

# David Suchet : "POIROT AND ME"

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PAO Pascale Cuyinat 2008

A documentary on David Suchet's portrayal of Hercule Poirot, broadcast in a Poirot-marathon on UK television.

ITV3 devoted an entire weekend in November 2006 to David Suchet's nearly 20 years of outstanding portrayal of the "bloody little Belgian" by running back-to-back episodes of Poirot. They were introduced by Suchet (pre-recorded) and among them were *The ABC Murders*, *Death on the Nile*, *Sad Cypress*, *The Mystery of the Blue Train*, *The Mystery of the Spanish Chest*, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, *The Chocolate Box*, *Death in the Clouds*, *The Underdog*, *Lord Edgware Dies*, *The Hollow...*

#### ***How It All Began* [Part 1](#)**

About a serious talk with Anthony Hicks, a perfect bow tie and developing the character...

#### ***My Most Intriguing Mystery* [Part 2](#)**

Something that has to do with the alphabet... and a 'nose-job'!

#### ***My Most Humorous Episode* [Part 3](#)**

Not necessarily Suchet's own favourite, but one of the audiences'. If I say a Poirot in disguise, you might associate to something *veiled*...



#### ***My Favourite Male Star***

##### ***[Part 4](#)***

Actually it's two...

#### ***My All Time Favourite***

##### ***[Part 5](#)***

Takes place on a Steamboat...

#### ***My Loneliness As Poirot* [Part 6](#)**

A touching view on Poirot's loss in life...

#### ***My Favourite Leading Lady* [Part 7](#)**

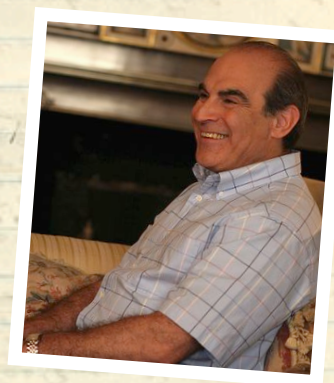
There are many, but one in particular of interest...

#### ***Poirot Almost Gets It Wrong* [Part 8](#)**

Poirot is *always* right, he *can't* be wrong! But sometimes he admits, he's an *imbecile*...

#### ***My Most Challenging Location* [Part 9](#)**

Collapsing in the heat... - and too little space in a train...



Part 1 : How it all began



97°



How it all began...

Suchet: Because I *had* been lots of different characters, this was going to be another *character*... I started to go back to the books, and I met a little man that I've never met before in any of the films. What I *didn't* know was, that I was the choice of the Agatha Christie estate, the family. Rosalind Hicks, the daughter of Agatha Christie, and her husband, Anthony Hicks, wanted to meet me and have lunch, and they said how pleased they were that I was going to do Hercule Poirot, and all of a sudden the conversation became *incredibly* serious... In fact Anthony Hicks looked at me, and his finger, like this [Suchet pointing] - and he said: "We *do* not want anybody to laugh *at* Poirot... They can laugh *with* Poirot, they can *smile* with Poirot because of his eccentricities, but he is *not* a clown, and I want you to take him *very* seriously..."

I had learned how to do bow ties, when I was 'out of work' actor. I used to get tips from Americans. Yeah [nodding], they used to tip me, if I could tie their bow tie and teach them how to. Little did I know [laughing] that this was all wonderful training [laughing even more] for a career... [becomes serious again] - but there you are, and I would do my own bow tie, and... and the bow tie had to be perfect... In fact somebody said to me: "But it's so perfect that it could be a made-up one"... - and I knew then [putting his head on one side, pointing a finger and screw up one eye] I got it right... Because for Poirot it had to be that perfect [smiling].



Suchet showing Anthony Hicks' pointing finger during their lunch-meeting



and I knew then I got it right...





