

Gallifrey, the long way round

Issue 5

Spring/Summer 2020

IN THIS ISSUE:

Doctor Who Season 7
- 50 Years On

Studio Ghibli Anime

Red Dwarf

Buffy The Vampire Slayer

...and much, much more!



Gallifrey, The Long Way Round

Issue #5: Spring/Summer 2020

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CONTENTS

FEATURES

4: ANIME- Studio Ghibli and director Hayao Miyazaki
by Craig Sanwell

15: RED DWARF—Insult Compilation - Part 1
by Brandon Mays

21: BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER—Part 1
by Rob Peasley

DOCTOR WHO

34: SEASON SEVEN— TRUE GRIT by Nick Mays

39: SPEARHEAD FROM SPACE by Nick Mays

42: THE SILURIANS by Lynda Pinfold

45: AMBASSADORS OF DEATH by Tony J Fyler

49: INFERNO by Nick Mays

54: 6B OR NOT 6B by Charles Hampson

59: SPEARHEAD WITH ZOE—Fanfic by Nick Mays

65: INTERVIEW WITH JIM MORTIMORE
by Alex Pinfold

69: Squaring The Circle by Bok

75: DOCTOR WHO—Season 12 Overview
by Annie Worrall

SPECIAL FEATURE

84: THE WATCH by Rachel Anthony-Rowlands

REGULARS

93: VEERING OFF—Books vs Film by Veerle Blajic-Kik

97: OUT OF THE VORTEX—News , Reviews & Previews

104: THE BACK OF BEYOND

EDITORIAL by Nick Mays, Editor-in-Chief

Greetings One and All! Okay, so... once again, this issue is just a tad later than we'd originally planned. It was all going swimmingly up until mid-March, then world went kinda mad. Coronavirus Covid-19 has caused a Global pandemic and it's been pretty scary. It's easy to think of post-apocalyptic TV series such as Terry Nation's *Survivors* and movies like *The Road* and not feel that it holds a window up to us all - right here and now.

So, whilst I'm definitely not using Covid-19 and the subsequent Lockdown as an excuse for the delay in this issue, it was certainly a major contributing factor, as the three of us—Lynda, Annie and me, together with our families, had to adjust to a new way of life which impacts on everything. Still, on a positive note, at the time of writing (17.57 on Saturday, 6th June 2020, fact fans) the Lockdown is being cautiously relaxed in the UK and other countries and so let's hope that a greater sense of normality will soon be with us.

Following the old adage that Every Cloud Has a Silver Lining, the enforced quarantine at home has given many of us a chance to watch plenty of television, which has included Sci-Fi and Fantasy programmes and films a-plenty, both new releases and old favourites, as well as enjoying special programmes and features such as the excellent Doctor Who: Lockdown Event! Webcasts. The other bonus is that we now have a bang-up-to-date bumper issue for you—104 pages no less. So enough waffle from me—Read and Enjoy! And above all: Stay Safe, Stay Well.

Nick





Art and Humanity—Through the minds of Miyazaki and Takahata

By Craig Sanwell

In 2013, Hayao Miyazaki announced his retirement from animation, and the Japanese Anime film studio, **Studio Ghibli**.

Studio Ghibli was founded in the mid-1980s by Miyazaki, together with Toshio Suzuki, Isao Takahata and Yasuyoshi Tokuma in their roles as acting producers. Hayao Miyazaki shared the majority of the studio's output with Takahata, in their respective capacities as both screen writers/directors. This professional collaboration had begun in the early 1960s for Japanese TV. It saw both men's careers flourish, as their passions for animated film turned into a professional rivalry that would catapult the Studio, Japanese Anime, and the reputations of Miyazaki and Takahata, into the stratosphere, and see, over the next thirty years, Studio Ghibli create some of the most thought-provoking, critically acclaimed and influential movies of the fantasy genre.

Japan's obsession with art and animation is synonymous with its history of colourful, cultural storytelling, and covers the extensive and ubiquitous genres of **Manga** and **Anime**

in the medium of animated TV and film. With diverse and far-reaching subjects, content and genres, ranging from the very earliest example *Astro Boy* (the 1960's Fuji TV series) to the cult classics of the 80s and 90s, these animations have paved the way for the modern era of animated TV and films. *Sailor Moon*, *Akira* and the 2001 release, *Metropolis* (inspired by the 1927 Fritz Lang masterpiece) and more recently *Paprika*, *The Girl who Leapt Through Time*, *Mary and the Witch's Flower*, and the metaphysical, critically acclaimed, body swap, romantic fantasy *Your Name*, have all, with Studio Ghibli at the forefront, propelled the Japanese animated film industry to a level worthy to rival US world dominators, Walt Disney, DreamWorks and Pixar.

Miyazaki, the genius behind Studio Ghibli, had the passionate flame of his creativity ignited during the time he studied at Toyotama High School. In his third year he saw the movie *Panda and the Magic Serpent* (1958) and immediately fell in love with its heroine. Later, at Gakushuin University, he

would spend all his free time visiting his former middle school art teacher and sit, drink, chat and sketch in his studio.

Prior to his formation of Studio Ghibli in 1985, Miyazaki had an illustrious and prolific career in both TV and film. It began in 1963, when he was employed by the Toei Co.Ltd. as an in-between artist on animations such as *Wolf Boy Ken* and *Gulliver's Travels Beyond the Moon*, working his way up to chief animator/concept artist/scene designer. He left Toei in 1971 for A-Pro, where he met Takahata and collaborated with him on animations such as *Astrid Lindgren's Pippi Long Stocking* and *Panda! Go, Panda!*, before moving on, with Takahata, to work on many more animations with varying studios for Japanese TV throughout the 1970s. During this period, the pair contributed to 23 episodes of *Lupin III: Part 1*. In 1979 Miyazaki revisited the character in his first feature film, undertaking both screen-writing and directorial duties on *Lupin III: The Castle of Cagliostro* for TMS - an adaptation of Kazuhiko Kato's (AKA Monkey Punch) Manga series, featuring the exploits of the master thief, Arsene Lupin III. The film is an action adventure comedy, with loose, almost Tin-Tin-esque styled animation.

In 1984, Miyazaki collaborated with Takahata once again, on the visual masterpiece *Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind*, which contains some of the most beautiful and stunning animated art of all time. Based on Miyazaki's 1982 Manga, the film was animated by the Japanese Anime Studio, Topcraft, and distributed by Toei Co. Ltd. Although the film precedes the creation of Studio Ghibli, it was screen adapted and directed by Miyazaki and produced by Takahata, and it is widely considered a Ghibli film because of its DVD release as part of the Studio's collection, but also because of its themes, style, tone and sensibilities. Critically acclaimed, the film stands tall among the greatest Sci-Fi fantasy movies of all time and holds up today, better than some of the films that were inspired by it. It influenced Sci-Fi, comic book art, and cult 1980's Sci-Fi films such as *Slipstream* starring Mark Hamill, *World Gone Wild* starring Bruce Dern and more

recently 2012's *Beasts of the Southern Wild*, as well as Hollywood blockbusters such as Kevin Costner's *Waterworld* and James Cameron's *Avatar*. Yet none of these films are a match for the visual metaphors and poetry of *Nausicaa*, and its vision of an alien-like, dystopian Earth; even of those that borrowed some of its environmental themes with the best of intentions.

Set 1,000 years in Earth's future, after an apocalyptic war (remembered as The Seven Days of Fire) created a mutated alien-like jungle (Fukai) full of toxic, poisonous spores, the film centres on the young Princess Nausicaa (pronounced Norshika) and her guardians and protectors within an area known as The Valley of the Wind. Earth is ravaged by pollution, and over-run by giant mutated insects (The Ohmu) that live in the Toxic Forest. The wastelands surrounding the valley are reduced to no more than rust and ceramic pieces and are split into kingdoms, including Pejite, The Valley of the Wind and the home world of the Tolmekians, who have found an ancient chrysalis and are working to revive the great warrior within, in order to destroy the Ohmu. This, causes devastating environmental consequences to the surrounding country.

Nausicaa spends her time navigating the wind in her glider, crossing the barren lands and toxic Fukai, trying to find ways to appease the Ohmu, find a natural solution to the unbreathable atmosphere that surrounds her country, and bring a balance back to its lands.



Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind

The film was well received and respected for its efforts to enlighten and educate its audience on issues regarding man's destructive influence on the planet and the effects this has, long-term on the environment and was honourably endorsed by the WWF. An outstanding piece of cinema, way ahead of its time on so many levels, it still resonates in today's unpredictable world, 35 years after its initial release.

A year after the release of *Nausicaa*, Miyazaki founded Studio Ghibli. During a three-decade period, it was responsible for producing some 20 plus movies, before being put on temporary hold in 2014. Miyazaki's film, *The Wind Rises*, had been released the previous year, while 2014 saw the release of its two final films to date, *When Marnie Was There* and Takahata's *The Tale of Princess Kaguya*. This indefinite hiatus put an end, at least for the foreseeable future, to a creative art form which explored themes of all that is good in humanity and the forces which govern it, that at times seem quite the opposite to the harsh brutalities so often played out in the real world and within our own personal realities, and drew on pure gold for its execution.

Studio Ghibli's subject matter was as diverse as it was compassionate, whether situated in a far-off distant world, or in a very ordinary, suburban setting recognisable to us, the viewer. Often touching on the fantastical and magical, they delivered a message or explored themes that had morality, sensitivity, consideration and understanding beating strongly at their heart. One thing is always

evident in their films : the plight and struggle the individual has to go through to separate right from wrong, good from evil - the hero's journey, that has featured at the centre of legends, fables, stories and sagas throughout the history of civilisation: a journey that has enlightened, educated or entertained his brothers for as long as man has told, written, drawn or recorded his works. That is the force driving Studio Ghibli's works.

The arrival of Studio Ghibli's first film proper, came in 1986 with the release of the enchanting and visually beautiful *Castle in the Sky* (*Laputa: Castle in the Sky* in some parts of the world). Extremely influential, both in the fantasy/Sci-Fi genre in Japan and internationally, the film is in plot and visual narrative, quite an old fashioned, traditional, action adventure, romp. Its scenes and characters would not look out of



ABOVE: Hayao Miyazaki (L) and Isao Takahata the creative geniuses behind Studio Ghibli

BELOW: *Laputa: Castle in the Sky*



place in Hollywood classics such as *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* or *The Great Race*, with its OTT villainous pirates, government agents and military soldiers. But it is in the execution of the machinations within Laputa's nerve centre where the film is truly way ahead of its time. Scenes look like something, that could have been created in the 1990's CGI blockbusters, *The Matrix*, *Tomb Raider*, and latterly, 2000's *Prometheus*. The subtlety of the opening sequence looks to have influenced Neil Gaiman's faultless and wonderful *Stardust*.

release, features such talent as Anna Paquin as Sheeta and Mark Hamill as Muska, the central female protagonist and male antagonist respectively. Essentially, it's a tale of two young teens on a heroic journey. Sheeta, a young girl, escapes from her government-led, military captors, while held prisoner aboard an airship, and falls, quite literally, into the life of Pazu, a young boy who works in the local mill. Miraculously surviving the fall due to the power of a magical stone worn around her neck, it becomes apparent that the girl, the stone and the legendary, mythical, floating island of Laputa are



The villainous Muska and his henchmen lay claim to Laputa

Laputa borrows from elements, characters and themes created by Jonathan Swift for his *Gulliver's Travels*, and Gulliver would return to the Ghibli- inspired Laputa in Alan Moore's & Kevin O'Neill's *League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* series of books, in the late 90s/ early 2000s.

So much of the artistic choices and creations in the film are realised with inspired originality, particularly the design of Laputa's giant robots; and Laputa itself is a thing of both organic/natural and architectural beauty.

Written and directed by Miyazaki, the voice cast, added for the subsequent western

connected, as the duo are pursued by Dola and her pirates, military soldiers and the villainous Muska and his government agents, all determined to capture the girl, seize the stone and lay claim to Laputa with all its secret powers and hidden treasures.

The enormous success of *Castle in the Sky* upon its Japanese release, culturally and critically, ensured the future of Studio Ghibli, and their next release in 1988, followed up with a double feature of two films made separately by Miyazaki and Takahata. Two very different features, they were designed to be played together in cinemas across Japan for a family audience: the Miyazaki magical and fantastically inspired *My Neighbour Totoro*, and Takahata's heart-wrenchingly, thought-provoking masterpiece (the finest film of his output), *Grave of the Fireflies*.



Satsuki, Mei and Totoro from *My Neighbour Totoro*

Miyazaki's *My Neighbour Totoro* is a delightful, modern day fairy-tale of family unity, childhood and the magic that exists within young children's imaginations. It looks at the wonder of childhood discovery and all its earthly and universal creations within the natural world. With a backdrop of beautifully drawn and detailed landscapes and vistas, executed in sharp, crisp colours and shading, the story tells of a young professional father and his two young daughters, Satsuki (pronounced Satsky) and Mei (May), as they move into a very old and neglected house in the countryside while their sick mother is treated in hospital. Adventuring through their once derelict, new home, the girls discover soot mites, sprites and dust gremlins. The garden with its enormous and overgrown interior and surrounding countryside, contains an ancient statuesque Camphor Tree. One day while her older sister is at school, infant Mei is playing in the grounds. Two small Troll-like spirits of the forest lead Mei to discover hidden areas of the overgrown garden, leading her to fall into the hollowed out, moss-filled interior of the giant Camphor tree. There, she finds a snoozing, snoring, friendly, giant owl, cat-like, troll creature, whom she names Totoro after the sounds of the growls and roars with which he communicates.

The Totoro acts as guardian and protector to the two young girls because their father spends long days as a teacher of archaeology at the university and their mother's stay at the hospital is lengthened. It offers the siblings lightness and fantasy during the time of their darkest fears, taking them on a magical

journey inside a giant flying cat-bus to visit their mother in hospital. The film's uplifting optimism is a complete contrast to the bleak content of Takahata's *Grave of the Fireflies*.

Its later, western release, featured the voice talents of real-life Hollywood sisters Elle and Dakota Fanning as the animated Satsuki and Mei. The Totoro would become instantly recognisable as the Studio Ghibli logo emblem, as iconic a symbol, as Disney's

Sleeping Beauty castle. It returned to cinema audiences once again in a cameo as one of the toys in Pixar's *Toy Story 3*: a gesture by the US animation studio to acknowledge the influence of Miyazaki and Studio Ghibli.

Grave of the Fireflies was born out of Takahata's childhood. This was similar to Miyazaki's in so far that, it was while studying at school that Takahata first saw the French film *The King and the Mockingbird*, and this became the catalyst that forged his love of animation and to ultimately pursue it as a lifelong career.

The film draws on Takahata's own experiences as a young boy of nine, who witnessed and survived, along with his family, a punishing air raid on Okayama City by the US; and later as adolescent and a grown man witnessing first-hand, the effect on a nation that had been humbled by defeat and crippled by the destruction caused by WWII. *Grave of the Fireflies* pulls no punches, and cleverly uses the device of two orphaned, abused, desperate children struggling to survive, to lead the viewer to empathise with their perilous struggles and suffering, without debating the historical realities of the relentless bombing campaign on Japan by the US.



A peaceful moment in *Grave of the Fireflies*

That situation is merely a means to focus on the humanity of the two main characters and serve as a visual backdrop. A must-see movie for anyone who loves film and cinema, whether they appreciate animation or not. *Grave...* is undoubtedly Takahata's finest work and another Studio Ghibli gem.

Isao Takahata's screenplay was adapted from the novel *Hotaru No Haka* by Akiyuki Nosaka, and has been rightly critically cited as "one of the most powerful war films ever made". It must have left family audiences aghast, on seeing it played after the family-friendly warmth of *My Neighbour Totoro*.

Miyazaki's final film to date, which he both wrote and directed, was 2013's beautiful *The Wind Rises*. It also saw him explore themes and experiences from his childhood, during and after WWII as an evacuee whose father was a director of a manufacturing company that made rudders for fighter planes. The film is a fictionalised biopic of Jiro Horikoshi, the designer of the Mitsubishi A5M and A6M zero fighter planes used by Japan during the war, as well as serving as a visual tribute to his father, his work and ethics. The film's original source and inspiration was a Manga, beautifully illustrated in watercolour by Miyazaki.

Thus far, these two men's creative talents have been responsible for just over two-thirds of the studios entire catalogue of releases, in either directorial, screenwriting or production duties. Although both are undoubtedly prolific, Studio Ghibli has, however, also employed the services of a whole host of personnel on other, equally influential and successful, animated films and projects; most notably, producer Toshio Suzuki. Under his guidance and influence, Hayao Miyazaki's son Goro was encouraged to direct and co-write Ghibli's adaptation of author Ursula K. Le Guin's *Earthsea* series. It caused some conflict between father and son. Ghibli and Hayao had previously tried to adapt the series after the release of his 1983 Manga *Journey of Shuna* (also based on the *Earthsea* books) without success, and it was not until 2001's *Spirited Away* won an Academy Award, that the author would finally relent and see *Tales From Earthsea* released in 2006.

Having previously worked successfully in landscaping and agriculture as a consultant, Goro was involved in the design and creation of the Ghibli Museum in Mitaka in 1998. This led to a consultancy position within the Studio, which lasted many years. He was urged to present a storyboard to Suzuki, which impressed the producer enough to encourage Goro to make the film. Translated from the Japanese release, with a voice cast featuring the talents of Timothy Dalton as the wizard SparrowHawk, and Willem Dafoe as the villainous Cob, the story sees the wizard, together with young Prince Arren, seeking to end the imbalance that has sent the land of Earthsea into ruin and disorder. This has been caused by forces harnessed by Cob to control the dead and gain immortality. SparrowHawk, and Prince Arren unite with an old friend of the wizards, Priestess Tenar, and her young daughter, to defeat Cob, and bring calm and order back to Earthsea. Upon the film's release, Hayao Miyazaki, who had felt his son's inexperience with film-making would hamper the project, gave it his approval, and ended the friction with his son. Although unhappy with the film's conclusion, and acknowledging that "it was not her book, but his movie," author Ursula K. Le Guin also gave Goro her blessing.



