



Gallifrey,

the long way round

Issue #1 – Spring 2018

All new Amy Pond
fanfic inside this issue!

Merlin
Humans
Blake's 7
Supergirl
Doctor Who
Colin Howard
and much more!



EDITOR'S DISPATCH

Oh no, not another Fanzine! Guilty as charged! You see, Annie, Alex and me, we're all sci-fi/fantasy fans and we got that nagging feeling that we needed a publication which covered all our tastes. So here it is.

We sincerely hope that it appeals to you too and that you find things to enjoy within its pages. Perhaps you'll find your interest piqued enough by them to seek out something that you've never thought of watching or reading. That's what we're aiming for. And please feel free to join in and send us your own contributions, thoughts and ideas.

Nick

Gallifrey, The Long Way Round Issue #1—Spring 2018

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If you are interested in contributing to this Fanzine, please contact us on the email address below. All submissions are subject to editorial approval.

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KEEPING IT COVERED: COLIN HOWARD



Amy Pond in Peril: Colin's original artwork for this issue's cover

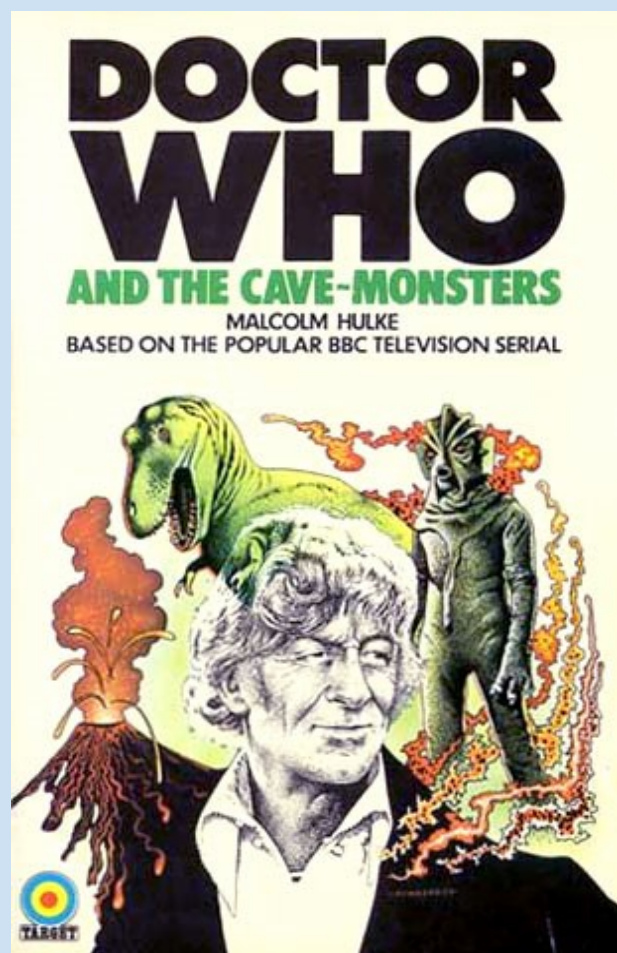
This first issue's cover artist, long time Doctor Who merchandise artist Colin Howard, was kind enough to give an interview to this fanzine, discussing his career creating covers for videos, books and comics through the years, right up to his latest involvement in the animated recreations of popular stories of the past. We began by asking what appealed to Colin about professional illustration at the beginning and how he got started? "I always drew as a child, mostly animals and mythical creatures" explained Colin, "I remember the Ladybird books on the *Siege of Troy* and *the Wars of the Roses* and loving the painted pages. Then I started collecting the *Doctor Who* cardboard stand-up figures by Weetabix. On TV, *Doctor Who* really got to me, and I recall being terrified by the Autons breaking out the shop windows in *Spearhead From Space* [1970] and by the troll doll in *Terror of the Autons* a year later.

"The novelisations published by Target, with covers by Chris Achilleos, helped young fans to remember the stories and, alongside comic stories like the one in *Doctor Who Magazine* featuring Kroton the Cyberleader, I was inspired to start copying the pages and illustrations, firing my interest in science fiction to deeper levels.

"After years of drawing for myself, and for *Doctor Who* fanzines such as *Cosmic Masque* and *Cloister Bell*, I managed to be included in *The Key to Time* book by

Peter Haining [1987]. Working on Peter's follow-up book *25 Glorious Years* [1988] led to Mike Brett asking me to create a painting for *Attack of the Cybermen*. "Regular illustration work for Games Workshop and their *White Dwarf* magazine, and a role play book called *Empire in Flames*, allowed me to become self-employed in 1989."

It was around this time that Colin met then-DWM Editor John Freeman at a Doctor Who convention in Essex.



Early influence: Chris Achilleos' artwork for the Target Books range of Doctor Who novelisations (1974)

Colin continues: "Taking a chance on a new artist, John commissioned me to create a full-page comic strip for the *DWM Archive* section on the story *The Masque of Mandragora* and then for *Terror of the Autons*. We then moved to using my 'speckled dot' style Rotring Pen illustrations, similar to the already mentioned Target covers by Chris Achilleos, a style I had used for many years while my painting evolved from its rough early style."

Colin became well known for the cover artwork he created for the BBC range of Doctor Who VHS tapes, and so we asked how he became involved in these and what the challenges were?

"I spent a few years sending my artwork to the BBC's Video arm with little response, but this was while Alister Pearson and Andrew Skilleter were doing the proverbial lion's share at the time," explains Colin. "Eventually my painting technique improved and I was asked to come in and meet a lady called Sarah Andrews, who was looking to vary the style of the covers. Colin Baker had written me a letter of recommendation when we met at the theatre in Norwich, and she took a chance on myself and fellow artists Bruno Elletori and Pete Wallbank. Pete is another lovely, friendly, talented chap. We met at some early conventions and even collaborated on finishing a pencil of Bessie, that he had started some time before, for a charity auction!

"Anyway, I was given a choice by the BBC of doing either *The Two Doctors* or *Resurrection of the Daleks*. I chose the former, as it would give me an opportunity to paint Colin Baker, Patrick Troughton, Jacqueline Pearce *and* the Sontarans which was great! There always seemed to be about two weeks between receiving a call about which story was next and the target delivery date! I always wanted to string the available time out a little longer, due to the pre-internet difficulty in finding references from old issues of *DWM* and self-made reference logs of photos, books and magazines collected over years of being a fan. Nowadays with the Internet it just takes a few mouse clicks. I remember a very frantic six weeks when I was asked to do the whole *Key to Time* season for a box set. This was also my first collaboration with Andrew Skilleter, who was providing the spine artworks, and it is interesting how this has re-occurred in recent years."

So did Colin have any ideas as to how to present the VHS covers and bring his own artistic style to them?

"I always wanted to add a sense of each individual story with the cover compositions, rather than just floating heads. Something that was quite amusing was the recurring theme of a request to make them look more like 'movie posters' of the era, something the actual product definitely was *not* and which was often

impossible to achieve due to the kind of storytelling, subject matter, and of course budget limitations that characterised much of *Doctor Who's* classic era. But, that said, I did my best! Sometimes titles were dropped from the schedule at the eleventh hour. I would have to rush through a replacement, such as when rights delayed the *Revelation of the Daleks* release and *Time Flight* took its place, but the BBC would normally be understanding with the timescale. With the cover for *Inferno* however, I was due to go on a belated honeymoon four days later, leaving three days to create the cover from scratch! All the staff at the BBC were lovely, especially Sarah Andrews and Margaret Clark, with whom I had also supplied some covers for their new fiction line."

So, what other Doctor Who related work has Colin been involved with in the past? "Many black and white pieces for the archive features, then some covers for *DWM* and *DWM Classic Comics*, a connected Doctor Who publication, for John Freeman and Gary Russell as successive *DWM* editors. There were covers for Virgin Publishing's books related to the show, which led into the BBC Video work, and the 1999 calendar. This last one was a farewell gesture from me at the time, as traditional art was on the way out. There was even a *Day of the Daleks* painting for a collector's plate series that sadly never happened in the end.

"Despite spending a lot of time in the intervening years doing Artist Agency work, I did get to supply some digital adjustments on some of the DVD box sets. This involved making some adjustments to the images of David Tennant, Matt Smith and Peter Capaldi outside the Tardis, adding sympathetic colour highlights to their hair and faces and so on to blend the stock photos together, and weathering the Gallifreyan Crib."

While on the subject of classic era *Doctor Who*, we asked Colin which are his favourite Doctors, stories and creations from the show as a whole, and which of the Doctors he finds most rewarding to paint?

"Mostly I love the early Tom Baker seasons, especially *Pyramids of Mars*, *The Talons of Weng-Chiang*, *The Ark in Space*, *Planet of Evil* and *The Sontaran Experiment*. From other eras my favourites include *Tomb of the Cybermen*, *The Web of Fear*, *The Ice*

Warriors, and *The Seeds of Death* from Troughton, *The Sea Devils*, *Doctor Who and the Silurians*, *Day of the Daleks*, *Claws of Axos* and *The Time Warrior* from the Pertwee years, then *Resurrection of the Daleks*, *The Visitation*, *The Awakening* and *Terminus* from the Davison era. I was at the age that I started drifting away slightly when Sylvester McCoy took over the role, but oddly, that began to improve just as the show was cancelled. Then again, I like the new series stuff up to a point, although some of Matt Smith's later stories and a lot of Peter Capaldi's stories are a pretty tough watch for me. But there are still some diamonds in there! But personally, I love painting Tom Baker, although the hair and scarf are a challenge, as he has such an interesting face and lot of character!"

Who would Colin say was his illustrating 'hero' and what have been the main influences on his style and work? He answers immediately: "Chris Achilleos, without whom I would not be who I am today or have half the interests, determination or talent that I have. I also love Jeff Cummins' work, and of course Andrew Skilleter and Frank Bellamy who influenced me a lot in the early days. All lovely men with bucket loads of talent! A lot of the 70s and 80s movie posters also influenced me. I loved the old Hammer films as well, and always used to watch them with my Mum on a little black and white portable television on the kitchen table on Saturday nights, while my Dad and brother watched the football. I just love putting detail into my work, and I think it is especially well deserved with commissions."

Colin is also closely involved with *Red Dwarf* and its fandom. What could he tell us about the work he has done for that show or its cast members?

"When the run of *Doctor Who* work moved away from me, to Black Sheep, I was very lucky that John Freeman, my old *Doctor Who Magazine* boss, told me that Fleetway were starting the *Red Dwarf Smegazine* and that I should give them a call. That led to lots of covers for its run of two years or so, and getting invited to a lot of *Red Dwarf* fan conventions, meeting Danny John Jules, and creating a digital artwork for the cover of a *Red Dwarf* trivia DVD called *Beat the Geek*. I mention Danny John Jules because he was looking for someone to help out with the storyboard and cover artwork for his *Tongue Tied* single [a song

which his character Cat sang in the *Parallel Universe* episode of the second series of *Red Dwarf* in 1988]. It is a lovely fan club that reminds me of the old days of being a *Doctor Who* fan, before all 'mighty dollar' influenced conventions and the money train took over"

We wondered what appeals to Colin about science fiction and fantasy, as it is the genre that he is best known for?

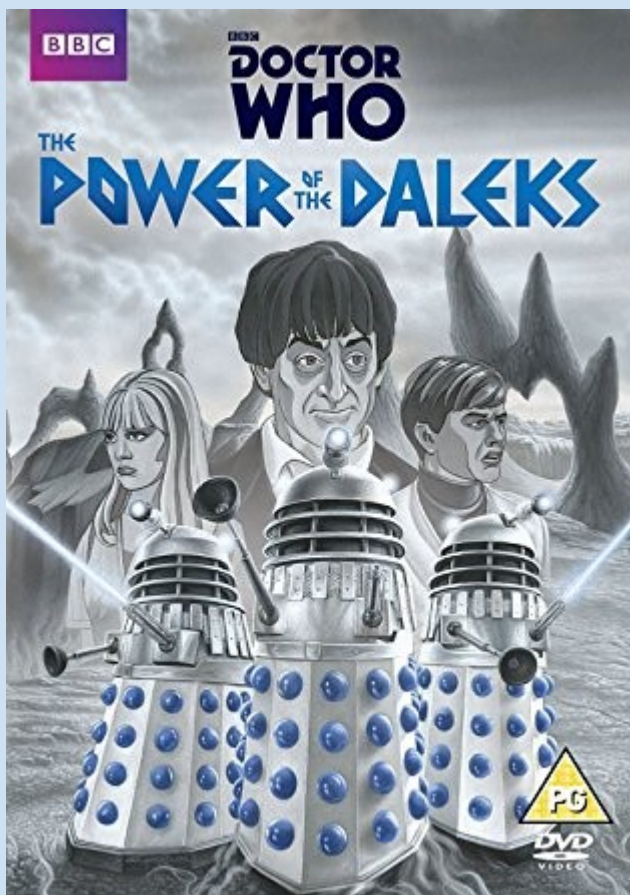
"I have always loved science fiction, fantasy and horror. I was brought up on *Sinbad*, *Flash Gordon*, *Doctor Who*, *Space:1999*, *UFO*, *Sapphire and Steel* and the like. As a child, I liked to be scared and have my imagination stimulated as it gave me a creative buzz. It is something I have wanted to do myself for kids today, and a couple of years ago, via my agents, I worked with some other artists on a series called *Learn to Draw Fantasy Creatures* for the American market. Hopefully that might stimulate some new talent!

"I always try to be positive with critique as there is enough pointless negativity out there on the Internet. I wish people would realise it just makes them look like an arse and that they should just keep it to themselves!"

Moving to more recent times, Colin created the DVD cover and other elements for the recent release of the animated recreation of the 1966 Patrick Troughton debut story *Power of the Daleks*. We asked how this came about and what it involved from Colin's perspective?

"A couple of years or so ago, I did an interview by phone for Charles Norton for *Doctor Who Magazine*, about my brief association with the Target novelisation range and my time on the BBC Video covers. He obviously remembered me and asked me if I would be willing to come back and do the cover for the *Power of the Daleks* DVD, and of course I said yes! At the time, I did not realise the many stipulations that would be in place. No misrepresentative portraits were allowed, for example, which scuppered my initial pencils. Only the animated characters were allowed and, as it was Troughton's first story, I felt I had to include the Doctor.

Obviously, some people, not realising that the artwork was relating to an animation rather than the original tapes, failed to check their facts and were overly critical of the stylised look of the characters in the finished work. Hopefully a lot of people liked it though! A couple of weeks later, Charles called me on a weekend to ask if I was still available. There was a last-minute requirement for a Tardis exterior, so I created one in greyscale on my computer and graphics tablet in about twenty-four hours and it can be seen on screen in episode one & six! I think the same Tardis art has resurfaced with colour added and a few alterations for the 70s era in the recent *Shada* animation.”



Stipulations Abound! Colin's cover of the animated DVD release of Power of the Daleks

The latest official project to involve Colin has of course been the re-release of the almost mythical Tom Baker Doctor Who story *Shada* [1979], with the missing scenes alone replaced with animation and new original cast voice recordings. We asked Colin about the differences between the *Power* and *Shada* projects?

“I spent three months or so working on *Shada*. Charles Norton asked after *Power* was completed whether I would consider supplying backgrounds for their next project, and I would have been a fool to say no! How could I resist the chance to have my work ‘on screen’ in a classic *Doctor Who* story? This time was a little

different for me, to be involved from the start in the actual on-screen stuff rather than just the DVD cover. I have done my usual thing of trying to make my elements look as good as they can, including loads of *Doctor Who* and other appropriate ‘in-jokes’ to look out for! On my part, the work involved loads of shop fronts, churches and old buildings for Chris Parson’s cycle trip through late 1970s Cambridge to his lab, and several accompanying items therein, including pavements and drain covers.

“Yes, you did hear that right. The lab itself had to be rendered and populated, with texture wraps for the 3D objects designed by Rob Ritchie from the original set designs. This involved models that were hand built initially by effects designers Adrian Salmon, with Martin Geraghty, in card, to give an idea of camera angles for the animation, then recreated digitally inside and out, including a public phone box scene, sets for the *Shada* prison station and its chambers, as well as the Tardis junk room. Loads there to look at! At the last count it added up to one hundred and forty two digital illustrations in three months, which involved me working for up to twelve hours a day and sometimes six and a half days per week to make the deadline! Graham Bleathman, a fellow artist best known for his work in connection with the shows of Gerry and Sylvia Anderson, supplied the remainder of the backgrounds, including the carrier ship belonging to Skagra and the Kraags, most of the space stuff, as well as the prison planet itself, when seen suspended in space.”



Background Detail: Colin's meticulous rendition of Chris Parson's laboratory from the part-animated DVD release of Shada

“This time, the whole thing has been in colour from the start, unlike *Power of the Daleks*. That story was always intended to appear in black and white, and it was a political decision to alter the artistic direction of the production for a market (on a continent far, far away) that would not accept the black and white version. One major thing to realise and appreciate is

version. One major thing to realise and appreciate is that these animations are created by a small number of dedicated people, under leadership and guidance driven by Charles Norton's love of the show, who want to see complete versions of otherwise lost stories. This is very different to the hundreds of artists working with almost unlimited budgets and resources at studios like Dreamworks or Pixar. It really is a labour of love."

Recently, Colin was also the first featured artist for the range of portfolios produced by *Who Dares*, a line showcasing traditional art from Doctor Who products of the past. How does Colin feel about this revival of interest in traditional art inspired by Doctor Who as something anyone can buy, and the opportunity to be the first artist chosen to launch that range?

"It was kind of an honour, for one of your heroes (Andrew Skilleter) to get in touch to see if I would be interested in doing a portfolio," smiles Colin. "How, again, could I say no? I think it did well for them. It is great that there is somewhere that traditional art is valued over photo montage. There are also Titan Comics, who have a great range of artists, and Candy Jar's *Lethbridge-Stewart* line of novels, which I worked on to get 'out there' again and I think, as a range, are

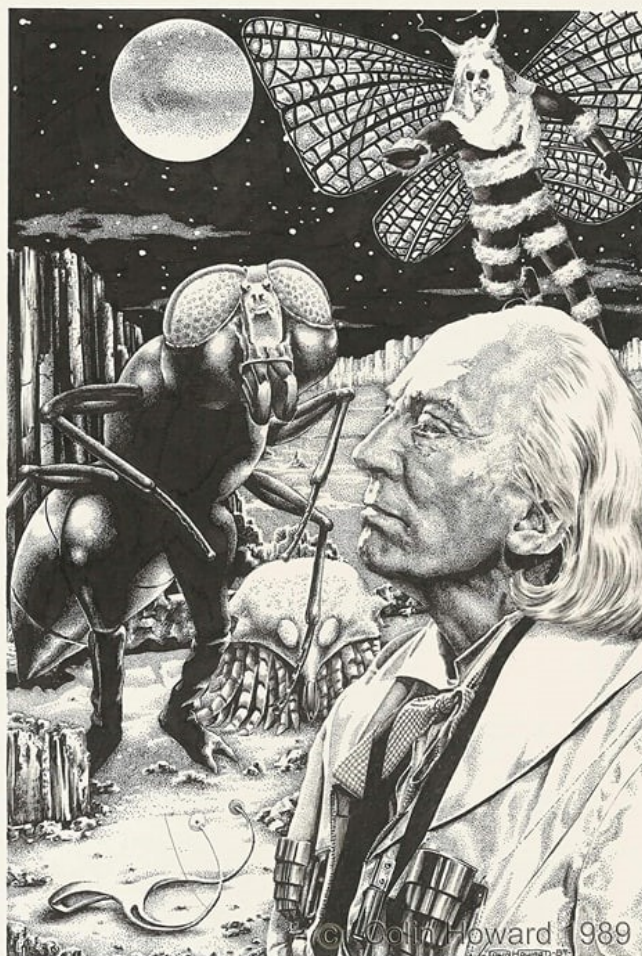
going down well. Hopefully, people with talent will be valued again?"

Finally, we asked Colin about his popular private commission work. What have been some of the most interesting commissions, of those that he is able to discuss at least, and does he feel that fans have their own role to play in helping to keep traditional art alive?

"Yes, I am lucky enough to do some *Who* related private work. It is always varied, often quite specific, and sometimes I have been asked to create 'covers' as I would have years ago, for stories like *Pyramids of Mars*, *Genesis of the Daleks*, *Fury From the Deep*, and *The Face of Evil*, all great stories and also my favourite type of commission. Another particular favourite was a full figure portrait of Clara Oswald, at the console of her Tardis as seen in *Hell Bent*. But hey, I'm a self-employed artist so anything is considered, no matter how outlandish the brief!"

Colin Howard was interviewed for Gallifrey, the Long Way Round in November, 2017

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Labour of love: Colin recreates the magic of the 1965 Doctor Who adventure The Web Planet, starring William Hartnell as the First Doctor

Where's International Rescue When You Need Them?

asks Annie Worrall

It's nearly dinner time and the glue is drying in sticky curtains on my hands, seeping into the pin prick cuts from the chicken wire that I have wrestled into something that looks vaguely like a cliff. The boys, bored with how long this is all taking, are running around the house like demented bumble bees, knocking into things and throwing objects between them in a way that presages disaster for the lamp shades. The project I have been working on all day now looks remarkably like a piece of cardboard to which various packaging items from the rubbish bin have been stuck at random. And someone has left the lid off the brown paint, the bottle has fallen over and the sludgy mess is pooling across the edge of the table.

This is the point at which my husband returns home from work.



Thunderbirds Realism

Thunderbirds. Oh yes I remember the Thunderbirds, in both the 1960s and in their early 1990s revival... And their crew, the Tracy brothers. I remember their curious, jerky movements, the lack of emotion on those faces. The sense of shock when a real hand was filmed manipulating a tool, highlighting the contrast with their stiff, ungainly bodies. In my memory, Thunderbirds puppets came in two guises - smoothly, pinky perfect or something that could only have been dreamed up in the lab of Dr. Frankenstein; Granny being an obvious example of the latter.

Of course, that isn't an accurate memory. Jeff and his family were highly sophisticated marionette creations for their time, each character individually sculpted from plastic, their heads packed with electronics which moved their eyes and mouth pretty expressively for puppets, and the whole

show, created by Gerry and Sylvia Anderson filmed in 'Supermarionation'. But the truth is I didn't find any of them charismatic, except perhaps Brains whom I rather liked.