## Part 1 suite : *How it all began*

### How it all began...

The first day - oh, gosh, I remember it, because it was... I think it was... Edward Bennett and myself discussed the fir... *how would we introduce Poirot!*

And together we *knew*, we should start with the shoes... And there was a camera movement, when you saw the spats, up my leg, and you saw the crease in my trousers, and then it came up, and I think, if I remember correctly, you could see the fob-watch and the waistcoat, and then it would come up, come up... What I do remember vividly with the production values... and I remember leaving my dressing room one day, and we saw this *big crane*-[?] [near? on?] the Albert Bridge, and I looked at Hugh, and Hugh looked at me, and actually I think it was Hugh that said to me... [in a low voice] My God, they are spending money on this... and I looked and thought... [even lower voice]... He's right...

And I remember another moment in that first episode. I was in a taxi, and I think at one point Poirot looks out at the window, and I saw nannies with prams, people on 1930s bikes, we saw cars, *way* into the distance children playing, all in 30s costumes, and that's when I thought to *myself*, wow, I'm in something *so* special... [slowly nodding his head].

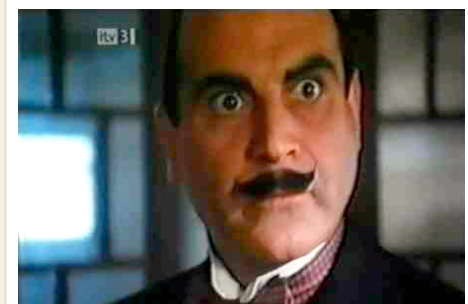
I had to do a mixture - of French and Belgian, but I also need to speak English - so I listen to English speaking Belgian radio, English speaking French radio.

Now once I've done that - I couldn't use my own voice - well, listen to my voice, it's down here [placing one hand flat at his chest while holding the other flat on his stomach], but Poirot is a *head* voice [placing the hand from his chest up on his forehead] - so what I had to do was, start with my voice down here [placing his hands down in front of his stomach] think [switching to a Charles Boyer/Aznavour alike accent] a lit(t)le bit about Freennch accaang, or som(e)thinng like thaat, ta(l)kinng, and then you have the [switch to an accent with the harsch Flemish glottal stop] glottal sounds of the Flemish here coming!!!

And then you mix the Flemish with the French and the sound, something like thiis, and a little like thaat, but you raise your voice slightly [voice becomes lighter], and it goes to the chest [one hand flat slightly and repeatedly beating his chest while moving upwards, keeping the accent] and then it goes to the throat, and then you put in a little Belgian, a little French, up, up, up... [hands going higher and voice going lighter and Poirot's voice takes over] and there you are, you have (H)ercule Poirot!... [Suchet pauses and smiles broadly. Somebody in the background applauds and laughs].



Poirot is a head voice...



"Do they think, they can get rid of Hercule Poirot like that! No!..... No, no... no, no, no... no! Thirty-six times, NO!"

Poirot's reaction when the Tods dismiss him from the case of the disappeared Eliza Dunn in the episode *The Adventure of the Clapham Cook*, the first episode Suchet appeared in as Poirot.

## Part 2 : My Most Intriguing Mystery



- so that nose almost touches the nose...  
Donald Sumpter and David Suchet in The ABC Murders



### My most intriguing mystery...

Suchet: I think Agatha Christie... er... is one of the great mystery and intrigue writers. *Not* so much for her plots... I think she's great because of her characterizations. I think *that's* where she *really* scores. She has *great* heroines, *great* detectives, *great* villains, she has *great knowledge* herself of drugs, because she herself was a dispensing chemist in the First WW... I think Agatha Christie has a sense of mystery *all* around herself, as well...

and in a sense for *me* one of the *great* mixtures that Agatha Christie puts in with *character and* plot... er... intrigue, mystery and very *clever*... for me? The ABC Murders! It's as simple as the murderer decides to kill according to the alphabet. And *where* do you go with that...

It's with an actor, a wonderful actor called Donald Sumpter, to playing Cust, and he is suspected of being the murderer, and he is put into jail, and I visit him in jail - and I think as far as actors are concerned, here in terms of craft, *less* is more...

I remember, there is only two of us in the scene... and a lot of it was, er, profile, and just *very* quietly, two *fully* rounded characters, *confronting* one another... in a *very* small area of the jail cell... er... and looking back over all the years that I've done Poirot, that scene with Donald has to be... one of my very favourites.