***Tales From Earthsea*, adapted from Ursula K. Le Guin's series of fantasy novels.**

Goro's second and final film to date, 2011's *From Up On Poppy Hill*, turns the events of the second world war and a Japan ravaged by its past, into a positive and uplifting view of the modern Japan of the early 1960s, as it looks ahead to a bright future and the approaching 1964, Tokyo summer Olympics. Again, co-adapted by Hayo and based on the 1980 Manga *Kokurikozaka Kara*, the film sees

bright young thing, Umi, and her fellow high school students, try to save their school clubhouse (where they produce the school newspaper) from demolition by local businessman and school chairman, Tokumaru. The film was very well received: quite a triumph for Goro, considering how, as a young boy who had witnessed his parents work, had concluded he would never be able to achieve his father's status and so pursued another path.

The 1993's TV film *Ocean Waves*, directed by Tomomi Mochizuki, was, unusually for an animated feature at the time, used as a vehicle by the Studio to harness the talents of young, upcoming Ghibli personnel. It draws on events from the very real, present, dramatic, adult world, and focusses on a young man Taku, as the character journeys from Tokyo to a school reunion and reflects on his past friendships and a love triangle back in Kochi City.

The forward thinking of the Studio, in story content, character development and even in the processes of film making, is no more so evident than in its very early use of current, extremely important and universal environmental issues, and more predominantly, in its foresighted and intuitive ability to create stories that feature a strong female lead as the protagonist, many, many years before the current and belated Hollywood trend.



City worker Taeko embraces the rural world in a scene from *Only Yesterday*

Only Yesterday from 1991 sees Takahata write and direct a beautifully created and rounded female lead that the likes of Julia Roberts or Nicole Kidman would not be averse to performing in a chick-flick, live-action film of the modern day. It tells of 27-year-old

single, unmarried, professional city worker, Taeko Okajima, who has spent all her life in Tokyo. Set in 1982, she takes a trip to get away and visit extended family who live in the countryside, where she works the land and starts to make new friends and relationships. Becoming more at one with herself and the natural world around her, she begins to find her emotional centre. Wrestling with her 1960's childhood memories and her unfulfilled current state, this beautifully crafted, central character, experiences feelings of wistful melancholia, longing, and nostalgia, as she seeks fulfilment, contentment and love in the present, through ghost-like recollections of the past. The viewer, witnessing Taeko's recent and distant experiences, learns to appreciate the true beauty that can be found within an ordinary, everyday life. The soundtrack to the end title sequence, perfectly underlines and punctuates the tone of the film. *Ai Wa Hana, Kimi Wa Sono Tane*, translated as "Love is a Flower, You are the Seed", sung by Harimi Miyako is a Japanese adaptation of Amanda McBroom's *The Rose*, previously performed by Bette Midler and covered by Elaine Paige in the US and UK respectively.

But it's the fantastical and magical for which Studio Ghibli is mostly recognised. It's productions draw on Japan's rich historical and cultural legends, myths and fables, as well as stylised western visuals and stories, adapting and re-imagining some of our best loved childhood memories from fairy tales and literary classics. One such adaptation is 2010's *The Secret World of Arrietty*, an enchanting reworking of characters from Mary Norton's 1952 novel *The Borrowers*.

The first of only two films directed by Hiromasa Yonebayashi, and once again co-adapted by Hayao Miyazaki, it is a sweet, sensitive, and sentimental tale, with exquisitely rendered and realised artwork and tells the story of a young boy, Sho, who has a rare heart condition and spends time at his Great Aunt Sadako's house, convalescing before his next life-saving operation. There he spies upon a tiny girl, Arrietty, and sets about befriending her, while at the same time trying to save her, her family and her community of undiscovered little people, from his Aunt's mean spirited housemaid Haru, who has suspected their existence for some years, and hopes to capture them and rid them from the household. The film centres on the

empathetic relationship between the inquisitive and adventurous adolescent, tiny girl, who hopes to find independence outside of the safety of her parents' world, and the desperately sick, adolescent boy, as he faces his personal fears, and the challenges of his uncertain future.



**Sho meets the tiny Arrietty in
*The Secret World of Arrietty***

The highest grossing film in Japan of its year of release, the film was distributed by Disney (as part of a deal which began in 1996 with *Princess Mononoke*) and featured a voice cast of outstanding actors for the Studio Canal U.K. dubbed version - Saoirse Ronan, Geraldine McEwan, Phyllida Law, Olivia Colman, Mark Strong, and the film debut of Tom Holland. Unusually, there is an alternate U.S. dubbed version with a voice cast of U.S. actors made for Disney.

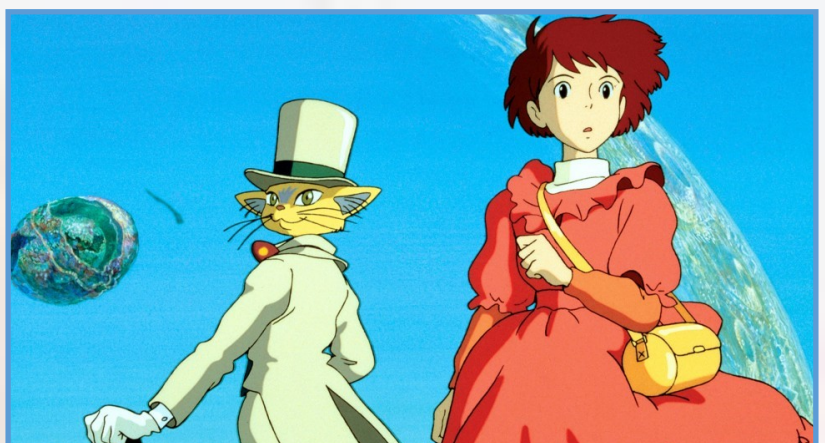
It had been assumed that Yonebayashi would naturally succeed Miyazaki upon his retirement. But after the completion of 2014's *When Marnie Was There*, Yonebayashi and the film's co-producer Yoshiaki Nishimura left, in 2015, to form Studio Ponoc, and subsequently released *Mary and the Witch's Flower* to much success and critical acclaim. Yonebayashi had been at Ghibli for some 18 years, beginning as a key animator on some of its most successful films in both the Studio's and his own, career.

Marnie... was another book adaptation. Based on Joan G. Robinson's 1967 novel of the same name, it is another visually and narratively, beautifully crafted and executed tale, this time of two young, lost and lonely girls who share a fleeting friendship which reveals a ghostly, generation-crossing connection between the two, and delivers a twist that turns the importance of their meeting into an ancestral anomaly.

Every single Studio Ghibli film is a lesson taught to the viewer, particularly children. Their uncompromising moral and emotional content, the recurring themes and messages, (whether it be of the hero's journey, the struggles of the individual, the importance of the strong, determined female role model, or the plight and preservation of the world we inhabit for our brief time on this planet) are important to each and every one of us, but particularly, to young and impressionable minds.

This is the case with the unique tale of Takahata's from 1994, *Pom Poko*. It is a rich eco-story about shape-shifting forest raccoons pushed out by man's encroaching and destructive felling of their natural habitat, which leads them to take on human form, living and working like ordinary folk in the city! It's worth noting that *Pom Poko* was the first Studio Ghibli film to use computer graphics within the animation process.

Whisper of the Heart, focuses on the charming fantasies of a young romantic girl, Shizuku, who longs to be a writer and who, after borrowing some books from the library, sets out to find the young boy whose name appears on every single one of the checked-out library book cards. On her journey she creates a fantasy story, based on a cat figurine she finds in an antique shop (after being led there by a stray cat she follows one day) about her and 'The Baron'; a life-sized, talking cat who is seeking his lost love. The antique shop is later revealed to be owned by the young boy's grandfather! It's spiritual sequel, *The Cat Returns*, directed by Hiroyuki Morita, features a quiet and shy female school student, who hides her secret ability to communicate with felines and enters the world of The Baron, after being offered her hand in marriage by the Cat Prince, Lune.



The Baron and Shizuku in *Whisper of the Heart*

1997's influential, epic work of genius, *Princess Mononoke*, would also see Miyazaki embrace the technology for the first time, and it would become the first Ghibli film to use digital colouring. It was also the first animated feature in Japan to gross over 10 billion Yen at the box office and to win Japan's National Academy Award for best picture of the year. This international success raised both Miyazaki's and Studio Ghibli's reputation and influence to new heights.

Set in ancient Japan, the film tells of a time when the land was covered in untamed forests, and Gods and Demons inhabited the land and lived harmoniously alongside Giant Beasts. Rich in Japanese folklore, the story begins with young Prince Ashitaka defending his village from a Giant Wild Boar, which has been corrupted by an iron bullet and turned into a raging Demon. It wounds him in the process, giving him an extraordinary strength which will, eventually, kill him. He sets out to find the cure for his life-threatening condition, encountering Samurai and a Buddhist Monk along the way.

The Prince is guided through the wild, ancient forest by thousands of tiny, child-like dryads. They lead him to magical, untouched places where he catches a glimpse of the Forest Spirit, a strange deer with unusual, sculpture-like antlers, and its protectors, the Giant snow-white wolves, ridden by a wild, human wolf-girl.

He discovers that Lady Eboshi is decimating this sacred forest, taking its iron to manufacture war weapons. This has enraged

its Gods and forced the Beasts into aggressive action. In retaliation she seeks to destroy them, and wipe out the Samurai, the wolf cubs, their mother Moro, and her human child, San/Princess Mononoke, whose soul was taken when Moro found her as an abandoned baby and raised her as her own. The Princess fights with the wolves to protect the forest from Eboshi's plans to dominate this world, and, bound by both fate and the same motives, Ashitaka fights with her, until Eboshi is defeated and vows to live in harmony with the forest.

Again, this is an outstanding film of extraordinary detail and an almost, alien-like vision of beauty. The richness of the artwork is breath-taking, particularly in its realisation of the natural beauty of the forest wilderness and it's unusual creatures, spirits, Gods and Demons. Visually, it's as awe inspiring as *Nausicaa...* if not more so.

Due to the Japanese culture-heavy content of its subject matter, it was deemed necessary to re-write the script for the release of the U.S. dubbed version; a duty given to fantasy novelist and comic book maestro Neil Gaiman. Distributed by Disney's (at the time subsidiary) Miramax, the voice cast featured Claire Danes, Gillian Anderson, Billy Crudup and Billy Bob Thornton respectively.

Miyazaki's next film proved to be a phenomenal worldwide success. 2001's *Spirited Away* elevated the Studio to heights never achieved before by a non-English speaking animated film. It was Miyazaki's

first feature to be shot in a one hundred percent digital process, and it overtook *Titanic* at the Japanese box office, becoming the top grossing film in Japanese film history and winning the Studio its one and only Oscar, for best animated feature.

Literally spell binding, the film centres around a young girl, ten year old Chihiro, and her quest to free her parents from a spell placed on them on a seemingly ordinary drive

to a new home, when they accidentally stumble into a run down theme park, and open a gateway to a spiritual, alternate



The Wolf-Girl riding one of the snow-white wolf forest guardians in 1997's *Princess Mononoke*.

reality. There, she witnesses her parents being transformed into pigs, a visual metaphor for the greed and gluttony to which they have succumbed. Aided by Haku, a young boy, Chihiro finds herself working for the working for the bathroom witch - Yubaba.

Yubaba steals the forms of humans who arrive within the realm, and gives Chihiro the new identity Sen, forcing the child to work for both her own and her parents' freedom. But, living amongst these weird and wonderful otherworldly spirits and guides, reveals to Sen she is more than a stranger here and that she must remember who she really is if she is to release herself and her parents to return to the real world.



Chihiro a.k.a. Sen in *Spirited Away*

Screen written and directed by Miyazaki, visually, the film is steeped in Japanese cultural mythology, but it also creates, in itself, a captivating modern cultural myth which resonated with audiences worldwide. As a result, *Spirited Away* became, globally, the highest grossing anime of all time.

Hayao Miyazaki has never been one to shy from using his working medium as a platform for his own personal ideals and beliefs, or to use them to present opinions designed to educate and inform the viewer. In 2004's *Howl's Moving Castle* he voices his disapproval of the U.S. involvement in the war in Iraq. Loosely based on British fantasy author Diana Wynne Jones' novel of the same name, with subtle elements borrowed from Frank L. Baum's *Oz* series, the movie tells of Sophie, a young girl living within a warring Kingdom, who is turned into a 90-year old woman by the Witch of the Waste. Led to the wizard, Howl, by a sentient scarecrow, she

enters and stays within his Moving Castle, along with a menagerie of characters, as they quest to end the war and find a means of reversing Sophie's unnatural condition. Howl is interfering in both sides of the war in the guise of a transformed bird creature, and is bound to a talking falling star, the life source of the castle. Miyazaki cleverly weaves elements of magic and mysticism into the story, exploring both the freedom that comes with ageing, and the ageing process itself, using these elements to emphasise the importance of compassion within the individual, and for humanity.

The third highest grossing anime of all time worldwide, the English speaking dubbed version features a stellar cast of Hollywood luminaries and legends: Christian Bale, Lauren Bacall, Jean Simmons, Billy Crystal, Emily Mortimer, Blythe Tanner and, Scooby Doo and Fred Jones voice acting legend, Frank Welker. Critically lauded for its stunningly inspiring and original artwork, the film is another Miyazaki written and directed *bona fide* classic.



Howl's Moving Castle

Finally, the sense of wonder and charm, through accessible, positive and uplifting family entertainment, that is Studio Ghibli's signature, is no better personified than in their fan favourite, and sweetly adorable, Miyazaki timeless classic *Kiki's Delivery Service*: a delightfully quaint and inspiring animation in its content, technique and execution. The Miyazaki written and directed film is adapted from Japanese children's author Ms Eiko Kadono's *The Good Witch*, although the 1989 screen version differs from its source material - the first book in a series which sees the character grow into a young adult and eventually mature into a mother of two.

Becoming one of Ghibli's most popular films, the story tells of a young thirteen year old apprentice witch Kiki, and her talking cat, as she spends a year training to become a fully-fledged witch, learning to fly so she can create a home delivery service for her neighbourhood, via her broom. The adapted Disney voice cast version features the talents of female leads Kirsten Dunst and the late Debbie Reynolds.

The diversity of films produced under Ghibli's banner include very different and contrasting art forms, content and styles. *Porco Rosso*, *My Neighbours The Yamadas*, *Ponyo*, *The Tale of Princess Kaguya*, as well as the host of short films made particularly for the Ghibli Museum, and even 2014's anime TV series *Ronja, The Robber's Daughter* (based on Swedish author Astrid Lindgren's children's book) will all ensure that Studio Ghibli will

exist for many more generations to come. In 2013, along with his announcement that he would retire from film making, Hayao Miyazaki appeared in the feature film/fly on the wall documentary, *The Kingdom Of Dreams And Madness*, in which he looked back on his long, varied and prolific career, and shed light on his creative processes, revealing that he never starts with a script, but always begins with a storyboard and builds his story from that. He shared insight on the plight of Japan after the terrible events of Fukushima, and reflected on his life, friends and colleagues, particularly his illustrious career and sometimes conflicting relationship and friendship with Takahata. It seemed at the time a significant closure for a phenomenal man and his career, and put Studio Ghibli on hiatus, which saw it ultimately cease production in 2014... Which appeared to be the end...

... Until...

February 2017.

Studio Ghibli producer Toshio Suzuki announces that a new movie, *How Do You Live*, is in production, and will be, once again, directed by Hayao Miyazaki, putting an end to the drought of inspiring creativity that had been missed for so long, by so many, guaranteeing The Studio's survival and announcing a future in which many more adventures and stories can be told.



Kiki sets off on her broom with her talking cat in *Kiki's Delivery Service*



THE ULTIMATE INSULT COMPILIATION

PART 1 OF SMEG KNOWS HOW MANY

BY BRANDON MAYS

This is something I have been wanting to compile for years, and now I finally have a proper excuse as I am currently rewatching the whole series for the bazillionth time with my (American) wife, who is totally new to it. She seems to be enjoying it, trying to predict what will happen in many episodes only for me to be like “oh it’s so much better” or “oh it’s so much worse”.

One of the most memorable things, in my opinion, about Red Dwarf is its dialogue. From the catch-all fictitious swear word “smeg” to “Smoke me a kipper, I’ll be back for breakfast”, there’s an unending supply of quotable lines -- and of insults. Some just as basic as “git” and others going on for whole speeches.

For this compilation, I am largely using direct insults and not generalisations and am including subtitles and other languages.

Let’s see how many pages this takes up!!! No doubt I still missed some too.

SEASON 1

1. The End



RIMMER: Are you blind?

LISTER: I try and respect Rimmer and everything, but it’s not easy, ‘cause he’s such a smeghead.

TODHUNTER: Oh Rimmer... You *are* a smeghead.

RIMMER: With respect, sir, your career’s finished, Todhunter, you big lig! Gah!!

RIMMER: Lister, you’re a nothing.

RIMMER: What’s that, the plan to be the slobbiest entity in the entire universe?

RIMMER: Lister, you’ve got the brain of a cheese sandwich.

HOLLISTER: Just one thing before the disco, Holly tells me that he’s sensed a non-human life form on board.

