



Dick Gautier:

A Man of Many Talents

By Nick Thomas

Of all those zany sitcoms produced in the 60s, *Get Smart* remains a favorite of classic TV fans. This show had it all: crazy characters (Max, “99,” Larabee, Hymie the humanoid robot), delightfully wicked villains (Siegfried, the Claw, Leadside), goofy spy gadgets (shoe phone, cone of silence), cool cars (Sunbeam Tiger), unforgettable catchphrases (missed it by that much!), a parade of stellar guests (Milton Berle, Don Rickles, Vincent Price), unbelievable save-the-world plots, and that omnipresent 60s canned laugh track.

Don Adams, who played Max, passed away in 2005. A few years earlier, during a 75th birthday roast in his honor, Don made a very simple request: “I don’t want a big funeral. I don’t want a lot of flowers; or eulogies,” he told the gathering. “I’d just like a few of my close friends to get together and try and bring me back to life.”

Dick Gautier, who played Hymie the robot, wasn’t close friends with Don off the set, but says he enjoyed working with him. We talked a few days ago from his home in Los Angeles.

“He lived a very different kind of lifestyle to me,” said Dick. “He and his buddies were always at the racetrack, but I was never a gambler.”

Incredibly, Dick’s Hymie character (“his father’s name was Hymie”) only appeared in six episodes during the first four seasons of *Get Smart*. Yet he remains one of the show’s most popular and memorable characters.

Dick based Hymie partly on a childhood memory.

“As a kid in Canada, I saw this mannequin-like guy in a store window who moved in a very stiff manner. The deal was, if you made him smile, you could win a gift from the store. I almost got him to laugh! So I started imitating him and discovered I



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had a flair for entertaining. I told that story during my *Get Smart* audition, did those movements, and got the role of Hymie."

Not surprisingly, laughter was not uncommon on the *Get Smart* set.

Dick remembers shooting one scene where Max takes a rather drunk Hymie into a closet and scolds him because drinking and spying don't mix.

"I had to reach over and kiss Don on the cheek," recalled Dick. "But the two of us started giggling like high school girls during every take, and the crew grew impatient. I finally got through it by not looking at Don. When the scene was over, he looked at me and said 'Are you going to say it or am I?' So I told him to go ahead. He looked at the crew and said 'Okay guys, we're coming out of the closet!'"

In addition to acting in hundreds of TV shows and movies, Dick has been a stand-up comedian, writer, producer, director, voice actor, and singer. During lean times, he even demonstrated pogo sticks at Macys. Details can be read on his web site bio which Dick describes as "that once grotesquely inflated thing which deflates slightly with each passing day."

Dick is also an artist specializing in caricatures and has written numerous books on drawing.

He's captured the Burt Reynold's forehead, the W.C. Fields' nose, the John Travolta chin, and dozens of other celebrities

perfectly (see www.dickgautier.com).

He also makes an interesting comparison between today's stars to those of yesteryear with their more rugged features (think

Bogie, Gable, Connery).

"Many of today's actors look like fashion models. Take someone like Brad Pitt who has those stunning, boyish good looks. Some are so handsome, they just don't have any distinguishing features to hang your comic hat on, as an artist."

In addition to drawing and painting, Dick has just finished writing a two character play which he hopes to

direct. And at 81, his career achievements just keep mounting.

"I've been around so long," he says, "sometimes I feel like I was in the original *Flintstones* – the real ones the cartoon was based on!"

[**Photo Credits** - page 14: ABC publicity BW still from 1989. Permission was given by the artist to publish Dick's color caricature of WC Fields. Page 15: Reunion of cast for "Get Smart, Again!" movie. (l to r): Robert Karvelas, Dave Ketchum, Don Adams, Dick Gautier.]

Thomas' features and columns have appeared in more than 300 magazines and newspapers, including the Washington Post, LA Times, Chicago Tribune, Boston Globe, San Francisco Chronicle, and Christian Science Monitor. He can be reached at his blog: <http://getnickt.blogspot.com>



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