But charismatic or not, you had to give it to the Tracy family for discipline. Sibling rivalry or challenges to parental authority were all quickly resolved, always in favour of age and experience, unlike the disputes in my own family which could rumble on for days and only end after considerable compromise by us older members. Lady Penelope was a good role model too, a liberated woman with a pink car to die for, even if she did seem to employ a chauffeur with a dodgy past. (Just me, or did Parker's face suggest he was a bit shifty to you as well?)



You need Brains to build Tracy Island...

The stories have not, I confess, stuck in my mind. There was tension, I remember; usually (I may not be being fair here either) falling into one of two categories:

Will the villains manage to dupe the Tracy boys or will our heroes discover their wicked plot in time to defeat them?

Will the Tracy family find a way of saving some foolish professional from a folly that has endangered their own life, one or two of the Tracy gang and/or the immediate environment or even the world?

The answer was invariably, "Yes". This is not a criticism. While I can't remember the story lines I can remember feeling on edge when Scott, Virgil or Brains were in trouble and relieved when their inevitable rescue came. Getting your audience to invest emotionally in the fate of a plastic puppet (however sophisticated its construction) is no mean feat.

The boys weren't great fans but there were cool, TV related toys that became must-haves, and Tracy Island was one of these. All their mates had, or were getting one. Far too expensive to buy, but I was an enthusiastic crafter (an activity my youngest categorized accurately and dismissively as "sticking things on other things") and determined to give creating my own version a go.

"It'll be fun," I promised with more optimism than truth.

We watched the *Blue Peter* demonstration and it looked easy enough. We sent off for the instructions and waited for them to arrive but there was a backlog (the Blue Peter office were inundated with requests) and meanwhile Simon up the road had a birthday and a brand-new Tracy Island. "Toy deprivation" is a syndrome mothers will recognise. The guilt at failing to provide your kids with the latest gizmos runs deep until that magic day when you snap, "No... You're not getting a xxxxx. We can't afford it." I hadn't reached that day. Unwisely I set about creating the island with only my memories of the demonstration to guide us.

It's difficult to believe now, but back then we had no Wi Fi. I had an Amstrad computer which we used as a word processor and the private school I worked at had just created its own Internet cafe as a big selling point to parents, but I had no idea how to use it. Gradually, over the next ten years, the school and I became fully computerised but in the early 1990s we were hand writing every student report. I can still remember my indignation when the school announced that we were swapping from floppy discs to USBs having just mastered how to use the former. I include this information to assist any younger readers to understand why in tackling the Tracy Island project I was reliant on memory alone. There was no YouTube or BBC iPlayer in the early Internet era.



"You too can make your own Tracy Island easily," says Blue Peter's Anthea Turner...

I won't hang this out. I *did* manage to finish a home-made version of Tracy Island, narrowly avoiding a divorce scenario in the process. It always looked as if it was made out of painted toilet rolls and it fell apart pretty quickly. To add insult to injury, the kids were never very interested in playing with it despite my encouragement.

Even more vividly than the show itself, I can remember the feeling of peeling layers of glue from my hands and finding, a good two years after the event, some paint stains on a kitchen chair attributable to the project.

But paint stains weren't the only legacy. I still occasionally, to the irritation of my family, announce as we marshal grandkids to the front door in their wellies and macs, "Thunderbirds are Go!"

Yep. I remember Thunderbirds. I remember fondly a time when the shows we watched encouraged real rather than virtual participation. When you watched a programme once and if you had the money you bought a video to watch it again or if you hadn't you waited impatiently for repeats. When special effects involved models and disguising the strings in puppets rather than inviting a herd of dinosaurs to share your living room. And when you could rely on good triumphing unambiguously over evil at least once a week.

There is something wonderful and rare in an adventure show featuring an organisation dedicated to rescuing people from the consequences of their own folly without a corresponding remit to punish them for any wrongdoing.

Yay. Go Thunderbirds!



Simply stick this bit here...

And insert that bit there...



Or just give up and buy the real deal!



***A classic episode, reimagined
in verse***

Written by Lynda Anne Pinfold

All is calm in Scott Tracy's world,
As he returns from a fire.
He wasn't needed after all it seems,
They managed to control it by other means.
He can return to his base and standby resume,
So there he is heading, softly humming a tune.

The calm is shaken and he's fully alert,
Three unidentified fighters are shooting!
He swiftly takes action to avoid their attack,
But his actions are futile as they counter back.
They shoot at his tail and he dives to the ground,
And crashes in the desert – there's no-one
around...

Jeff Tracy is anxious, Tin-Tin is stressed,
Scott's radio is quiet, there's no answer.
What can have happened to Thunderbird One?
Gordon's plotted its course, there's work to be
done.
It's time for Virgil to take Thunderbird Two,
To see if a 'reccie' will give them a clue...

Virgil and Tin-Tin and Brains are aboard,
To cover all likely contingencies.
Be it broken mechanics or broken Scott,
They hope they're equipped to cover the lot!
While Jeff and Alan and Gordon conjecture,
The mysterious cause for Scott's latest adventure.

Meanwhile, in the desert, in Scott's vicinity,
Are Wilson and Lindsay in search of a mystery.
They've heard there's a pyramid lost to the world,
They want to discover if there's truth in the words.
But they're losing their interest and their tempers
fast,

When Wilson thinks Lindsay is seeing a mirage!

Lindsay isn't mistaken, for there in full sight
Is a craft of International Rescue.
But their contemplation of the craft is stalled,
As they see a body, slumped, out cold...
Scott awakens and asks them to use
Their radio to give International Rescue the news.

Scott and Virgil, with Tin-Tin and Brains,
And Wilson and Lindsay among them,
Are camped in the desert to settle down for the
night.
Discussing the fighters that disappeared from
sight,
And the mystery pyramid around which legend has
grown,
That Khamandides built – location unknown.



Tracy Island is buzzing with talk,
Scott's being quizzed by the family.
Who were the fighters? Why did they attack?
Scott hasn't a clue, but he's hoping that
Wilson and Lindsay, searching the desert, can
Find the pyramid of Khamandides lost in the sand.

The two explorers are in trouble alas,
Their fraying tempers have finally snapped.
Wilson was recklessly driving too fast,
The trailer swerving wildly over the sand dunes so vast.
The tow-bar snapped, the trailer was gone,
With the water and food and gasoline on.

A big explosion engulfed it all,
Everything gone in a flash!
No food or water, only three gallons of fuel,
But the radio survived the smash.
300 long miles from civilisation,
The pair are faced with a grim realisation...

The radio is damaged but they must call base,
They hope to be heard but that isn't the case.

Wilson studies the map and to his surprise,
There's a waterhole near their location.
They've fuel to cover fifty miles of sand,
The waterhole's forty so they have a plan.
To keep calling for help from base while they drive.
Their message is heard by Thunderbird Five!

Alan relieves John who has finished his duty,
He tells Alan about a faint message.
Band 794, they're trying to call base,
"It might be the explorers" – (we know that's the case)
Alan wonders what Wilson and Lindsay are doing,
What message to base they are tirelessly pursuing.



Lindsay and Wilson have reached the hole,
There's no water at all, it's gone dry.
Lindsay is panicking, "We'll die of thirst!"
Wilson is calmer and thinking fast.
Scott Tracy said, if we need help at all,
They'll be happy to help, just give them a call.

"Calling International Rescue" the radio cried.
Alan replies, but their radio has died.
Scott's on his way but things have moved on,
They've seen a sight on the Horizon!
The lost pyramid of Khamandides is there to see,
They leave the water hole to explore the scene...

A secret door opens wide to admit them,
They're drawn by the sound of water.
The door closes behind them, they are trapped,
But they don't stay put like they ought'a...
Scott arrived at the hole to find them gone,
He follows their tracks to the towering stones.



Scott lands at the pyramid, the door opens wide.
He, like the others, ventures inside.
The door closes behind him, but he hears voices.
Jeff tells him to explore, but beware of his choices.
Lindsay is mad and shoots at Scott,
He's found some treasure, and he wants the lot!

Lindsay shoots at his cover, Scott is trapped!
He's standing there, open to danger.
Two strangers appear and Lindsay falls down.
He's lying unconscious on the ground.
They signal to Wilson and Scott to bring him,
On a travel tube that leads to the central control room.

Thunderbird Two appears on the screen,
They're going to shoot three missiles!
Wilson and Scott go on the attack,
The missiles are fired wide of the mark.
They make their escape by means of the train,
The travel tube returns them the way they came.

They pass through a hanger as they cover the ground,
Scott recognises the planes that shot him down.
As they shoot their way out, the car fills with smoke,
The servicing crew begin to choke.
Scott and Wilson try to get more speed,
The men in the control cannot breathe.

Lindsay comes round and they make it outside,
And quickly tell Virgil to fly Thunderbird Two wide!
Thunderbird One takes off just in time,
The pyramid blows apart from inside.
There's nothing but rubble where the pyramid was,
Khamandides pyramid is now definitely lost!



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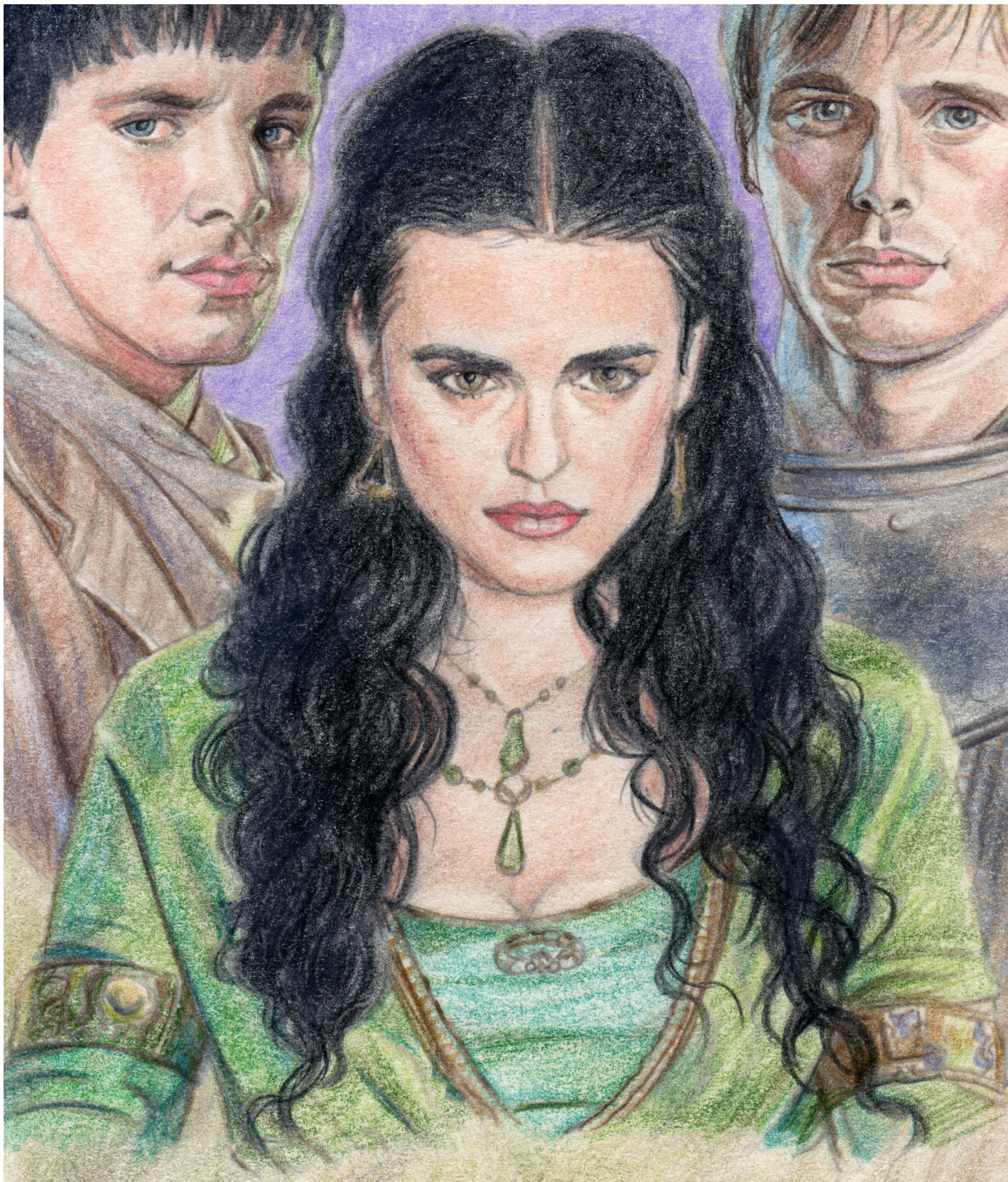
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The 10 Doctors : by Colin Howard

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The three main leads of Merlin
Original Artwork © Andrew Skilleter

The Destiny of a Great Kingdom

Note: Since discussing five seasons in a single essay could become cluttered, this piece is intentionally light on episode titles and concentrates rather on their contents and the show as a whole.

Merlin ran on BBC television for five series from 2008 until 2012 and, as a Saturday tea time fantasy drama commissioned by BBC Wales, it could be considered as a partner show to *Doctor Who*. Although the two shows are very different, there is a similarity of tone and style between them that makes it easier to consider and enjoy them together. Both series take serious subject matter that can become quite dark, write it as drama that can pack a few emotional punches, cast the episodes from some of the best established or up and coming character actors from stage and screen, and employ powerful imagery that stays in the viewers' minds for weeks afterwards, but also both shows leave this as a base upon which the actors and directors can add a great deal of levity to even bleak moments and make the experience a lot of fun both to watch and to work on. The creators of *Merlin* did not back away from the shows being seen as coming from the same stable either. Several of the principle cast of the first episode had very recently appeared in guest roles in *Doctor Who*, with Richard Wilson working alongside Chris Eccleston in *The Empty Child* and *The Doctor Dances*, Anthony Head playing the head master opposite David Tennant, Eve Myles starring in the spin-off series *Torchwood*, and Angel Coulby had a role in *The Girl in the Fireplace*. Colin Morgan had a role in the *Doctor Who* episode *Midnight* in the same year as *Merlin* began transmission.

The setting of *Merlin* is very interesting. Clearly inspired by England in the late Norman period, thus allowing for substantial infrastructure like castles and the flexibility of narrative settings that brings, a nod is also given to the origins of the Arthurian legend as a Celtic myth. Morgana is portrayed by the Irish actress Katie McGrath, her costumes emphasising her as a Celtic character, and the song sung by Eve Myles' pilot episode villainess Helen is clearly Welsh in style and composition. This scene remains one of the most outstanding moments in the show, as the graceful yet powerful melody enchants the royal court and, aided by a combination of visual effects and superb lighting changes, leaves Helen standing alone in the centre of the hall with the web shrouded court at her mercy. In real history, the nearest parallel for this version of Camelot is perhaps Pembroke in Southwest Wales, a Norman state within a Celtic land that imitated the British tradition of independent kingdoms despite being subject to the same monarchy as the rest of England. The geography of this part region of Wales, and the idea in *Merlin* that leaving Camelot's boundaries leads travellers into a land of myth and danger, further reinforces the comparison.



Even in the first season, before the show truly gained a reputation for quality, many of the guest cast were either illustrious names already or would go on to become highly regarded drama actors. Apart from the already mentioned Eve Myles in the first episode, two of the main antagonists included the femme fatales Sophia and Nimueh, played respectively by Holliday

ANDREW SKILFETTER © 2012

Grainger, later to become a star name in period and detective drama, and Michelle Ryan, already famous as Zoe Slater in *Eastenders* but at the time becoming a cult celebrity with roles in *Doctor Who* and the remake of *Bionic Woman* as well as playing a recurring character here.



Michelle Ryan

While both of these actresses interpreted their roles as pantomime villains, with a convincing sincerity towards the other characters but a coquettish devious wink through the fourth wall that told the viewers that they were plotting dastardly schemes, there was an altogether different performance from the always reliable Julian Rhind-Tutt as Edwin. He plays his character, as is often the way with the best villains, as a 'baddie' who completely honestly believes that he is doing the right thing for honourable reasons within the context of his own backstory. Rhind-Tutt sells this so well that, with hindsight, the show missed a trick in revealing him as an opponent so early in the episode, since the ambiguity of events and his story would have led to a different angle on the drama compared with other series one episodes if preserved for longer.



If the second season has a weakness then it lies in the fact that, having established a status quo

but it also being too soon to advance the major plot arcs, the show has to make its drama from the week by week adventure formula without relying upon big reveals and developments to keep viewers tuning in. This leads to a tonal unevenness and a tendency to push individual storylines beyond the limitations of the series format, past a plausible reset point where ongoing character motivations and dynamics remain unaffected by stand-alone events. An excellent example of this is the two-parter *Beauty and the Beast*, an enchantment storyline concerning King Uther. The creators of both *Merlin* and *Doctor Who*, with the Slitheen in *Aliens of London/World War Three*, were apparently so amused by their farting monsters that they stretched the stories involving them to feature length. This is especially a problem here as there is simply not enough plot to fill an hour and a half with just the quickly tired gag of the King falling in love with the troll. By taking the story beyond an embarrassing marriage to all kinds of absurdity at court, the events as depicted would obliterate the credibility of a royal dynasty that has its power and respect at the core of the series' premise for all five seasons and beyond. Even in a fantasy context, the characters' respect and feelings for each other need to be maintained if the viewers are to engage with them. Thankfully for Uther and his household, all of the characters, and probably some of the viewers too, seem to have forgotten all about this story by the following week. A reverse example is a later story entitled *The Lady of the Lake*, in which Merlin becomes romantically involved with a druid girl who is cursed to transform each night into a dangerous creature and is, at the start of the episode, the prisoner of a bounty hunter. But the time constraints of fitting this into a single episode mean that Freya in her human form has opportunity to do no more than escape, hide and die, leaving us unfamiliar with the character and more sympathetic of Freya's plight than the girl herself, and making Merlin's obsession and grief come across more as an adolescent crush. This would have made a powerful two-parter,

especially with the dark undertones of Arthur and his men chasing down a truly innocent young woman, the beast manifestation being a curse placed upon her rather than Freya being a magic practiser herself, as she flees in rags and bare feet through the streets. Two other episodes that are worthy of note from the second series, not least because they are traditional swash buckling adventures of the Errol Flynn variety, are *The Once and Future Queen*, in which Arthur tries to prove himself and almost falls victim to an assassin, and *Lancelot and Guinevere*, which sees the latter imprisoned by a warlord under the false belief that she is Lady Morgana.



Particularly noteworthy across the show is the depiction of the characters' personal journeys, not least in a legend where the expectations of those roles have been built up by centuries of retelling going back to the real medieval period. The central character of the Arthurian legend is, naturally enough, Arthur, and Bradley James does very well to balance the heroism and sincerity required to meet the expectations of the myth with the humour and vulnerability needed by the demands of good television drama. Guinevere rises in this version from servant to queen, tackling class issues well by covering her progression over several seasons. But in casting Angel Coulby, a non-white actress, the show also touches upon race and does so in the best way possible for a drama in which race is not the principle subject matter. Her ethnicity is simply never raised as a problem for the other characters in the first instance, which must be the best kind of acceptance and equality. Morgana's path leads in the opposite direction, from a place in the royal house of Pendragon to that of a fugitive and enemy of the state.



Angel Coulby (Guinevere) and Katie McGrath (Morgana)

The actress certainly hits her stride much better as the character's descent into villainy speeds up in the second season and the beginning of the third, playing the scheming witch with much more confidence and enthusiasm than when Morgana was an innocent lady of the court. Even though she takes Morgana firmly down the pantomime villain route rather than the subtle nuance of Emilia Fox as Morgause, of whom more in a moment, Katie McGrath more than makes up for any lack of depth with an amusing repertoire of sinister smiles and frustrated frowns that she directs through the fourth wall when our heroes' backs are turned!

Emilia Fox, as Morgana's half-sister Morgause, gives one of those rare and brilliant performances that take a television series to a higher level. She plays the villainess as both a real danger and a charming ally and pitches it so beautifully straight down the middle that her character exactly as performed here would fit into a children's serial, family adventure like *Merlin*, or adult drama such as *Game of Thrones* and be effective in any comparable setting and against any other characters. Mesmerising in her choice of moves and eyelines, expressions and reactions, interactions with other cast members in any given scene, and in her delivery of each line, it is the kind of cool performance that other actors cannot steal scenes from no matter how much they might try, utterly compelling every time she casts a glance back over the camera at what in real life was probably the tea trolley. Emilia Fox is to *Merlin*

what Peter Dinklage is to *Game of Thrones*. And having mentioned that show, there are some other reasons why its fans might find *Merlin* of interest. Apart from the superficial elements that are similar such as the faux medieval setting and the occasional dragon, the creative detail might also appeal. The castles have enough creativity in their design in the special effects scenes to match the fantastical nature of the show, but also have a realism that means the location filming in real castles matches the overall vision and brings verisimilitude. Camelot as portrayed here is not entirely dissimilar from Kings Landing, and various episodes deal with the politics between the local kingdoms. In production terms, Joe Dempsie, James Cosmo, Charles Dance, Joseph Mawle, Donald Sumpter, Liam Cunningham, John Bradley, Julian Glover and Alexandra Dowling all appear in guest roles, many of them significant in the episodes in which they feature. *Doctor Who* fans will also find many familiar faces, probably more, including a brilliant comedy role for Georgia Tennant (before her marriage, Georgia Moffett).



Georgia Tennant and Bradley James

The final two seasons, four and five, change the mood and take show in slightly different direction, while also retaining enough familiar elements for the transition to be comfortable. This coincides with the show becoming truly special yet also, ironically, with the departure of Emilia Fox in the series four season opener. It is with this story that the penultimate year

instantly sets out to be something bigger, bolder, colder and more powerful than anything that had come in the previous three. True, dangers had lurked around every corner from the start. But the bleak tone and visuals of this two-parter, with its gloomy castles and genuinely unnerving ethereal wraiths that prove less is definitely more, really casts a shadow over Camelot that never lifts. The next story brings the death of King Uther, up until now a regular character, and deals with it as a truly moving family bereavement rather than a plot convenience that was necessary to move the series forward. Part of the reinvention of the show at this point revolves around the liberation of three key characters. Arthur becomes King and therefore responsible for his own, from here on, autonomous actions. Morgana is no longer even a part of the royal court of Camelot, let alone effectively a minor under the care of older men, and can wreak havoc as a free agent. And as a consequence of both Arthur and Morgana's changes of circumstance, Gwen ceases to be Morgana's servant and becomes Arthur's romantic interest on her route to the crown. Thus, three characters whose actions and motivations were dependent, almost as satellites, upon the direction taken by more dominant characters suddenly become available to the writers in a whole new way and the show benefits from the adjustment to a formula that would have run out of steam.