LISTER: Sir, it’s Rimmer!

HOLLISTER: Lister, not only are you so stupid you bring aboard an unquarantined animal and jeopardise every man and woman on this ship -- not only that -- but you take a photograph of yourself *with* the cat and send it to be processed in the ship’s lab.

RIMMER: But I would have done one day, murderer!

RIMMER: I’m dead, I’m composed entirely of light, and I’m alone in space with a man who’d lose a battle of wits with a stuffed iguana.



LISTER: Rimmer, look, I know it’s wrong of me to speak ill of the dead and all that, but you’re still a smeghead.

RIMMER: To them, you’ll be the equivalent of the slime that first crawled out of the oceans.

2. Future Echoes

RIMMER: Morning, Lister! How’s life in hippie heaven, you pregnant, baboon-bellied space beatnik? What’s the plan for the day then? Slobbing in the morning, followed by slobbing in the afternoon, then a bit of a snooze before the main evening’s slob? God, you’re a disgrace to the species!

RIMMER: No, a clean uniform, you idiot.

RIMMER: You stupid jumped-up Filofax.

RIMMER: Git.

RIMMER: Yes, you, you ugly goit.

RIMMER: Lister, don’t be a gimboird.

LISTER: Smartarse.

TALKIE TOASTER: Bozo.

CAT: Hey, you crazy monkey! You creased my suit!

RIMMER: You goit! No, *you* goit! You’re all goits! I’m surrounded by goits! Holly, you’re a goit!

3. Balance of Power

HOLLY: Jean Paul Sartre said hell was being locked forever in a room with your friends.

LISTER: Holly, all his mates were French.

CHEN: Ah, you've got no chance with her. You're just too ugly.

LISTER: Listen, hadron head, I've got no big thing about Kristine Kochanski!

RIMMER: Good evening, you stupid, stinking, festering, gimboïd of a cat.

RIMMER: Navigation officer? Yes, I remember her. Snooty cow.

RIMMER: Lister! Rise and shine, el slobbo!

RIMMER: I've got the arm of a Danish moron.

RIMMER: I don't want your fish, you stupid cat.

RIMMER: Idiot.

RIMMER: Holly, that's an order! You stupid ugly goit.

RIMMER: Where is Lister, the little worm?

RIMMER: You seriously believe a piece of fungus like you has got the stuff to become an officer? You've got the brains of diarrhea and the breeding of a maggots.

RIMMER: But a chef? A white-hatted ponce?

RIMMER: Of course you're tense, you rectum-faced pygmy!

RIMMER: Smeg off, dishwasher-breath!

RIMMER: Look at you, Lister. Obnoxious, ruthless, single-minded, insensitive. You're more like me than I am.

4. Waiting For God

HOLLY [quoting Hollister]: "Astoundingly zealous. Possibly mad. Probably has more teeth than brain cells. Promotion prospects: comical."

RIMMER: I always hated that pus-head Hollister.

RIMMER: You moron.

RIMMER: It's a yo-yo, you modo.

CAT: Why sure I do, grease stain!

CAT: Listen, you stupid monkey, Cloister's another name for... for God!

CAT: Then I gotta ask you the ultimate question. If you're God, why that face?

CAT: What's wrong with your face? It's upside down and inside out, that's what's wrong with it.

RIMMER: Ah, the chance to meet an intelligent life form, after 18 weeks alone with you.

LIISTER: Oh, Rimmer, he's such a smeghead, man.

RIMMER: So you're saying, Lister, you're an intergalactic, pus-filled cold sore! At last, Lister, we agree on something.

RIMMER: Look, I'm sick of hearing about these stupid cats!

RIMMER: *Bastard!*

RIMMER: Yes, come on, you gimboïd!

5. Confidence and Paranoia

HOLLY: The highest form of life in the universe is Man and the lowest is a man who works for the post office.

RIMMER: Look at you, you're turning into a sad, middle-aged woman.

RIMMER: She could've said, "No, you're a filthy, stinking, loathsome, disgusting object I wouldn't be seen dead with in a plague pit."

RIMMER: Shut up, you stupid moggy.

PARANOIA: So how are you anyway? Isn't that a huge spot appearing on your so-called face? My god, you've gotten fat, haven't you? Must be all that lager. Bet you've got a terminal disease. Always happens to the people who least expect it.

RIMMER: You're insane.

RIMMER: The "H" stands for "Hologram." I happen to be dead.

CONFIDENCE: Couldn't happen to a more deserving guy.

RIMMER: You followed me, you goit!

6. Me²

RIMMER 1: No more *you* and your stupid, annoying face. No more *you* and your stupid, annoying habits.

LISTER: I nearly needed brain surgery!

RIMMER: What brains?

RIMMER 1 and RIMMER 2 simultaneously: Goit.

LISTER: He's a total lunatic.

HOLLY: No, you can't. You haven't got a clue. You're useless.

RIMMER 2: You've got a sponge for a backbone! No wonder father hated you!

RIMMER 1: You're a filthy, smegging, lying, smegging liar!

RIMMER 2: Face facts, man, nobody likes you! Not even Mummy!

RIMMER 2: *I said Mr. Gaz-paaaaacho, deafie!!!*

RIMMER 2: *Shut up, you dead git!*

RIMMER 1: *Stop your foul whining, you filthy piece of distended rectum!!*

RIMMER 1: Excuse me, I can't see through the back of your stupid, curly-haired, sticky-outy-eared head.

RIMMER 2: Don't forget to write, you great nancy!

LISTER: Aw, come on. You're not a nothing.
CAT: He is.

SEASON 2

1. Kryten

LISTER: Rimmer, you've been doing Esperanto for eight years. How come you're so utterly useless?

RIMMER: Well, unlike you, Lister, I have ambitions. I'm not prepared to sit around all day polishing my space-bike so I can go joyriding through some asteroid belt. 'Cause I'm not a gimp!

RIMMER: Look at you. You're absolutely pathetic. You're really trying, aren't you? You're wearing all your least smeggy things.

LISTER: And what about you? You look like Clive of India! Or the one whose mum does use new biological Biz!

RIMMER: Remember those two little brunettes from supplies? And I told them I worked in stores and they were really interested and asked me exactly what I did there.

LISTER: And I said you were a shelf.

RIMMER: Exactly! And I suggested a little trip to Titan Zoo and you said, "Ooh he's taking you home to meet his mum already!"

RIMMER: Or what about the nickname I had at school?

LISTER: What? "Bonehead"?

LISTER: Get out of town! Your nickname was never "Ace"! Maybe "Ace-hole".

RIMMER: Smeg off, dog food face!

KRYTEN: That is my purpose -- to serve and have no regard for myself.

LISTER: You're beginning to sound like my mum...

KRYTEN: That's easy for you to say, Mister David. You're a human.

RIMMER: Only just.

LISTER: "Mister Arnold" isn't his name. His name's "Rimmer". Or "Smeghead". Or "Dinosaur Breath" or "Molecule Mind". And on a really special occasion when you want to be really mega-polite to him, Kryten, we're

talking *mega*-polite, in most exceptional circumstances, you can call him "Arsehole".

LISTER: (mimicking Kryten) "Yes, Mister Arnold, sir." You're a total Gwendolyn, do you know that, Kryten?

KRYTEN: Dinosaur Breath! Molecule Mind! Smeg-for-brains!

2. Better Than Life

LISTER: Philistines! I mean how can you re-make Cassablanca?

RIMMER: Close? I hated him. I detested his fat, stupid guts, the pop-eyed, balding git.

LISTER: It's Marilyn Monroe, you gimp.

RIMMER: Who is that? Just because some hoity-toity, gonad brain gimp knows an Admiral, does he have to broadcast it?

RIMMER'S DAD: I just wanted to say -- You're a total smeghead!

LISTER: You're a total dinglebat, aren't you?

RIMMER: I'm sorry!

CAT: Yeah! We were having a great time until you came along with your diseased brain.

LISTER: You're a bozo!

3. Thanks For The Memory

LISTER: I suppose it's because you *are* a total smeghead.

RIMMER: What about all the time I spent licking up to Todhunter even though he was a total gimp? And Captain Hollister? Mr. Fat Bastard 2044.

HOLLY: Here I am trying to do the comprehensive, nay, definitive A-Z of the entire universe with street names, post offices, and little steeples and everything and some git's been fiddling with it!

CAT: Ok, which one of you chimpanzees did this?

CAT: What are you talking about, grease stain?

RIMMER: Right, smeg brain, prepare to die!

4. Stasis Leak

RIMMER: With respect, sir, you've got your head right up your big fat arse.

LISTER: You ripped up and ate his wife's photograph.

RIMMER: I didn't know it was his wife. I thought it was a publicity shot from "Planet Of The Apes."

CAT: There's a wise old Cat saying which I think applies in this situation. It goes: "What are you talking about, dog-breath?"

RIMMER: That little lemming broke my heart. The little git completely ruined my helicopter wallpaper.

CAT: Where's Alphabet-Head?

CAT [looking down at the guy in the shower]: Don't worry, it's personality that counts.

PAST RIMMER: Did you indeed? How sad for you, Captain Paxo!

CAT: Hey, she's not as stupid as we thought!

LISTER: Why do women always leave me for total smegheads?

CAT: What is this, a meeting of the ugly convention?

LISTER: Have I always been such a smeg-head? Or did I change?

LISTER: Smeg head.

FUTURE LISTER [through the door]: And you.

5. Queeg

LISTER: You're a piece of dirty, filthy, cheating scum, aren't you?

LISTER: What's wrong with you, Holly?

RIMMER: He's computer-senile, that's what's wrong with him.

RIMMER: You're about as much use as a condom machine in the Vatican.

RIMMER: You are a total, total... a word has yet to be invented to describe how totally whatever-it-is you are, but you are one. And a total, total one at that!

CAT: I can't believe I'm doing this! Look at me, I'm disgusting! I look like you in your best clothes!

CAT: Yeah. Queeg has got to go! Look what he's done to my cuticles! The man is a maniac!

QUEEG: And you two suckers! Stop shirking and get working!

LISTER: Steady on, Holly. This guy's a nutter.

CAT: Bye-bye, Baldy!

QUEEG: Okay, suckers, get this into your stupid thick heads.

6. Parellel Universe

CAT: Say what, Goalpost Head?

LISTER: What was wrong with her?

RIMMER: Nothing.

LISTER: C'mon, a girl agrees to go out with you, and there was nothing wrong with her?

LISTER: You're a sad weasel of a man, you know that, Rimmer?

HOLLY: It could be something even more incredible, like perhaps Ringo was a really *good* drummer.

ARLENE: What's wrong with that? You're not one of those boring masculinists, are you?

CAT: Augh! What kind of toothpaste does he use?! Rotting meat flavour?

CAT: Man, I could smell you if you was on Mars!

ARLENE: Frigid!

CAT: You're a great conversationalist, you know that?

DOG: I am? But I ain't said nothing yet.

CAT: Yeah, that's what I like best.

RIMMER: That is the most awful woman I've ever met.

LISTER: She's you.

RIMMER: She's absolutely repugnant.

RIMMER: Nonsense. She's maladjusted. Trust my luck to wind up with El Weirdo while you trap off with the one with the juicy jugs.

RIMMER: What's the other one like?

LISTER: Totally gross. She's unbelievable. She tried to impress me by drinking six pints of Lager then belching the whole of "Yankee Doodle Dandy".

RIMMER: You pieces of filth. How could you commit an act of carnal knowledge?

DEB: No offence, but you're not exactly Mr. Difficult-to-pull, are you? Talk about a pushover!

LISTER: Oh that's rich coming from Miss Yo-yo knickers!

ARLENE: I hope you get pregnant, you cheap little tart!



SEASON 3

1. Backwards

RIMMER: What period in *history*, dingleberry-breath?

CAT: The way I see it, if Goalpost Head and Freak Face want to get themselves lost, that's their bag!

MAN [subtitled]: You scoundrels! Return my bike immediately!

MAN [in actuality, in reverse]: You robbing bastards, that's our tandem!

CAT: Bye, suckers! You lost your bike!

CAT: This is entertainment to these people? It's pathetic!
LISTER: They're Bulgarian - they have very simple tastes.

CAT: I got it - it's a moron convention!

RIMMER: As each year passes you get younger and younger until you become a newborn baby. Then you go back inside your mother, who goes back inside her mother, and so on, until eventually we all become one glorious whole!

LISTER: Rimmer, you already are one glorious hole!

LISTER: Okay, okay! But look at the flipside of the coin. It's not all good. Take someone like, say... St. Francis of Assisi. In this universe, he's the petty-minded little sadist who goes around maiming small animals! Or Santa Claus, what a bastard! He's the big fat git who sneaks down chimneys and steals all the kids' favorite toys!

MANAGER [in reverse]: You are a stupid, square-headed, bald git aren't you?

MANAGER [in reverse]: I'm addressing the one prat in the country who's bothered to get hold of this recording, turn it round and actually work out the rubbish I'm saying! What a sad life he's got!

MANAGER [in reverse]: Frankly, your act's crap anyway, anybody could have done it. I hate the lot of you,
BOLLOCKS TO YOU!

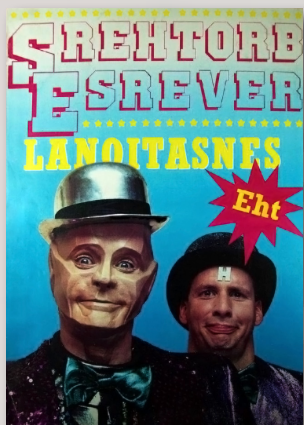
GUY [in reverse]: You bloody bastards!

CAT: What's the matter with him?

MAN [in reverse]: You've unscoffed my sodding pie!

LISTER: I think he's a bit T'd off 'cos we've just uneaten his pie.

LISTER: Tight git!



2. Marooned

LISTER: And you never paid me back. You're tighter than an Italian waiter's keks.

LISTER: It's so ironic, when deep down you're such a basic, natural coward.

LISTER: It's French, you doink.

LISTER: Are you trying to say I've got a big bum?

RIMMER: Big? It's like two badly-parked Volkswagens.

3. Polymorph

KRYTEN: Oh, and, er, who's that, there? and old girlfriend, Mr Arnold, sir?

RIMMER: Hardly.

KRYTEN: Ah, no. Not really your type, I suppose - silly old trout like that.

KRYTEN: Oh, how can I forget it, sir? I compared your mother to a foolish, aged, blubbery fish! I said she was a simple-minded, scaly old piscine! I estimated she was an ugly, lungless marine animal with galloping senility! A putrid amphibious gillbreather with with less brains than a mollusc!

LISTER: Come on, then! All of you, slags!

CAT: Idiot.

KRYTEN: Oh, screw you, hadron-head!

KRYTEN: Oh, look! It's Bonehead's mum.

KRYTEN: Look at him! You can't trust his opinion - he's got no anger. He's a total dork!

LISTER: I'll nut the smegger to oblivion!

KRYTEN: Has anyone ever told you that you are a disgusting, pus-filled bubo who has all the wit, charm and self-possession of an Alsatian dog after a head-swap operation?

LISTER: Listen, you bunch of tarts, it's clobbering time!

LISTER: Last one alive's a wet ponce. Who's with me?

KRYTEN: Maybe if I hand you guys over, it'll let me go. Move it, suckers!

LISTER: Come on, you chicken. Show us your slobbery chops, and we'll blow them off.

4. Bodyswap

RIMMER: Look, you stupid woman, we'll explain later.

CAT: Well done, sphinx face.

RIMMER: Last week when there was that lights failure in the engine room, your silhouette was cast onto the wall.

I got the fright of my life. I thought it was Alfred Hitchcock.
LISTER: Are you saying I've got a gut?
RIMMER: You have got more gut than a Turkish butcher's shop window.

RIMMER: You've reached that age, Lister. When you're younger you can eat what you like, drink what you like and still climb into your 26 inch waist trousers and zip them closed. Then you reach that age - 24, 25 - your muscles give up they wave a little white flag and then without any warning at all, you're suddenly a fat bastard.

LISTER [in Rimmer's body]: This hat is smeggin' stupid. I look like Captain Emerald.

CAT: Hey! What are you doin' dressed like that? Why do you want to look like Goalpost Head? Have you flipped? You want to model yourself on a man who has ears so large that they can pick up satellite TV? Why do you want to look like that smeg head Rimmer for?!

RIMMER [in Lister's body]: Ha ha ha! Chickens!

LISTER [in Rimmer's body]: You Bastard!

LISTER: Oh, look. It's captain chloroform.

KRYTEN: I *had* to obey him. It's in my programming to obey all humans. No matter how insane.

CAT [in Rimmer's body]: I was asleep, okay? Next thing I know, Plastic Percy here puts a sponge on my face and out go the lights.



5. Timeslides

LISTER: I'm sick of you and your silly green suits, I'm sick of your stupid flared nostrils. I'm sick of the way you always smile when you're being insulted.

RIMMER: God, he was thick. Thickie Holden, we used to call him. "Hello, Thickie! How's your acne, Thickie?"

RIMMER: How can that be? The most desirable woman in the western hemisphere and Thickie Holden, a spotty little gimp who used to blow off the bed covers every time we had cauliflower cheese!

LISTER: Ignore him! He's a complete and total nutter! And

he's only got one testicle!

LISTER: If I can go back and fix things so that I don't join the Space Corps, don't sign up with Red Dwarf, I can create an alternate existence, a normal existence, back on Earth. I won't be stuck with your ugly mush for the next 3 million years.

YOUNG LISTER: Hey, what happened to him? His face - it's grotesque, isn't it? Has he had an accident? He looks like he spent three weeks with his head jammed in a lift! It's totally shady!