Scenes come together in very many different ways. Sometimes the director has a very firm concept of how he wants it shot, er, but the *best* scenes - er, er - come together when it's a collaboration. Er - I'll have done my homework, the other actors have done their homework, the directors have done their homework, and there is *so* little time to rehearse, so you *rush* together before th... before you do the scene, er, you *block* it through, [in] another words you block... er... you, you hit certain marks that the director would like to hit and in so doing, you're talking about the scene. And you say: "Well, maybe,

because this is here, like this, maybe if I move over there, and there and there and there", and then he says: "Oh yes, well *yes!* *Yes*, because if you could do that, I could do a profile... on you there, and then maybe you could come *very* close together so that nose almost touches the nose, and *yes!* That would help *that* line, because that would make that *very*, very tense, and" ... - so, the *best* of scenes is when *everybody* is working together!

When acting these mysteries and these stories, you know, and I come back to this again and again and again - it's vital to take it seriously! There is much at stake! Er, and - if the writing is good, and the production values are good, and the music is good, and the story is good, and the characters above all, á lá Christie, a[re] true, real, some are dark, some are light, they ar. er... they all have colours, you're gonna get a great, great mystery...

## Part 3 : My most humorous episode...

### My most humorous episode...

Suchet: There's a lot of humour in them, I hope there is, anyway - but I hope it's subtle humour, in the same way as the books have a lot of humour. Er - the short stories actually contain, I think, perhaps [even?] more humour than the big long stories, where she gets really involved in the plot. But all the humour is of eccentricity. My humour for example, the humour of Poirot, is always of eccentricity or situation, where he finds himself with the sort of people that he - er - finds himself - talking to, that sort of thing...



-I'm not a bloody, little frog! I'm a bloody, little Belgian! - The Mystery of the Spanish Chest



- I am the locksmith! - The Veiled Lady

Whenever I do those comedy moments, I remember, *don't* let them laugh at... make them laugh or smile with... and that's of his eccentricity. You must never hopefully see me, the actor, telling *you* I'm being funny...

One particularly episode I remember, is called The Veiled Lady - [?] with a wonderful performance with Frances Barber [for one ?] - but Poirot has to get into disguise because he - he actually takes on the role of a burglar - I won't spoil the plot or anything like that, but he does, and he gets in disguise. And, ah - the amount of discussion, how... what will he wear, what will he not wear, what will he wear.. it had to be real. Well of course seeing Poirot in disguise is funny, anyway. But it mustn't be a costume that commented on that. Poirot's moustache actually drooped. I think it's the only time you ever see it - down, er - and once again, must not be commented on. But I've got so many letters saying that people loved that episode, because they laughed and they laughed and they laughed - and of course, the great thing about it was, I didn't know I was being funny...

I think it's very important to bring out the humour in the right way, because they are not Who-dunnits - they are How-dunnits! How Poirot solves the murder! You all know, you have all seen the murder, there is no mystery about the murder. In the end it's how did he found out who, because nobody else can... It's not just any detective. It's this quirky little Belgian with the funny moustaches and the - and the egg-shaped head - it's the man, who can't eat two boiled eggs given to him if they

are not exactly the same size. Whose... the speck of dust on his shoulder is as painful to him as a bullet wound! He once wore a watch in stead of a - a fob, around his waist [Suchet switches four times between looking at his watch on his left hand and an imaginary fob in his right hand, while saying] and he couldn't, he couldn't, he - he couldn't, he couldn't make it work... It's these characteristics, it's his hot chocolate night, his - his muffle around his neck, his sneezing, his colds, his hypochondria... it's all this, that are both amusing, delighting the audience, delighting the reader, who can smile and laugh, and then be drawn right in, when he uses his famous [switch to Poirot accent] little grey cells!

Oh, it looks so easy now, doesn't it? [saying, while laughing] I ca... it was... it was hours and days and weeks and weeks and weeks and... It's alright having a dossier like that about a character, but in a - in a sense it's terrible [laughing] having a dossier like that about the character, because every page is filled with... with character... characteristics! And I didn't want just to get a paintbrush and just paint on that little man, I didn't! - I wanted to become his shape, so before we started shooting, I would - I would drive them crazy with costume fittings, padding fittings... Er - you know, I was developing his eye. I would say: "No, that side of the jacket is a millimetre longer than the other side of the jacket", and they would look at me and go: "What!".... And I would say: "No, it is, it's not right, it's not right, it's gotta be perfect, it's gotta be this than the other..." er - it had to be right...