Discussing character motivation also leads us to another point of special interest in *Merlin* as a show, and it is a point of internal contradiction. Right from start to finish, the format of the show is a very traditional one of heroes and villains, often to the point of actors indulging in self-parody of their own characters' pantomime villainy, and it is very rare for the audience not to know from the start of any given episode which side of the fence a character is on. The magician and his friends are the heroes, and he wants to save others like himself from oppression, allowing all men to live free and equal in a peaceful kingdom. Those opposing

this, through misuse of power whether it be magical or tyrannical, are the villains. Except that painting Uther as an oppressive tyrant brings a couple of problems, when Arthur becomes King and reveals that he believes in and will continue his father's opposition to magic and does not perceptibly change sides – he remains Merlin's friend and continues to be written and performed as a primary protagonist. The other problem with the tyrant label attached to Uther by Merlin and others is that the show itself continually supports his stance. Knowledge and practice of magic does bring nothing more to Camelot than endless death and suffering, sixty-five episodes of anguish and disaster, proving everything that Uther and Arthur say about it to be true. Uther's actions might be very extreme, although the use of torture and execution also has to be considered in the historical context too, but Camelot was also facing an extreme threat level at the time. Even using that modern term highlights another notable angle on *Merlin* as a television production. Magic is clearly identified throughout as the 'old religion' while the city state of Camelot and its rulers have very little connection on screen to any later religions, effectively atheistic. So, the principle division in the world created here is neither a political one nor a religious one, but an ideological conflict between concepts of political entity and religious identity. It would be inappropriate for this essay, and pushing the parallels too far, to start imagining specific similarities with real life events and characters, but it is true that *Merlin* is a creation with a worldview informed by the early twenty-first century that resonates with that of contemporary viewers in fascinating ways that are not obvious at first glance.



The fifth and final season does however see some singular inconsistencies creep in, that give the show the appearance of a story that has set up its end game with the previous year's finale but now does not really know how to fill the time until the big showdown. The first major problem comes in the third episode with Arthur, now King. His opposition to magic and the old religion, and the opposition to the same of his father Uther before him, was not merely a part of the status quo. Both characters fought against it because of strong, deep personal beliefs that added much of the depth and conflict to the show and its dynamics. To then have an episode where Arthur, without any particular threat to his kingdom and for no discernible reason apart from curiosity, actually practices magic to contact the spirits of the dead is utterly absurd and goes diametrically against everything established about Arthur and his motivations and values up to this point. The episode itself is a low point anyway. The actors, director and effects team make it one of the very best haunted castle horror dramas ever produced for television, but showing the supernatural as a lot of cheap thrills is completely not what this show is about. Another mid-series episode then shows Merlin behave in a manner completely wrong for his character without any real context too. When a desperate situation finally leads Arthur to ask Merlin his advice on how to protect the kingdom from the evil of magic without being seen as intolerant or a tyrant, Merlin is first silent and then backs the established view of a zero-tolerance policy even of those born with special abilities who may not necessarily have ill motives. This is the Merlin who from the first episode has argued, and longed, for freedom from oppression for those, like himself, that have magic yet wish and cause no harm to others. The reason for betraying his values, beliefs and kin? He wants a third party, a coven of witches, to take the life of his opponent Mordred as punishment against the King for not lifting the ban. Failing to

protect Arthur or Camelot against the coven and the callous nature with which he seeks the death of Mordred are even more out of character and fail to justify the action in the earlier scene.

Another episode deals equally poorly with the character of Morgana, surely in the elite league of television baddies who concoct an endless succession of unnecessarily convoluted evil schemes that are doomed to failure by their own contrivance. She successfully infiltrates the royal court of Camelot in a disguise that even Merlin does not see through and yet wastes her time with a pointless over-complicated plan involving Princess Mithian when she could simply murder Arthur, Gwen or virtually anyone else in Camelot whenever she wishes to. Two episodes later, Morgana is seen creating another doomed plan, to infiltrate Camelot and kill Arthur! It could be the writers trying to mix things up and keep the formula interesting in the final season, but it comes across as a creative team who could no longer be bothered to proof read the scripts for continuity while planning the next big thing. However, the continuity shortcomings of the final series are compensated in part by the excellent performance of Alexander Vlahos as the older Mordred, introduced as a druid child in an earlier series but here an adult and a knight of Camelot. One of the very best episodes of the final series is a Mordred centred episode that deals with his divided loyalties to his faith, his allegiance, and a former love interest.



The finale itself is well known for three things: two major twists in the overall story arc of the show, that includes a deviation from the myth

that we won't spoil for anyone reading this through an interest in discovering the show for the first time, and the controversial last scene. The jump to an aged Merlin in the present day is bold and exciting, but also creates some major problems that are a symptom of the loose attitude to continuity and context in series five. On the one hand, it creates a direct narrative link with the world that the viewers themselves live in and opens up almost unlimited potential for new tales in those viewers' own imaginations. But the problem is this. While this essay earlier made a comparison between Camelot as seen in the show and the Norman medieval province of Pembroke, surrounded by the tribal ruled mountainous region that is now South Wales with all its dragon myths and so forth, a comparison was all it was. The specific geography does not match, and the mixture of historical references from before and after the Norman conquest mean that this Camelot is as much a fantasy realm as Middle Earth or Westeros and Essos. For Merlin to reach present day, familiar Earth would require travelling not just through time but some kind of reality portal. This idea is much more the territory of *Doctor Who* and, while the shows could have been more similar in this way, there is nothing in *Merlin* as broadcast up until the end of the last episode to establish this kind of context.



In overall conclusion, *Merlin* was a bold idea that deserved to reach its planned conclusion. To set out with a five-year story plan, rather than take each season and the annual renewal process one year at a time, was courageous and not something that happens very often on British television. The cast that was assembled at the very beginning were all suited to their roles, grew into them, formed a perfect rapport on screen, and stayed at the same high level throughout. That the team behind the show were able to keep such a large ensemble cast together for so long, without having to recast a single major character except for hiring a young Asa Butterfield to portray Mordred as a boy, was an exceptional achievement. The practice in later seasons of having a regular actor join the main cast for a limited time worked well too, with Emilia Fox, Nathaniel Parker and Alexander Vlahos all fitting in as though they had always

been there. Visually, the show was stunning. The huge amount of location filming, especially the French chateaux that doubled for the citadel of Camelot and the ancient woodlands of Puzzlewood that doubled for almost everywhere, makes *Merlin* one of the most believable medieval fantasies ever seen on television. From creepy ruins to bustling city life, from the cold hard stone of the harsh medieval world to the beauty and wonder of the natural world, this show is full of a strange and enchanting atmosphere. The mix of high drama and comedy that is played out in the storylines is a perfect match for the fictional context. If the show has faults, they lie more in missed opportunities and things that were not done rather than anything that was done especially badly. For anyone who already likes shows such as *Game of Thrones*, *Robin of Sherwood* or *Once Upon a Time*, this show is highly recommended.



DOCTOR WHO

YEAR ONE

NOVEMBER 1963—NOVEMBER 1964

To a Time Lord, time itself may be relative, but to us mere humans, it's linear— Time has a Past, Present and Future, therefore all things that exist here in the present and into the future must have had a beginning. Thus it was with Doctor Who, a series now enjoyed in the present and seemingly with a healthy future. But go back 55 years to its beginning in November 1963 and you'll find that its future was far from assured...

As has been well documented, the show was conceived in early 1963 by Canadian Sydney Newman, the recently appointed Head of Drama at the BBC as a semi-educational children/family show for Saturday teatimes. The plot involved the time travelling adventures of a mysterious professor-type character, the titular Doctor Who, (so called because nobody knew his real name), accompanied by his equally mysterious teenage Granddaughter Susan, and two teachers from her school, Ian Chesterton and Barbara Wright.

The Doctor travels through time and space in a marvellous 'ship' called the TARDIS, a name made up from its initials—Time And Relative

Dimension In Space. Its outward appearance was a 1950s police telephone box, but its interior was a huge, futuristic travel machine. It was a simple yet brilliant concept!

Despite months of hard work by Newman and Producer Verity Lambert to launch the show, putting together a strong cast comprising veteran actor William Hartnell as 'Doctor Who', Carole Ann Ford as Susan, William Russell as the heroic Ian and Jacqueline Hill as the intelligent and brave Barbara, BBC bosses were so unsure that the show had any kind of potential to grab and hold ratings that they didn't plan for more than 13 episodes. Thankfully however, the advent of the Daleks in the show's second story proved so popular that a 48 week season was commissioned, followed by another... and you know the rest.

That first year spanning November 1963 to November 1964 was so full of innovation and imagination; all produced in a tiny studio with a miniscule budget and primitive, yet also brilliant special effects and design, that led to the show's long, assured future...

An Unearthly Child

4 episodes (all exist)

In which one of the greatest adventures in space and time, maybe the greatest of them all, begins as a curiosity in a junkyard. The pilot is bold in format and ideas, with concepts that other shows might take weeks to build up to covered in just a few minutes and the drama itself divided between a non-linear first person narrative split between two characters and two lengthy set pieces in the junkyard set and the futuristic control room of the enigmatic Doctor's time machine. The other three episodes are a traditional adventure of travellers in time trapped in the past, and it is interesting to note that the ambitious element of trying to recreate a prehistoric society, that could have left this story looking very dated, actually works in its favour with hindsight by concentrating entirely on a conflict of human nature that gives the story told a timeless quality.

RADIO TIMES November 21, 1963 7

Your Weekend Saturday

DR. WHO

In this series of adventures in space and time the title-role will be played by William Hartnell

5.15 Dr. Who? That is just the point. Nobody knows precisely who he is, this mysterious exile from another world and a distant future whose adventures begin today. But this much is known: he has a ship in which he can travel through space and time—although, owing to a defect in its instruments he can never be sure where and when his 'landings' may take place. And he has a grand-daughter Susan, a strange amalgam of teenage normality and uncanny intelligence.

Playing the Doctor is the well-known film actor, William Hartnell, who has not appeared before on BBC-tv.

Each adventure in the series will cover several weekly episodes, and the first is by the Australian author Anthony Coburn. It begins by telling how the Doctor finds himself visiting the Britain of today: Susan (played by Carole Ann Ford) has become a pupil at an ordinary British school, where her incredible breadth of knowledge has whetted the curiosity of two of her teachers. These are the history teacher Barbara Wright (Jacqueline Hill), and the science master Ian Chesterton (William Russell), and their curiosity leads them to become inextricably involved in the Doctor's strange travels.

Because of the imperfections in the ship's navigation aids, the four travellers are liable in subsequent stories to find themselves absolutely anywhere in time—past, present, or future. They may visit a distant galaxy where civilisation has been devastated by the blast of a neutron bomb or they may find themselves journeying to far Cathay in the caravan of Marco Polo. The whole cosmos in fact is their oyster.



The legend begins... from the Radio Times, Issue dated 21st November 1963

The Daleks

7 episodes (all exist)

Even without its role in television history or the many further adventures with the Daleks in the show, this is still a science fiction classic. The complexity created by the designers and writer Terry Nation is astonishing, with an alien society that presents its own values and history, culture and conflicts, and a landscape that features forests, lakes, mountains, caves and tunnels, and a vast futuristic city along with details such as its power and water supplies. Into this setting comes a volatile mix of characters, not only the dysfunctional crew of the time machine, and not one but two adventures come to life. The first brought about by the travellers' explorations, the second by their need to raid the city for equipment lost in the opening episodes in a perfect example of plot progression. Arguably, the Daleks are never better than here. Knowing so little about them, fear of the unknown as well as threat and danger make them all the more frightening before the main character of the Doctor is established as their nemesis and equal.

Edge of Destruction

2 episodes (both exist)

Often judged within the context of the long running show that Doctor Who became, this story is seen as filler

material that arose from the way episodes were funded and the need to save money with a recording based mostly around a standing set. But in the context not of a long running series, which Doctor Who at the time was not, but in the wider general context of 1960s British television, this format of science fiction was less atypical. Looked at in isolation, this is a very effective and intriguing fifty minute speculative fantasy drama about the physical and psychological effects upon four people trapped in a malfunctioning time machine. Or, to put it another way, this could be seen as the best episode of *Out of the Unknown* that never was.

Marco Polo

7 episodes (all missing)

If the previous story was familiar to contemporary viewers for its stage play-like similarity to the anthology drama of the time, Marco Polo would have been equally familiar for very different reasons. The twenty five minute historical adventure format included shows about Robin Hood, William Tell, Sir Lancelot, Sir Francis Drake, the Buccaneers, the Count of Monte Cristo and more. William Russell, now one of the stars of Doctor Who, had only recently starred as Sir Lancelot in that show. And an actor who often appeared in at least two of these shows, especially in Sir Lancelot, was Derren Nesbitt. So a historical drama running for nearly two months, with no other fantasy elements beyond the limitations of the period setting, where each twenty five minute instalment brought new perils, and that involved William Russell and Derren Nesbitt facing off week after week, would have been very familiar family entertainment indeed. From the surviving soundtrack recordings, this story seems to have compared very favourably with these other shows too.

The Keys of Marinus

6 episodes (all exist)

A fantasy series consisting of several separate stories linked by an overarching plot, with a regular cast and recurring guest cast, moral dilemmas, romance and an ambiguous villain. Yes, this story was decades ahead of its time with a structure more familiar to audiences in the 2010s than at the time of broadcast. The level of attention to detail in building this alien world is very much in the same league as The Daleks earlier in the season, and this is one of the tales that lent the early years of the show such an epic sense of scale. Other elements also take this serial out of the realm of family entertainment and into that of drama that children are invited to share, as it is the first story to really sexualise the role of the companion with an abduction scenario involving Barbara (not the last time this kind of thing happens to Babs either) that is no less powerful for lacking modern special effects in the telling of events. This story is notable for raising, and leaving unanswered, several big ethical questions. The machine that subdues the population of the planet is no different to similar devices in other fiction that are used as symbols of tyranny, yet the Doctor and all his companions ally themselves with its operators through self-interest. Do they fully grasp the implications of their actions? Do they even care? And is the sinister leader of the Voord a terrorist or a freedom fighter? Yes, he kills a character and would kill others, but other characters in similar circumstances have also done so and are considered heroes.

The Aztecs

4 episodes (all exist)

This memorable story is the first to really explore the nature of time travel, the potential consequences of altering history and whether or not this is possible anyway. The Fires of Pompeii would discuss this again in similar terms and give descriptive tags such as 'fixed points in time' to present these ideas to a new audience, but the first season introduced viewers to the concepts in only its sixth story. In a way, although it was unlikely a part of the writer's thinking at the time, the issues here are allegorical of the foreign policy of the major powers in seeking to control the affairs of supposedly lesser nations, except that here it is our present day society seeking to exert influence over a civilisation located in the past. It is interesting to note that while the story presents Tlotoxl as an antagonist and the Doctor does not condone his violent mode of worship, the Doctor nonetheless does respect the man's position in his own society, and by extension his right to act in the way that he does within the context of his culture, as valid. Tlotoxl is better described as an opponent than a villain. The more mature tone of the earlier adventures continues not only with the intellectual depth of the plot and the quality of the dialogue but in a literal sense as a female regular, Susan this time, is threatened with forced sex for the second time in as many stories and faces quite a gruesome torture punishment for refusal until rescued by the other protagonists.



Barbara the God: Facing serious cultural issues in The Aztecs

The Sensorites

6 episodes (all exist)

There are many reasons why fandom might overlook this story, but one of the principle ones for a modern audience might be that most elements of the story are considered very basic space fiction tropes in a post Star Trek genre. However, this story would have been exactly what a mid-60s audience would have expected and enjoyed. Before the Enterprise swept away all opposition inside fifty minutes every week, exciting space fiction in the UK generally involved ostensibly British rocket ship crews saving the Earth with their backs to the wall and a stiff upper lip, usually over a period of several weeks or even months and normally with one catastrophe following another for most of that time. Viewed as a part of that heritage, and recall that the mission to the unknown planet to investigate a lost expedition was

Captain Maitland's not the Doctor's, this becomes an effective traditional space adventure that neatly crosses over with a time travel show in which the Doctor and his crew could easily be stepping into the pages of the Eagle to help Colonel Dare or into viewers' radio sets to save Jet Morgan. With Doctor Who being commissioned by Sydney Newman and produced by Verity Lambert, both very progressive television figures, one of the characters on the space mission is an intelligent and capable female, Ilona Rodgers as Carol, in addition to the two female characters in the regular cast.



Carol—More than capable

The Reign of Terror

6 episodes (1,2,3 and 6 exist)

Bad Wolf, Torchwood and Vote Saxon might have seemed like a new idea for Doctor Who, but the show employed a discreet finale teaser in its first season too. Right back in the very first episode, Barbara recounts to Ian (on screen by means of a flashback) a moment at Coal Hill school when Susan returns a book on the French Revolution [*Having read it in just a day; whether this was due to Susan sharing the Doctor's speed reading ability, seen in City of Death, or the Tardis taking her and the Doctor on an adventure immediately prior to the events of the first episode is one of many unanswered questions*]. Sure enough, the first season ends with the entire crew trapped in the same events. Yet again, as with the story Marco Polo, the style adopted has enough similarities with the popular twenty-five minute format historical adventure series for it to be clear that the production team were alternating between pushing boundaries and playing safe with established expectations in much the same way as the show in the modern era. Once again, Barbara is every bit the modern heroine as the prison warden offers sympathy in exchange for sexual favours and she stoically refuses his intentions. This very serious quality to the drama along with the complexity of the plots and counter plots at work prove that Doctor Who was never just an amusement for children in the minds of the production team.



Barbara the Brave: With the doctor at the heart of The Reign of Terror

Planet of Giants

3 episodes (all exist)

In true Hollywood style, one of this story's many claims to fame is that the creative team recut the final edit to reduce the overall duration from four episodes to three. The version that survives does actually work well enough, and again it is of interest to consider that a modern audience might be better prepared for a narrative divided between two groups of characters who do not necessarily interact, even by the end of the serial, or may not even be aware of each other's existence. Although the theme of miniaturisation is good science fiction, it is in the drama that the scenes really stand out. The murder plot is a simple and straight forward piece of crime drama and, once you get past the fact that this element has virtually nothing to do with Doctor Who even within this story, that part in isolation and the actors approach to it is actually very effective and compelling in what it is trying to achieve. And amongst the main cast, this is a significant story. Many fans point to the first episode of *The Romans* as the moment that you can see Ian and Barbara as a romance, but in reality it is this story where William Russell and Jacqueline Hill start to reinterpret the scripts and play their characters as a couple. The moments when they are alone when Barbara is first poisoned and becomes ill, before the effects of the poison become clear and therefore a plot device, allow the actors to explore their roles as they might on stage. This is a story easy to overlook because it is disjointed, but well worth close attention.

The Dalek Invasion of Earth

6 episodes (all exist)

So, here's a thing. While it is easy to look at *The Chase* and *The Dalek Masterplan* as two stories that created an epic sense of scale for the Doctor's battles against his number one opponents, by changing their pace and settings while having a real spirit of adventure, this is often overlooked as a quality of this story. It is actually two very different stories that are linked by an arc that involves the Dalek titular invasion, with an occupation thriller much like any number of war films that 60s viewers would have known followed by an imaginative sci-fi tale about drilling to the centre of the Earth and flying planets through space. And it is the bleak dystopia of the early episodes juxtaposed with the futuristic fantasy of the episodes later on that create such a contrast and a feeling of something huge and epic. But it also has thematically unifying effect with hindsight, combining two styles associated with Terry Nation into a single serial. That we also have the show's second romantic sub-plot only adds to making this into what the modern business would call an 'event story'. It has been suggested in the past that the Susan/David love story is too sudden and comes out of nowhere, but the passage of time created by the splitting of events as described above means that this impression relates more to the show as broadcast than it does the events as experienced subjectively by the characters.



Behind the scenes during rehearsals on the spaceship set of 'The Sensorites': L to R: Jacqueline Hill as Barbara, Ilona Rodgers as Carol and William Russell as Ian. Art copyright © Andrew Skilleter

Photographs copyright © BBC

THE DALEK KID



TRANSLATED FROM THE DALEKESÉ BY
NICK MAYS

“My name is Nick Mays and I’m addicted to Daleks.”

There. I’ve said it. I’ve shared. But really, I ‘came out’ years ago. Yes, friends... I was a Dalek Kid!

Like so many other Doctor Who fans across the decades, I couldn’t tell you what it is that makes me love those strange ‘animated pepperpots’, or indeed what drew me to them in the first place. I suspect I grew up with them. Being born in March 1962, I was 20 months old when the first episode of Doctor Who aired on 23rd November 1963 and I probably watched it from my high chair. Doctor Who really was ‘Saturday Teatime’ for my family and, right up until 1970, it was on for most of the year! But I can truthfully say that my earliest retained memory of our beloved series (in fact, one of my earliest memories full stop) was the Daleks. It was either episode 3 of *The Daleks a.k.a. The Mutants* or episode 6 of *The Dalek Invasion of Earth*, because I remember Barbara and someone else – Susan? Jenny? being manacled to a metal wall and Daleks gliding around them. So perhaps, for me, the Daleks imprinted subliminally on my growing brain.

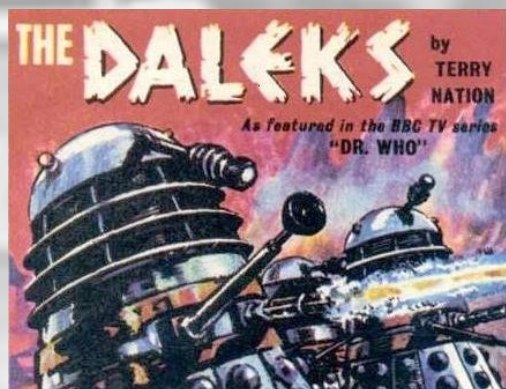


My earliest memory?