LISTER: How can I say this without giving offense? You don't make it 'cos ... you're crap.

YOUNG LISTER: Oh, and how would you know, grandad? You're too old to receive what we're trying to transmit!

LISTER: I'm you, you dork!

YOUNG LISTER: Too old and too crypto-fascist.

LISTER: Will you stop saying everything's crypto-fascist? You make me sound like I was a complete git!

CAT: Oh, give up! The guy's an idiot!

LISTER: He's me!

CAT: Exactly!

LISTER: Throw him out, Gilbert. He's a nutter.

RIMMER: Useless. Didn't listen. Didn't even recognise me. Just thought I was some neurotic, deranged, crazy madman.

HOLLY: You sure he didn't recognise you?

RIMMER: Holly, though it pains me dearly, I'll be having to say, "Ta-ta." Ta-Ta, to your stupid gormless face.

6. The Last Day

JIM REAPER: Greetings. As you are no doubt aware, your Kryten Series 3 Mechanoid is nearing the end of its useful service life. It can hardly have escaped your attention that he is slow, stupid, crudely designed, and quite amazingly ugly.

LISTER: I'd be smegged off. I'd be mad as hell, man. If some git in a white coat designed me to croak just so that he could sell his new android with go-faster stripes.

CAT: Okay, the soup's made, Holly's working on the juice, Goalpost Head is working on the invitations...

CAT: Get this pile of junk outta here.

[Hudzen 10's screen view] LISTER. Homo Sapiens. Barely human. WHAT THE HELL!

RIMMER: You're a very rude man.

LISTER: he's a total nutter!

HUDZEN: Time's up, tin can!

TO BE CONTINUED...





BUFFY: TWENTY-ONE YEARS ON!

"In every generation there is a Chosen One. She alone will stand against the vampires, the demons and the forces of darkness. She is the Slayer."

ON October 31, 1999, I decided to check out a TV show called *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*, which was being shown on BBC2.

After a break in transmission, due to Sky having the principal rights, BBC2 were restarting, appropriately, from *Halloween*, the sixth episode of the second season.

I'd never been a fan of vampire or teen fiction, while science fiction had always been my thing rather than horror. *Blake's 7* and *Doctor Who* were my favourite shows. But I quickly found out that *Buffy The Vampire Slayer* transcended any stereotype or pigeon-hole and was simply a great show. It was also clear that it owed a great deal to Classic *Doctor Who*, a compliment that would be repaid when Russell T Davies became showrunner of resurrected *Who* in the mid-noughties.

In addition, *BTVS* wasn't just a show about a bunch of High School kids. It was a show about growing up and finding your place in the world.

In late 1999, I was 26 years old, and like many, still had a great deal of growing up still to do, because it's not a case of turning 18 or 21 or whatever and suddenly you becoming a different person. It doesn't happen. You're still the same person, but you do mature, and your attitudes change over time. Plus finding your place in the world is something that

evolves over your entire life. I could empathise a lot with *BTVS* in 1999 – I still can now.

I thought *Halloween* was a top episode, while the following week, *Lie To Me*, was even better. *BTVS* creator Joss Whedon wrote and directed the latter episode (he usually took the director's chair whenever he penned an episode), and completely re-wrote the former.

Soon, I was catching up on the programme in every way that was possible – quite often via the VHS box sets. By September 2001, I had 100 episodes available to me (the first five seasons) and had already watched many of the earlier episodes multiple times.

I've re-watched *BTVS* several times since. Watching the 144 episodes for the first time in almost five years, starting on the 20th anniversary of when I first saw the show, seemed an opportunity too good to miss.

In this issue, I will look back at the opening three seasons, which form the High School phase of *BTVS*. In the next issue, I will focus on Seasons Four and Five, before then concluding with Seasons Six and Seven.



Sarah Michelle Gellar stars as Buffy the Vampire Slayer

(1.1) WELCOME TO THE HELLMOUTH

(Part 1 of a two-part story) by Joss Whedon

The perfect introduction to the series, as Buffy Summers starts life at Sunnydale High School, and we're introduced to her world.

Buffy, fellow sophomore students Xander and Willow, and school librarian Giles (also Buffy's new Watcher) are three-dimensional characters from the off. By the end, it feels like we've known them for years – not just over 40 minutes.

Right from the pre-title sequence, it's obvious that this will be a retelling of vampire legends with a post-modern and subversive twist. A cocksure boy and a stammering girl break into the school, only for her (Dara) to turn into the blood sucking fiend rather than him.

So many different shows start with a character having their first day at a new job, or school, or whatever, and *BTVS* is no different. It's Buffy's first day at her new school, since being kicked out of previous one and moving to Sunnydale with her mother.

Buffy's scene with the touchy-feely Principal Flutie is a delight, as he rips up her old report card and then glues it back together, when he finds out about her rather colourful past.

I guess if you really wanted to nick-pick, then the vampires are a bit clichéd. They are throughout all of Season One. However, this makes for a nice contrast between modern Buffy and the ancient vampires, so it turns a potential weakness into a strength.

This is simply a textbook first episode. There's a lot of exposition, without it ever feeling clunky, sets such as the school library and the Bronze (the local club) are introduced, and both the horror and humour of the series are established.

The cast are brilliant from the off, with Sarah Michelle Gellar putting in a fantastic central performance, as 16-year-old Buffy tries to juggle her social life at her new school alongside her duties as the Chosen One. Flawless. (10/10)



Welcome to the Hellmouth: Buffy confronts her destiny as The Chosen One

(1.2) THE HARVEST

(Part 2 of a two-part story) by Joss Whedon

BTVS's opening tale is concluded with another very strong installment.

Again, there's a lot of exposition, but also some nice scenes – I love the one where Willow outsmarts Cordelia and Harmony, to get them to delete their computer programme after they are mean about Buffy.

Arguably, it does become a bit of a run-around in the middle, when Buffy and Xander go down into the sewers, only to escape again. Although this is to reveal the big shock – that Jesse, Xander's close friend, is now a vampire.

Apparently, Joss Whedon wanted to make it even more of a shock by including Eric Balfour in the opening credits for the first two episodes, but at this point in the show's history, there wasn't enough money to film an additional set of titles.

The strength of *BTVS* is already the inter-action between the regulars. And here they are presented with their first apocalyptic threat, as the Master vampire attempts to rise. There's a nice conclusion as Buffy doesn't just grind the vampires into dust; she outwits Luke on the way to dusting him and stopping the Harvest. (9/10)



Buffy faces the terrors of The Harvest

(1.3) WITCH by Dana Reston

"Let me make sure I have this right. This witch is casting horrible and disfiguring spells so that she can become a cheerleader?"

BTVS's first standalone episode is an absolute treat.

Following the opening two-parter (transmitted as a single, feature-length episode in the US), we now settle into the rest of Season One, with a few arc stories, but mostly Monster-Of-The-Week standalone tales.

Witch is a trailblazer for much of what is to come. The big metaphor for the first season is 'High School is Hell'; quite literally at Sunnydale High School!

On this occasion, *Witch* deals with parental pressure, plus the wish by some to relive their youth through their children.

The plot, which involves a witch using her powers to get onto the school cheerleading team, stays just the right side of absurd, even when a body-swap is revealed; the cast playing it with absolute conviction, and a genuine threat to Buffy's life. It's the first episode to feature witchcraft, later to become a staple of *BTVS*.

There's some nice stuff between Buffy and her mum, where Joyce Summers doesn't really understand her 16-year-old daughter, but behind it all, there's a loving relationship. Kristine Sutherland and Sarah Michelle Gellar are so well cast as mother and daughter.

It also has a memorable conclusion, with Catherine Madison, a far cry from Joyce, well and truly hoist on her own petard, and stuck inside her own cheerleading trophy. It's rather creepy as we hear her stifled cry and see her eyes darting around.

It's massive fun, and a great example of why I'm so fond of *BTVS's* opening season. (9/10)

(1.4) TEACHER'S PET by David Greenwalt

I'm a sucker for Xander-based episodes and this is the first of those.

The opening dream sequence is very funny, and exactly the stuff that teenage boys do fantasise about, and then poor Xander falls for the new supply biology teacher, in reality a preying She-Mantis on the hunt for virgins to lay her eggs in.

There's some nice character stuff along the way. In just a single scene before his murder, Dr Gregory

makes an impact on Buffy as the first teacher - apart from Giles - to encourage her and not treat her like a felon. And there's the first signs of a budding romance between Buffy and the mysterious Angel.

The She-Mantis creature itself looks like something from *Doctor Who's* original run (i.e. not very convincing), but the plot is sound enough. (8/10)



Xander's crush on his teacher goes awry—someone has bitten off more than they can chew!

1.5) NEVER KILL A BOY ON THE FIRST DATE by Rob Des Hotel & Dean Batali

"I'll just jump in my time machine, go back to the twelfth century and ask the vampires to postpone their ancient prophecy for a few days while you take in dinner and a show."

Arc-based story, which is a bit flimsy on a strong individual plot.

But it's got some nice developments between Buffy and Giles, as the Slayer and her Watcher learn the need to juggle her duties around her trying to live a normal life - in this case, her date with Owen.

There's also a nice bit of misdirection about the identity of the Anointed One - as it's not the big, scary, preachy vampire after all. (7/10)

(1.6) THE PACK

by Matt Kiene & Joe Reinkemeyer

"Why couldn't Xander be possessed by a puppy or some ducks?"

Xander is possessed by a hyena after a trip to the zoo and becomes mean and nasty to everyone. That includes poor Willow, who is infatuated by him and devastated by his different behaviour. He's also part of a group that eats Herbert the pig, the new school mascot.

It's an off-the-wall take on the 'survival of the fittest' trope; but it gets rather dark at one point, when Xander tries to assault Buffy.

At least he isn't responsible for the death of Principal Flutie, who suffers a rather grisly fate, eaten by the other possessed students.

The Pack wouldn't work without a top performance from Nicholas Brendon in portraying mean and moody Xander. He delivers this perfectly - it's all in the eyes. A largely fun but sometimes grim tale. (9/10)

(1.7) ANGEL

by David Greenbelt

"I've killed a lot of vampires. I've never hated one before."

One of the main problems of becoming a fan of *BTVS* midway through the second season is that I already knew the major revelation when I first watched this episode. This sees Angel, the mysterious stranger to whom Buffy has taken a shine, finally come out of the shadows, and a passionate kiss with Buffy brings out the beast in him – he's a vampire.

It meant it took me a few times to fully appreciate *Angel* and to see how it is pretty much a dry run for the magnificent second season.

It's where all the shades of grey start to come into the series. Until now, it's been clear-cut - Buffy is good; vampires and demons are bad and must be killed.

Angel is also where it's revealed that vampires can still love. Darla, Angel's 'sire', still loves him, while Angel loves Buffy. Even the Master shows more emotion than before – he talks of Darla and Angel as "family".

The love triangle between Buffy, Angel and Darla is at the core of *Angel*. Darla realises the way to rattle Buffy is through her mum, and pragmatically attempts to blow Buffy's brains out, rather than fight her.

In killing Darla, Angel proves which side he is on, while the revelation is also made that he is a tormented vampire with a soul. All-in-all, this is a game-changer. (10/10)

(1.8) I, ROBOT... YOU JANE

by Ashley Gable & Thomas A. Swyden

I'm well aware this episode gets a pasting from *BTVS* fandom, but it's not really deserved.

The pre-titles sequence is fantastic, with Moloch trapped in a book in 15th century Italy, but that book then being scanned into a computer in the library of modern-day Sunnydale High. Meanwhile, it's highly plausible that Willow could be taken in by an internet stalker.

We're also introduced to the wonderful character of Jenny Calendar, the computer science teacher, who has Rupert Giles in her sights from the off. These two characters work against each other so well, and it makes up for the fact that Jenny's students are somewhat stereotypical computer nerds.



Buffy and Angel: A gamechanger episode...
And plenty of material there for a spin-off, surely?

The idea of a demon in the internet is a good one, even if some of the terminology is a bit dated, while there's a great final scene where Buffy, Willow and Xander realise any chances of a successful love life on the Hellmouth are doomed. (8/10)

(1.9) THE PUPPET SHOW

by Rob Des Hotel & Dean Batali

"My predecessor, Mr. Flutie, may have gone in for all that touchy-feely relating nonsense, but he was eaten. You're in my world now. And Sunnydale has touched and felt for the last time."

A really weird episode, where any description makes it sound daft. Yes, it's the one where Buffy and pals are in search of a murderer and find out that's there more than meets the eye to a ventriloquist's dummy.

But it does somehow work. It's hard not to like Sid the Demon Hunter, the said cursed ventriloquist's dummy, with his line in corny, dated jokes.

Meanwhile, Giles in charge of the school talent show is a hoot – most of the acts are truly dreadful, including Cordelia's singing. Buffy, Xander and Willow get in on the act, during a unique tag scene that plays alongside the end credits.

Plus, of course, there's the introduction of Principal Snyder, who is the antithesis of Flutie and takes an instant dislike to Buffy Summers. He's the principal who hates children and a walking quote machine – a complete delight.

Oddball, weird, but strangely brilliant. (9/10)

1.10) NIGHTMARES

by David Greenwalt (story by Joss Whedon)

A familiar trope, with people's nightmares coming true, but it's very nicely realised.

Some of the living nightmares aren't effective as others – surely Xander's fear should be about being fully naked in front of class rather than with his



Nightmare scenario! Buffy vamps it up...

underwear on? It could have been portrayed- with a little camera trickery!

One of the crueller, but most powerful, features the first appearance of Hank Summers, Buffy's father. No-one wants to be a disappointment to their dad, or be told that they've caused the break-up of their parents' marriage. Sarah Michelle Gellar excels in this scene.

In the meantime, Xander punches a clown, while Cordelia has a bad hair day in a wonderfully comic sequence.

We then see a series of dream horrors, a couple of which are revisited later in the show - Buffy's fear of being buried alive and Giles' dread of Buffy dying. These are followed by Buffy's nightmare of coming back as a vampire, which is arguably, also hinted at in *Prophecy Girl*.

It's the most compelling part of *Nightmares* – followed by the resolution when Buffy persuades 12-year-old Billy to confront his fear and he wakes up from his coma, while his kiddie league baseball coach is arrested for beating him up.

There's also a nice teaser of what's to come when Buffy and the Master meet twice – once in her dream at the start of the episode, but then face-to-face as Buffy's living nightmares allow the Master to temporarily rise. (8/10)

1.11) OUT OF MIND, OUT OF SIGHT

by Ashley Gable & Thomas A. Swyden (from a story by Joss Whedon)

Season One is all about 'High School is Hell'. This episode is very much at the heart of that, featuring a girl who found herself so ignored, she slipped into invisibility.

It focuses on the insecurity that many of us had while at school. We felt everyone else was the in-crowd and considered ourselves to be outsiders. It's part of human nature, and it's why *Out Of Mind, Out Of Sight* strikes such a chord.

Buffy, Willow and Xander consider themselves outsiders, especially compared to popular Cordelia, but in the case of Marcie, it's amplified to extremes.

The monochrome flashbacks are very effective, while, early on, the flute playing through the corridors of Sunnydale High creates a haunting atmosphere. The episode also kick-starts the redemption of Cordelia Chase, the main subject of Marcie's revenge.

Angel re-appears for the first time since the traumatic events of his eponymous episode, and Giles remarks

to him: "A vampire in love with a Slayer! It's rather poetic - in a maudlin sort of way."

Another plus: it's got a wonderful final scene, as invisible Marcie begins her new life working for the FBI - her first lesson will be in 'Assassination and Infiltration'. (9/10)

(1.12) PROPHECY GIRL

by Joss Whedon

Joss Whedon turns director for the first time and shows real flair, while his script is big, end-of-season stuff, with an apocalyptic threat and a sense of building tension.

Xander's advances are turned down by Buffy, while Buffy finds she is prophesied to die, which results in a great performance from Sarah Michelle Gellar, as 16-year-old Buffy first rejects, then accepts, her destiny.

In later seasons, this story would have unfolded over two episodes to give it more chance to breathe – if there's one criticism that could be levelled, it's that the ending seems rushed.

Events do happen in quick succession. Buffy is killed by the Master in his lair, the Hellmouth is opened (it's amusing that it's right under the school library, without Giles ever realising), Buffy is given CPR by Xander and revived, and she destroys the Master in their rematch on the roof of the library - all in the space of the final ten minutes.

There's a tantalising tease that Buffy may have come back to 'life' as a vampire (which would have, no doubt, led to all sorts of theories had there not been a renewal), while this is a powerful and strong end-of-season finale. (9/10)

SEASON ONE OVERVIEW:

It's quite often considered one of the weakest seasons of **BTVS**, but that's not in my thoughts at all. As a mid-season replacement (hence the shorter run), it hits its stride remarkably quickly – maybe because Joss Whedon had realised how a TV version could develop ever since the rather hit-and-miss film starring Kristy Swanson and Donald Sutherland from 1992.

The show has a strong, female empowerment message from the off. Whedon has often been quoted about how he wanted to subvert the "the little blonde girl who goes into a dark alley and gets killed in every horror movie" trope, by making her the hero.

I like the mix of standalone (monster of the week) and arc episodes, plus there's a real emphasis on each of the leads in this first season, since there are fewer characters about. Buffy, Xander, Willow and Giles are all so well characterised and acted.

The relationships within the opening season are nice and simple. Willow fancies Xander; Xander fancies Buffy; Buffy fancies Angel; Angel does love Buffy in return, but realises it's not a clever idea.

At this point, each episode is very much its own entity, and the clear message that Joss Whedon is communicating is 'High School is hell!'. There are metaphors galore, as Buffy has to slay her demons in quite a literal sense.