The size of a Poirot-dossier...



## Part 4 : My favourite male star...

### My favourite male star...

Suchet: It's so difficult to choose... - you know, who are my favourite male stars, co-stars - but - er - yeah, well, although I say it's difficult, it's not really, because - er, these have to be Hugh Fraser, who plays Hastings and Phil Jackson, who plays inspector Japp. They are not only wonderful actors, wonderful people, but the characters they have embodied and made them totally themselves, and as far as Hugh [laughs] Phil Jackson is concerned, I know, because I played inspector Japp, er, so badly myself very long time ago. So he has done a magic job with his. And Hugh - er - how difficult it is, actually, to play that character with someone like Poirot. All the time, having to say things like [imitating Hastings voice]: "I say, Poirot..." er: "Good God!" And all that sor-trying, you know, it's very hard, and, and he's maintained it over the years fantastically. Er, Japp - er, always getting it wrong, so that Poirot can get it right...

My two - little, er, favourite moments, really, had nothing to do with the stories, they had to do with meeting. But in the moments of meeting - Hastings and Japp - you will see how the different characters respond. And the first time, I remember this happening, was with Hugh Fraser in, well, the first story that Agatha Christie ever wrote about Poirot, The Mysterious Affair at Styles. And, er - Poirot's, you know, visiting the Bel-Belgium refugees [in? of?] the First World War, and he first met Hastings in the First World War in Belgium or in France, wherever, and - they meet for the first time in England in a country village...



-I don't know why I bother, sometimes... I may as well stay at home and do my garden...!



Poirot: "Hastings?" Hastings: "Good Lord - Monsieur Poirot!" Poirot: "It is indeed, mon ami, Hastings!"



Hastings: "I was talking about you only the other day!" Poirot: "Oh, mon ami, mon ami!"



Hugs and kisses are not Japp's 'cup of tea...'

And with Japp? It was in the story called The Murder of Roger Ackroyd. Very famous story, a great story, but Poirot had retired almost, he had given up, and he hadn't seen Japp for ages. And - there is a wonderful moment when they meet. And you see the difference when meeting Hastings in The Mysterious Affair at Styles and the meeting between Poirot and Inspector Japp.



- a handshake is more like it...





## Part 5 : My all time favourite...



### My all time favourite...

Suchet: And I remember being on set one day, I remember it very vividly... I was asked to put sugar in my, my tea. Now, he puts so many teaspoons, but when it comes to sugar lumps - I was at a loss! Do I take t-three? Was it five? Was it four? Was it? - and I couldn't remember, and I didn't have my sheets of paper - and we're shooting! Now - I, it doesn't sound important, does it, but it was to me, because I'm - you know, I've always said, I'm the most difficult person, that I have to live with, because I'm a perfectionist. I had to get it right! So, I rang home! To my wife! And I said...: "Sheila, where, where is this peace of paper, can you find the peace of paper with all the characteristics of Poirot?" "What!" Yeah, so and so and so - "How many lumps of sugar does he take!" Well I didn't say that, actually, [be]cause [I was saying ?] [switch to Poirot accent]: "How many lumps of sugar does Poirot take? Can you please tell to me, how many lumps of sugar..." - You know, she is used to this, it's ok, it happens, you know... So, [laughing] she says - she finds the peace of paper, and I've written on it - she says - er...: "Three!" [switch to Poirot accent]: "Oh, no, three! I think..." [switch to his own voice] "Hold on, hold on - sometimes five!" [switch to Poirot accent again]: "Ah, thank you - good bye!".... [laughing] - I mean... yeah, [?] crazy [?] I mean... - but you gotta get it right, you gotta get it right, because that's what makes him so special...



Suchet/Poirot calls for help in the case of a famous detective's sugar habits...



Suchet (in white) just about to step into Peter's shoes...