Dalekmania

I didn’t know it at the time, but the period 1964 to 1966 would become known as ‘Dalekmania’ (a riff on the term *Beatlemania* from when the Fab Four were just about everywhere!). Daleks were everywhere! Books, comics, toys, games... I was a very bookish child – my parents and my grandmother who lived with us read to me every day, so I learned to read quickly and voraciously. But by far and away my favourite book from childhood was, and still is, the second Dalek annual, *The Dalek World*, which I guess was a Christmas present in 1965. I *loved* that book, I knew all the stories (the strips mainly) and I could recite the whole of the Daleks vs Mechanoids story *The World That Waits*. I was awestruck by the stills from the upcoming *Dr Who and the Daleks* film, which my parents never thought to take me to see at the cinema (Boo! Hiss!). It looked jolly thrilling and very grown up! I was captivated most of all by Richard Jennings’ stunning colour artwork and his rendering of

the Daleks. This may have been, in part due to loving the Dalek comic strip, initially illustrated by Jennings in *TV Century 21* comic (or *TV21* as it was better known) which made its debut in 1965. Much as I loved *Stingray*, *Thunderbirds*, *the Munsters* et al, I insisted that my mum should read me the Dalek strip on the back page first. Reading *TV21* was our little Wednesday afternoon ritual when I got home from school. Did I ever question that in *TV21* Doctor Who never faced the Daleks? Nope. Never. The Daleks were *far* more interesting having their own adventures!



Best. Comic. Strip. Ever.

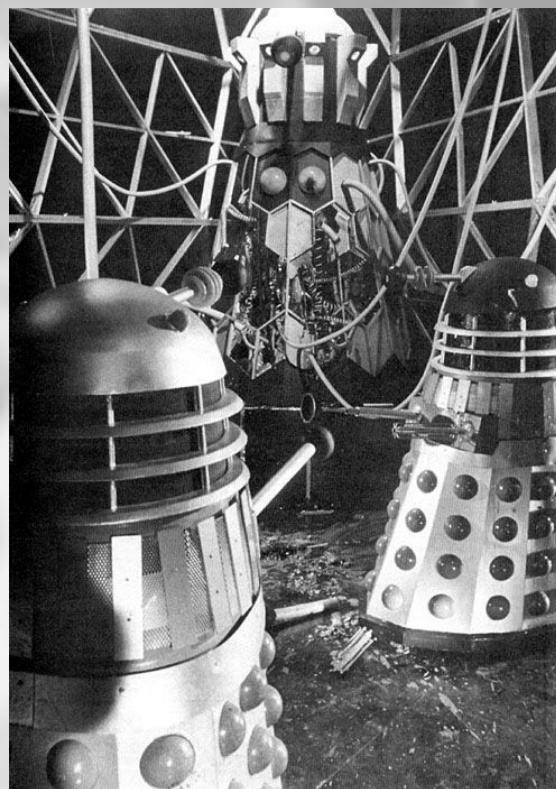
Needless to say, I had toy Daleks in abundance. Another early memory is my mum buying me a little grey plastic Cherilea Dalek from Woolworths and me sitting in my pushchair playing with it and trying to be careful not to lose its eyestick and ‘arms’. That was the trouble with those little Dalek toys, the appendages were easily lost, but hey – a broken matchstick would suffice as an appendage just as well, and if you used the burnt end of one, it looked like an eyestick. (Because all the adults in my family smoked, matchsticks were in plentiful supply. This was the 60s after all).

Soon I had a veritable Dalek army (there were about 9 or 10 of them) and they would fight regular battles against my toy soldiers. I’m pretty sure I had a Dalek bagatelle, and I also had two Louis Marx stop motion battery-operated Dalek toys, which lit up, a silver one and a black one. I was an easy child to please when it came to birthdays and Christmas - at least up until I was about six - “Give the boy a Dalek something.” If toys wouldn’t cut it (and I certainly never got even 10% of the Dalek toys that abounded in those days), by shuffling around with my feet close together and arms outstretched grating “*Exterminate!*”, I could be a Dalek myself!

And of course, when the Daleks appeared on *Doctor Who* – which they did regularly, I was captivated! Thus it was that I became known to everyone as *The Dalek Kid*.

The Final End?

Time passed and sadly, so did the Daleks. I watched awestruck as the Dalek civil war erupted on Skaro in *Evil of the Daleks* in 1967 when the Doctor made some ‘good’ Daleks (the human factor etc.) and they started blowing each other’s heads off, revealing the bubbling, foaming, tentacled mutants within, before turning on their giant Emperor and exterminating him too. I can well remember the Doctor’s last line in the final episode as he, Jamie and Victoria watch the Dalek city burn: “The final end”.

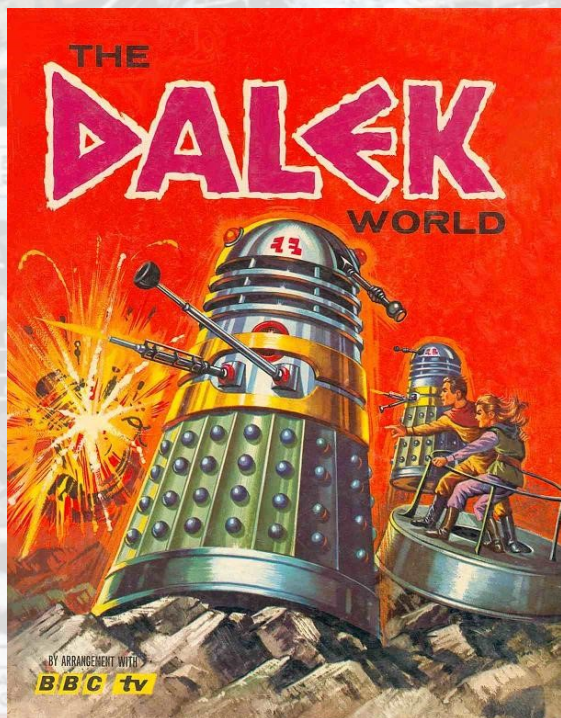


‘Evil of the Daleks’ – I saw it twice! Nyerrrr!

Actually, I got to see the ‘final end’ twice. The BBC repeated *Evil* as a summer time ‘bridge’ between seasons in July and August 1968. I can recall being hugely annoyed that they stuck a two-week break in the middle of the re-screening for the boring old Olympics. (For fact fans, that was the first ‘proper’ repeat of a complete *Doctor Who* story).

However, after that, there really were no more Daleks on *Doctor Who*. Years later I’d learn that this was due, in part, to Dalek creator Terry Nation withdrawing permission from the BBC to use them as he tried (and ultimately failed) to launch a Daleks series in the USA as a co-production between the BBC and an American network. Not only that, but the Dalek strip in *TV21* came to an end and despite my fervent longing, it never came back. Again, as a kid, I was not to know that the BBC and Terry Nation relicensed the use of the Daleks to Polystyle Publications so they could appear in their *TV Comic*, at last becoming part of their long-running *Doctor Who* comic strip (or at least until the BBC no longer

licensed the rights to them, then they disappeared from TV Comic too). As it happened, *TV Comic* wasn't one of the many comics my brothers and I got each week, so I never saw those Dalek strips until twenty years later when I researched old issues of *TV Comic* at the British Library. But I hadn't missed anything – they weren't that good after all. The Daleks looked much better in *TV21*, so there!



Noooo! Don't throw it away!

But the worst loss of Dalek-ness in my life was when I agreed, in a moment of weakness, to let my Dad throw out my battered old *Dalek World* annual. *Why* he wanted to throw it out, I'll never know. Okay, it was falling apart, its spine was gone, but it was *my* cherished book. More to the point, *why* I let him throw it out, I couldn't tell you. But hell, I missed that book! (I decided at the young age of eight that if I ever had kids, I'd never make them get rid of their favourite old annuals, no matter how tatty they got. Decades later, when I had my own kids, I stuck to that, although when they outgrew them, they sold a few of their favourite old annuals on Ebay, (the mercenary little buggers)!

Keeping the Flame Burning

Despite the Daleks receding into the fog of my young memory, I still played with my Dalek toys. My brother Trev was a keen model maker, and had a plentiful supply of *Airfix* model paint, so he taught me how to customise my Cherilea Daleks from their rather drab greys, pale blues and blacks into 'proper' Dalek colours. The rank and file were now metallic blue, there was a Black Dalek leader and a Red Dalek leader and even a Green Dalek. Best of all though was my own Golden Emperor, modelled after His

Excellency in the comic strips. His oversized round head was fashioned from a ping-pong ball painted gold.

Later on, as my interest in photography began to develop, due to being given a neat little Kodak Instamatic camera for my birthday, I photographed my toy Daleks in their own adventures. Invariably these adventures would take place in our back garden, which doubled as an effective jungle on an alien planet (Terry Nation would've been so proud—he loved a jungle on an alien planet!). The Daleks would often battle my collection of rubber monsters and aliens, these being very popular in the early 1970s and often to be found at tourist attractions as 'something for the kids'. As you can see from the photographs accompanying this feature, the results were, shall we say, variable, but please bear in mind I was only 9 or 10 years old. Mind you, I am particularly pleased with the 'hoverbout' that I customised from a metal ashtray.

Unfortunately, in my attempt to create a realistic Dalek civil war in a cardboard 'control room' set that I put together, disaster struck. The cardboard control panels that should have been smoking from Dalek gun damage went up in flames and three of my Daleks were melted, with two others partially damaged! To say I was distraught is an understatement. I decided to leave the pyrotechnical special effects alone after that. And worse, at this time, Dalekmania was long since over – you couldn't just go and buy new toy Daleks. No Ebay then either kids – you had to scour jumble sales and junk shops and hope you'd get lucky, which I never did.



Dalek civil war – in a suburban back garden!

The Daleks were to be absent from *Doctor Who* for five years. Five years may not seem that long, but when you're a child of ten, that's half your lifetime! (Actually four years if you include the repeat of *Evil* in 1968, but my point stands – it's forever when you're a kid)! So, imagine my euphoria when the Daleks returned to our screens in January 1972, a fact trumpeted by the BBC on the front cover of their TV

listings magazine *Radio Times*, (actually, this was the Daleks' third *RT* cover feature since 1964, but at the time I wasn't to know that), brilliant artwork by *Eagle* comic alumni Frank Hampson. I was ecstatic! I probably must've gone on and on about it to my school mates, because the *Dalek Kid* epithet came back. Then a series of miracles happened, which turned 1972, for me at least, into my own Year of the Daleks.

My Year of the Daleks!

The BBC screened both 1960s Dalek movies on TV that summer and they were amazing! The photos from *The Dalek World* film report came alive for me in *Dr Who and the Daleks*, and then you had Daleks and Robomen gunning human resistance fighters down all over London in *Daleks Invasion Earth 2150 AD*.



They're back!

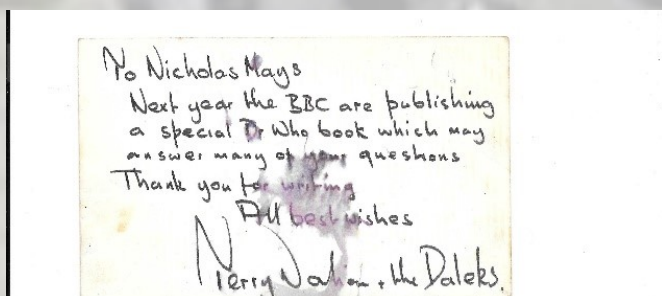
It got better... My schoolfriend Jamie casually mentioned that he had a book about Daleks and promised to bring it into school to show me. It was – yes, you've guessed it – *The Dalek World*! I was over the moon! It was like greeting an old friend after years apart- all my favourite strips and stories... *The Mechanical Planet*, *The Orbitus*, *The World That Waits*, *the Invisible Enemy*... Of course, I borrowed it. I offered to buy it from Jamie, but he was a stubborn buggler and wouldn't budge – it wasn't for sale. But then another miracle happened. Another classmate, Duncan, said he too had a Dalek annual and he would sell it to me for the princely sum of 50p. It was the very first Dalek annual – *The Dalek Book*, published late 1964, fact fans. I quickly devoured this amazing

item and my Dalek knowledge expanded exponentially – I realised that *The Dalek World* was a sequel to the events of *The Dalek Book*, in which the Daleks attempted to invade Earth, having conquered all the other colonised planets of the Solar system. *World* picks up the story 200 years later. The Daleks having been disarmed, at the conclusion of the previous annual, offer to help the Sol system leaders fight off the deadly Mechanical Planet which is blasting its way across the Galaxy. (In the later strip, *The World That Waits* it is revealed that the robot inventors the Mechanoids built this deadly weapon). The Daleks are re-armed, they destroy the Mechanical Planet and then go on the offensive again, their mission to make all the worlds in the skies one world... the Dalek World!

Later I learned that there had been a third Dalek annual published in 1966, *The Dalek Outer Space Book*. I could never track it down anywhere, until the advent of Ebay, when in 2003 I acquired all three Dalek tomes. I was, putting it charitably, pretty underwhelmed by the *Outer Space Book*. The fact that David Whittaker wasn't the main writer was very clear. In fact, so the story goes, the writer that Terry Nation commissioned to write the bulk of *Outer Space Book* had never even seen an episode of Doctor Who! (I was also totally unimpressed by the Dalek annuals of the late 1970s – full of badly edited reprints from TV21 and quite tepid text stories, which were very generic Terry Nation fare).

The Creator

Talking of Terry Nation... they say you should never meet your heroes because you'll be disappointed. Well... 1972 saw the publication of the Piccolo book *The Making of Doctor Who* by *Who* production stalwarts Malcolm Hulke and Terrance Dicks. I learned all about Terry Nation and how he dreamed up the metallic malevolent mutants (no mention of poor old Ray Cusick who designed them!). So, as a swiftly-becoming-aware Doctor Who fanboy, I made it my business to write to Terry Nation c/o the BBC (along with the -then current Doctor, Jon Pertwee and numerous other luminaries). Of course, I asked a slew of Dalek-y questions and awaited a response. It came in 1973 when Mr Nation sent me a BBC publicity photo of an *Invasion* Dalek on the banks of the River Thames. On the back he'd written:



Nice though it was to get the great man's autograph, I felt a bit, well... fobbed off, basically. The 'special Doctor Who book' turned out to be a magazine - the *Radio Times' Doctor Who 10th Anniversary Special* which was, frankly, brilliant! And yes, there was a photo of Mr Dalek, Terry Nation looking all suave in suede outside his mansion surrounded by Dalek props. Later, I learned to appreciate Terry Nation's vast body of work, not just for Doctor Who, but also *The Avengers*, *Danger Man* and many others, as well as his later *Survivors* and *Blakes Seven*. Great concept man, our Terry, but I must be honest and say that the best stories involving his creations - Daleks, *Blakes' Seven* and even the titular *Survivors* often fared better in other writers' hands. But when all's said and done, he created the Daleks, they made his fortune as a writer, so ultimately, he's alright with me. It's very sad that he died at such a relatively young age.

Once a Dalek Kid...

Doctor Who as a series had been running into trouble in the mid to late 1980s. It was at the BBC and was to be axed in 1989. But despite the lack of much TV *Who* there was a growing interest in *Doctor Who* merchandise, often from serious model making companies and individuals. I can recall being shown some wonderful miniature Daleks and Cybermen by a fan friend Glen, so I had to get myself a couple of boxes. Thus it was, I found myself, aged 25, once again spreading some newspaper on the dining room table and spending a few happy hours putting the exquisitely detailed figures together. They snapped in place and could also be glued, then painted. I managed to get nearly two whole boxes worth completed in one afternoon! And I *carefully* customised a few 'exterminated' traitor Daleks, managing to cause no full scale conflagrations this time around.



My miniature Dalek army—complete with two 'exterminated' traitors...

So, here I am now, 55 years of age, a truly life-long *Doctor Who* fan. Despite *Doctor Who* and the Daleks being a huge part of my life, I've have other interests and, I suppose, could be considered to be just in the 'normal bloke' category. I still love *Doctor Who* of

course and I have a few *Who* collectibles - mainly Daleks. I've still got some of my old Cherilea Daleks too, but they don't look very Dalek-y next to the fantastic scale models you can get nowadays, in every type to have ever graced our TV and cinema screens in their various liveries. But for nostalgia and childhood memories, they can't be beaten. And yes, I do occasionally photograph my Daleks...!



Daleks Invasion Nick's Kitchen 2018 A.D.

Naturally, as I have grown older, more critical and more aware of what happened behind the scenes on *Doctor Who*, thanks to the plethora of books, magazines, DVD commentaries etc., I realise that the Daleks haven't always been as good as they could be. Ditto some of the stories in the series itself, whether it's the 1963-1989 'Classic' series or the post 2005 'Nu-Who' series. However, I literally cheered and punched the air when, in episode 6 of Season One of the revived series - Rob Shearman's brilliant *Dalek* - one lone Dalek exterminated loads of people, went on the rampage and behaved just like the Daleks always should have done and always had done in the books, the comics and in my imagination. It even levitated! Stairs? Hah! Who's joking now eh? Basically, the Daleks were back and they were badasses! I think it's no small stretch of the imagination to say that *Dalek* cemented the revived series firmly in the hearts and minds of millions of viewers in the same way that the Daleks did in the second story of the original series way back in 1963. My kids loved the new series too and even got to like the classic series for all its lack of CGI and David Tennant. In fact, to this day my teenage son Ben still loves *Doctor Who* and I know he loves the Daleks... although he's a bit too cool to actually *say* so. (Give it time...). I'm sure my grandchildren will soon become fans too - and I bet the Daleks will be their favourite alien monsters.

... But *I'll* always be the original Dalek Kid.

"EXTERMINATE!"



SEASON SEVENTEEN: IT HAS A BOUQUET

By Rob Peasley

“Time is running out, Doctor.”

“What do you mean, time's running out? It's only 1505.”

I could make this one of the shortest essays ever. What do I like about Season Seventeen of **Doctor Who**?

Well, in a sentence, it's got heaps of imagination, good storytelling, cracking dialogue, humour which is genuinely very funny (largely thanks to script editor Douglas Adams), and Tom Baker at the peak of his powers and very much in love with his leading lady, the talented Lalla Ward.

But let's expand on the above, and also take a quick look at each of the stories that make up one of my favourite seasons of the programme.

Firstly, a bit of my own personal background. It's with Season Seventeen that I started to cross over from viewer to 'fan', at the tender age of six.

I've been watching **Doctor Who** as long as I can remember. It was always on, because my dad watched it. **Doctor Who** is often described as family viewing, and it's a spot-on description.

I'm sure I remember the secondary console room from Season Fourteen, even though I wasn't even four years old at the time. I definitely remember Leela leaving at the end of *The Invasion Of Time*.

My interest went up several levels with the return of the Doctor's oldest foes in *Destiny Of The Daleks*. I knew about the Daleks - I'd seen them occasionally in clips on **Blue Peter**, and now here they were in their own full adventure.

Suddenly I was watching episodes avidly and I used to have questions, especially when an old monster or villain turned up, and my dad sometimes would struggle to answer them... he watched the programme, but without taking in every small detail.

On Sundays, the day after transmission, we went over to Tetsworth, around 20 miles from Woodstock, to see my Nan and Grandad.

One of my dad's sisters lived next door with her family, while my two uncles still lived with my grandparents, so almost the whole extended family was under one roof for Sunday dinner. It was a good time to ask my uncle questions about **Doctor Who**. During *Destiny*, it was “Who is Davros?” A season later, with *The Keeper Of Traken*, it was “Who is this Master chap?”

My uncle was pretty reliable. For example, he told me that the Master had fallen into a black hole the last time he'd been on **Doctor Who**. Which isn't quite how *The Deadly Assassin* finishes (the Master is seen to escape in his TARDIS at its conclusion), but a fair enough description. It gave my inquisitive, young mind something to go on.

I watched Season Seventeen with an air of wonder. There was so much to feed a young mind. Oddly enough, my least favourite monster of the five from original transmission was Scaroth from *City Of Death*. I used to have a notebook with (very bad) drawings of four of the 'nasties' from this season – a Dalek, Erato, a Mandrel and a Nimon. It's a pity that I've long since thrown that notebook away.

But, hey, just because I liked something as a child doesn't mean I like it as an adult. I remember being enthralled by the 1936 **Flash Gordon** serial when it was repeated on BBC2 in 1980, in the lead up to the release of the movie. So much so that it became the first film I ever went to see at the cinema. I still like the film – but I now find the serial a bit laughable.

But I still very much like the stories which make up Season Seventeen of **Doctor Who**. It was no hardship to watch them again, to pin down exactly why...

DESTINY OF THE DALEKS

“If you're supposed to be the superior race of the universe, why don't you try climbing after us? Bye, bye.”

The season starts with what is something an anomaly to the Graham Williams era of Doctor Who – with returning monsters and a sequel to a story from another period of the programme.

More than any other producer, Williams seemed to loathe bringing back old monsters – the only other monster he brought back were the Sontarans, in the final two hastily-written episodes of *The Invasion Of Time*. His preference seemed to be introducing new and fresh pages within Who lore.

Destiny also features the return of Terry Nation as a writer for the first time since *The Android Invasion*.

Nation's stories were always very action-driven, and therefore *Destiny* is an intriguing mix, since Douglas Adams - the new script editor and a very different type of writer - had so obviously rewritten the scripts, complete with an Oolon Colluphid reference to his radio serial-cum-book ***The Hitch-Hiker's Guide To The Galaxy***.

It's a mix that I believe works, since some of Nation's other Dalek scripts, such as *Planet Of The Daleks* and *Death To The Daleks*, are a little dull in places. *Destiny* is never dull.

In particular, Part One is a very strong episode. It is almost Hartnell-esque in that it largely consists of the Doctor and his companion, the newly regenerated Romana, played by the exceptional Lalla Ward. Hardly anyone else gets a look-in.

It's also tremendously atmospheric. Winspit Quarry made a great location, while the direction of Ken Grieve is very effective.

As the story progresses, it becomes clear that this is a direct sequel to the classic *Genesis Of The Daleks*, since the Daleks are searching for Davros, their creator presumed dead after he was apparently exterminated at the conclusion of that previous tale.

It leads to a chance for more discussion between the Doctor and Davros. It's not as fascinating as the scenes in *Genesis*, but it's a nice addition none-the-less, even if Davros is played by David Gooderson rather than Michael Wisher.

