at first known as “The Ministry.” (See the Epilogue for a comprehensive discussion of the outfit they worked for.) The series was a comedic spoof of the “James Bond” type capers encased in the classic sly British humor and style. The scenarios were so outrageously disconnected from reality that they stretch our willing suspension of disbelief. Nonetheless, who cares? The shows were clever fun and waggishly entertaining. In essence, the shows’ appeal was the enchanting ambiance engendered by the witty badinage between Steed and Emma and their elfish behavior.

Throughout the series, the relationship between John Steed and Emma Peel appeared to be more than just professional associates and more than just congenial friends. As an avid fan of *The Avengers*, I ask: did Steed and Emma have a sexual romance? The quick answer is, “*quién sabe.*” However, on reflection and noting the bountiful clues that pervaded the shows, the answer is “probably.” Their sexual chemistry suffused throughout—with more action left un-played and unsaid than played and said. In many of the shows, there were charmingly faint and sometime patent erotic innuendos: *double entendres*, roguish *bon mots*, and sensual play that spoke of carnal relations.

In all the fifty-one Emma Peel shows, the pair’s interactions manifest a serious personal relationship. Following are the shows in which I have spotted overt romantic/sexual clues. I’ve listed these shows by their chronological release date—as listed in the publication titled *The Avengers*, by Dave Rogers, Published by ITV Books, London in 1983. I’ve not listed shows in which I’ve failed to find *risqué* clues.

Town of No Name

This was the first show broadcast in which Mrs. Emma Peel appears as the co-star. Accordingly, it sets the perspective and ambiance for the following shows in this series. In this first episode, there are many clues to the erotic relationship between John Steed and Emma Peel. In the opening titles, Steed tosses a rose to Emma. She accepts, looks at Steed and cracks that slow smile of hers as she pins the rose on Steed’s label. Their exchange of looks is telling. This title scene prevails throughout the 1965/1966 series.

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Prologue

Steed and Emma play in a faux fencing match. Shortly she pops Steed on his butt with her foil. In a close-shot of Emma’s backside, Steed responds by slapping her *derriere* with his foil. Such frivolity is more fore-play than professional conduct.

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