

Dr Peter Hutchings
(Northumbria University)

I mthe girl he wants to kill :Brian Clemens and the woman-in-peril thriller in 1970s British film and television.

The writer-producer-director Brian Clemens is perhaps best known for his work on the television series *The Avengers* and *The Professionals*. However, during the first half of the 1970s he specialised in what might be termed women in peril thrillers, writing the cinema films *And Soon the Darkness* (1970) and *Blind Terror* (1971) and writing and producing the television drama series *Thriller* (1973-1976). In their presentation of predatory males stalking female victims, these narratives ostensibly offer a take on gender politics that is both disturbing and reactionary, and one might relate them in this respect to other narratives from this period that also relied on representations of the victimised female (e.g. *A Clockwork Orange*, *Assault*, *Straw Dogs*, *The Devils*, *Frenzy*). However, this paper will find in Clemens' fictions more ambiguity and ambivalence around gender identity than might initially be supposed. While this never coheres into anything that could be described as progressive, there is nevertheless a distinctive playfulness with gender roles evident here, especially in the television dramas, which in various ways belies or troubles the ostensible sexual politics and to a certain extent sets Clemens' work apart from other similarly themed popular fictions of the period. Focusing on Clemens' work in this way can arguably lead to a more nuanced understanding of the possibilities for gender representation in British visual culture of the 1970s.