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AGENT

# Barbara Feldon

## 'I'M SINGLE... AND LOVING IT'

It's been more than 45 years since *Get Smart* ended, yet the classic TV spy comedy remains just as popular as ever. Over five hit seasons, actress Barbara Feldon played Agent 99, the sexy, smart sidekick who battled international baddies while helping the hapless object of her affections, Maxwell Smart, out of trouble.

Though decades have passed, Barbara's passion for the show and its fan base hasn't lessened.

'It never gets old,' the 82-year-old tells *New Idea*.

'I know celebrities get tired of being associated with a particular show, but I think we're so fortunate. In my case especially, because *Get Smart* was so beautifully written... so charming and clever. Agent 99 was such a unique character that I was very happy to inhabit. Around my home in New York, to this day, I always get stopped on the street, which is sweet.'

Barbara's love affair with her home city would signal the end of what should become her most famous role before it had even begun.

'They offered me the part and

I loved the script,' she explains. 'However, I lived in New York and they were going to shoot it for five years in California. So I turned it down. Thankfully, they came back a second time and asked me to do it for a year with an option to extend. By that point I loved the show so much there was no way I'd give 99 to another actress!'

Beginning her career in theatre and then modelling, the leggy brunette soon landed guest roles in an array of small-screen shows before being approached for the lead in *Get Smart*, for which she was twice Emmy-nominated.

The actress puts part of the show's success down to her relationship with her fellow onscreen spy – and later onscreen husband – Maxwell Smart, played by Don Adams.

'Don and I never even met until the first morning we shot the pilot,' Barbara says. 'It was just so easy for both of us – accidental chemistry that you can't create, you can just hope for.'

Her much-loved co-star died in 2005 and, three years later, Steve Carell stepped into his shoes in a big-screen spin-off, with Anne Hathaway as Agent 99.

'I enjoyed the movie very much,' Barbara says. 'But do I think it had the flavour of *Get Smart*? No.'

In its opening weekend, the movie topped the US box office with nearly \$55 million but, for Barbara, the lure of Hollywood has lessened. She reveals that producers asked her to make a cameo but she declined.

'Don was no longer living and he and I were a team on the show. I just didn't want to. Back then, it was a perfect little experience, and I didn't want to spoil it,' she says.

Now the star has all but retired from acting – 'It doesn't interest me any more,' she tells us – and prefers reading poetry publicly.

Barbara penned a memoir, *Living Alone And Loving It*, in 2003, which was conceived following the demise of her relationship to *Get Smart* producer Burt Nodella in 1979. So now, more than a decade on, is she

still single and 'loving it'?

'I am!' she says, laughing. 'After two long relationships, I just assumed that another would follow, but nothing ever developed into a live-in relationship. I used to think that you needed to have a partner in order to be happy, but that's just not true. I just can't imagine living with someone else now. I'm very happy alone.'

By Paul Ewart NZ

The *Get Smart* star reflects on the hit TV show and the love affair that almost lost her the biggest role of her career...



Anne Hathaway and Steve Carell stepped into the iconic roles created by Barbara and Don Adams (below) for the 2008 *Get Smart* film.



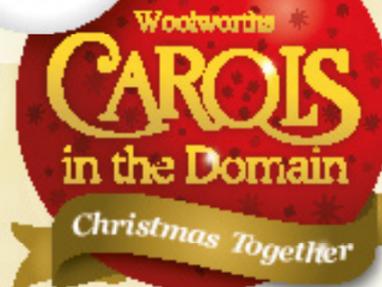
The always-stylish Agent 99 broke boundaries in 1960s TV.

'Get Smart was... so charming and clever. Agent 99 was such a unique character that I was very happy to inhabit'



Barbara has been single since 1979, after splitting up from *Get Smart* producer Burt Nodella.

Barbara will be a guest at Supanova in Adelaide on November 21 and 22, and in Brisbane from November 27 to 29. For more information, see [supanova.com.au](http://supanova.com.au)



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