Maybe the Master isn't as three-dimensional as subsequent Big Bads. But the way he's kept trapped in an underground church, means he doesn't end up defeated every week.

Season position: 3rd.



LEFT:
Buffy prepares to face the Master in the climax to Season One

RIGHT:
The Master comes uncomfortably close to Buffy



SEASON TWO:

(2.1) WHEN SHE WAS BAD

by Joss Whedon

"Hi guys! Miss me?"

BTVS swaggers into its second season with an air of confidence. Buffy is not quite feeling herself-and is rotten to her friends: in one scene in the Bronze she manages to upset Xander, Angel and Willow all in one go.

Sarah Michelle Gellar has to play Buffy as a hero 99% of the time, but she has a much wider range than that. She does seductive and bitchy so well - as anyone who has watched the film *Cruel Intentions* will testify.

It turns out there is unfinished business with the Master, before his possible return is thwarted once and for all – with Buffy getting over her issues by smashing several vampires and the Master's bones into dust.



Buffy—Season 2

It's such a shame that Willow and Xander are interrupted in the opening scene, by a vampire and then Buffy, before they have a chance to kiss, and the moment is lost.

A strong re-introduction to the series, with the usual nice character moments - the scenes between Principal Snyder and Giles are a hoot - while it sets the template for future season openers. (8/10)

(2.2) SOME ASSEMBLY REQUIRED

by Ty King

BTVS does the *Bride Of Frankenstein* in a rather wonderful homage, which sees the villains of the piece after the head of Cordelia.

There's some marvellous character stuff, especially when Jenny Calendar wraps Rupert Giles around her little finger as she manipulates him into taking her on a date to an American Football game.

In fact, the whole episode is driven by its characters – even misguided science nerd Chris, the brother of the undead Daryl, is portrayed with sympathy. And in the best traditions of the genre it is borrowing from, it all ends in a fight and a fire in the science laboratory. (8/10)

2.3) SCHOOL HARD

by David Greenwalt (story by Joss Whedon & David Greenwalt)

Spike and Drusilla walk into *BTVS*, and the whole show goes up another notch. The bad guys are now as interesting and cool as the good guys. The couple were based on the tragic pair of punk rockers - Sid Vicious and his girlfriend Nancy Spungen. We've seen that vampires are capable of love, but this is the first time we see a vampire couple very much in love with each other.

Spike is far more contemporary than other vampires seen until this point, and far more dangerous (he's already bagged two Slayers). His only weakness seems to be his love for the mad, demented Drusilla.

Meanwhile, Buffy is desperate to keep her mother away from Principal Snyder on Parent Teacher night. She fails, just as Spike and a mob of vampires come smashing into the school, and things go a little *Die Hard* (hence the title) as Buffy attempts to protect teachers, parents and students from their attackers.

Great stuff throughout, concluding with Joyce Summers hitting Spike over the head with a fire axe, and then telling Buffy she's doing fine, because: "I have a daughter who can take care of herself. Who's brave and resourceful and thinks of others in a crisis." Joyce is barricaded in a room for much of the action which prevents her seeing the whole truth.

The final scene sees Spike declare: "From now on, we're going to have a little less ritual and a little more fun around here", as he tosses the child Anointed One into a cage and then hauls him up into the sunlight. *BTVS* will never be quite the same!



Spike and Drusilla make their debut in Season 2

2.4) INCA MUMMY GIRL

by Matt Kiene & Joe Reinkemeyer

Xander's love-life continues to suck. This time, he finds a girl who truly loves him, and she's stunning.

The major problem is, she's not really Buffy's exchange student, but rather an ancient Inca Mummy princess who can only survive by draining the life out of people by kissing them; and sooner rather than later, she's going to have to do that to Xander. Oh well, life on the Hellmouth and all that.

Although it's clearly sign-posted, there's still a tragic ending for the poor Ampata as she eventually crumbles to dust in Xander's arms. Buffy is well aware of the parallels with her own life.

Inca Mummy Girl also marks a turning point for Willow. Seeing Xander with Ampata makes her realise she has to stop waiting for him to show an interest in her. Oz also appears for the first time, performing with his band, Dingo's Ate My Baby, at the Bronze, and he takes an instant shine to the very cute girl in the audience in the Eskimo costume (Willow).

A vastly under-rated episode. (9/10)

2.5) REPTILE BOY

by David Greenwalt

Not an entirely successful episode. Buffy gets drunk after Cordelia takes her along to a frat party where the guys are part of a demon-worshipping cult. These male university students are a bit misogynistic, but I guess that's the point.

But it's worth it, for the scene where Willow tells off Giles and Angel for the way that they've been treating Buffy, leading to some nice scenes at the conclusion, as both make amends.

Oh, and there's also Sarah Michelle Gellar chained to a wall in a very fetching black dress, before Buffy yanks herself free and chops the phallic-like male monster in two. The series has been subtler! (7/10)



Willow and Buffy in costume and character for Halloween

(2.6) HALLOWEEN

by Carl Ellsworth (complete rewrite by Joss Whedon)

The first episode of *BTVS* that I ever saw. It's a delight. It's Halloween night and everyone becomes the characters their costumes are representing, thanks to a spell cast by Ethan Rayne - an old adversary of Rupert Giles - who hints that Giles, whom he calls 'Ripper', has a darker side.

It enables Sarah Michelle Gellar, Nicholas Brendon and Alyson Hannigan to all portray different characters. Buffy is a somewhat useless 18th century girl, and Xander is a soldier, while Willow is a ghost and has to take charge of the group of her amnesiac friends, gaining confidence in herself as a result.

It's tremendous fun, while Spike remains a fab villain, and making Buffy so helpless adds a hint of peril. What's not to like! (10/10)

(2.7) LIE TO ME by Joss Whedon

The best episode so far. Ford, Buffy's old crush from LA, appears on the scene. However, he is dying from a brain tumour, and wants to become a vampire, selling her out to Spike, to achieve it.. Caught up in events are a whole group of foolish young adults who somehow consider vampires as "creatures above us."

It results in some stellar stuff from Sarah Michelle Gellar, especially in her confrontation with Ford, as she tries to make him see sense.

There's also a terrific final scene as Giles comforts Buffy, while she has to stake the Ford vampire as he rises from the grave. The dialogue is just brilliant and demonstrates that Giles is not just Buffy's Watcher, but a fine father figure:

BUFFY: Nothing's ever simple anymore. I'm constantly trying to work it out. Who to love or hate. Who to trust. It's just, like, the more I know, the more confused I get.

GILES: I believe that's called growing up.

BUFFY: I'd like to stop then, OK?

GILES: I know the feeling.

BUFFY: Does it ever get easy?

GILES: You mean life?

BUFFY: Yeah. Does it get easy?

GILES: What do you want me to say?

BUFFY: Lie to me.

GILES: Yes, it's terribly simple. The good guys are always stalwart and true, the bad guys are easily distinguished by their pointy horns or black hats, and we always defeat them and save the day. No one ever dies, and everybody lives happily ever after.

BUFFY: Liar.

We also learn the truth about Drusilla, when Angel reveals to Buffy that he both drove her insane and 'sired' her. (10/10)

2.8) THE DARK AGE

by Dean Batali & Rob Des Hotel

Mild-mannered, tweed-wearing, school librarian Giles has seemed a little too good to be true until now, but his past comes back to haunt him, as it turns out he was a troubled youth who dealt in black magic.

Jenny is put in danger along the way, placing a huge dampener on their budding romance, while there's a return appearance for Ethan Rayne. He may be an old acquaintance of Giles, but he's a complete rotter who is prepared to sacrifice Buffy to save his own skin.

There's a clever resolution worked out by Willow (great to see her becoming more confident with each passing instalment), as Angel's inner demon comes out fighting. (8/10)

2.9) WHAT'S MY LINE (PART 1)

by Howard Gordon & Marti Noxon

It's Career Fair time, but Buffy can't see the point - her destiny already seems mapped out. Meanwhile, Spike has had enough of the Slayer and doesn't want her to get in the way of his plans to restore Drusilla to full health, so he sends for a group of demon bounty hunters, the Order of Taraka.

As the first episode in a two-parter, there's more time available for character moments: for example Angel takes Buffy to an abandoned ice rink. Joss Whedon found it was a hobby of his leading lady, and he decided it should be written into the series as one of Buffy's passions.

Of course, this is *BTVS*, so the ice rink scene ends in a bloody death, after the arrival of the first of the Order of Taraka.

The tension mounts as Giles explains the scale of the threat: "They're a breed apart, Buffy. Unlike vampires they have no earthly desires, but to collect their bounty. They find a target, and they eliminate it. You can kill as many of them as you like, it won't make any difference. Where there's one, there will be another, and another. They won't stop coming until the job is done."

There's so much good stuff here: we have Willow and Oz finally meeting properly and the first appearance of double-dealing bartender, Willy the Snitch.

There's also a marvellous triple cliffhanger. Angel is in danger of getting fried, Xander and Cordelia are unaware that they've just let a bug man into Buffy's house... and a big, big surprise as Buffy fights a young woman who then declares: "*I am Kendra, the Vampire Slayer*". Wow! (9/10)

(2.10) WHAT'S MY LINE (PART 2)

by Marti Noxon

A fine conclusion to this story.

A lot of the early focus is on the sheltered and bookish Kendra, highlighting how her upbringing has been very different to that of Buffy. Buffy first seems a bit jealous, but then ponders if the appearance of a second Slayer - who was activated when Buffy briefly died in *Prophecy Girl* - will allow her to go off and lead a normal life.

By the end of the episode, the two Slayers are getting on famously. Buffy encourages Kendra not to hide away so much, while Kendra explains her views of her 'calling' to Buffy:

KENDRA: You talk about slaying like it's a job. It's not. It's who you are.

BUFFY: Did you get that from your handbook?

KENDRA: From you.

Meanwhile, Xander and Cordelia end up passionately kissing in the middle of an argument, while trying to keep the bug man at bay. They had always bad-mouthed each other just a little too much, plus there had been one or two little hints previously that they fancied each other.

The development of relationships in Season Two always seems so realistic and natural: we also see further scenes between Willow and Oz and the obvious attraction there - this pair are so cute together.

The narrative comes together in a great big fight sequence, as Buffy saves Angel, but not before Drusilla regains her old strength. Though Spike will spend most of the rest of the season in a wheelchair.

A lot of great stuff across both episodes, both plot-wise and character-wise. Marti Noxon proved a great addition to the creative team, and she quickly became Joss Whedon's right-hand woman. (10/10)



The Slayers Unite: Buffy and Kendra

Buffy's had a lot to cope with in previous episodes. But this one demands a tour-de-force from SMG as she demonstrates her character going through states of confusion, bewilderment, devastation, anger and guilt while discovering the truth about what happened to 'her' Angel. In contrast, Drusilla and Spike are delighted to have their Angelus back.

While the human drama takes centre stage, there's also a small matter of the apocalyptic threat posed by the Judge to deal with. "No weapon forged" can stop him. But, as Xander works out, technology has now superseded that prophesy. In a memorable scene, Buffy blows the Judge back into bits with a great big rocket launcher, just as he is about to go on the rampage in the mall.

There's a delightful scene between Giles and Buffy in his car towards the end of *Innocence*, where he refuses to blame her for the turn of events and again proves what a fine father figure he is for Buffy:

GILES: It's not over. I suppose you know that. He'll come after you, particularly. His profile... well, he's likely to strike out at the things that made him the most human.

BUFFY: You must be so disappointed in me.

GILES: No. No, I'm not.

BUFFY: But this is all my fault.

GILES: No. I don't believe it is. Do you want me to wag my finger at you and tell you that you acted rashly? You did. And I can. I know that you loved him. And he has proven more than once that he loved you. You couldn't have known what would happen. The coming months are going to be hard, I suspect, on all of us. But if it's guilt you're looking for, Buffy, I'm not your man. All you will get from me is my support. And my respect.

In later seasons, we get used to Joss Whedon occasionally shaking things up in complete game-changers that have serious consequences for subsequent episodes. This is arguably the first time he does it.

We're left wondering if Giles will ever forgive Jenny for her betrayal, where Xander and Willow will go from here, and most of all, what the future holds for Buffy and how she can deal with the man she loved now that he's turned evil. Intense and brilliant stuff. (10/10)

2.11) TED by David Greenwalt & Joss Whedon

Joyce Summers has a new boyfriend, and Buffy takes an instant dislike to him. Ted, played in great style by John Ritter, clearly has something a bit wrong with him, although he's nice as pie to everyone apart from Buffy.

The tension between Buffy and Ted escalates, until

they fight and he falls down the stairs, apparently dead. Buffy has to come to terms with killing a human being and realise the consequences that she may have to face. It's the first examination of such a topic.

However, in this case, the Season Two arc is about to move into top gear, so a reset button is needed.

Therefore, Ted is actually a deranged robot with a string of dead wives in the closet and Buffy has to destroy him once more.

I think of *Ted* as a "10" until the last ten minutes, as the robot stuff, although it's alright, takes events in a less challenging direction. But it's still a very strong episode. (9/10)

2.12) BAD EGGS by Marti Noxon

This may not have the emotional resonance of many of the episodes around it, but it's still good stuff, as Buffy and Xander are the only ones not possessed by creatures growing out of eggs given out to Sunnydale High students to look after as 'parents'.

It's traditional horror fare, with nearly everyone under mind control and a giant mother creature under the school laying the eggs. A couple of Wild West cowboys are also thrown into the mix, mostly for comic effect.

It's not Joyce's finest hour as she grounds Buffy – surely, she can see the good her daughter is doing? Mind you, even that can't stop Buffy and Angel from growing ever closer, which leads neatly into the next episode... (8/10)



A Mom and Daughter heart-to-heart:
Joyce grounds Buffy

(2.13) SURPRISE (Part 1 of a two-part story) by Marti Noxon

Time to ramp up everything, starting with the opening dream sequence in which Drusilla kills Angel.

Drusilla's plan is soon revealed to be the re-assembling of the scattered pieces of a demon known as the Judge: which is pretty bad for the whole Earth, really. Yup, it's high time for another apocalyptic threat.

It's also Buffy's 17th birthday. Unfortunately for her, Jenny Calendar has hidden motives - she is a descendant of the gypsies who cursed Angelus. She has a plan, related to the Judge, intended just to keep Buffy and Angel apart.

Except that it goes wrong (of course!) and the Judge is assembled. There's a real sense of jeopardy, as Buffy and Angel barely survive a confrontation with him, and after they escape, make love for the first time... at which point, something strange happens to Angel.

It's an outstanding set-up episode. It's got plenty of big moments, with Sarah Michelle Gellar excelling as she always does when presented with emotional scenes, as Buffy fears for Angel's life and then believes that they will be parted.

But it's also got some terrific little moments as well, such as when Oz asks out Willow in delightful fashion - these two are so sweet. *Surprise* has it all. (10/10)

(2.14) INNOCENCE (Part 2 of a two-part story) by Joss Whedon

The biggest metaphor yet - 'I had sex with my boyfriend and he's turned into a monster'. As always with **BTVS**, Buffy's demons are literal - Angel loses his soul and reverts to the callous, evil vampire he once was.

Innocence wouldn't work without some brilliant performances. The biggest surprise is David Boreanaz. Up until now, his casting seemed to be down to providing some nice eye candy for female viewers.

But he pulls off evil, cruel Angel so well - in particular in the scene where he is mocking Buffy over their act at the end of *Surprise*, with lines such as: "You got a lot to learn about men, kiddo. Although I guess you proved that last night", before he snidely calls her a "pro".

By the end of *Innocence* you really hate him and it's quite satisfying when he gets a hard kick in the goolies from Buffy. Actually, let's call him Angelus while he's without a soul - to differentiate the two versions of this vampire.

Another great performance comes from Alyson Hannigan, after a shocked and disgusted Willow discovers Xander and Cordelia kissing in the racks in Giles' library. When Xander tells her: "Willow, we

were just kissing. It doesn't mean that much," she replies: "No. It just means that you'd rather be with someone you hate than be with me."

But pride of place goes to Sarah Michelle Gellar. Joss Whedon once said he put Buffy through as much hell as possible, because he knew it would result in a fantastic performance from his leading lady.

Buffy's had a lot to cope with in previous episodes. But this one demands a tour-de-force from SMG as she demonstrates her character going through states of confusion, bewilderment, devastation, anger and guilt while discovering the truth about what happened to 'her' Angel. In contrast, Drusilla and Spike are delighted to have their Angelus back.

While the human drama takes centre stage, there's also a small matter of the apocalyptic threat posed by the Judge to deal with. "No weapon forged" can stop him. But, as Xander works out, technology has now superseded that prophesy. In a memorable scene, Buffy blows the Judge back into bits with a great big rocket launcher, just as he is about to go on the rampage in the mall.

There's a delightful scene between Giles and Buffy in his car towards the end of *Innocence*, where he refuses to blame her for the turn of events and again proves what a fine father figure he is for Buffy:

GILES: It's not over. I suppose you know that. He'll come after you, particularly. His profile... well, he's likely to strike out at the things that made him the most human.

BUFFY: You must be so disappointed in me.

GILES: No. No, I'm not.

BUFFY: But this is all my fault.

GILES: No. I don't believe it is. Do you want me to wag my finger at you and tell you that you acted rashly? You did. And I can. I know that you loved him. And he has proven more than once that he loved you. You couldn't have known what would happen. The coming months are going to be hard, I suspect, on all of us. But if it's guilt you're looking for, Buffy, I'm not your man. All you will get from me is my support. And my respect.