Nation was also involved in writing for ***Blake's 7*** at the same time as *Destiny*, and Part Three includes a scene 'borrowed' from the ***Blake's 7*** episode *Space Fall*. The Daleks exterminate prisoners until the Doctor surrenders, just as Raiker with Blake.

Nation was never one to waste a good idea, and here the Movellans are eventually revealed to be just as bad as the Daleks, as with both the Kaleds and Thals in *Genesis*.

Destiny is not a perfect story, and isn't chockful of quotable dialogue like the rest of the stories in the season, but it's still a hugely likeable and enjoyable one.

And some interesting continuity from Romana's regeneration sequence at the beginning of Part One.

Time Ladies seem to have unrestricted regenerations. Even given that her regeneration is in flux, and it's therefore it's possible that just one new body is used up rather than several, Romana still changes for a cosmetic reason. Would she do that if she only had twelve regenerations? I don't think so.

It suggests that the regeneration cycle for a Time Lady is different than a Time Lord. In which case, how can there be regenerations from one gender to the other? Answers on a postcard please to Chris Chibnall.

CITY OF DEATH

“Where are we going?”

“Are you talking philosophically or geographically?”

“Philosophically.”

“Then we're going to lunch.”

I'm not going to beat around the bush - this is my favourite **Doctor Who** story of all-time. As a result, it is quite difficult to review, as I could simply say this whole story is 'marvellous' – it's certainly not a 'table wine'!

So much about this story is simply exceptional, and totally belies the fact that the script was a last-minute rewrite by Douglas Adams and Graham Williams, because David Fisher's original *A Gamble With Time* needed hefty changes and the original writer wasn't available.

The location work in Paris adds so much to the opening episode, as the Doctor and Romana skip around hand-in-hand. Anyone who thinks that romance was only added to NuWho needs to watch these scenes – the Doctor is very much in love with his companion.

Of course, the location work is accompanied by a simply gorgeous Dudley Simpson score. He was such a talented composer – his music always underpins any drama, rather than try to drown it out, as is the curse of modern television.

Here, many of the location scenes do not contain any dialogue, therefore allowing Dudley to be more adventurous, and he gives us something delightful.

But he's on top form throughout the story – there's also the music accompanying the start of the 16th century scenes, which helps convince us that we've really moved from Paris 1979 to Renaissance Italy, plus the Pink Panther type music for the Countess, as Catherine Schell had indeed been in one of those films.

But everyone seems to be at the height of their game for this story – everyone. There's some delightful 'arty' direction from Michael Hayes that perfectly suits such a sophisticated story, while the design is top notch – most notably, Ian Scoones' wonderful spaceship.

The guest cast is also superb. Julian Glover is just brilliant in his multiple role as the last of the Jagaroth race; Tom Chadbon makes a terrific heavy-handed detective Duggan; and even 'bit-parts' like Kevin Flood's Hermann are both beautifully written and acted.

The plot is mind-boggling, but totally plausible – one of Adams' trademarks was to take fantastical ideas and to sell them completely. He had a unique imagination.

He also realised you don't need to explain every smallest detail. For example, how does the artist in Part One know that: 1) Romana is a Time-Lady and 2) that time is becoming fractured? *It doesn't matter.*

And the dialogue is simply a thing of beauty – it comes across as so natural. It makes the viewer laugh at the correct points, while also maintaining the drama.

For example, there's the wonderful six-handed scene at the beginning of episode two starting with the Doctor exclaiming: "I say, what a wonderful butler. He's so violent!". That scene is probably the one that I would show to someone that I was trying to persuade to become a fan.

I also love the following exchange, which says so much about the two characters involved:

ROMANA: You should go into partnership with a glazier. You'd have a truly symbiotic working relationship.

DUGGAN: What?

ROMANA: I'm just pointing out that you break a lot of glass.

DUGGAN: You can't make an omelette without breaking eggs.

ROMANA: If you wanted an omelette, I'd expect to find a pile of broken crockery, a cooker in flames and an unconscious chef.

After spending four episodes being the butt of the joke, Duggan saves the human race with "the most important punch in history" in the final episode. And this comes shortly after John Cleese, yes John Cleese, makes a two-line cameo. This really was the story that had *everything*.

Finally, a word on Graham Williams. He wasn't the luckiest man when it came to **Doctor Who**. He followed Philip Hinchcliffe, a brilliant producer, but one who overstepped the mark on both on-screen violence and budget. Hence, Williams found himself kept under a tight rein, at a time of spiralling inflation that kept on devaluing what money he had.

But he was also a savvy fellow with good judgement. He quickly realised the rewritten *City Of Death* was something special, and allocated it much of the year's budget. The resulting story shows exactly what his production team were capable of.

Marvellous? Too right it is.

THE CREATURE FROM THE PIT

"We call it the Pit."

"Ah. You have such a way with words."

In my opinion, the weakest point of the season. David Fisher contributed *The Stones Of Blood* and *The Androids Of Tara* to Season Sixteen - two tremendous scripts. *The Creature From The Pit* still has plenty going for it – but there's not quite enough story to fill four episodes.

The humour in *Creature* is very hit and miss – for me, Geoffrey Bayldon's astrologer Organon works, but the bandits are less successful. In particular, John Bryans is somewhat wasted as Torvin – having demonstrated he was a fantastic actor in two very different roles in **Blake's 7**, Bercol and Shrinker.

The **Doctor Who** crew of this time would try to pull off absolutely anything – they certainly didn't mind experimenting. But Erato doesn't really work as a monster – and looks rather obscene at times!

Having said that, at least the pit scenes are kept extremely dark-light, leading to some very atmospheric scenes. It's only when the creature lurks into full camera shot that any illusion is shattered. Although I think I was terrified of the creature as a six-year-old.

David Fisher had a tendency to write very good female roles. For the second time in three stories, his lead villain is a lady – Myra Frances has a whale of a time as Adrasta. The character is very strong-willed, but shown to be rather small-minded – she wants the whole of time and space simply to

to extend her monopoly of metal on Chloris.

Lalla Ward is somewhat different as Romana in this one, since it was the first story of the season to go before the cameras and she was still finding her feet. It also marks David Brierley's debut as the voice of K9 - something I don't have much of an opinion about, since he's fine.

Mind-boggling science is a trademark of this era of the programme, and Part Four proves this in abundance, with the scenes involving Erato and the neutron star. It just about works.

I do like the scene in Part Two, where the Doctor is clinging onto the side of the pit. He just so happens to have 'Everest In Easy Stages' in his pocket. But it's in Tibetan. Just as well he also has 'Teach Yourself Tibetan' in his pockets as well, in addition to a hammer and grappling hooks!

We all know the Doctor's ability to produce whatever he needs out of his pockets is a bit ludicrous, so why not give a knowing wink in the direction to the adults in the audience while having fun with the concept?

NIGHTMARE OF EDEN

"I don't think we should interfere."

"Interfere? Of course we should interfere. Always do what you're best at, that's what I say."

There's so much to enjoy in *Nightmare Of Eden* – Bob Baker's first (and last) solo script for the series is a cracker and unusually serious for this era, although it still contains a lot of funny lines.

In many other periods of **Doctor Who**, there would be a lot of sanctimonious preaching about drug smuggling, but fortunately, this is the Williams/Adams season. So the Doctor is suitably horrified, but the plot then moves on.

There's a lot going in *Nightmare* – the two ships 'locked' together in highly intriguing fashion as the Empress materialises out of hyperspace; the CET machine (a similar but different enough idea to the Scope from *Carnival Of Monsters*); the killer drug Vraxoin; and the Mandrels.

It's a meaty plot with plenty of imagination, and well resolved – with the villains hoist on their own petard after the Doctor does something clever.

Watching the stories in transmission order, it's noticeable that Lalla is so more self-assured as Romana than she was in *Creature*. She carries the drama so well – you believe because she believes.

The Mandrels are obviously not the best-realised monster of all-time. It's such a shame that the lighting on the Empress is so bright – the Mandrels are far more effective in near-darkness on the Eden set.

Tom Baker's infamous ad-lib in this story is often picked out by its detractors, but otherwise he gives a controlled performance and is serious when he needs to be serious. In particular, there's his understated "go away" to Tryst towards the end of the final episode.

Talking of performances, David Daker is fantastic as Rigg. We see his descent, as the controlled spaceship captain is given Vraxoin without his knowledge, and goes through the various stages of its addiction.

Nightmare Of Eden was a troubled production (the director walked out, leaving Graham Williams to complete the story) and it was made on a very tight budget. But it still manages to be an intelligent **Doctor Who** story that gives viewers much food for thought.

THE HORNS OF NIMON

"Silence. Later you will be questioned, tortured and killed."

"Well I hope you get it in the right order."

I realise this is a marmite story for people – but I'm in the group who simply love *The Horns Of Nimon*.

I have a theory that many of the people working on it came to some sort of agreement – "Yes, the budget has run out because we're saving any remaining cash for *Shada*, but let's make sure we have much more fun with this than similar cash-strapped productions such as *Underworld* and *The Armageddon Factor*."

Hence, there is quite a lot of what could be described as 'silliness' in *The Horns Of Nimon* – there's the Doctor giving K9 the kiss of life and later presenting his robotic dog a 'First Prize' rosette; the Doctor spinning the TARDIS off an asteroid like a Cricket ball; the co-pilot exclaiming "Weakling Scum!" no less than four times; K9 covered in ticker-tape; Romana's sonic screwdriver (previously seen in *City Of Death*, but fully referenced here); and comic sound effects from Dick Mills after an explosion.

Tom's having a lot of fun, but the most OTT performance comes from Graham Crowden, who had turned down the part of the fourth Doctor five years earlier. He proclaims many of his lines as Soldeed, such as "My dreams of conquest!", while his death scene is a masterpiece of glorious over-acting.

But all this 'silliness' is mixed in quite lovingly with some brilliant dialogue. For example:

SETH: *If we don't pay tribute, the Nimon will destroy us.*

ROMANA: *Sounds like an insecure personality to me.*

SETH: *He lives in the power complex.*

ROMANA: *That fits.*

Some of the dialogue seems to have come from Douglas Adams, rather than Anthony Read. For example, any fan of **The Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy** will recognise when the Doctor says to the co-pilot: "Look, why don't you give me the gun and then I can keep an eye on myself so that I don't get up to any funny business?"

And behind this Tom-foolery is some pretty imaginative science and superb concepts. The Nimon's power complex resembles a giant positronic circuit, while they travel through space from one black hole to another.

Wormhole travel became a sci-fi staple in the following two decades – *The Horns Of Nimon* was ahead of its time.

It's an appropriate time to pay tribute to Lalla Ward's contribution to this story. While the likes Tom Baker, Graham Crowden and Malcolm Terris are hamming it up and making this a gloriously fun retelling of the Minotaur legend, Lalla plays it absolutely straight as Romana, keeping the whole thing grounded.

The Nimon are a huge galactic pest, and Lalla's scenes with John Bailey's Sezom early in the last episode hammer home the gravity of the situation.

There are times when the lack of budget works in the favour of the story. For example, the Skonnan spaceship is supposed to be an old, clapped-out ship which could fall apart at any moment, while it's actually part of the plot that "all these corridors look the same". Meanwhile, the Nimon have the most wonderful voice, despite a slightly flawed design.

As I said at the beginning, I love *The Horns Of Nimon*. It's never dull, and clever, intelligent and witty, and isn't afraid to poke fun at itself. It's fantastic entertainment.



SHADA

"You want to take over the universe, don't you? I've met your sort before. Any moment now a mad gleam will come into one of your eyes and you'll start shouting, the universe shall be mine."

"How naive, Doctor. How pathetically limited your vision must be... Take over the universe? How childish. Who could possibly want to take over the universe?"

"Exactly. That's what I keep telling people. It's a troublesome place, difficult to administer. And as a piece of real estate, it's worthless, because by definition there'd be no one to sell it to."

I'm in two minds whether *Shada* is actually part of Season Seventeen or not. But it probably should be included, on the grounds that it was the story that Williams and Adams intended to bow out with.

It's not an all-time classic, such as *City Of Death*. After a busy year with both **Doctor Who** and **The Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy**, I suspect Adams didn't have much time to hone his scripts for *Shada*.

And maybe he almost welcomed when it was only half-filmed and then cancelled, because it gave him a second chance to work with many of its elements to form what is my favourite book of his, *Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency*, published in 1987.

But *Shada* – which thanks to BBC Worldwide we can now enjoy in a more complete way than ever before – still has so much to enjoy across its six episodes. It has the usual mind-bending plot from Adams, with some of the usual, sparkling, witty dialogue that you would expect from him. For example:

DOCTOR: *Well, when I was on the river I heard a strange babble of inhuman voices, didn't you, Romana?*

ROMANA: *Yes.*

CHRONOTIS: *Oh, undergraduates talking to each other, I expect. I've tried to have it banned.*

And:

CLARE: *No, you don't understand. The book itself, it's atomically unstable. It seems to be absorbing radioactivity. I think it's very, very dangerous.*

WILKIN (after she leaves): *I don't know. Nowadays they'll publish anything.*

Once again, Romana proves her usefulness. When she tells the Doctor that his mind is also in the sphere, it allows him to finally work out a way to defeat Skagra. In a moment harking back to K9's rosette in *Horns*, the Doctor presents her with a medal.

In many ways, it's a shame that *Shada* wasn't transmitted in early 1980. The location scenes in Cambridge are delightful, and it would have rounded off a very strong season with another clever and witty story.

And a word on the many, different formats of *Shada*. I think my favourite is still the wonderful book by Gareth Roberts, in which he perfectly captures both the drama and humour of the tale. It's a massively entertaining page-turner.

But the latest visual version, mixing the existing footage with animated scenes voiced by the original cast, gives us the clearest-ever idea what *Shada* would have been like.

OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

"I was rather under the impression that Mr. Duggan was following me."

"Ah. Well, you're a beautiful woman, probably, and Duggan was trying to summon up the courage to ask you out to dinner, weren't you, Duggan?"

"Who sent you?"

"Who sent me what?"

In some ways, Season Seventeen is an extension of what came before. After a somewhat mixed Season Fifteen, the following season of the **Doctor Who** was the one where producer Graham Williams, along with script editor Anthony Read, really put their mark on the series. Humour became a much larger part of the programme in Season Sixteen.

But in other ways, Season Seventeen does feel different, due to the change of script editor. Douglas Adams, seemingly, loved to dabble. Therefore, his fingerprints can be felt all over this season.

I love the fantastic worlds that he created. Meanwhile, his take on science can be gathered from this dialogue from *Shada*:

DOCTOR: What? Do you understand Einstein?

PARSONS: Yes.

DOCTOR: What? And quantum theory?

PARSONS: Yes.

DOCTOR: What? And Planck?

PARSONS: Yes.

DOCTOR: What? And Newton?

PARSONS: Yes.

DOCTOR: What? And Schoenberg?

PARSONS: Of course.

DOCTOR: You've got a lot to unlearn.

In other words, Douglas Adams knew there is a lot out there that we have yet to discover, and much of it will disapprove what we originally thought to be true. His imagination has no bounds and is not restricted by current thinking. Was he a genius? Very probably.

It's very different to the approach of Christopher H Bidmead in Season Eighteen to fit everything into existing scientific concepts. Bidmead has often criticised the outlandish science of his direct predecessor - but which of the two was invited to give lectures?

I personally prefer the big, bold concepts of Season Seventeen, where anything seems possible.

It's also worth noting that this is the last series of Classic Who without John Nathan-Turner as producer. Storytelling was placed very much at the heart of the programme by both Philip Hinchcliffe and Graham Williams. On the other hand, JNT seemed more pre-occupied with what it looked like - style over substance, if you like.

Meanwhile, a big factor in how Season Seventeen turned out was Tom Baker. Tom is a moody fellow, but for this season, he was on top form throughout.

The addition of Adams behind the scenes and Lalla Ward in front of the camera seems to have energised him. At his point, he and Lalla were getting on like a house on fire, and her input to the season was also a huge plus - I liked Romana Mk 1, but Romana Mk 2 was even better and an equal to the Doctor.

Also, Tom was placed at the forefront of every script (no side-lining of him in this season), and he was obviously really enjoying himself.

Does it mean that it's more *The Tom Baker Show* at this point rather than **Doctor Who**? Not really. The storytelling is still the key to the success of the whole thing. And let's not forget how successful that this season was. Even given the inflated figures for *Destiny* and *City* due to the ITV strike, the number of viewers remained very healthy for the remainder of the season.

And having such a larger-than-life actor at the centre of the programme is not a bad thing. **Doctor Who** is surely there to entertain people, while using presenting them with diverting stories and concepts, and making them think sometimes and making them laugh sometimes.

Season Seventeen *does* succeed absolutely across all those factors. And that's why, in my mind, it is one of its strongest-ever seasons of **Doctor Who**.

It definitely does have a bouquet.



SNAKES IN A BASEMENT!



Pond in Peril: Original artwork © Colin Howard

Water splashed from the open valve and cascaded into the flooding basement with a crescendo that was amplified by the claustrophobic acoustics. As one shoe slipped off the narrow ledge upon which Amy was precariously balanced, a second sound was added to the watery melodies. The telephone in front of her, fixed to the opposite wall, was ringing, its green light flashing urgently on and off to show the incoming call.

While trying to maintain her balance and avoid falling into the water, Amy reached out towards the device in a desperate effort to reach it before whoever was on the other end of the line hung up. Below her, the rising water was made potentially deadly by the approach of several large green snakes that had escaped from the nearby glass case. Escaped as in released, by the same person that had complicated her own escape by fastening one of her wrists to the pipework with a pair of handcuffs before escaping themselves with the keys in their pocket. Those pipes now hissed with the water pressure flowing through them and out into the room she was trapped inside. Nearby, a gauge on the wall showed that a self-destruct had been set somewhere in the building.

So, if she did not die of asphyxiation underwater or by a bite from one of the Green Mambas advancing upon her through that water, one of the world's deadliest venomous snake species, she would be blown to pieces along with the rest of the house. And it was all through a single, foolish moment. The light on the telephone continued to flash on and off...

Ironically, it had all begun with a flashing red light on the Tardis console.

"Should this red light be flashing" Rory had asked.

"Obviously, moron" scowled Amy; "that's what it was put there for in the first place!"

"Yes..." sighed Rory, "but is this particular light flashing a good or bad thing?"

"No idea, ask the Doctor" shrugged Amy, turning to face the upper landing of the console room and the passage that led into the Ship's interior and bellowing "DOCTOR!! Come down here, Rory is a bit worried about flashing on the Tardis console!"

The Doctor had come running at Amy's call, straightening his bow tie as he bounded into the console room like a tiger chasing prey. An emergency to investigate was the kind of thing that kept him going, and quiet periods in their lives were the antithesis of relaxation for him. Luckily for him, Amy Pond felt the same way. Her husband Rory less so, but he was outvoted. The distress signal directed the Tardis to the planet Earth in the mid-twentieth century, sometime in the 1950s though the controls were a little vague on specifics as usual, somewhere in the Central African tropical zone. Materialising next to a large colonial house, its white plastered façade gleaming in the sun, the Tardis crew had stepped out into the late evening heat and made their way to a large wooden front door upon which the Doctor knocked loudly. There was no answer, upon which Amy stepped forward and knocked more loudly.

"Can I help you?" asked an older gentleman when he opened the door. He was an Englishman as far as Amy could tell, well-spoken and in his retirement years, wearing the traditional white linen suit that was familiar to anyone who visited museums on the subject or watched Agatha Christie adaptations on a regular basis; "my staff are all away at the moment, but please come in as my house is yours."

"Thank you," said the Doctor as he led his travelling companions inside; "You're probably wondering what three people are doing in the middle of your jungle without local guides or any trucks, but don't worry about that, we're wondering if you've seen anything unusual recently...?"

"Apart from you, you mean?" smiled the man; "Nothing, I'm sorry. My name is Professor Reynolds"

"I'm the Doctor," said the Doctor; "and this is Mr and Mrs Pond."

"Williams." corrected Rory

"Oh, shut up!" snapped Amy; "We're looking for aliens or their spaceship, because one crashed here somewhere and they're sending a signal for us to come and rescue them. Have you seen any?"

"No," said the professor; "Lots of strange and amazing sights, but no aliens in flying saucers. Are you by any chance friends of Mr Clarke? I'm an admirer of his work..."

"Okay," said Amy; "If you haven't seen any aliens, question two: are you actually the alien?"

"No..." chuckled the man awkwardly; "No, I don't think so..."

"I'm really, really sorry," said Rory; "Amy, what's the matter with you? You can see he's not alien!"

"Yeah, and we can see the Doctor isn't an alien either..." began Amy.

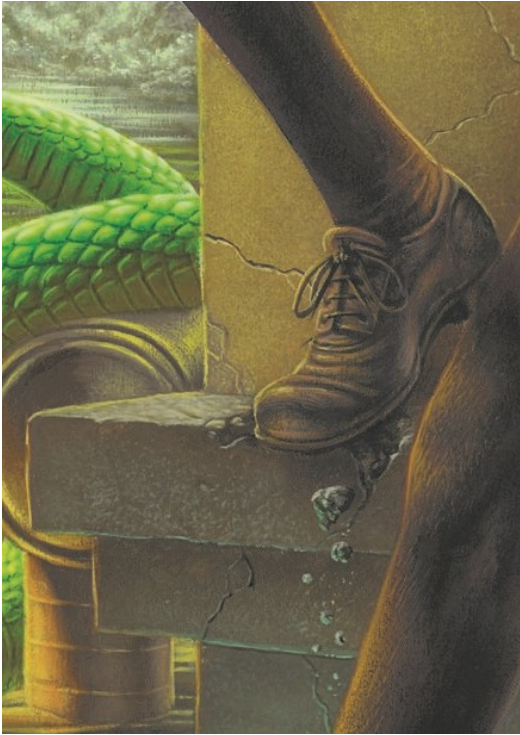
"I don't think..." the Doctor interrupted, "that Professor Reynolds wants to hear about us, he looks like a very busy man. May we trouble you for somewhere to sleep the night though? Have you got any spare rooms we can use, as our transport is a bit uncomfortable to spend the night in!"

"What do you..." began Rory, confused, before Amy kicked him.

"Of course!" said Reynolds; "The spare rooms are already made up. Come this way..."