'Death on the Nile' by night... One of the beautiful sceneries...

Everytime I do a, a, a, a story, I think to myself, as I go home at the end: 'I think that was my favourite', you know, 'I think that was my favourite...' - and I haven't finished them all yet, I mean there is still, er, at the moment of speaking, there is still 12 more to go! But - if I'm forced to - er, choose - I would - pick out "Death on the Nile". I'd choose it because - er - I was working with the most fantastic cast. You have so many wonderful actors. Faces that everybody will recognize. In a terrific story. And the setting! I mean, for me to actually find myself... not only in Egypt... but amongst all those ancient monuments. I mean, this is British TV at its most expensive - and as far as I'm concerned, it, it looked fantastic! And I was filming on the boat, the same boat that was used by Peter Ustinov in his big movie version. So we ain't cutting corners here, this is, this is big time! I was very aware that it was Peter Ustinov's, Poirot's, boat. And when I first s-took my s-first step on that boat, and I went up the stairs - and I thought, yeah, I remember these stairs... I remember the... - and I'm gonna be playing him...

I think, I still have that... youthful, joyful naivety - er, about playing Hercule Poirot. And I suppose, it really came in to the fore, when I was actually stepping on to that boat, because I was literally stepping into Peter's shoes at that time. Er - I loved it! I always get excited, every time I'm asked to do anything with Poirot - and I've always been asked, do I get bored, because I've played him for, what, now 18, well, the best part of twenty years. And the answer is: no. How can I get bored playing such a fascinating, little quirky man, who happens to be the greatest detective in the world, with some of the greatest mystery stories ever written, by one of our greatest mystery writers. Bored? I should clap my hands and say thank you every night...



## Part 6 : My loneliness as Poirot...

### My loneliness as Poirot...

Poirot is a most interesting character apart from anything else, because he is - er - A: an outsider - in - this country, anyway, but he is also an outsider socially. Er - he's also got a very dark side, he's, he's a, he's a lonely man... Er - I think, I've said before, that he believes the relationship with a man and woman, er, a loving relationship, is the greatest gift of God, especially when it ends up in marriage. And he himself very often in Agatha Christie's books says: "I wish, I had married". And - I try and bring out this quality of Poirot more and more, because I think that, er, it is important. - Er, you know, he lives alone, he has a - man servant, but he is alone in all ways. And he has become self-sufficient, because he's had to become self-sufficient.

But when, when I do have the opportunity of - not falling in love with another woman on or in the films - but when I - those women that I'm with, will often - make - me aware of my own solitude. Er, one thing that I can think of is, when he was an avuncular to - a character called Katherine Grey, played by Georgina Rylance in "The Blue Train". She decides to go off travelling on her own, and this comes as a surprise to Poirot. But the surprise [?] itself, I hope for you, the audience, in a sense of loss. In a sense of realization that once more he is on his own...



- on his own... once more...



Poirot: "Love is not everything!" Jacqueline: "Oh, but it is! It is! You must know that, Monsieur Poirot... Surely you understand..."



"It is terrible, Mademoiselle... All that I have missed in life..."

There is another time, there is a lovely character called Jacqueline De Bellefort, played by Emma Malin, in "Death on the Nile", where the writers wonderfully have me, Poirot, come to her [on ?] an evening scene on board the ship, that he reveals to her - the loss of his life, again...

"Lord Edgware dies" has a character called Jane Wilkinson. Poirot says: "The ticking of a woman has always been a mystery to Poirot". And he says it in such a way - er, that I remember saying it in such a way, that, it may have been a mystery... it's the-possibly the only mystery, he's never solved... but one that he'd like to have solved...

They way I try and play him, is, I'm not asking you to feel sorry for Poirot. Because Poirot *doesn't* feel sorry for himself. In fact he *fights* not to. But yes, there's, er, I think there are lot of people who've watched the series, that actually - would love Poirot to - meet someone - er, to, not only love *him*, but that *he* could release and, and, and love - love a lady. And - he wished he could, too...



