

A BRILLIANT PIECE OF TELEVISION ART

Review of "Mixed Doubles" by Sharon Brandos

Now we've come to the episode I consider to be the best of the lot. I know there are problems with the plot but taken as a whole and given what I like about Pros, 'Doubles' stands far ahead as my favorite. The structure is wonderful, the characters perfect, the dialogue excellent and the tension steady and relentless. Though the topic is the grim one of men as cannon fodder and political assassination for money, humor runs a clear path up to the finale. The Lads have never looked better, the settings are wonderful and the secondary characters are memorable and sympathetic.

The editing is incredible. The cuts from one pair to the other, in places even allowing dialogue to overlap makes for almost poetic parallel structure. Again, I am aware of the plot problems – ones I would never allow myself such as the possibility of the meeting at the pub and the brawl, but the overall effect is so good I forgive the flaws.

The entire sequence with Macklin is a true Pros jewel. Bodie in a tee-shirt is a rare treat! And Doyle in red then orange with the necklace – ah. Gorgeous close-ups, amazing use of props as symbols (one does hope that was unintended, particularly in the instance of the gun and cup – though it works at many levels!) and dialogue allowing us insight into the characters rather than merely advancing action. Marvelous, marvelous material.

The "night-before" scenes run a close second if not a tie with the above. We learn more about Bodie and Doyle in a few lines of dialogue than we have in all the shows that have aired before. Again, the direction, editing, acting, writing and camera work is all incredibly good.

Whoever decided that Doyle should wear sunglasses during the finale was a genius! To have both of them so emotionally vulnerable during the "you scared?" confession scene and to cover Ray's give-away eyes was pure art. Bodie can always keep his feelings hidden. With Ray the glasses were needed.

More parallel structure: Doyle shaving, surprised by Cowley and drawing so fast it has to be played over to catch that he uses his left hand and Bodie sitting watching the machine by the stairs and drawing his weapon in less than a heartbeat when Doyle and Cowley enter. The "guns fussing" scene with both pairs. Wonderful camera work.

Toward the end the scene showing both agents as watchers: they've never looked more "real". They prowl like panthers on guard. Perfect work by all concerned.

The Bodie-recognition moment is a classic. No one goes from friendly to deadly as quickly or as effectively. Again this episode shows us who these men really are!

Ray Doyle at the end, having killed his opposite, is a dirge made visible. He passes by the body without a glance and hunkers down by the water (wash my sins away?) to contemplate his weapon. It would be easy to imagine the character resigning from CI5 at the next opportunity, only to be talked out of it by his partner. One cannot exist without the other. By now their need for the balance they give each other is so great it's impossible to imagine them alone ever again.

Far and away my favorite episode. It's a brilliant piece of television art.

<http://www.personal.u-net.com/~carnfort/Professionals/d12.htm>