The Doctor's interest in staying at the house instead of returning to the Tardis had made Amy think that he too might have suspicions about the Professor and that her question might therefore not have been too far off the mark. The guest rooms were indeed made up and ready for use, which in itself was somewhat singular in a house without staff. The large house was very modern, with telephones in all the rooms, and there were indications that it served, or at least had in the past, a function as some sort of research facility. Maybe there were mineral deposits or some other natural resource nearby that had required a base of operations for people working in the area. Now, however, the house did seem very quiet with only the old man to occupy it while he pursued his own studies.





Dinner had been a lively affair, with Rory helping out by preparing it while the Doctor and Amy had chatted with the old man in the hope of finding out more about the house and its singular occupant. But although very good humoured and full of anecdotes about his friends, Professor Reynolds remained frustratingly vague about what he was doing alone in hundreds of miles of rainforest at this particular moment. So it was that after the meal had been cleared away and goodnights had been said, that Amy decided to explore the house for herself.

Neither the upstairs nor downstairs levels of the two-storey building yielded anything of interest. The ground floor did indeed contain a couple of rooms apparently converted into laboratories, but most of the equipment looked as though it had not been used for some time. Returning to the hallway, Amy spun round at the sound of approaching footsteps and looked for somewhere to hide. It was at that moment that she noticed a narrow door beneath the stairs for the first time. She felt sure that it must have been closed earlier in the evening for her not to have noted it before, and the style and colour of the door certainly would make

it blend in with the panelling to either side such that it would be impossible to discern that it was a door at all when closed. With no time to contemplate the risks of exploring the dark space beyond, before whoever else was about discovered her investigations, Amy ran across the wide rug that covered the hallway and slipped inside.

Steep steps led down through the darkness, illuminated only by reflected light from the hallway above and a brightly lit room below, to a spacious basement. The space was not a single room but two rooms connected by a short passage with no door. Equipment stacked on the floor caught Amy's attention as she reached the furthest corner from the door. It was so clearly alien in origin that for a moment she failed to look inside the more ordinary looking glass case beside her. It was tall and filled with what looked like tree branches or shrubbery, but a movement from inside made Amy spin round and then recoil with shock and an involuntary moment of terror. The case contained an enormous green snake that was slowly uncoiling itself from a branch and moving its arrow shaped head nearer to the glass as if to inspect the intruder. The shade of its scales was such a light, bright green that Amy was in no doubt, with its size to consider too, that this was a deadly green mamba, one of the world's most dangerous snake species and definitely very annoyed to be trapped in such a confined space. After the moment of shock had passed, Amy actually felt a strong wave of sympathy towards the beautiful creature. It must be awful, she thought, to be confined for so long with so little room for movement despite being able to see so much unreachable space.

When Amy heard a serpent's hiss, she initially thought that it had been made by the one she was at that moment admiring through the glass. Then with a sudden flash of realisation, she realised that the sound had in fact come from behind her. Spinning round, expecting to be confronted by a second mamba, Amy recoiled from the figure that faced her and stumbled back into the alien technology piled into the corner. Standing in front of her was a figure something like a man, and dressed in Professor Reynolds' white linen suit, but which had the green scaled face of a lizard. It spoke, but the only sound that came out of its mouth was a strange kind of chattering noise. Acting through instinct rather than reason, and in a moment that she would regret at leisure, Amy felt behind her for a long metal bar she had noted propped against the wall and, grasping it firmly, swung it through the air at the head of the creature. Not once or twice but three times Amy, feeling cornered but underground and literally in the corner of the basement, attempted to knock out the creature and flee to tell the Doctor of her discovery.

Twice the lizard man stepped out of reach just in time, and once the bar caught him with a glancing blow on the shoulder he fumbled inside his jacket for what his assailant assumed must be a gun. Instead it was a small box that flashed when touched and a pendant on a neck-chain that the creature was reaching for, and instantly it took the form of Reynolds and began to speak in his voice.

“Now, stop this my dear!” appealed the Professor; “Please accept my apologies for not having either my voice translator unit or my perception filter turned on. I wasn’t expecting to see anyone”.

“Well, I wasn’t expecting any lizards in suits either,” retorted Amy; “What *are* you anyway?”
“I am a Foamasi,” said Reynolds, “And no, you would not be able to pronounce my real name.”
“So, are you going to let me out of here?” asked Amy, assuming it to be a rhetorical question as she kept a tight grip on her only weapon; “Now I know what you really are and stuff.”
“My dear, you have no idea what I really am,” replied Reynolds; “And your fear of me does rather say to me that you and your friends are more likely to hinder my departure than assist it...”

With a deep sigh, Reynolds reached into his jacket again. Taken off guard by his not having pulled out a gun on the previous occasion, Amy reacted too late to the small alien energy weapon that fired a beam over her shoulder and knocked the metal bar out of her hands. She hoped that the sound of it clattering to the floor would bring the Doctor or Rory to her aid, and was disappointed when the light alien metal fell almost soundlessly. Reynolds backed away towards the door, beckoning Amy forwards as he retreated. She was unsure if he intended to lock her in or escort her upstairs. As they passed into the first room of the basement nearest to the stairs, Reynolds gestured with his gun for Amy to stand against the wall. Reaching into his jacket for a third time, Reynolds this time pulled out a pair of steel handcuffs and flicked the open arm around Amy’s left wrist before squeezing his hand around it and locking the arm shut with a familiar rapid clicking sound. Raising the chain above their heads he then closed the arm of the other cuff around a metal pipe high on the wall. Reynolds left the cellar and closed the door, Amy’s fierce but futile stare following his exit. She experimentally tugged at the cuffs but both were locked securely, the pipe they were attached to equally securely fixed to the wall. Attempts to struggle against either the pipe or the cuffs with her free hand were also futile, and even the telephone on the opposite wall seemed to be disconnected in a conspiracy to thwart her escape. The dawn was rising and casting its glow through a hitherto unseen window above the glass case when the door to the basement opened. Amy’s hopes rose at the thought that it was the Doctor or Rory come to rescue her, but fell with a sickening feeling when she realised it was the lizard creature. Its translator was turned on but not the perception filter, leaving Amy conversing with a talking lizard.



“I have decided what I am going to do,” said the lizard, formerly Professor Reynolds; “You have seen too much, apologies for the cliché, and I’m going to have to leave you here. To make sure that nobody else finds out that I was here, other Foamasi that is rather than humans, I’m also going to destroy the house. Please don’t take it personally. But I’ll try and make your last moments exciting ones, to save you the tedious despair of waiting for the explosion...”

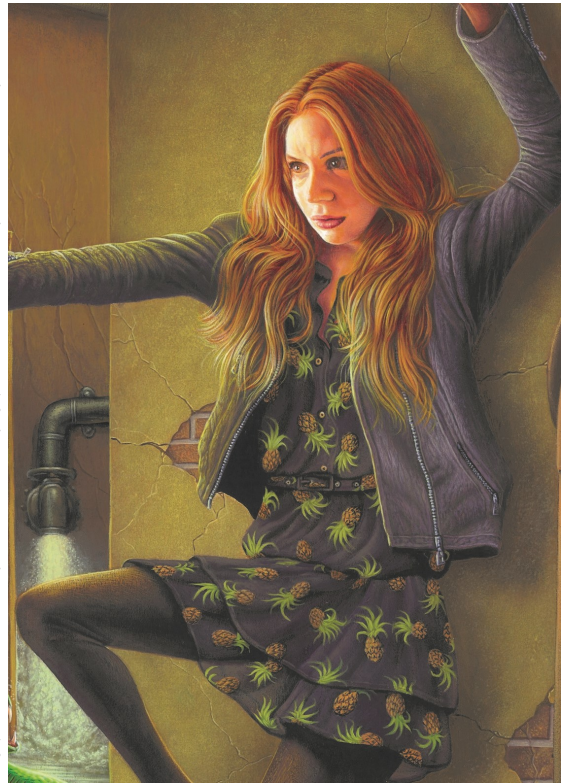
“Excuse me!” called Amy, watching as the lizard man opened a valve on a water pipe that should have connected to another but now simply emptied its water onto the floor; “Are you actually insane?”

“Yes”, said the lizard man; “It is the Foamasi psychiatric service that I do not wish to find me...”

“Oh...” said Amy, deflated; “At least we got that straightened out”

“So sorry,” said the Foamasi, taking out its gun and firing.

Amy closed her eyes, thinking that the creature had changed its mind and decided to shoot her. There was a loud shattering sound followed by the slam of the door shutting. She opened her eyes to find the lizard man gone and not one but several of the giant snakes slithering out onto the floor, alarmed by the energy release that had freed them but wasting no time in fleeing their incarceration. Climbing onto a narrow stone ledge above the slowly rising water and the snakes, Amy realised that it would not be long until one or both reached her. The window above the glass was also above her head, even standing on the ledge, and, with the handcuffs inhibiting her ability to swim, the water level would close over her head and drown her before it flowed outside. The snakes would probably have bitten her fatally before that anyway, since they could not possibly miss coming into contact with her in the small space and were known for their aggression to humans. To the side of her a dial was creeping up into the red, presumably connected to whatever was going to destroy the house. As she slipped off the ledge the phone began to ring and she reached out for the receiver. It was just beyond her grasp so, climbing fully onto the ledge once more, she leaned across and picked up the telephone.



“Rory!” she said into the telephone, relieved; “No... no.... NO!!! Just shut up and come down to the cellar, and bring the Doctor, and tell him to bring the sonic screwdriver! And no, I never expected to ever say that either! Of course there’s a cellar you imbecile, otherwise I wouldn’t be asking you to get me out of it! And the Professor is an alien, called a foamy something! What do you mean you know all about it and he’s escaped in a space ship? Just get down here or we’ll all be blown into space after him!”

Slamming down the receiver, Amy stood on the ledge and watched the snakes swim around her and coil around the pipes with anxiety until, with some effort against the weight of water behind it, the Doctor forced open the door and cried out as the water flowed around his legs. He pointed the sonic screwdriver at Amy’s handcuffs and watched them spring apart, his companion leaping into the water and wading towards him. They ran up the stairs, leaving the door open for the snakes to escape the ensuing destruction of the house if they could.

Back in the Tardis, Rory passed the Doctor and Amy towels as they watched events climax on two small screens. On one, a tiny flashing dot marked the progress of the Foamasi ship as it left the Solar system behind and continued on its way. On the other, the jungle was shaken by a blinding explosion that signalled the end of the house and the adventure of the lizard man and his basement of snakes.

END



CHILDREN OF THE REVOLUTION

A Heartfelt Retrospective - Forty Years On

It's not stupid and, thank goodness, it's still going: A retrospective look at Blake's 7 and why I still watch, write and obsess about it

Says ANNIE WORRALL

So here I am, in my seventies, an ex-teacher and a grandmother, revealing my passion for a budget sci fi show that's nearly forty years old and which I find even more relevant to my life today than I did when I first started watching it as (relatively) slip of a girl.

To get you to understand why I rate this show so highly (although to be frank I have so many different reasons for this that to do them all justice would involve me writing a book or ten) I need to give you a brief window into the events that formed my political sensibilities.

I was a student during the sixties - a decade when social change seemed not only possible but mandatory. Health care was good, housing affordable, a University education no longer the prerogative of the rich. Freed from the stricture to be seen but not heard, we youngsters voiced our opinions loudly and expected our views to be heeded.

For working class families like mine the sixties was a decade of revolution; a revolution which was bloodless and which ensured me a good education, a comfortable standard of living and access to privileges and experiences my mother and grandmother could only dream of. I was convinced it would result in an honest, more peaceful society where everyone would be equally valued and spades could be called spades, if not bloody shovels.

Some of you may be spotting a flaw or two in my reasoning here.

Yep. By the end of seventies my beliefs had been exposed as somewhat naive. Things changed alright, but not always for the better. Free speech was not so welcome, nor had the opportunities we had been given turned Britain into the utopia I had envisaged. While most of us now had convenience machines, holidays in Benidorm and orange accessories, frequent economic crises warned that this plenty wasn't guaranteed for working people and might be taken away at any time. And we were more likely to grab what we could for ourselves in the interim than share it with the less fortunate.

Enter **Blake's 7**, a space opera set in the future and chronicling the adventures of a group of largely reluctant rebels opposing the fascist Federation governing Earth and its colonised planets. Everything about it chimed perfectly with the cynicism, fears and disappointment that I was feeling. The show's depiction of an Earth population confined within concrete and glass domes while its ruling class indulged in decadent consumption, confirmed how right I was to worry about a nuclear holocaust or global environmental disaster.

The Federation's brutal suppression of rebellion faintly echoed the violent clashes between police and protesters during the miners' strikes and Blake's appalling mind-wipe seemed a natural progression from the lobotomies and electro-convulsive therapy still being used by the psychiatric services to "cure" madness at the time the show aired. Further, *Blake's 7* defied convention and made its Supreme Commander and principal villain a female and I was not alone in finding similarities between her attitudes and those of Britain's newly elected, first female Prime Minister, though Servalan was the far more glamorous of the two.



The principle villain – and Servalan

The world *Blake's 7* depicted was a world I both recognised and, like its eponymous hero, wanted to change.

I fell in love with the show instantly. Foreign travel and the moon landings had whetted my appetite to discover what was out there and I devoured every science fiction series that came along but *Blake's 7* was my favourite. Whereas the *Star Trek* crew were perfect specimens of humanity, coiffured and polished to within an inch of their glamorous physiques, Blake's lot had bad hair days, gaps in their teeth, fleshy jaws and pudgy waistlines (well the men anyway) and so were much easier to identify with.



Flawed, yet perfect... The original crew line up

Star Trek encountered glossy, alien worlds and suggested that, by and large, human-kind had found ways to solve the problems of 20th Century Earth through technology and benign controls, creating an almost utopian society in the process. *Blake's 7* told us that the future would see humans regress back to ape-like creatures and landed its heroes on grungy, often third-world planets where technology sometimes solved their problems but often caused them, its reliable unreliability justifying my own Luddite leanings. Even the crew's mistakes and the feeling that they were barely muddling through, made their struggle real to me. I could never relax with *Blake's 7* as I could with *Star Trek*, where, however nail biting the danger, I knew my heroes would always escape intact. *Blake's 7* was a show that avoided such narrative familiarity and after Gan's demise, death or modification was an ever-present possibility for my heroes.



Blake and Avon: Alike, yet poles apart

Yet it wasn't all hopeless. Blake and then Avon had just enough successes to suggest that they might one day fumble their way to ushering in the kind of fairer society I had dreamed of in my student days, or at least defeat Servalan and win safety for themselves.

Avon. Ah, Avon. I have to be honest and admit I may not have been quite so keen on the show if it hadn't been for the presence of that cynical, brilliant computer expert with a great line in put downs and an uncanny ability to save the day. Not bad eye candy either! Blake embodied for me all that naive optimism I had felt in the sixties which had failed me and, strangely for someone who had chosen to work in the Social Services to help the poor and downtrodden, I had little time for him.



Avon Calling...

It was Avon and his determination to point out in acid detail the fallibility of human nature whom I revered. Perhaps he made me feel better about my many failures to change the world of my clients- *you can't win, Annie, you know you can't win.* More probably I kidded myself that his cynicism masked a need to believe in something much as my own did and that although he professed to be motivated by self-interest, underneath it all he really he cared. His pragmatism and competence seemed to me to offer the best chance to defeat the forces of evil; I was confident that when (not if) he found Blake again, he'd team up with him and together they'd usher in a new and much kinder era.

Those of you who have experienced the dramatic ending to the series may now be spotting further flaws in my thinking!

Forty years on and I still love the show although for different reasons. Avon no longer seems to me so easily defended (although I still fancy the pants off him) and Blake's valiant, hopeless fight against oppression is one I have come to admire. I recognise now that Avon's statement, "Wealth is the only reality and the only way to get it is to take it away from somebody else," summed up the philosophy of the Seventies perfectly: a philosophy that led on inevitably to a decline in the

opportunities for free education, free health care and a voice that would be heard; things that women of my age from poorer working families had enjoyed during our formative years. Blake, a broken, largely lone figure of protest, is now my hero - naive, not always very effective, but important because he believed in something and was prepared to fight and die for it. I still have qualms about his manipulation of his crew mates, the emotional blackmail he sometimes employed to get them on board but then he was leading a bunch of criminals and he was prepared to run the gauntlet of danger with them in pursuit of his ideals. Avon, in contrast, simply lied to or frightened his crew into doing his bidding, risking his life only if it was unavoidable, and was always motivated by what was best for Avon.

And that contrast in styles sums up for me part of the show's enduring fascination. It presents a stark choice, Blake's or Avon's way and then demonstrates that both can lead to failure in a muddled world. It eschews easy solutions and sends me back to the episodes again and again to evaluate the arguments made by the principal players in support of their choices. Is, "wealth the only reality?" How important is trust? Are all soldiers, "instrument(s) of the service" and their actions the responsibility of those that trained them? Was Servalan right when she claimed that, "where there's life there's threat" and if so how far should we be prepared to go to protect ourselves? If "all life is linked" what implications does this have for domestic and foreign policy?



Crew Mark 2 – led by Avon

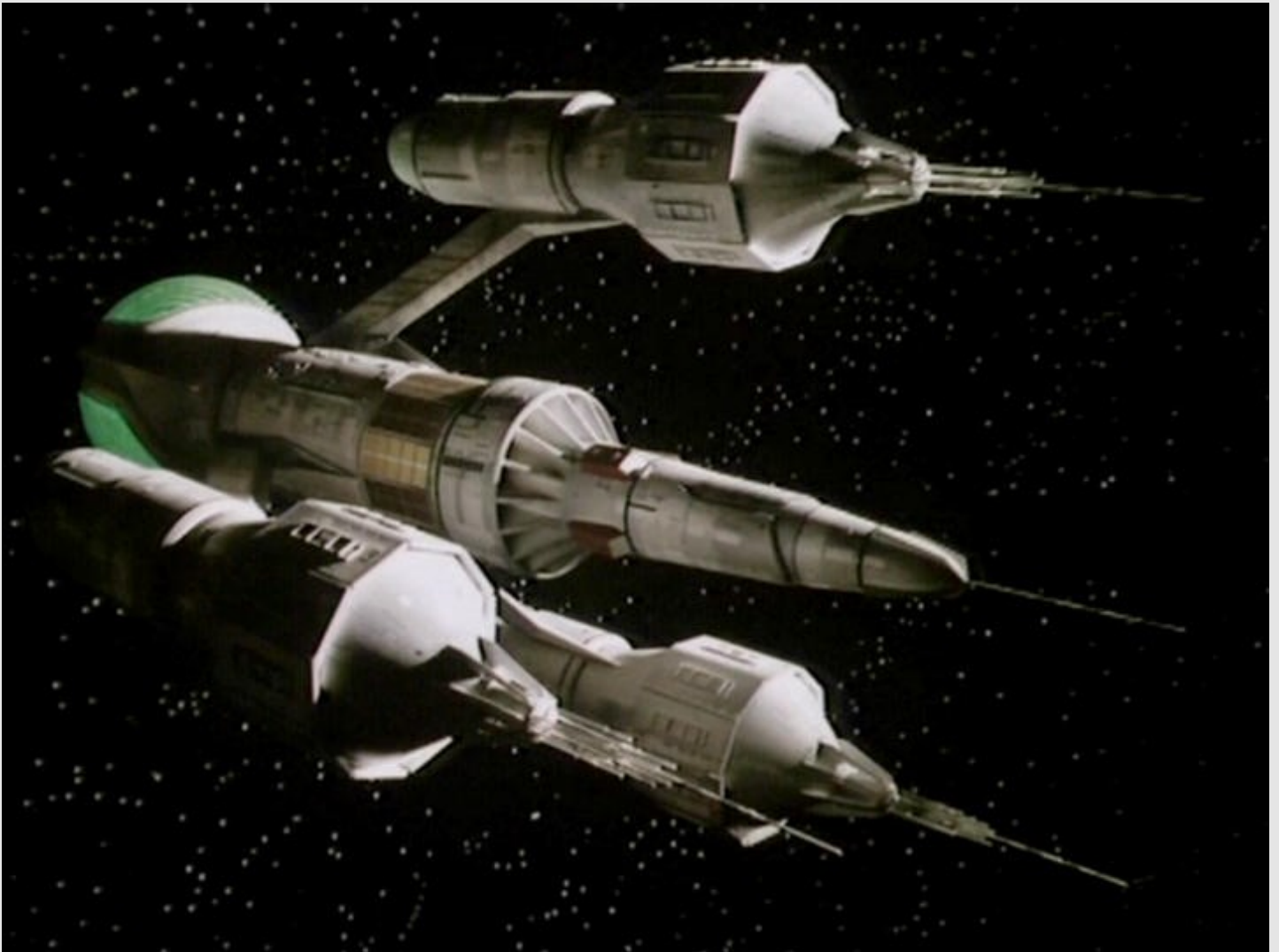


The brutal Federation Troopers

Blake's 7, with all its faults, is a perfect mirror of my times and the dilemmas those times have posed. The issues it raises, both in the stories themselves and the ways in which the female characters are used and viewed, seem to me as relevant today as they were when the show first aired. The grotesques the crew encounter find their counterparts in today's Trumps, Jong-uns, and Weinsteins. Even the strange magic the seven experience is a reminder that we actually know very little about the laws governing our Universe or the impact of our actions on it.

Most of all, we learn from the series that the passage of time does not guarantee a world in which the honest man is free to act and speak and that if we want such a world, we'd better start fighting for it now or face the consequences of our inaction.

It's a message which still inspires this old Granny.



The Liberator – Blake's ship and a symbol of hope in the fight against tyranny

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FAMILY LANNISTER: HEAR ME ROAR!

BY BRAD BLACK

*If you are reading this essay, I presume you are familiar with the major events of the books and television series, 'A Song of Ice and Fire,' better known as **GAME OF THRONES**. I will therefore not waste time with a detailed explanation of said events when referencing them. And, obviously, this essay contains spoilers for anyone who has not seen season seven of the television series.*

George R. R. Martin has stated that one of the inspirations for his epic series is the period of English history known as the War of the Roses, in which the House of Lancaster battled the House of York for the English throne. From this, it is easy to conclude that the fictional House of Lannister may be inspired by the historical House of Lancaster.