## Part 7 : My favourite leading lady...

### My favourite leading lady...

Suchet: I've had so many wonderful leading ladies that it would be almost invidious, I mean, obviously my first choice would be Pauline Moran, who plays Miss Lemon, but that's, in a sense, that is not a leading - leading lady, in, er, in, er, she's not with me all the way through each episode. I would like to pick one, actually, if I had to, and I - will have to, I'll pick Elisabeth Dermot Walsh, who plays Ellinor Carlisle, in Sad Cypress. I think her performance in that film - for me was... just extraordinary. There is one scene in particular I remember, when Poirot visits her in the jail, and she's acting one side of the glass, and Poirot is at the other side of the glass. And..... she's in a class of her own! That's when it works, when people really act from their heart, and the best leading ladies - work from that and therefore engage with Poirot on a very truthful level. If they take him seriously - him, me, me, him - seriously - you will, too...



Poirot...



- leaves



- a devastated Ellinor behind glass

Elisabeth Dermot Walsh: David has an amazing quality, where - h-he just is Poirot, when he's acting, and he's, er, playing the character. And even though we were looking through the glass at each other, it was just very easy to forget that there were cameras there, and it was too hot and... because we were to play this really quite intimate scene - almost more intimately than if there hadn't been a piece of glass between us - because with that protection we could be much more, sort of - open with each other, or I-my character could be with him, obviously, Hercule is obviously

Elisabeth Dermot Walsh: He remains in character all day on set, which is - so [brilliant ?] for [to ?] maintain the kind of reality of what we are trying to - do... It was delightful to touch him, as Poirot, and - there are some, there is a party sequence, I think, where we have a sort of chat, where we first meet. And, er - we had a chance to have a bit of a chat, as Ellinor and Poirot, which was like really charming and delightful, and we knew, you know, that we were just playing, but it really helped with playing subsequent scenes as well - to have little chats in character, but with a twinkle in each others eyes, knowing that we were just pretending and playing...



The lovely Elisabeth Dermot Walsh telling

Suchet: One of the most exciting episodes I played was, er, The Chocolate Box. It presented so many challenges for me, because I, you will see Poirot for o-the first time ever as a young police-officer - as well as the middle aged Poirot. So I had to almost work backwards for that character to find the young Poirot. But what's special - is in that - episode - he does fall in love - and he falls in love with a beautiful girl called Virginie Mesnard, played by Anna Chancellor. And it's in this episode, that he gets given his lit-tle silver - vase, er, that he wears as a broche. And people have always asked me, where did I get that from, where does Poirot get that from - well, he got it from Virginie Mesnard, from a girl that he fell in love with, in The Chocolate Box...



The little silver vase...  
- Poirot got from Virginie Mesnard...  
- a girl, he fell in love with...



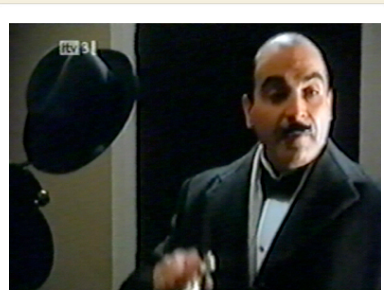
## Part 8.: Poirot almost gets it wrong...

### Poirot almost gets it wrong...

Suchet: Poirot - has no doubt that he's always going to be right. I mean, th-this is - as far as he's concerned: [Poirot shows up in a clip from an episode, saying: "I am the best! I am Hercule Poirot!"] - and he doesn't say that modestly! [While laughing]: He is not a, a modest man. He believes it - er, and, and, er, he is right! Er - he thinks that - Sherlock Holmes is very good, er, but it's fiction...! [laughs for a long time and says]: Ah - love it! And, er, he, he is not, he is real. And of course, er, as far as he's concerned, there's no [switch to Poirot accent]: "there is never



"I am the best!"



"I am Hercule Poirot!"

any doubt that it would be so, because I am Hercule Poirot, ah!"