In later seasons, we get used to Joss Whedon occasionally shaking things up in complete game-changers that have serious consequences for subsequent episodes. This is arguably the first time he does it.

We're left wondering if Giles will ever forgive Jenny for her betrayal, where Xander and Willow will go from here, and most of all, what the future holds for Buffy and how she can deal with the man she loved now that he's turned evil. Intense and brilliant stuff. (10/10)

(2.16) BEWITCHED, BOTHERED AND BEWILDERED by Marti Noxon

Perhaps the very funniest instalment of *BTVS*, as Xander is dumped by Cordelia on Valentine's Day, and then makes Amy Madison - who is following in her mother's footsteps - cast a spell for him.

Of course, the love-spell goes wrong. And to hilarious effect, as every woman in Sunnydale develops a fixation on him - except Cordelia.

This includes Buffy and Willow. And Miss Calendar. And Joyce Summers. Even Drusilla the Vampire. It's glorious stuff, and Nicholas Brendon is so good at comic acting as things quickly get out of hand.

The scene where Buffy tries to seduce Xander is extremely hot - it's no coincidence that voters of FHM magazine voted Sarah Michelle Gellar as the sexiest woman in the world around the time of Season Two.



And then a lovelorn Amy turns Buffy into a rat for much of the episode, so that SMG could go off and host Saturday Night Live (a showcase for comedy on the NBC network in the United States).

There's some nice character development too, as Cordelia shows she's not so shallow, after all. Great episode! (10/10)

(2.17) PASSION by Ty King

"Passion rules us all. And we obey. What other choice do we have?"

An extraordinary piece of television, that turns everything up to an 11. If you're not wiping away a tear or two by the end, then you're not human.

There are two main plot strands - Buffy's concern with the games that Angelus is playing and whether he will go after her mother (which leads to Giles finding a spell to revoke an invitation given to a vampire to enter a home). And Jenny Calendar seeks redemption by attempting to restore the soul to Angelus, a strand that finds Buffy and Willow reflecting:

BUFFY: Every time something like this happens, my first instinct is still to run to Angel. I can't believe it's the same person. He's completely different from the guy that I knew.

WILLOW: Well, sort of, except...

BUFFY: Except what?

WILLOW: You're still the only thing he thinks about.

The drama really kicks off when Angelus finds out Jenny's plan. It leads to the first death of either a regular (or semi-regular) in the show, in a compelling sequence late at night at Sunnydale High.

Even more powerful are the scenes that follow, as Angelus plays a cruel trick on Giles. Discovering flowers and champagne in his apartment, plus an invite to go upstairs, he thinks Jenny wants to make up for events. What he finds upstairs make him drop his champagne glass.

It's chilling, but perfectly written, directed and acted, and shows Angelus' artistry in what he does - however perverted and evil it is.

Apparently, this was Anthony Steward Head's favourite episode, as he explained to the BBC website: "because it was a beautifully shot episode and a beautifully written one." Kudos to writer Ty King and director Michael Gershman.

One of the most effecting sequences occurs without dialogue. It shows Buffy and Willow being told by phone that Jenny is dead, while Angelus watches through the window with a sadistic smile on his face.

Giles then confronts Angelus and tries to kill him. Buffy has to save her Watcher, while the Factory - the vampire base throughout the season until this point - is burnt down. It's worth mentioning the love triangle that has developed between Angelus, Drusilla and the injured Spike - Spike seems to want Giles to kill Angelus.

After they escape, a furious Giles tells Buffy: "Why did you come here? This wasn't your fight!". She decks him with a punch and tells him in a flood of tears: "Are you trying to get yourself killed? I can't do this alone." SMG and Tony Head are on top form throughout *Passion*.

Very high on emotion, and one of the strongest episodes of the entire run. In fact, the quality of the show has now hit the stratosphere - how on Earth did they keep up this quality week-on-week? (10/10)



NEXT ISSUE:
We cover the rest of S2 and S3, concluding
Buffy's time at Sunnydale High

SEASON SEVEN—TRUE GRIT

By

Nick Mays

January 3rd 1970 saw the launch of the most innovative and ground-breaking seasons in *Doctor Who*'s history. After six years of thrilling, but always in black and white, adventures in time and space, the Doctor's activities would now be limited to Earth in the late twentieth century, albeit with a new Doctor and in glorious full colour. However, although the seventh season of the long-running BBC children's/family Saturday teatime drama was new, there was the possibility it could also be the show's last.

As recounted in GTLWR Ish #4 (*Passing the Baton*), the premise of the new season had been devised the previous year by Producer Derek Sherwin and Script Editor Peter Bryant. Faced with the task of producing a new season of *Doctor Who* in colour, with all the technical issues this involved, Sherwin and Bryant also had to tackle several other dilemmas. Not only would they need to re-cast the show's leading man, (Patrick Troughton had signalled his desire to move on at the end of Season Six) they also had to make alien planets and the distant future look realistic in a whole new medium. And the new season would only be 25 weeks long, rather than the 42-44 of previous years. Added to this, although still retaining a faithful following, *Doctor Who*'s ratings had been steadily declining over the preceding couple of years. The glory days of the Daleks attracting audience ratings of over 10 million were long gone (as were the Daleks at that point), and it now averaged around 4.5 million per serial. This was causing some consternation amongst the BBC hierarchy, who were considering whether the show had a future in the BBC's schedules.

Thankfully, there was nothing suitable with which to replace it (although the US import of NBC's *Star Trek* had proved a very useful "filler" between the end of Season Six in June 1969 and the start of Season Seven, it wasn't seen as an in-house BBC-produced replacement). With this in mind, the BBC cautiously gave the go-ahead for Season Seven to be produced, with the proviso that if its ratings did not improve, the show would be axed.

So, Sherwin and Bryant – and subsequently Terrance Dicks who took over from Bryant as Script Editor – devised a whole new premise for the show. The Doctor would be exiled to Earth by his own people, revealed to be the Time Lords, for the crime of interfering in the affairs of other planets

and for stealing a TARDIS. During this time, the TARDIS would be largely disabled and the secret of how to operate it and time travel theorems blocked from the Doctor's memory. To give the Doctor a home base to work from, he would become Scientific Advisor to the military/scientific organisation UNIT – the United Nations Intelligence Taskforce, whose role was to investigate any scientific and alien anomalies and to repel any attempt at alien invasion. As a link to the past – but the only such link – the character of Brigadier Alistair Gordon Lethbridge-Stewart would be brought back as head of UNIT in the UK.¹

Undoubtedly, Sherwin, Bryant and Dicks were influenced by the popular *Quatermass* serials of the mid to late 1950s where the titular Professor was tasked with facing threats from space and also from the Earth itself. All of Season Seven's stories feature some *Quatermass*-like element, from alien invasion, to ancient horrors from the Earth uncovered by scientists. As Script Editor Terrance Dicks drily observed; "... exiling the Doctor to Earth only gave you two story types: Alien Invasion or Mad Scientist."²

acting as an assistant to the Doctor, rather than a companion, and Nicholas Courtney, reprising his role as the Brigadier.³

To apportion the 25 weeks' duration of the season, the stories were split into four; the first of these being a 4 parter and the remaining three, 7 parters. The show's new leading man, in the flamboyant form of 50-year-old Jon Pertwee, was introduced to the nation's press on 7th June 1969. Filming on Season Seven began in September 1969 and ran through to May 1970, finishing just weeks short of the season's end. Pertwee was accompanied by series regulars Caroline John, playing Dr Elizabeth Shaw, a Cambridge scientist acting as an assistant to the Doctor rather than a companion, and Nicholas Courtney, reprising his role as the Brigadier.³

The action in three of the four stories largely takes place, not only in different kinds of scientific research establishment, but also in recognisable, contemporary locations which add realism to proceedings. This is nowhere more apparent than when the Autons, disguised as shop window mannequins, smash their way out of the windows of John Sanders department store in Ealing and start blasting down commuting pedestrians.

Jon Pertwee himself famously remarked in an interview: 'I was always a believer in having threats to Earth happen on Earth, rather than us going off to unknown planets. The simile I always use is it's more alarming coming home and finding a Yeti sitting on your loo in Tooting Bec.'⁴

Ostensibly, the story takes place few years into the (then) future, around 1977, although this isn't made implicit in the series itself.⁵ In the first story, *Spearhead From Space*, the Doctor arrives into exile, collapsing outside his TARDIS in Oxley Woods, having just undergone a forced regeneration. His arrival coincides with a shower of meteorites, which contain a disembodied lifeform known as the Nestene Consciousness. This is then used to animate plastic mannequins called Autons in a bid to conquer the Earth (or at least London and the Home Counties, where most alien invasions seemed to take place). UNIT are already investigating this, the second such "directed" meteor shower, when the Doctor shows up. After some overcoming the initial disbelief from the Brigadier that this strange, tall, white haired fellow is the same Doctor he knew from their previous encounters with the Yeti (*Web of Fear*, 1968) and the Cybermen (*The Invasion*, 1968), the Doctor thwarts the Nestene invasion. The Brigadier asks him to become UNIT's Scientific Advisor and in return he will provide him with a home, including a laboratory and all the equipment he needs to repair the TARDIS. Liz, who had originally been recruited as Scientific Advisor, will become the Doctor's assistant (and presumably Assistant Scientific Advisor).

Following this initial adventure, the Doctor and his UNIT colleagues face down threats from the reptilian Silurians, revived from aeons of hibernation by the nuclear power of a research station in *Doctor Who and the Silurians*⁶. Next, it's a game of cat-and-mouse to find three alien ambassadors who are essentially being weaponised to build up distrust of alien lifeforms by unscrupulous humans, in *The Ambassadors of Death*. Finally, the Doctor must face the menace of heat-mutated "Primords" during the ambitious but flawed attempt to penetrate the Earth's inner crust to find an energy-producing gas in *Inferno*. The fact that the Doctor travels to a parallel Earth for part of this story allows us to see in graphic detail what happens when the Doctor fails to save the day and the Earth is, literally, destroyed.

In Season Seven, the Doctor starts off as quite pompous and bad tempered much of the time. This can be explained "in Whoniverse" as the Doctor chaffing at his exile to Earth in what he sees as a primitive time in Earth's history with crude technology and people to match. Despite being very authoritarian himself, the Third Doctor retains his previous incarnations' distrust of authority. He particularly dislikes being at the Brigadier's beck and call when he would rather be getting on with trying to "fix" the TARDIS (i.e. escape) or tinkering with his vintage car "Bessie". He mellows somewhat by the time of *Inferno* and, after a shaky start, forms a firm friendship with the Brigadier, although he remains at odds over the latter's militaristic instincts to "blow things up" as a means of dealing with potential threats.



The Doctor's prickly nature was toned down somewhat in subsequent seasons under new Producer Barry Letts and Script Editor Terrance Dicks, with Pertwee being given moments of charm and a "twinkle" by Dicks. It was during this time that the Doctor began to wear flashier, extravagant velvet jackets and capes, which are so often associated with his third incarnation. From Season Eight, the cuddly UNIT "family" was created, comprising the Doctor, his second assistant Jo Grant, the Brigadier, Captain Mike Yates and Sergeant Benton.

However, the UNIT family was a long way off in Season Seven, with its very gritty, austere and 'adult' tone; more *Doomwatch* than *Doctor Who*. In fact, *Doomwatch*, the eco-scientific thriller series devised by former *WHO* writers Kit Pedlar and Gerry Davis, started just weeks after Season Seven was first aired. As such, *Doctor Who*'s fresh start in the 1970s is a jolting departure from the sometimes whimsical 1960s serials. It's as different again from the seasons which follow it, being very much a one-off in the history of the series.

When organised *Doctor Who* fandom began to develop in the mid to late 1970s, during the time of the Fourth Doctor, Season Seven became very much a "forgotten" season and was not looked upon as representative of the Third Doctor's era. However, after 1989, when the show was eventually "rested" and thus was out of production for many years, Season Seven became the go-to era for authors of the Doctor's continuing adventures in the original *Doctor Who* novels which formed the Virgin

Publishing's *New Adventures* range. The Silurians and the parallel Earth of *Inferno* were key elements, along with shadowy, government-backed departments such as C-19 (yes, C-19 – *what are the odds?*)⁷, latching onto the zeitgeist of conspiracy theory heavy sci-fi shows such as the *X-Files*.

Ultimately, of course, Season Seven was a success. The ratings shot up, Jon Pertwee proved very popular as the Doctor and, with the introduction of an evil Time Lord nemesis The Master to keep the Doctor on his toes and the return of the Doctor's oldest foes, the Daleks, the show went from strength to strength in the years that followed. After performing covert operations on behalf of the Time Lords who controlled the TARDIS and then saving the Time Lords themselves from certain destruction, the Third Doctor was eventually given his freedom to roam time and space again. This led to the era of the Fourth Doctor and even greater heights of appreciation for the series.

Let's remember that, without Season Seven at the very beginning of the 1970s, the show would not have continued for a further two full decades. It was a standalone, senses-jangling re-imagining/reboot of the whole concept of *Doctor Who* and it still resonates half a century later.

True grit in every way.



FOOTNOTES

- 1) It was initially planned that the companion Zoe Herriot, played by Wendy Padbury, would accompany the Doctor into exile. Ultimately however, Padbury opted to leave the series at the same time as her co-stars and friends Patrick Troughton and Frazer Hines.
- 2) *Quatermass* creator Nigel Kneale had a strong dislike of *Doctor Who* for plagiarising many of his storylines and concepts. Season Seven manages to go "full Quatermass" in all of its four stories.
- 3) Jon Pertwee was known mainly for his comedy roles, such as impersonating film star and performer Danny Kaye and, more especially, for radio shows such as *The Navy Lark* and *This Waterlogged Spa*, where his funny-voiced characters brought tears of laughter to the nation's listeners. The role of the Doctor was his first mainstream 'serious' role.
- 4) Pretty alarming on *any* loo, *anywhere*, in fact!
- 5) The UNIT dating controversy was to become a thorny fan issue in later years, thanks to the insistence of later Producer Jon Nathan-Turner to set part of the 1983 story *Mawdryn Undead* in 1977, when the Brigadier has retired from UNIT. Of course, this totally contradicts all established continuity. Nowadays in the revived series, it's playfully explained away as an effect of the Time War, with the Brigadier's daughter, and successor as head of British UNIT, Kate Lethbridge-Stewart saying "Check the records, it's the 70s or 80s, depending on the dating protocols."
- 6) The only time the words "*Doctor Who and...*" have been used in a serial's title. This was a simple mistake by the Title-Setter's department before the serial was screened. Its formal title is simply *The Silurians*. However, "*Doctor Who and...*" was made good use of in the later Target novelisations for many years afterwards...
- 7) The British branch of UNIT apparently operates under the purview of the British Government's covert Department C19. In the 1982 story *Time Flight*, the Fifth Doctor is asked by C19 to investigate the mysterious disappearance of a Concorde jet. Department C19 also plays a major role in the *New Adventures* novels *Scales of Injustice* and *Who Killed Kennedy*.



CONFIDENTIAL



SPEARHEAD FROM SPACE
SEASON 7- SERIAL AAA 4 Episodes
by Robert Holmes
First Broadcast BBC1-
03 January to 24 January 1970



SPEARHEAD FROM SPACE... AND A TRAILBLAZER TO BOOT

Saturday, 3rd January 1970: The six and three-quarters years old me is sitting expectantly on our settee, waiting impatiently for *Grandstand* to finish and the new series of *Doctor Who* to begin. It's been a long wait... Previously, *Doctor Who* was on pretty much all year round. There'd be a short break for the summer holidays and then in the Autumn it'd be back, taking us through Bonfire Night, Christmas, New Year, Spring and back into Summer... But this time it's been *six long months* until my favourite show returns. This time it's got a new Doctor in it (I can just about recall the first time the Doctor "changed" – it seems a lifetime ago – and now this new Doctor looks a bit like the first one to me from the newspaper photograph in today's *Daily Sketch*... well, he's got white hair and a cloak anyway. Oh, and this time *Doctor Who* is in colour, but we've still got a black and white telly, so no change there...

And then it begins... swirling patterns – Oooh... new swirling patterns and... ooo-er--- the new Doctor's face lights up. He's smiling, but that's a bit spooky... not sure I like that... Ah, the title: *Spearhead From Space*. Hmmm. I know what a spear is, and the head must be the pointy end of the spear. Not *quite* sure I understand that, maybe I'll ask Dad what it means later. Ooh, here we go... A couple of sweaty soldiers in some control room place talking about meteorites landing... now some sweaty, old, whiskery geezer looking at one of the landed meteorites and covering it up. Where's the Doctor? Oh, hang on... the TARDIS is materializing! The door opens... that's the new Doctor! Tall, white or grey hair... he staggers forward and falls flat on his face in the heather! What's wrong with the Doctor? Now it's another soldier and a red-haired, severe-looking women in a car. The soldier looks a bit familiar though. Hmmm...



lots of talking about alien invasions...

By the end of episode one, I was re-hooked. The Doctor was still acting erratically, but I supposed a change of body and face did that to you. Of course he'd survive being shot at by that soldier... Episode two and I was genuinely scared of those walking dummies in boiler suits – the Autons – with their blank faces and flip-down gun hands... I never actually hid behind the sofa, but I did put a cushion over my face...



IN WHONIVERSE – THE PLOT:

The TARDIS lands in Oxley Woods, south east England, at the same time as a mysterious meteorite shower has landed nearby in a directed funnel of hot air. The newly regenerated and disorientated Doctor stumbles out of the TARDIS and falls unconscious to the ground...