With that in mind, Tywin Lannister becomes something akin to the real life historical figure John of Gaunt, the patriarch of the House of Lancaster who can count three English kings as his direct descendants. The Lancaster Coat of Arms even features a golden lion, the sigil of House Lannister. This much is obvious and requires little or no debate or explanation.

Fitting in the rest of the Lannisters into this scenario is a little trickier. It has been suggested that Cersei is inspired by Margaret of Anjou, Henry VI's warrior queen, and while Cersei is as ruthless as Margaret was, we have yet to see Cersei command soldiers in battle. The history of the War of the Roses is so filled with heroes, villains, and opportunists that endless analogies can be drawn, but to me, comparisons between Lannisters and Lancasters (other than the name and social status) seem marginal. I would therefore offer that while the House of Lannister may bear certain resemblances to the historical House of Lancaster, the Lannisters themselves bear a stronger resemblance to the Borgias of sixteenth century Italy.

There is Tywin, the patriarch who raised his family to preeminence, and while he could not aspire to be king, wielded great power through his wealth and appointed position, just as Alexander Borgia did. There is Jamie Lannister, the warrior son, who fills the role of Cesare Borgia, and Cersei Lannister, who bears a resemblance to literary (if not historically accurate) depictions of Lucrezia. The Borgia's enemies even circulated rumors that

Cesare and Lucrezia were incestuous. Sound familiar?

Certainly the intrigue, betrayals, and scheming so prevalent among the Lannisters would make them feel right at home either in medieval England or renaissance Italy.

The official words of House Lannister are, "Hear Me Roar," words that conjure an image the family wishes the rest of the world to see, an image of power and majesty. Yet better known is the unofficial motto of House Lannister, "The Lannisters Always Pay Their Debts." This is both a promise to their allies and a warning to their adversaries. Any favor done to the family will be remembered and repaid; any slight to the family will be avenged. This unofficial motto, "A Lannister Always Pays his Debts," is symbolic of both the image the family wishes to portray; wealth, power, reliability, and the darker side of the family; vengeance, ego, and self-love.

To the Lannisters, family is everything, although the definition of 'family' varies from Lannister to Lannister. Cersei tells Joffrey, "Everyone who isn't us, is an enemy." To Cersei, 'us,' and 'family,' means Cersei. Her two redeeming qualities, according to her brother Tyrion, are her love of her children, and her cheekbones. For someone as self-centered as Cersei, her love of her children can be seen as a narcissistic extension of her love of herself, as can her love for Jamie, her twin and genetic duplicate.

To Jamie, family means his sister/lover Cersei, their children, brother Tyrion, and to a lesser extent, father Tywin. To Tyrion, family means the people he cares most about. Jamie and Tyrion therefore have compatible views on the meaning of family.

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HBO*

To patriarch Tywin, ‘family’ is the family name, the family status; wealth, position, power. From his first on screen appearance in the series, Tywin talks about ‘family.’ “It’s the family name that lives on, it’s all that lives on, not your personal glory, not your honor, but family,”

Tywin, therefore, has a problem. Jamie, his true heir, eldest son, and anointed knight, is a member of the King’s Guard, and therefore forbidden from inheriting titles or marrying and producing a legitimate heir. Cersei’s children are royalty, but they do not bear the Lannister name. That leaves Tyrion, the son Tywin despises for his physical deformities and publicly lax morals. Tyrion is described in the books as having mismatched eyes, a common literary device indicating mixed heritage and illegitimacy. Tywin’s wife, Joanna Lannister, was a lady in waiting to Queen Raella, the wife of Aerys Targaryen, the Mad King. Aerys was rumored to have affairs with this wife’s ladies in waiting. This suspicion, along with Tyrion’s lifestyle and deformities, seems to be in the back of Tywin’s mind when he declares that Tyrion is, “No son of mine.”

It is therefore easy to see how Tyrion and Tywin could come into conflict, and they do on many occasions. When Cersei’s son King Joffrey was poisoned, Cersei accused Tyrion of the deed. Tywin was no fool, and must have known that Tyrion would never have murdered his nephew, not only for his love of family, but also for his fear of being caught. Tywin nevertheless puts Tyrion on trial, and seems to stack the deck against him. Why?

Tywin has a plan. Tyrion will be found guilty, but will be allowed to ‘Take the Black’, renouncing his family name and joining the Night’s Watch. This leaves Tywin without an heir, which with a royal decree will allow Jamie to leave the King’s Guard and take up his birthright as the Lannister heir. That royal decree will come from the next king, Tommen, who like Joffrey is Tywin’s grandson, but unlike Joffrey will be easily controlled by Tywin. Therefore all of Tywin’s familial problems are solved in one stroke: Tyrion is exiled, Jamie becomes heir to the family name, and Tywin will be the true power behind the throne. It is a wholly pragmatic solution devoid of the emotion of love, a cold, heartless stroke of genius, and therefore pure Lannister.

When we first meet Tywin, the patriarch of

House Lannister, he is entering old age with fully grown children of his own and three grandchildren. It is therefore unsurprising that he shows little character development as the series progresses, as he has spent a lifetime becoming the man he is. Yet his history, presented in the books via flashbacks, offers insight into what it means to be a Lannister.

Tywin’s father was Tytos Lannister, also known as the Laughing Lion for his jovial and easy going demeanor. Tytos was more concerned with popularity than respect. As a result, many took advantage of his forgiving and trusting nature, borrowing Lannister gold and never paying it back. There were even jokes at court about the Toothless Lion, and many made a game of ‘twisting the lion’s tail.’ House Lannister waned in power under the weak leadership of Tytos, while other houses, most notably House Reyne, grew in power at the expense of House Lannister.

Needless to say, this did not sit well with young Tywin, and when he came of age, he called in the debts. When House Reyne chose rebellion over repayment, Tywin used the Lannister army to ensure that all debts were paid in full, leaving not a single Reyne alive. In killing every Reyne man, woman, and child, Tywin’s vengeance may have been excessive, but should any Westerland Lord get ideas above his station, Tywin does not need an army to remind his banner men of their proper place, he need only send a minstrel who can sing the Rains of Castamere. Tywin is ruthless, but effective. He does not revel in vengeance or bloodshed for its own sake, but as a means to an end, and that end is always to increase the power and prestige of House Lannister. As he states, “Explain to me why it is more noble to kill ten thousand men in battle than a dozen at dinner.”



Tywin—patriarch and schemer

Tywin is steadfast, stubborn, and his opinions seem set in stone. He alters his outlook only once, temporarily softening his dislike and distrust of Tyrion after Rob Stark launches an ambush and captures an overconfident Jamie, something Tyrion had warned of.

Tywin goes so far as to give Tyrion real power and position for the first time, sending him to King's Landing as acting hand while Tywin pursues the war. He explains his sudden confidence in Tyrion's abilities with the simple phrase, "You are my son."

Coming from Tywin, this is high praise, and something of a bombshell. This sudden turn can be explained in one of two ways: It could represent a newfound respect for Tyrion's natural abilities as a strategist - or - on a darker note, it could be a sign that Tywin has given up on ever seeing Jamie alive again. For a brief time, Tywin is resigned to the fact that he is stuck with Tyrion as his heir. The television series opted for the former outlook, the books for the latter.

Tyrion does a good job as acting Hand, rallying allies and dispatching enemies with guile, cunning, and subtlety. At the same time he is less subtle with his fondness for drink and his desire for Shae (who in Tywin's eyes is a common whore, someone no Lannister should be seen in public with). In other words, while Tyrion was an effective Hand, and saved the city from invasion, he didn't 'act like a Lannister' while doing it. Therefore Tywin's new found respect (if that's what it was) is short lived, and when Jamie returns, Tyrion's fall from grace in his father's eyes is assured.

Tywin may appear as a stern pillar of strength and virtue, yet he is a Lannister, and that means that beneath his mantle of pride, strength, and honor, we find human frailties. Lord Baelish had previously commented on a former Hand of the King who had a secret tunnel built between the Tower of the Hand and Lord Baelish's establishment. It seems likely this Hand was none other than Tywin, who enjoyed his time with the prostitutes, but would not be seen entering or leaving the establishment. In this, Tywin was a perfect Lannister, honorable and steadfast on the outside, corrupt and given to human failings on the inside. Proof comes when despite Tywin's condemnation of Shae as a common whore, we find her in Tywin's bed.



Cersei – would-be Queen?

If Tywin displays little character development over the course of the series, Cersei's character development seems to be retrograde. According to Tyrion, her 'redeeming virtue' was her love of her children, but as the series progresses, it becomes clear that the only thing Cersei truly loves is herself. She weeps for Joffrey on his death, a monster of a child, and the tool through which she would have ruled the kingdom. She shows genuine grief for her daughter Myrcella when she is poisoned by Ellaria Sand, but she hardly bats an eye when her last living child takes his own life. Compare her reaction to Joffrey's death to her lack of reaction to Tommen's death. Joffrey was a monster, but he was a monster through which she would rule. Tommen was a sweet, humble, caring child, but Cersei held no influence over him. She could not rule through him, his death paved the way for her to seize the crown directly, and therefore his death held little grief for her.

In destroying the Sept and countless innocent lives for the sake of revenge, and in taking the throne for herself, Cersei has crossed the Rubicon of redemption. Varys once said of Lord Baelish, "He would see this country burn if he could be king of the ashes." Lord Baelish never came close to fulfilling that prophecy, but Cersei has.

Moving on, what would be your initial reaction if I told you there was a knight who saved hundreds of thousands from being burned alive, who was one of the best swordsmen on the continent, who was stunningly handsome, incredibly popular with the ladies, and yet had been loyal to his one true love his entire life?

Now what would be your reaction if I told you that his one true love was his twin sister? This is the paradox that is Jamie Lannister, a man of honor who sleeps with his queen, who just happens to be his sister, and attempts to murder Bran Stark, the child who uncovered his crime.

This is why Jamie is the ultimate Lannister. He is the noblest of the noble; brave, heroic, honorable, the defender of the weak and the crown's foremost champion of justice. At the same time he gives in to his inner demons and base desires. How do you reconcile the man who leapt one handed and unarmed into a bear pit to defend a fellow knight, with the man who murdered a young boy who had not only squired for him, but was a cousin, a Lannister on his mother's side, just to create a diversion for his own escape from Rob Stark's prison?

This is why Jamie Lannister is one of the most popular characters in Game of Thrones. As a knight he is so much more than any of us could ever be, yet as a man he yields to temptations that any of us could resist. He is so far above us, and so far beneath us, at the same time.

"The things I do for love." These are Jamie Lannister's words as he pushes Bran Stark from a high tower window. The boy's only fault was catching Ser Jamie in an act of treason, having sex with the queen, who just happens to be his twin sister, hardly an auspicious introduction for an honorable knight. And yet, later in the first book (first season), Ser Jamie refuses to kill a helpless Ned Stark because, "It wouldn't be clean," an act of chivalry for which father Tywin Lannister would berate him.

This is the dichotomy, the contradiction, that is Ser Jamie Lannister, an honorable knight who does dishonorable things in the name of Love and Family. Some would argue that he merely follows his personal code of honor. I think not.

To quote Jamie Lannister, "So many vows...defend the king, obey the king, obey your father, protect the innocent, defend the weak. What if your father despises the king, what if the king massacres the innocent? It's too much."

Ser Jamie killed the Mad King, whom he was sworn to obey and protect, because the Mad King was ordering the death of every man, woman, and child in King's Landing. Unable to follow the knight's code of obedience and live with himself, does Jamie Lannister live by his own code, or by no code at all?

Allow me to suggest that Jamie simply tries to do what he thinks is right, making decisions with all the virtues of a story book knight, *and* all the vices of a Lannister. It makes for a compelling character

that is at times the best of mankind, and at times the worst of mankind.

His capture, the loss of his hand, and his odd relationship with Brienne of Tarth have put him on the road to redemption. Whether he achieves redemption is yet to be seen. Since his return to King's Landing he has lost much of his arrogance, broken with this father, questioned his own path, and now finally, at the end of season seven, seen Cersei for what she is. Jamie has come far as a character, but to call him transformed is premature. He cannot be redeemed if he returns to Cersei, for she is irredeemable.

Will he remain loyal to her? He stood by his sister when she berated him for the 'betrayal' of being captured.

Cersei: "You come back after all this time with no apologies and one hand and expect everything to be the same."

Jamie: "What do I have to apologize for? You think I wanted to be taken prisoner, I murdered people so I could be here with you."

Cersei: "You took too long."

He stayed loyal to her even after this, and so it went for him, balancing love of family against his own ideal of personal honor, until there was no family left but Cersei, and no honor left at all. Forced to choose between Cersei and every living thing in Westeros, he finally leaves Cersei. This break with his sister/lover echoes his break with the Mad King. His road to redemption is now a road to the ultimate war between the living and the dead. Should he survive the war, he may yet find redemption, though I doubt redemption is on his mind, he is simply trying to do the right thing, and for once, he is doing the right thing without thinking like a Lannister. Perhaps he will turn out to be the ultimate hero of the saga, perhaps not.



Jamie and Cersei—a test of loyalty



Tyrion – despised scapegoat

What can I write about Tyrion that has not been written in countless blogs, articles, books, and magazines before? For he is clearly the most popular character in Game of Thrones. Instead of dissecting his history, a task beyond this essay, let us ask why he is so popular.

If I argue that to be a Lannister is to be duplicitous, to give the appearance of nobility and honor while indulging your own petty vices, then what do I make of Tyrion? For Tyrion has many vices, women, gambling, drink, and yet unlike his Lannister kin, he does not bother to mask his human failings behind a facade of honor and respectability.

In this, he is following the advice he once gave Jon Snow. "Let me give you some advice bastard. Never forget what you are. The rest of the world will not. Wear it like armor, and it can never be used to hurt you... All dwarves are bastards in their father's eyes."

In a story of larger than life heroes and villains, Tyrion is a smaller than life figure in more ways than one. When we first meet him, he has given up on finding love, contenting himself with rented affection. Rather than plying his obvious wit and cunning to better his station, he drowns his sorrows in wine.

This is not to say he is without his finer points. He is far more clever and observant than most give him credit for. Confessing a fondness for Cripples, Bastards, and Broken Things, Tyrion provides Bran Stark with a special saddle, allowing the crippled boy to ride. Forced into a political marriage with Sansa Stark, he takes no advantage of the young Stark girl.

When given a chance to wield power as acting Hand of the King, he saves King's Landing from an invading army, and yet he gets no credit, no thanks, no accolades. Stripped of power by an ungrateful king and an ungrateful father for his

perceived character flaws, Tyrion suffers humiliation and ridicule. This is nothing new for Tyrion.

His mother died giving birth to him, and his father and his sister blame him for her death. His father has all but disowned him, and he becomes a convenient scapegoat when his nephew King Joffrey is murdered.

Tyrion endures all this, but he has his breaking point, and her name is Shae. He took her as his lover against the wishes of his father. As Tyrion rose to prominence, he had to keep Shae hidden in order to keep her safe from Tywin's wrath. Shae did not appreciate being kept a secret, and developed a strong jealousy for the relationship between Sansa and Tyrion, even though said relationship was purely platonic. She gained her revenge for these imagined slights by testifying against Tyrion at his trial, and by leaving Tyrion's bed for Tywin's. This was a devastating betrayal for Tyrion to endure, but worse was yet to come, at least in the books.

In both the books and the series, Tyrion tells the story of Tysha, his first wife and one true love. Tyrion and Jamie rescued her from bandits. While Jamie hunted down the bandits, Tyrion comforted Tysha, and fell in love with her. They were married in secret and lived happily as man and wife for a while. Eventually Jamie confessed that the bandits were a sham, and that Tysha was a whore. The entire episode was an act instigated by Jamie to buy his brother some brief happiness. The revelation broke Tyrion's heart. He never pursued love again, until he met Shae.

In prison, betrayed by Shae and waiting execution for a crime he did not commit, Tyrion is freed by his brother Jamie Lannister. Here the television series sadly diverges from the books. In the books, Jamie admits that his confession regarding Tysha was a lie. Tywin had discovered the secret marriage. Furious, the Lannister patriarch forced Jamie to lie, claiming that Tysha was a prostitute. She was not, she was a wheelwright's daughter after all, and truly in love with Tyrion.

In the books, this is what prompts Tyrion to delay his escape and search for his father, a motivation noticeably missing from the television series. Tyrion finds Shae in Tywin's bed, and in a fit of rage, murders her. He then confronts Tywin, and when Tywin refuses to tell Tyrion what happened to Tysha, when Tywin repeatedly calls Tysha a whore, Tyrion murders his father.

This series of events breaks Tyrion. He throws himself into the bottle. It could be said that the Tyrion we had known dies. But in time, a new Tyrion arises from the wine. Once he is free of King's Landing and his Lannister kin, he becomes a major player on the political stage, rising to become the Hand of Queen Denaerys. Tyrion seems to have undergone a transformation, and like another popular Game of Thrones character, killed the boy to let the man be born.

His wit, though still sharp, is more subtle and subdued. He is still fond of wine, but no longer lets it interfere with duty. He confesses that his transformation is due to Daenaerys, that in her, he has found someone to believe in. This is true, but having finally gained freedom from the Lannisters, it must also be true that Tyrion has found someone else to believe in, that finally, and for the first time in his life, Tyrion believes in Tyrion.



Maggy The Frog: Prophetic vision

Over the course of the series, Tywin, Joffrey, Tommen, and Mycella Lannister have all been killed. Cersei has placed herself on the throne, and broken her ties with Jamie, who leaves her in King's Landing to fulfill his destiny fighting the army of the dead.

What then is the future of House Lannister? Does it have one, or like so many other great houses, Baratheon, Tyrell, Bolton, Frey, and others, is House Lannister doomed to extinction? What will happen to the surviving Lannisters, Jamie, Cersei, and Tyrion?

Prophecy plays an important role in foreshadowing events in *A Song of Ice and Fire*. What then, does prophecy say about House Lannister?

Cersei: *Will the king and I have children?*

Maggy: *Oh, aye. Six-and-ten for him, and three for you. Gold shall be their crowns and gold their shrouds, and when your tears have drowned you, the Volonqar shall wrap his hands about your pale white throat and choke the life from you.*

This is the prophecy of the seer known as Maggy the Frog, given to a young Cersei Lannister when she sought out the witch. It is worth noting that so far, the prophecy has proven accurate. Robert Baratheon fathered sixteen bastards, Cersei bore three children, though none of them by her husband. All three children have preceded Cersei in death.

The prophecy concludes by declaring that the Volonqar shall murder Cersei. Volonqar is High Valyrian for 'little brother.' This prophecy may be the reason Cersei hates Tyrion with such a passion, as she believes that Tyrion is the 'little brother' in the prophecy.

Assuming this prophecy comes true, and a little brother kills Cersei, Tyrion is a leading candidate, but far from the only candidate. Jamie is also Cersei's little brother by a few minutes, and has recently fallen out with his sister. Nor does the prophecy state that the little brother will be a Lannister. This widens the field, for Euron Greyjoy is a little brother, as is John Snow, the little step brother to Rhaegar Targaryen's children by Elia Martell, and finally, Theon Greyjoy is Yara's little brother, and on his way to King's Landing at the end of season seven.

The clever reader will note that the only word in the prophecy spoken in Valyrian, is *Volonqar*, 'little brother,' and come to the conclusion that John Snow is the one who will kill Cersei, as John Snow is the only 'little brother' of Valyrian blood.

Or is he? Tywin declared on more than one occasion that Tyrion is "No son of mine!"

Recall that Lady Joanna Lannister, Tywin's wife, was a lady in waiting to Queen Raella. Recall that Aerys the Mad King was known to take his queen's ladies in waiting as lovers, either willingly or unwillingly. This means that Aerys could be the father of one or more of the Lannister children. The obvious choice is Tyrion. In the books he has mismatched eyes (as previously mentioned, a common literary device for foreshadowing illegitimacy), and a lifelong fascination with dragons, perhaps foreshadowing a Targaryen blood line. While compelling, it all seems a little obvious and conventional, and George R. R. Martin

is neither obvious nor conventional. His prophecies invariably come true, but rarely in the way you expect. Would it be the ultimate irony if Tyrion were in fact Tywin's child, but Jamie and Cersei were not, making Jamie a true Targaryen Volonqar?

Or are there other Targaryens out there? Or is Volonqar rendered in Valyrian only to throw the clever reader off the scent? Or does 'Choke the life from you,' refer to a miscarriage? Could the unborn baby, a 'little brother' to Joffrey, Tommen, and Lycella, kill Cesei in child birth the same way her mother was killed by Tyrion's birth?

Any of these seem possible given the unconventional nature of the story, and there are doubtless many possibilities that we have not considered. After all, we are seven seasons in to A Song of Ice and Fire, and we are still not sure who the main character is. This is the source of our fascination with Game of Thrones, its unconventionality, its unpredictability.

I look forward to watching the conclusion and finding out how wrong I am.

Tyrion Lannister

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THE HUMAN FACTOR

A Review of HUMANS Season 1

by Nick Mays



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AMC

"I'm sorry, Laura – I don't understand the question."

SPOILER ALERT!

The sci-fi staple of robots and artificial intelligence has a long history, stretching back to the 1920s with Karel Čapek's play *R.U.R. (Rossum's Universal Robots)*. (In fact, it was Čapek who first coined the term 'robot' to signify a humanoid machine). Later, Isaac Asimov's *I, Robot* codified the three laws of robotics which have been adopted throughout the genre as the primary programming of all robots. Since then, robots, cyborgs and androids have become familiar figures throughout all science fiction in its many forms, not least that of cinema and television.

The latest 'take' on the whole robotic theme has arrived on Channel 4 and AMC in the form of *Humans*, wittily styled as **HUMANS** to emphasise the inversion of humanity by the presence of a Synthetic android labour force. *Humans* is based on the original 2012 Swedish series **Real Humans** which sadly has not yet been made available here in the UK.

As in the original version, the premise is simple. The origins of the 'synths' is explained in a fascinating title sequence which is a combination of genuine (and sometimes quite disturbing) footage of AI development interspersed with a fictional history which shows how, at the end of the 20th Century, brilliant scientist David Elster managed to create synthetic humans with artificial intelligence. So now we find ourselves in the United Kingdom in an alternate present day, to which the viewer can easily

relate – no need for flying cars or teleports. Synths are a familiar part of everyday life and, arguably, their presence has slowed down the thirst for technological progress rather than enhanced it. Basically, synths carry out a whole range of tasks, as everything from household servants to factory workers and from health carers to sex workers. However, the creation of synths as a cheap, uncomplaining and un-unionised labour force has led to massive unemployment and deep resentment among many human workers. This is a world of anti-Synth protest marches and riots, as well 'Smash Clubs' where humans beat and break synths with a variety of weapons.

