



# Riverboat: The Evolution of a Television Series, 1959-1961

*S. L. Kotar, J. E. Gessler*

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Capitalizing on Darren McGavin's irresistible charm and his success on the small screen, Revue Studios cast him in their new series, Riverboat, which premiered in 1959. Since McGavin was also starring in Mike Hammer at the same time, he became the first actor to simultaneously star in two television series. Co-starring the young and inexperienced Burt Reynolds, the series captured a devout audience but suffered from numerous production problems, including what later became a well-publicized feud between McGavin and Reynolds. After completing thirty-one episodes its first season, Riverboat was renewed (with the costarring role going to Noah Beery, Jr.), but lasted only thirteen more episodes. Now, fifty years later, though never released on video or DVD by Universal Studios, Riverboat maintains a devoted fan base. S.L. Kotar and J.E. Gessler, are webmasters of Darren and Kathie Browne's authorized web site ([www.darrenmcgavin.com](http://www.darrenmcgavin.com)), and wrote the highest-rated episode in Gunsmoke's twenty-year history.

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