But he sometimes gets caught out, and very often, er, both in the books and in our series you see Poirot very nearly getting it wrong. And I suppose it is one of the few times that you really see Poirot getting emotional, when he gets it wrong. But when he does get it wrong, he has no [?] at all, [he is ?] getting

very angry with himself and calling himself an idiot and an imbecile! And er - er, er, sometimes he will call himself a [switch to Poirot accent] "dimwit!". Er, something completely out of character, because he'd never normally admit to this sort of thing... And Sad Cypress, very, very much so he gets caught out, and admits - er, to somebody in the room, what an idiot he is, and that's quite, you know, as a character to tell another character - [switch to Poirot accent]: "I am an imbecile!....." Poirot does it, because that's he's greatest crime to himself! Getting it wrong! He could never get it



The expression on Poirot's face when the person who "did-it" turns out to be some- one else than expected...

See, often, nearly always has Poirot have a moment of revelation, when he knows the truth, and - very often he'll just be sitting very quietly with his eyes closed - green eyes by the way, and if you look closely [Suchet looks directly into the camera, eyes wide open] - mine are brown. But when we started doing the series, I didn't, I couldn't wear - colour contact lenses, [I felt ?] rather relieved I couldn't, because I, you just have to [?] with the fact that my eyes are not his colour. I think that's about the only thing - er, th-where we differ, but - what he, what she says is, with his eyes closed - he will think and meditate upon - the crime, and then he gets this moment of revelation, and he will smile, and the eyes will open and glow greener than before. But he's very famous with just keeping his eyes closed [Suchet closes his eyes and demonstrates Poirot's expression during meditation and revelation and then suddenly opens his eyes, saying]: "Got it! - Got it!" And everybody knows, he has... !



Got it! Got it!



## Part 9 : My most challenging

### My most challenging location...

Suchet: I do remember this, I mean, er, I, I really don't want to film there again in the heat, and that was Tunisia. And it was so hot, I was sitting in the car, and I had to drive in - and stop, get out of the car and walk into - the building. Simple as that. That was the shot. But I was left for some time, waiting, while the camera was f-set up and everything, and my car had no roof on, so it was a convertible - and, I didn't realise it, well, I felt all right, but I drove in - on action, drove in, opened the door... goo, er, stood up on the pavement - and collapsed! I had to be given oxygen, I had, er, almost heat [?], so that, that was, er... that was not funny!

Well, because I, you know, I w-wore, I'm-I got this wing collar and tie, and then I got the padding underneath that, you know, the big padding and the waist coat and the... er, in temperatures that were really, really up in the thirties - really high, but the most challenging location, as far as acting was concerned, has to be The Blue Train. Oh, yes, you know, it's gotta be The Blue Train. Although there are a lot of, er, lovely exteriors in Cannes, and wonderful, but when it came to - the summing up... we built the train! There was the train! In all its confines, literally confines, and that was proved to be the most difficult summing up, I'd ever had to do, because all the suspects were in a line, and I had this narrow little corridor to walk down... - and very difficult to get camera angles for the camera crew... and, and, er - it was very, very challenging and very hot inside the studio, we were doing it in the summer, as well... I was always in front of the people, that I was confronting, I - I couldn't go behind... Sometimes when Poirot goes behind the chair, you can see the person - aware that he's there and all that, but this was absolutely face to face with every s-character that I had to, had to confront. And in the end, funnily enough - if I'm allowed to say this - I think it's probably one of the most exciting.



Summing up...



- on very little space...



- face to face...

If you like the - coup de théâtre for Poirot, it's the summing up, I mean, that is, because he could - I mean, Agatha Christie could - have had Poirot come in, into the drawing room or The Blue Train or wherever and say - [switch to Poirot accent]: "It was you!" Er, but he does, er, she doesn't have that. He knows who it is, and yet he puts [burst into laughter] he put's everybody through hell! He makes everybody feel guilty! And, er - he goes on for a very long time in the books, and on every television show it is the last act. The whole of the last act is Poirot summing up, and for me, the actor, of course is, is, is, is glorious, because it is my peace of theatre, as well as Poirot's peace of theatre... I look forward to it and dread it at the same time... It's become a very big moment in the, for the viewing public, and in fact I've got several letters at home, which tell me - that... they're watching the, er - episode - live, at home... start recording when I start my summing up. They all go out and have dinner... they come back... - and during dinner they have laid, lay bets on, who they think - have committed the crime...! And then they play my summing up! To see who was right...