The story starts rooted in domesticity with everyman Joe Hawkins (played by Tom Goodman-Hill) acquiring a synth domestic servant called Anita, but without consulting his wife Laura (Katherine Parkinson). However, Anita (Gemma Chan) isn't all she seems and displays some worrying human-like behaviour, despite seemingly having no knowledge of doing so. This arouses the suspicions of the Hawkins' 17-year old daughter Mattie (Lucy Carless), a programming genius who worries that she will never find a job thanks to the proliferation of synths in every walk of life.

Mattie attempts to hack Anita's programming and in doing so discovers that not only is 'Anita' not brand new, her real name is Mia, one of the first few synths developed by David Elster and, crucially, she has self-awareness, although this has been hidden under her 'Anita' personality after she was kidnapped and reprogrammed by illicit synth programmers.

Mia/Anita's story plays out as one of a series of seemingly unconnected narratives. Her 'brothers and sisters' are also self-aware synths created by Elster as a family for his young son Leo. However, following Elster's suicide, Leo, now a man in his twenties (played by *Merlin* alumni Colin Morgan), has gone on the run with his synthetic siblings to escape capture from a shady government organisation headed by AI scientist Edwin Hobb (Danny Webb) who suspect that Elster had created self-aware synths which they perceive as a danger to humanity. Leo himself harbours an unexpected secret – following his death in a car accident his father brought him back to life by replacing damaged body organs with synth components, making Leo effectively a cyborg and even closer to his synth siblings as a result.

Mia and Leo's 'sister' Niska (Emily Berrington) is hiding undercover as a prostitute in a synth brothel, but as time passes, she becomes increasingly distressed at being used in this way. Niska finally blows her top (and her cover) by refusing to submit to the demands of a client whom she then kills before going on the run. Disguising herself as a human being (easily achieved by eschewing Synth uniform and wearing human clothing along with coloured contact lenses to disguise her green synth eyes) Niska finds herself at a Smash Club, horrified at seeing harmless synths attacked by humans armed with a variety of weapons for the amusement of a baying crowd. Niska pretends to take a turn as a contestant and then turns on the club's owners and any other human present, injuring many of them. This brings her to the attention of the police in the form of DS Pete Drummond (Neil Maskell) and DI Karen Voss (Ruth Bradley) of the Special Technologies Taskforce, as well as Hobb and his associates.

DS Drummond has reasons of his own for disliking synths, as his disabled wife (played by Jill Halfpenny) shows increasing reliance on her handsome synth carer David. Frustrated domestically, Drummond maintains a strong friendship with DI Voss, who herself harbours a strange affinity with synths...

Along the way, Leo, his synth brother Max (Ivano Jeremiah) and Niska encounter David Elster's retired partner Dr George Millican (William Hurt) who suffers ill-health but refuses to be bullied by his GP and local health services into giving up his malfunctioning caregiver synth Odi (Will Tudor), who he looks upon almost as a son. Millican is able to provide information pertaining to Elster's original work on creating his self-aware synths and a sleeper programme he developed to allow all synths to gain self awareness.

The plot of Season One is very much a slow burner, spread over eight episodes, in which the patient viewer is rewarded with new revelations about Elster's work and the synths' place in the world.

This storyline is interspersed with the domestic drama facing the Hawkins family, which is exacerbated by the presence of Mia. At times this seems quite tedious, but it does provide a motivation for the family to eventually help Mia, Niska and later Leo, Max and synth brother Fred to avoid capture by Hobb and his associates. Until the protagonists meet up, there are endless scenes of Leo and Max walking around in wasteground or under motorway flyovers or along the same stretch of canal. The viewer is also asked to suspend their disbelief further by accepting that Mattie, a teenage hacker, can so easily gain access to the Synth Network which controls all synths, when the ability to do so eludes even the synths with their enhanced intelligence. However, it's a key plot point, so it's best not to question it too much as it helps move the plot along when its most needed.

However, whilst the narrative can sometimes lack pacing, when it moves up a notch, the viewer is treated to some thrilling moments and some top notch acting.

All the actors playing synths went to what was dubbed 'Synth School' in pre-production to master the careful, unhurried body movements of synths. Along with facial expressions and speech patterns. Top honours must go to Gemma Chan, who convincingly portrays two synth personalities so effectively, with Emily Berrington as Niska for maintaining a facial expression and tense body language of barely suppressed anger.

Amongst the cast, kudos to William Hurt who brings a quiet dignity to the elderly George Millican, a man beset by the irony that, despite years of working with artificial intelligence, he is gradually losing his own memories to dementia, with Odi, his malfunctioning synth the only way he has of retaining these memories. Tom Goodman-Hill excels as Joe Hawkins, playing the part with a believable mixture of conflicting emotions. Here is a man who loves his family but finds that he is fast losing his ability to understand them. A special mention to Pixie Davies who plays the Hawkins' youngest daughter Sophie. She more than anyone understands that synths have feelings too – no matter how unlikely that may seem; she demonstrates this by her naturalistic dialogue and behaviour towards Mia, Niska and the other synths she meets.

Season One culminates in a cliffhanger when Niska, by far the most volatile of the synths carries away a memory stick containing the rogue programme which could potentially give all synths self-awareness if uploaded to the synth network. Will she carry out this threat? After all, with a few exceptions such as Leo and the Hawkins family, Niska has no love of human beings...

Humans is engaging and thought-provoking. True, it has its flaws, but then again... don't all humans?

Classic Literature, Modern Voices

A brief look at the Big Finish Classics range

Beginning in 2007, the Big Finish Classics series has covered various angles in bringing fantasy writing, and other literature of interest to those with a leaning toward the former, to life through a collection of radio play styled adaptations. Gothic Victorian horror and science fiction, children's adventures, the plays of the Elizabethan era, and other well-known works and genres have been skilfully mixed, with such writers as Mary Shelley, Bram Stoker, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, William Shakespeare and many more being paid homage in this largely faithful series. Those featuring the detective Sherlock Holmes and his friend Doctor Watson are worthy of a whole separate article in a future issue, not least the dramas that cross over with the vampire lore and time travel genres or that take the characters on adventures more in the style of H Rider Haggard and Sax Rohmer. Though the adaptation of *Treasure Island* has a wonderful performance by Tom Baker to recommend it, this particular piece will not look at this or other children's books. Also, this essay is looking only at the audio productions in their own right and how they are evocative of the source material or subject matter, and will not delve into the complex relationships these interpretations might have with the original works. We have chosen five dramas to represent the range, though there are many more to explore and enjoy.

Phantom of the Opera

This was the first classic tale to be recreated by the studio in this format, and it set an early and very high benchmark for quality for that has often been equalled but rarely bettered. It is essential at this point to manage expectations of what to expect, since the Classics range in general differ from most Big Finish output in one key respect. Whereas the studio prides itself upon creating soundscapes that fill a listener's speakers or headphones with an almost cinematic spectacle in their imaginations, these productions have a theatrical quality that matches the more traditional pre-blockbuster storytelling ethos of the stage and would be quite at home on BBC Radio 4 on a Sunday evening. This is

especially true of *Phantom*, where the claustrophobic atmosphere of a haunted opera house is brought chillingly to life simply by treating the actors' voices with a 'small room' dull quality and adding effects like the opening and closing of wooden doors or stage trap doors swinging open with a bang. Action scenes are similarly achieved through performance rather than post production, and this in turn means that the impressive cast are used to their full potential. Star names like Anna Massey and Alexander Siddig, Peter Guinness and James D'Arcy, really have a chance to play their parts in character, adding little moments of humour or weakness or despair. The method of introducing and explaining the story by means of a character in the story recalling the tale as if in a memoir is an old one of course, but here it is done especially well and is a masterclass in performance and character acting for this medium of drama all by itself. Parts of episode four were more of a challenge to translate to audio, with tensions raised and some more fantastical elements to describe, but the balance between giving the listener a clear idea of what is happening versus the need to maintain a consistent tone and style with the first three episodes is handled very well, with the actors still centre stage rather than sound effects taking over the narration.

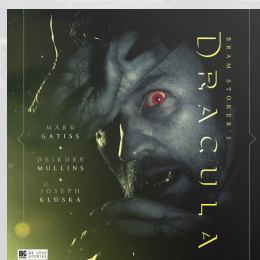
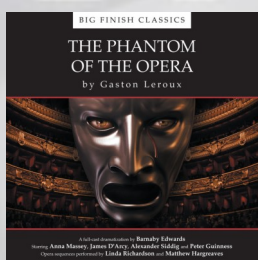
BIG FINISH

Frankenstein

This is one my personal favourite productions of Big Finish as a studio, so had to mention it here sooner or later. This is like a radio play incarnation of the Hammer horror films from the 1960s, but with the bonus of filling three whole disks with its three-hour duration. The characters all talk with awe and an earnest disposition about the adventure and fantasy elements, while still holding back from 'over the top' histrionics in a way that also gives a sensation of legitimate period drama. As with *Phantom of the Opera*, the sound effects and music are kept to a minimum, allowing the listener to feel on the same page as the setting and the 19th Century source material and also giving the actors more space to tell the story with traditional techniques. There is a very neat multi-layered narrative mechanism to how the story is told, with a ship's captain recalling in the first person a similarly first-person account told to him by Victor Frankenstein that in turn leads to fully dramatized passages of the events that are being described and referred to. This again ties the modern performance to the style of the novel, connecting past and present in a manner that gives a similar impression to watching a historical stage play on a darkened and well-dressed set. As for the actors themselves, this play has an especially fine cast that features Arthur Darvill in the title role, Nick Briggs as his creature, Georgia Moffett as Victor's romantic interest, Terry Molloy and Geoffrey Beevers; all of these have strong Doctor Who credentials as companion Rory Williams, as the voice of the Daleks, as the Doctor's daughter Jenny, as the Dalek's creator Davros, and as the Master respectively. Big Finish is primarily associated with Doctor Who, but to have such a fan pleasing cast in such a wonderful play as this is a treat like few others. The journeys of Victor, his experiments, his marriage, his trials and many personal tragedies, and his very personal journey from an enthusiastic student to a broken man, is all told in a completely seamless and holistic fashion, even in tone throughout the whole performance. Only one other production from the studio has enthused me as a listener quite as much as this one, but a discussion of the brilliant *Night of the Triffids* play will have to wait for another issue.

Dracula

Like the aforementioned *Frankenstein*, this adaptation keeps a style in keeping with the Victorian era not only by maintaining a subdued, gothic atmosphere in the overall style, but also by employing an effective method of first-person narration. This becomes especially helpful in the confusing and least effective middle act of the story, a fault that really lies in the source material rather than the audio play as presented here. The opening and closing acts, set in what is now modern-day Romania, are the real atmospheric passages and where the legendary evocation of class division and foreboding, of gothic castles as ancient power houses that cast long shadows over rustic villages, can be found. It is no real surprise that the iconic films of the 1960s based on the story generally choose this setting to explore. The middle section is essential in overall plot terms, because it is the Count's journey to England that brings most of the main players, especially Van Helsing, into an adventure that it would otherwise have no connection with. But the setting has no true depth, lacking the social and economic complexity of Victorian London, and relies too heavily on the disposable character of Renfield to push things along. In this regard, the audio play actually does very well to keep the tension and momentum going during a part of the novel that falls short in these qualities. It is clear that Stoker was far more interested in, and excited by, the dark and romantic gothic elements than the tedium of city life that he was in reality escaping by taking a room in the pleasant seaside town of Whitby. If this production has a flaw, it is not in the writing or direction of the piece but, rather, in the casting. All the actors do an amazing job of course, but three of the male leads – Jonathan Harker, Arthur Holmwood and John Seward – are all played by actors with similar voices, and all pitch their 'confident Victorian gentleman' personas in a similar way too, meaning that it can be easy to lose track of who is who in scenes that feature more than one of these characters together. But that minor quibble aside, this is another excellent play.



Hamlet

Something of a loner, despite his natural ease with acquaintances of different class and background, this character yearns for peace and to see the best in people, but is always distanced from forming close ties by his deeper worldview and often erratic behaviour, switching between a keen humour and deep melancholy almost at random, and finds himself turning against his better instincts and desires to violent means when the universe falls short of his high ideals. Sound familiar? It is especially fitting that Big Finish, a studio that has grown out of demand for *Doctor Who* spin-off media, should adapt a play that has been more influential on everyone's favourite Time Lord than any other, albeit indirectly through centuries of performed drama. Back when David Tennant was famously cast as Hamlet by the Royal Shakespeare Company, opposite Star Trek legend Patrick Stewart, various theatre critics mocked science fiction fans for expecting to see the star appear as the Doctor on stage, little appreciating that Tennant's interpretation of the so-called Tenth Doctor had essentially been 'Hamlet in Space' for the previous three years, and there are a great many scenes in his Hamlet portrayal that echo the iconic moments of his Doctor. Perhaps it is because of the success of the Tennant play, and the fact that many Doctor Who fans will have discovered the Bard by means of it, that the Big Finish version feels a lot like an audio adaptation of that particular production. There are many scenes where Alexander Vlahos, in the title role, follows so closely Tennant's creative choices that it sounds like an actual voice impression of one actor mimicking another. The previous performance and play were so good that imitation is not necessarily a cause for criticism, but it does make this audio version feel unoriginal at times. The atmosphere generated by the special sounds is also an interesting choice by the director, with the audio feeling like it is taking place in a theatre rather than taking the opportunity to take the play 'outside' into the 'real' world. But this does at least mean that the whole narrative is covered, as originally intended, by the talent and energy of the actors and not post-production. Overall, this is an excellent performance of a familiar text and is highly recommended.

Big Finish Classics are available to buy directly from Big Finish or via specialist stores such as Galaxy Four, based in Sheffield.

Website: www.bigfinish.com

The Time Machine

Like each of the plays featured in their own ways, *The Time Machine* is a very appropriate story for a studio associated with Doctor Who to produce. Aside from the obvious time travel connection, there are other ways in which this H.G. Wells classic can be said to have influenced the show. We have three elements in the real world of the reader, viewer or listener to connect the story to our own lives, and, although the time traveller's scientific and literary associates do not travel with him, they do fulfil the role of the 'companion' in providing audience identification characters and someone for the scientist to explain his observations and principles to. In this particular regard, the play scores very high marks for bringing the tale to life at all. For the time traveller is unable to communicate by means of language with any of the characters he encounters in the far future, leaving a radio version entirely dependent upon first person narration and dialogue with other characters not actually present when the events occurred. Even here though, this play maintains the consistent style of these plays and does not try to fill the gaps with exciting sound effects. There is enough to feel that you might be there if you close your eyes for long enough, but not so much that you have to close your ears too. Another way in which the earlier episodes of Doctor Who were influenced by this novel in particular was in the function of the time machine, not only as a means of placing the characters in the story but actually as a part of the story itself. Or at least, becoming separated from the machine and therefore stranded in an alien world is used to drive the plot and the motivations and dynamics of the characters. With the voice of the leading actor having to carry even more of the storytelling weight than normal for a Victorian era fantasy, special mention does have to be made of Ben Miles here. There must have been a temptation to tell the story emotively, especially with the subject matter in the latter stages, but he keeps the tone of his performance calm and steady, never shouting in anger or sobbing in despair to paint the picture but allowing the words and ideas and the sincerity of his performance sell the atmosphere. A lesser actor might have turned this into a one-man show full of sound-booth chewing angst, but that really was not needed and Miles demonstrates perfectly how to pitch this kind of adventure narrative.

Out of the Vortex

News, Reviews and Previews from the Sci-Fi and Fantasy Multiverse

BOOK REVIEW:

DALEK

By George Mann, Justin Richards and Cavan Scott

Published by BBC Books, 2017

RRP: £35.00

Following hard on the heels of their earlier magnum opus *The Whoniverse*, Messrs Mann, Scott and Richards have crafted what must, surely, be the ultimate work ever published on Doctor Who's greatest enemies and arguably, saviours – the Daleks.

This lavish tome is a magnificent work, which achieves the breathtaking feat of binding together all the contradictory continuity conundrums pertaining to Terry Nation's scariest creations, such as their multiple origin stories - of which there have been at least four – and, what's more, *making sense of them!*

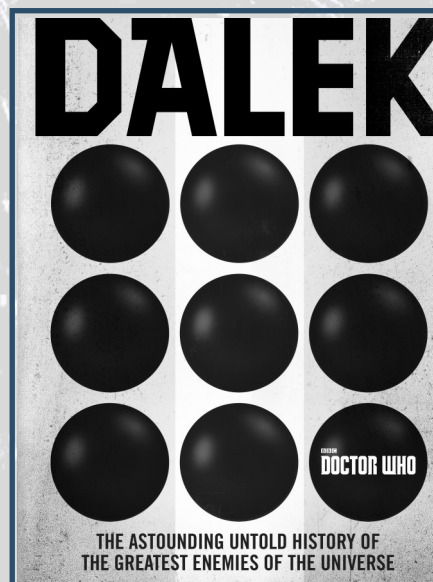
Somehow, they've made Nation's little known, one-off prose origin story *We Are The Daleks* published in the BBC Radio Times' 1973 *Doctor Who 10th Anniversary Special* an integral and accepted part of the whole Dalek origin lore. It's no mean feat. It has to account for the niggling facts that in their original *Doctor Who* TV outing *The Mutants* (1963-64) the Daleks are said to be the mutated descendants of the peaceful Dals, whilst in the comic *TV Century 21* (1965-67) they are descended from the Blue Skinned humanoid warlike Daleks, yet on TV 13 years later in *Genesis of the Daleks* (1975) they are shown to be genetically manipulated creations of the evil scientist Davros. And the notion that all of those legends may well be true because originally the Daleks (and perhaps also their arch enemies the Thals) are descended from temporally accelerated prehistoric humans kidnapped from Earth by the scientifically advanced alien Haldons per *We Are The Daleks*. The fact that these wildly contradictory stories were all written (and apparently forgotten) by Nation has confounded whole generations of continuity-crazed Whovians, yet the authors of *Dalek* not only make sense of these disparate Dalek origins, they make them all sound equally plausible and part of a whole.

As well as the fictional history of the Daleks, taken from TV, audio, prose and comic sources, *Dalek* combines the factual story of the Daleks from their conception by Nation to their physical realisation by BBC designer Ray Cusick, by way of their debut in *Doctor Who's* second television serial in December 1963 and the ensuing UK-wide phenomenon of *Dalekmania* which made Mr Nation a millionaire. Added to which, they helped secure Doctor Who's long term future, which had been under threat by sceptical BBC bosses before the first episode had even been screened.

There are individual prose and comic stories scattered throughout the book by numerous guest writers such as Terrance Dicks, Eric Saward and Paul Magrs, augmented by some truly stunning original artwork by Alex Fort. Fort's brilliant renderings of the Daleks bring the malevolent Skarosian pepperpots to life in an almost documentary way, as though they've been snapped by harried photo journalists under extreme conditions and, as such, they suit the 'real-world' tone of the book.

All in all, this tremendous volume is a must-have for Dalek fans everywhere and it is well worth its cover price. It's not just a work of genius and diligent research by the authors – it's a heartfelt love letter to all things Dalek.

NM



From Sheffield to South Africa!

The 13th Doctor, played by Jodie Whittaker (she's a *woman*, you know, the first to play the Doctor!) was spotted twice recently, albeit in different countries and timezones. On Valentine's Day Jodie felt the love of scores of fans who turned up to watch her and her fellow cast members filming at Sheffield's Park Hill Flats. Jodie was more than happy to pose with several fans which sent Twitter into meltdown.

A few weeks earlier Jodie was spotted filming in Cape Town, South Africa for what would seem to be a 1950's-set story about the apartheid race segregation regime that persisted in South Africa from 1948 until 1991.... So, a big issue to tackle!

The new series of Doctor Who airs this Autumn, on BBC1... with a new logo (see below). Stay tuned!



Photos show James Burtenshaw, Josh Turner, Dave Johnson and Zoe Ann with Jodie Whittaker and the new-look TARDIS at Park Hill Flats, Sheffield, South Yorkshire in February.

Thanks to you all for permission to reproduce images... you lucky, lucky people!



THE BACK OF BEYOND

UNLIKELY CONVERSATIONS #367

"Ah well, you see, on a lead actor's salary, you can afford made-to-measure bespoke, rather than off-the-peg..."



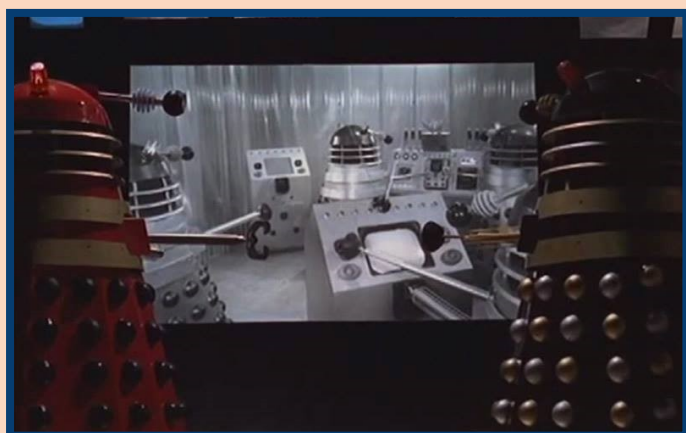
UNLIKELY CONVERSATIONS #1968:

"Oh the shame of it, Zoe! Taken prisoner by the Trumpton Fire Brigade!"



UNLIKELY CONVERSATIONS #104:

"Eee-Our-Black-Dalek-Chook! We-never-miss-an-episode-of-our-favourite-soap-Terry-Nation-Street!"



UNLIKELY CONVERSATIONS #81:

"Alydon, you thought you were here to defeat the Daleks, but tonight... This Is Your Life!"



Coming in issue #2 (Summer 2018):

Primeval * Fortitude * Interview with George Mann and Cavan Scott ('Dalek') * Blakes 7 *

Doctor Who Year Two * Gerry Anderson * Star Wars * And Lots, Lots More..!

Maybe even something written by YOU? See You Soon!