The British branch of the United Nations Intelligence Taskforce (UNIT) is investigating the meteor shower but draws a blank. Unbeknown to them, local poacher Sam Seeley has found and hidden one of the 'thunderbolts'. When UNIT's Commanding Officer Brigadier Alistair Lethbridge-Stewart hears that an unconscious man was found next a police telephone box nearby, he immediately thinks it must be the mysterious Doctor, whom he has met twice before during attempted alien invasions. He orders his men to transport the TARDIS back to UNIT HQ, then hurries to the local cottage hospital to see if this man is indeed the Doctor. He is accompanied by new UNIT recruit, scientist Liz Shaw. Initially, he is disappointed when he does not recognise the white-haired stranger in the hospital bed, although the stranger seems to recognise him...

In the course of the ensuing events, an examination taken at the hospital indicates that the Doctor has two hearts and a much lower pulse rate and body temperature than normal humans, together with a blood group of no known type on Earth!



Eventually, the Doctor tries to escape in the TARDIS only to find that he can't, as the Time Lords have disabled it and his memory of the necessary dematerialisation codes and protocols has been blocked. Somewhat reluctantly, he agrees to help the Brigadier solve the mystery of the meteorites. These turn out to be containers for a gestalt alien intelligence, the Nestene Consciousness, which manifests itself via plastic dummies manufactured by Auto plastics. The Nestenes aim to colonise the Earth and 'awaken' Auton duplicates of leading political and military figures throughout the UK to take control of positions of power. Meanwhile, in London, Autons placed in shop windows as display dummies are activated, and proceed to gun down several civilians to cause panic.



The Doctor attempts to destroy the Nestene's nerve centre with a hastily manufactured gadget that acts rather like an electro convulsion therapy machine. As UNIT soldiers battle the Autons, the Doctor and Liz break into the factory and head for the control centre. The Nestene Consciousness creates itself an octopoid body (presumably out of plastic which explains why the tentacles look so, well, plasticky), and the Doctor is very nearly throttled by said tentacles. Liz activates the device in the nick of time, killing the Nestene



Consciousness and saving the Doctor's life. This deactivates the Autons and thwarts the invasion.

Later, the Brigadier offers the Doctor the position of scientific advisor to UNIT, with Liz as his assistant, in return for giving the Doctor a laboratory and whatever materials and equipment he needs to repair the TARDIS. The Doctor agrees and settles on being known by the pseudonym of Doctor John Smith.

My nearly seven year-old-self loved that story! It was quite frightening in parts, it looked like a proper film. That machine the Doctor made was just like the one his previous self made to stop the Cybermen that time... In fact, the battle at the plastics factory between UNIT soldiers and Autons was very like that fight against the Cybermen. But who cared? It was great! I really liked this new Doctor. I remembered that the 'old' Doctor used John Smith as a name before (funny the things you remember). I missed Jamie and Zoe a bit, but I thought Liz might be a good companion. At least she didn't scream and ask a load of silly questions...

Location filming on the first story of the new season, *Spearhead From Space* took place in September 1969. As was usual at the time, location filming was done on 16mm film, as opposed to the videotape used in the studio, giving a distinctly different look and 'feel' to interior and exterior sequences. However, a technicians' strike the following month meant that all studio sessions for the story were cancelled. Instead, all remaining scenes were shot on film at the BBC's engineering training facility in Evesham. The end result was a very professional and "grown up" looking serial, which came in several thousand pounds *under* budget, despite being shot on film, by avoiding all those costly, highly regulated, unionised studio facilities!

As for that battle with the Autons at the plastics factory... If it looked similar to the battle with the Cybermen two years before in *The Invasion*, that's because it used the same location – the former TCC Condensers Factory in Ealing, west London.

And viewers could get used to this sort of face-off between UNIT and the baddies from now on, largely thanks to the use of an elite team of stunt men from a team called HAVOC, who made everything look as realistic and as violent as possible. In fact, "*Action by Havoc*" became a familiar part of the *Doctor Who* title credits for most of Jon Pertwee's five-year tenure as the Doctor.

As noted previously, Season Seven was potentially the last ever season of *Doctor Who* if the ratings didn't improve. However, the fact that *Spearhead From Space* looked so classy and was a rattling good story, told over four, well-paced parts, ensured that viewers were once again hooked. Jon Pertwee proved to be a charismatic, and ultimately likeable Doctor, and was happier to take part in publicity for the show than his predecessor, the intensely private Patrick Troughton. The ratings for all the stories that season were consistently high and the future of *Doctor Who* was assured.

Spearhead From Space was the first major re-boot in the series' history and it is a masterclass in how to present a show with its own history and mythos in a brand new light, appealing to long-time viewers and new viewers alike. There's an alien invasion. The mysterious alien called the Doctor turns up. He's got a backstory, but you don't need to know that – he's here and now and he's going to save the day. In fact, the whole of Season Seven could be viewed in isolation from the seasons preceding and following it and still be a satisfying whole.

It's no coincidence that Russell T Davies employed the same storytelling technique for old and new

viewers alike in *Rose*, the first story to launch the renewed series of *Doctor Who* in 2005. In fact, because the Nestenes and Autons are the invading aliens, it really *is* a homage to *Spearhead From Space* all those years before. My 44-year-old self was suddenly six-and three-quarter years old again, 2005 could have been 1970...

Best of all, after such a long wait, *Doctor Who* was back!

Nick Mays (aged 58 and a quarter)

BACKGROUND FACTOIDS:

The story was originally entitled *Facsimile* and was partly based on a script Holmes had written for the 1965 film *Invasion*. The story marks the first appearance of the Nestenes and Autons.

This is the first story where viewers learn, unequivocally, that the Doctor is not human, when a hospital X-ray reveals his binary cardio-vascular system (i.e. that he has two hearts. His blood type is unknown on Earth.

This is the first of many Robert Holmes-penned 'reveals' about Time Lords which have become part of the series' mythos. Later examples would be the 12-regeneration limit; the name of the Time Lord planet as Gallifrey; the Time Lords' main meeting place in the Capitol on Gallifrey being called the Panopticon; the Time Lord's shady undercover organisation the Celestial Intervention Agency (CIA) and the fact that the Second Doctor had previously worked for them.





Doctor Who and The Silurians - Artwork by Graeme Neil Reid - Copyright ©

Doctor Who and The Silurians

SEASON 7- SERIAL BBB. 7 Episodes. by Malcolm Hulke **First Broadcast BBC1 - 31 January to 14 March 1970**

In only the second adventure for the Third Doctor, we have a multi-level story, with a wonderful cast, about an energy research centre based on Wenley Moor, in a network of caves. The Doctor is called in by the Brigadier to investigate a series of mysterious power losses.

The Doctor and Liz have already formed an easy-going working relationship. As they are both there by circumstance rather than choice, and both bristle at being ordered about by the Brigadier; it's a friendship of like minds. The Doctor at first resists the summons to join the Brigadier, but his interest is aroused when he learns there are deep caves nearby. We are immediately introduced to the main guest cast: Head of the research centre, Dr Lawrence (Peter Miles), is wonderfully officious, and intolerant of UNIT interference on his project.. Chief of Security, Major Baker (Norman Jones), becomes increasingly hysterical and overwrought as the reactor's energy losses defy explanation, and inexplicable events refuse to fit his conviction that everything is the work of a saboteur. Deputy Head of the project, Dr Quinn (Fulton Mackay), is obviously fully aware of the real cause of the power losses, along with his assistant Miss Dawson, but is keeping it secret because he has designs of his own.

Other notable guest actors that we meet later are: Geoffrey Palmer as the pleasant, unassuming undersecretary Edward Masters; and Paul Darrow as Captain Hawkins of UNIT.

The Doctor and Liz discover that there is a high incidence of mental illness occurring on the project, and that some scientists explored the caves resulting in one death and one mental instability. While Liz investigates the medical records of the employees, the Doctor explores the caves, and soon discovers - when it attacks him - that there is a prehistoric animal down there. Moreover, there is another creature in control of it. The man who became mentally unstable is drawing pictures of "lizard

people". There is some very good direction with regard to the cave creatures. The "monster" (a Tyrannosaurus Rex) is first seen as a roaring mouth, a claw hovering over the Doctor, and a footprint in the sand. The creature controlling it is initially introduced to us through his three-eyed point-of-view vision as he crosses the moor and finds a barn in a farmyard to hide in.

Dr Quinn and Miss Dawson are concerned that the UNIT people might discover their secret, and discuss the danger if "they" don't stop drawing off the reactor's power. Major Baker's concern is the lack of information available on the Doctor. Dr Lawrence just wants UNIT to stop interfering and go away. The Brigadier believes The Doctor has seen something in the caves and sends a search party. Major Baker accompanies them and as he is attacked by the monster, he shoots at "a man". Captain Hawkins reports that it has fled the caves on to the moor. Dr Quinn visits the creatures in the caves and is given a signalling device to find the one on the moor, he is promised knowledge as a reward. He then goes to the farm, where the Doctor, Liz and UNIT are investigating the creature's appearance, before driving over the moor signalling for it to come. The creature responds and goes to Quinn's cottage where Quinn tries to force information from it.

The Doctor is always one step behind Quinn. He hears of a sighting on the moor but misses him. He goes to Quinn's cottage and finds it 'as warm as a reptile house,' but Quinn evades his questions and the Doctor returns to the research centre. He searches Quinn's office, finding research on the Silurian Era, of Earth's prehistory and questions Miss Dawson who almost but not quite responds. He then returns to Quinn's cottage and finds him dead. At this point the reptile man—the "Silurian" appears. The Doctor tries to communicate with the Silurian but it runs away.

Major Baker returns to the caves in search of his "saboteurs", and the Doctor follows him in search of the Silurians. They are both

captured. The Brigadier sends soldiers to the caves and they are trapped.

We now see a dispute among the Silurians. The leader, Okdel, wants to believe the Doctor and live in peace with humans. An aggressive, younger Silurian, Morka, firmly believes all humans must be killed, and sets in motion a plan to infect them all with a deadly disease. Okdel releases the Doctor and the soldiers, and Morka releases the infected Major Baker. Major Baker rapidly infects others in the research centre before succumbing to the disease and being taken to hospital, where the infection spreads. The undersecretary, Edward Masters, who has been sent to report on the problems at the research centre, has also been infected and takes the disease to London.

Liz treats everyone at the centre with antibiotics to control the infection, while the Doctor looks for a cure. Back in the caves, Morka has killed Okdel and sets out to recapture the Doctor before he finds a cure. The research centre has closed down because of the sickness and the Silurians no longer have power to revive their number in hibernation, so they take the Doctor back to the centre to restore power. The Doctor does so but sends the reactor into a critical state, so the Silurians return to the caves to wait out the nuclear fallout.

The Doctor manages to stop the reactor and, with an admonition to the Brigadier to leave the Silurians in peace, heads back to UNIT HQ. He plans to revive the

Silurians one at a time and reason with them, in an attempt to broker a peace treaty between the two species. However, the Brigadier promptly blows up the Silurian base, much to the Doctor's disgust.

An excellent story that promises much for the future. The earthbound stories are certainly off to a good start. Hitherto, the Doctor and the Brigadier have only crossed paths - and tempers - briefly, as they cooperated to deal with an alien menace; now their ability to work together will be put to the test. Although it is clear that they consider their relationship to be an amicable one, the Doctor's view of alien life is opposite to the Brigadier's and this is clearly seen in this story. While the Doctor tries to befriend the Silurians and find a way for them to coexist with humans, the Brigadier is firmly of the opinion that they are a threat to be eliminated, and when the Doctor is - as he believes - far enough away, he blows up the Silurian base.

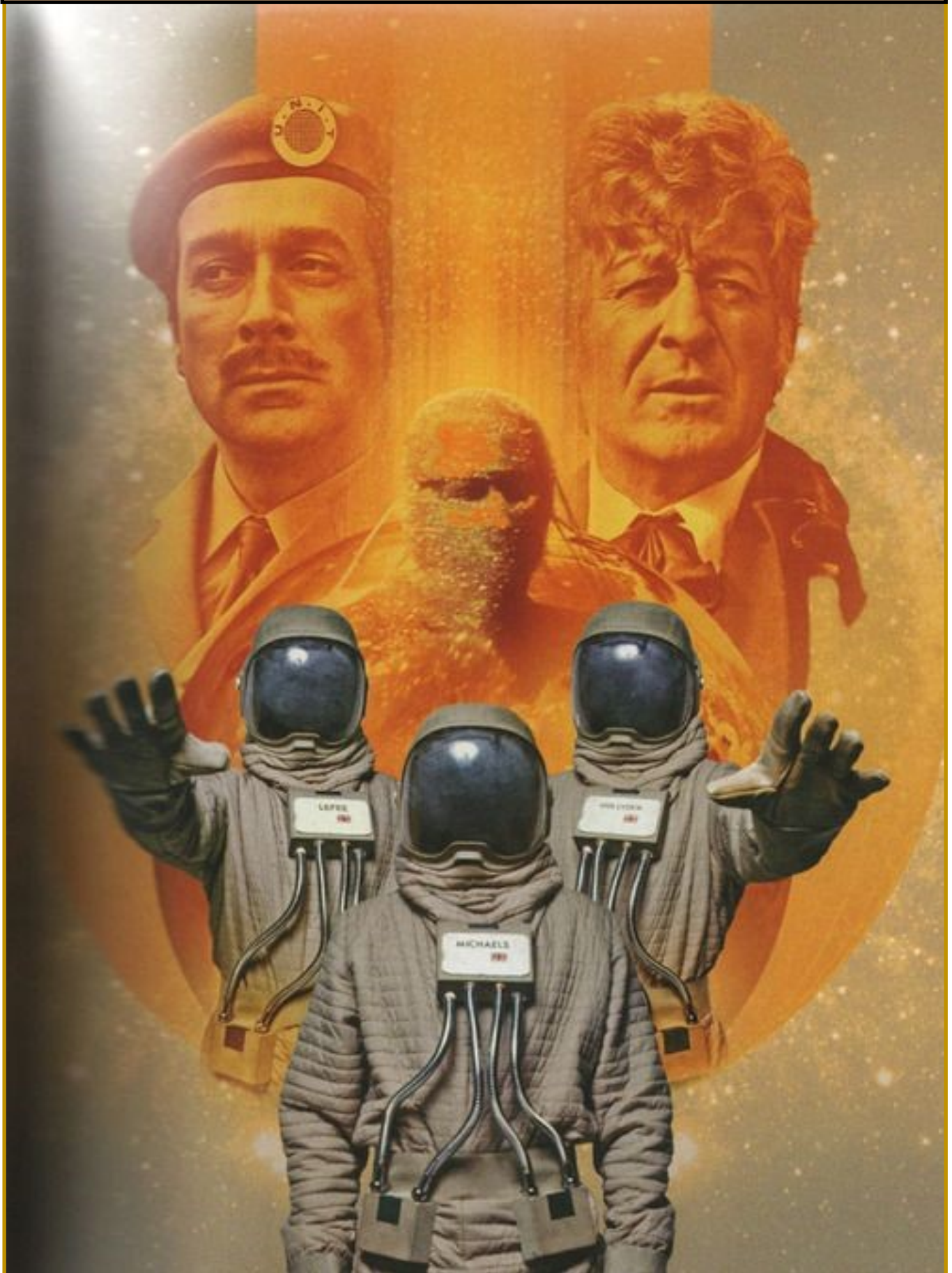
It's fair to say that they do, over time, learn to empathise with one another, but that friction never disappears completely - the Doctor is, after all, an alien life form himself. It is one story among many in sci-fi that deals with a virus that threatens all life on the planet, and although Covid-19 is, thankfully, not as deadly as these stories all depict, the understanding of just how quickly a deadly disease can envelope the planet is pretty accurate and scarily prescient.

Lynda Pinfold



SEASON 7- SERIAL CCC. 7 Episodes by David Whitaker

First Broadcast BBC1 - 21 March to 2 May 1970



The Ambassadors of Death—Artwork Copyright ©

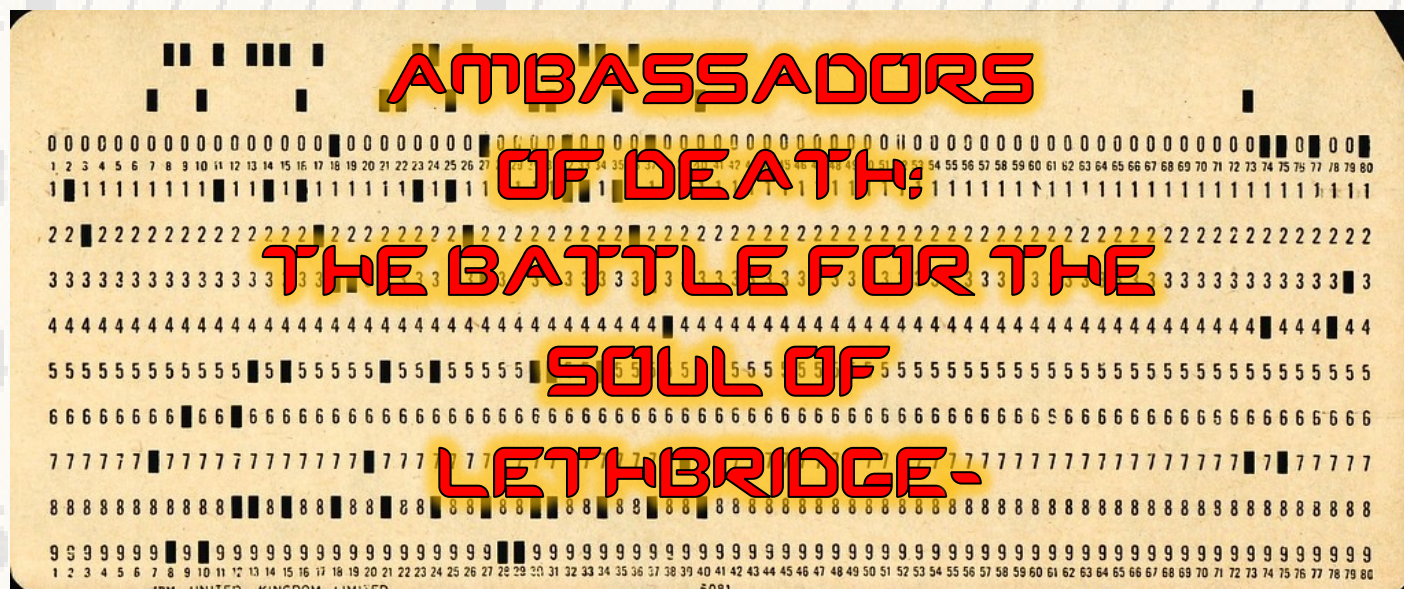
That *Ambassadors Of Death* is a seven-episode story, appears on the face of it, absurd. It only appears that way, because episode 1 is, essentially, a whole early Pertwee story in its own right. There's a missing space launcher, a mysteriously failed rescue mission, and a conspiracy running up to the highest in the land and down to your run-of-the-mill murderers, thugs and criminals. It has a gun battle between the Brigadier's chums and the villainous ne'er-do-wells, plenty of work for the boys from HAVOC and the Doctor being Captain Cleverclogs finding and unravelling the fact of the conspiracy and then setting Lethbridge-Stewart and his pals on the road to intercept the villains.

So in essence, *Ambassadors Of Death* could be condensed into a one-episode adventure. Does it need six more episodes on top of all that? Arguably it does, but only really because it determines that it does, slowing

down the pace of Actually Getting Things Done, while throwing in several additional action sequences. Even in the first episode, the gun battle ends with one of the villains pointing his weapon at the seemingly defenceless Brig, only for that villain to throw down his gun for reason or reasons unknown (though we later learn the battle was faked, and orders given not to actually hurt the Brig).

Likewise, the escape of Liz from the villains gives us a highly effective cliffhanger, only for the drama to be reset in the first few minutes of the next episode with her recapture. In other adventures, the Doctor's trip to space would be a short one, whereas here, it's extended all the way to the missing spacecraft and an on-screen meeting with the aliens who've sent ambassadors to Earth.

And so on, and so on.



All of that said though, *Ambassadors Of Death* is a thoroughly remarkable story.

It's worth remembering that this story went out just a year after the last of the Troughton episodes, but in terms of how the story's told, it's like nothing that went before it. That's especially bizarre when you consider it was originally written as a Troughton script, and only made it to the screen after a handful of re-writes and a change of production team.

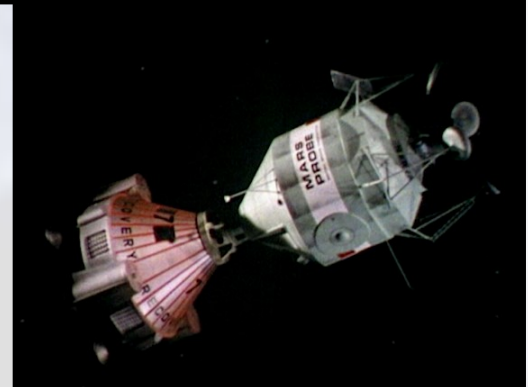
While the use of news reporting would become a solid element of the Pertwee era (in *The Daemons* for example), and was brought screamingly up to date in the first series of 'reborn *Who*' under Russell T Davies as a way of introducing new viewers to the nature of the drama, it's actually quite a shock to see it used as an almost immediate technique so early into the Pertwee era

when *Ambassadors Of Death* kicks off. This introduction of 'realistic' news elements

and organisations to carry the intimacy of the *Doctor Who* story we're watching out into the wider, contemporary world, doesn't feel like something the Troughton TARDIS team would have attempted,

That said, there are elements of 'hurry up and wait' in this story that realistically remind us of stories like *The Invasion* and *The War Machines* – both of which, of course, joined high-concept science-fiction to the notion of our very particular world coming under threat from alien or evil forces.

When a minister dies, rather than speeding up the process of getting spaceships into space, it paralyses events while we wait for his replacement to be appointed. And then we wait some more. And then – partially



inspired by the Doctor's infectious impatience – we stop waiting and bog off into space anyhow. Yes, it's time-wasting, but it's *believable* time-wasting, with a realistic, bureaucratic reason behind it, rather than a fantastical, sci-fi reason.

Within that realistic world, the story itself is gloriously mad. It's essentially a spy story, where James Bond has been so terrified by one of his previous adventures he's gone rogue and organised an inferno to take out his enemies. The question at the heart of the story is how we respond to fear, and to scary things. There's no doubt that the ambassadors themselves have power and the potential to kill us all. Their very nature is the antithesis of our own, making, as is mentioned, a mockery of everything we understand about radiation, and they have the power to direct absorbed radiation at us with fatal results. So it's important not to underestimate these lumbering spacesuits of death (another Pertweean idea borrowed for a Davies-era story, written by eventual showrunner Steven Moffatt, in *Silence In The Library*, and then re-used in *The Impossible Astronaut*). That idea of our own spacesuits turned deadly is a practically perfect spy metaphor – the undercover agent gone rogue, gone lethal, turned against us by the 'other side,' and that helps the ambassadors to deliver the full potential of their otherness, albeit helped to that deadliness by a gang of humans.

The fundamental core of *Ambassadors Of Death*, really speaking, is the question of how we react to people we fear – do we cower and wage a secret or a public war against them, seeking out the others in our society who are scared and collaborating with them to plot violence, repudiation and expulsion of the 'other'? Or do we, like the Doctor, go out to the 'other,' find ways to communicate with them, begin to understand them and so turn potential threats into potential friends?

In a sense, *Ambassadors Of Death* is the solid mid-section in an unspoken series arc that runs through much of Season 7 – not at any point questioning whether the *Doctor* is a good man, but whether the Doctor's new Watson figure, *Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart*, is a good man. In *Spearhead From Space*, we see him as the friend the Doctor needs, extending his hand to the alien in exile, albeit in exchange for the Doctor's help against any alien dangers that threaten the planet. But then, in *The Silurians*, a moment of crisis comes and Lethbridge-Stewart chooses fear, earning the Doctor's opprobrium when he kills the potential source of his fear, and betrays the Doctor's faith in human beings and their readiness to live in harmony with other sentient species.

Ambassadors Of Death almost takes that bad decision, that swamp of fear of the other, and gives it a body that's the mirror of Lethbridge-Stewart. John Abineri as General Carrington is a military man and a hero of the

space age, a British astronaut, possessor of "the right stuff", with a stiff upper lip. He's Lethbridge-Stewart in space, and he's consumed both by fear and by the certainty of his own moral duty to destroy the thing that frightens him. His masculinity, his whole humanity, is wrapped around the notion that he has that duty to save the world, whatever the potential cost in human life on the personal scale. He wants to do, on a nuclear, space age level, exactly the same thing that Lethbridge-Stewart did, in a more conventional sense, to the Silurians.

That of course leads us to *Inferno*, where the Doctor encounters a Lethbridge-Stewart operating within a Fascist regime; a Lethbridge-Stewart in a world where the fear of the other is encouraged as doctrine, and where he has no Doctor to argue with him, to scowl when he kills people, to tell him he's wrong. The Season 7 arc is all about the soul of Alister Lethbridge-Stewart. So when the Doctor softly tells Carrington that he can understand his determination, his sense of moral duty, he's speaking the truth. He sees it in his new friend's eyes, and he's uncertain about the outcome. Which Lethbridge-Stewart will prevail? The trigger-happy man who's afraid to share power, or the protector of an Earth ready to advance and take its place in a commonwealth of planets and species.

For Lethbridge-Stewart himself, it's *Ambassadors of Death* that proves the testing ground, as he never sees the nightmare world of *Inferno*. And what he sees is a general betraying everything for which Lethbridge-Stewart himself stands. There's no long, dark night of the soul for the Brigadier though; he simply pits himself and his forces against the traitor, and – at least this time – he trusts the Doctor to extend the hand of friendship to a force that could destroy the world, enabling the exchange of hostages that dials down the danger. He reacts to an external force of aggression and fear by putting himself between that force and its desires – like all the best of the Doctor's companions, before and since.

Apart from their underlying symbolism, the ambassadors are an unlikely, but effective, visual threat – technically, they're just a spacesuit walking, but the way they're used makes them loom, and, like the Weeping Angels decades later, their simplest touch is fatal, so they deliver on both visual and destructive levels. This gives the story its de facto 'alien villain', even though the real villain is fear and what it does to people.

The cast of the episode is an almost ridiculous embarrassment of riches. Abineri as Carrington would be enough to anchor a much lesser story than *Ambassadors* in the memory, but this episode also has future Davros Michael Wisher, future Master Geoffrey Beevers, Cyril Shaps as Lennox, and above all *Crossroads* legend Ronald Allen as Ralph Cornish, mission controller of the British space program. He's relentlessly unflappable, while still seeming switched on and dedicated, wherever possible, to peace rather than power, to safety rather than unnecessary heroics. While the world threatens to go to hell, he's the quiet eye of a deadly storm, and he's utterly, utterly perfect.

Ultimately, *Ambassadors Of Death* needs its seven episodes but not to fit in the action or the alien threat. It needs those episodes to feel real, to anchor the alien invasion (which isn't one in contemporary reality) and to show us our world if Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart let the fear of the Silurian incident swamp him, or if he let his moment of weakness become a pattern of behaviour. It's a story that's underrated by comparison with the rest of Season 7, but perversely, fifty years on it still has lessons to teach us. The battle between fear of the other and an acceptance of mutual power that takes us forward is still going on, on both sides of the Atlantic. Whether we become a Carrington or a Lethbridge-Stewart is up to us.

Tony J Fyler



BACKGROUND FACTOIDS:

Sgt Benton of UNIT makes his first appearance in the series since *Invasion* (1968).

The serial was originally written as a Patrick Troughton story by David Whitaker. Extensive re-writes were undertaken by Terrance Dicks, Trevor Ray and Malcolm Hulke, although Whitaker was paid for his original scripts and credited on-screen as the writer.

The serial was screened at the same time as a real-life space drama was unfolding and the crew of the stricken Apollo 13 moon mission were attempting to get back to Earth.

INFERNO

SEASON SEVEN – SERIAL DDD

7 EPISODES – BY DON HOUGHTON

FIRST BROADCAST BBC1

9 MAY TO 20 JUNE 1970



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THE SHEER HELL OF INFERNO

As I've mentioned before, when Season Seven began in January 1970, *Doctor Who* was on trial with the BBC... if this Season didn't improve the ratings, it would be the last. Five and half months later, the final story in the Season aired: Inferno.

If this was to be the last ever *Doctor Who* story, then what an adventure to go out on! The preceding three stories had all been of a high quality and Inferno did nothing to buck that trend, making the season, overall, a success. Jon Pertwee had proved to be very much a dashing Doctor of action; production values had never been higher and ratings had improved drastically. Who *needed* space and time travel to exotic alien planets in the TARDIS if the threats involved Earth itself?

And in the case of *Inferno*, as in some previous stories, the threats come not only from Earth, they come from *within* the Earth.

So, what sets *Inferno* apart from these Season Seven fellows?

You could say if you do a box ticking exercise, not much:
Research Centre facing mysterious problems? Check.
UNIT called in to provide security? Check.
The Doctor on hand as UNIT's rather reluctant Scientific Advisor? Check.
Arrogant research centre chief resenting the presence of UNIT and the Doctor? Check.

So far, so samey. But the big difference this time is... basically, the Doctor loses... And the Earth is destroyed!
Now *that's* different!

The plot concerns Project Inferno, a nickname given to the project to bore twenty miles down into the Earth's core to where Project Director Professor Eric Stahlman believes pockets of energy-generating gas can be located and siphoned off to the surface. Naturally, he has named this vast untapped energy resource Stahlman's Gas. Although the project has been heavily invested in by the British Government, Stahlman's relentless and obsessive pursuit of "total penetration" by a fixed hour has caused a few worried frowns in the corridors of power, so they have appointed Sir Keith Gold, from The Ministry of Science, as administrative co-director. Sir Keith has

been concerned enough by Stahlman's dismissive attitude to basic safety concerns – particularly with the pressure problems in Number Two Outlet Pipe – by calling in UNIT to maintain security and for their Scientific Advisor, The Doctor, to add his vast knowledge to the proceedings. Naturally, Stahlman totally resents this and he seems even more determined to blow his own pressure pipe when another of Sir Keith's advisors turns up in the form of oilman Greg Sutton who shares Sir Keith's concerns over the speed of the drilling at this crucial stage. Even Stahlman's level-headed assistant Petra Williams can't rein him in.



It's worth noting here that the Doctor isn't paying that much attention to events, as he's working on a secret venture of his own, assisted by the faithful Liz Shaw. He has brought the TARDIS Control console to the site, secreted it in a hut a little way from the main control centre and is using a feedline from the project's own nuclear reactor to power the console. He hopes this will enable him to break free from the barrier the Time Lords have placed on him during his exile. Just as the Doctor attempts a test flight however, there's a blow back on the troublesome Number Two pipe causing a power surge which plunges the Doctor into a hellish limbo between time and space, where his body is stretched and contorted. Thankfully, Greg Sutton saves the day, the power surge stops and the Doctor and the console are dumped back in the hut, much to the relief of Liz and the Doctor.

Just prior to these events we witness maintenance engineer Harry Slocum adjusting one of the troublesome pipes when some green slime, carried up from close to the Earth's core, bubbles out. Slocum touches it and finds that it's hot. It also causes his hand to turn a nasty shade of green, with added hair and talons. Slocum staggers off, his skin turning green, fangs growing in his mouth and he promptly murders a technician with a monkey wrench.

The Brigadier tells the Doctor about the murder and Slocum's disappearance, remarking drily "Trouble seems to follow you around Doctor." The Doctor, for his part, takes this in good spirit, remarking on a photograph of the young Lethbridge Stewart from his regular army days, *sans moustache*. The two had been at loggerheads ever since the Brigadier blew up the Silurian shelter earlier this season, but now relations seem to have warmed somewhat... which is just as well as things are going to get decidedly hotter.

The Doctor surmises that the green slime has caused Slocum and, later, a technician to regress into a primordial state, with great strength and aggression. The Doctor fears that, so far, they have only seen the transitory stage, the full regression has not yet taken place, as these "Primords" need heat to thrive. Stahlman becomes infected himself, but manages to control the transformation somewhat, no doubt using his immense will power and self-belief, but he shows a reckless disregard for safety and accelerates the drilling. In a fit of anger, Stahlman disconnects the power supply to the Doctor's hut, just as he's attempting to undertake another flight with the console...

After a bumpy ride, the Doctor finds himself back in his hut, but... also not his hut. It's tidier for one thing and adorned with a poster of a 'Big Brother' type Leader.¹ The Doctor finds that he is still at Project Inferno but in an alternate Earth the project here is at a far more advanced stage, with penetration ground zero mere hours away. The project is policed by the British Republican Security

Forces, a militia in a republican, fascist Britain. Not only that, but on this Earth the Brigadier is the sadistic, facially scarred, eyepatch wearing (and moustache-less) Brigade Leader Lethbridge-Stewart, with Section Leader Elizabeth Shaw as his right-hand woman. Sgt Benton is also present – as a thug. The Project Director *Stahlmann* here, is, if anything, more arrogant and determined than "our" Stahlman. None of them believe that the Doctor comes from a parallel universe, concluding he is, at worst, a spy, or, at best, a "free speech radical". They certainly don't give credence to his warnings about the danger the project is facing and Stahlmann's infection. Either way, he gets a violent interrogation and, ultimately, faces a firing squad.



From here on it's a race against time, The Doctor is certain that the penetration won't release energy-giving gas but will cause a massive volcanic eruption. And he's proved right, with the penetration triggering off volcanic eruptions and earthquakes across the country and in other parts of the world.

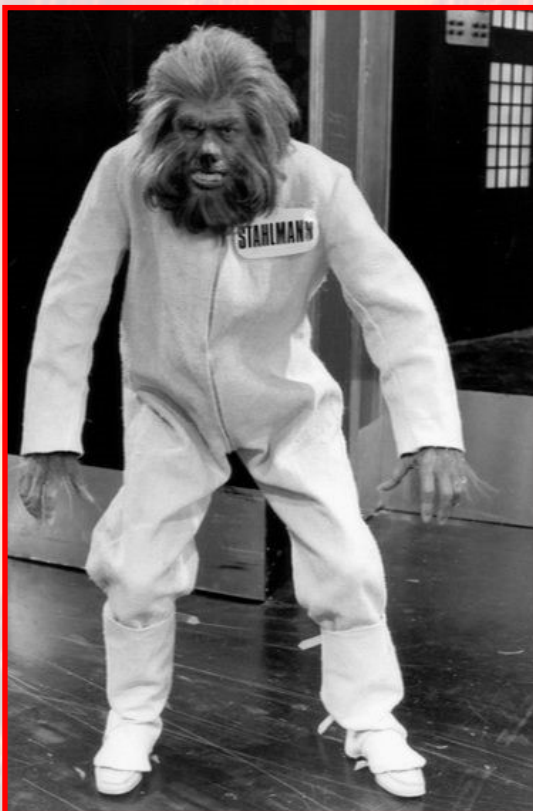


The Earth's crust is literally cracking itself open. Stahlmann has become a full, rampaging Primord and deliberately infects several technicians and the hapless Benton with the green slime. There's no way to prevent the eruptions, but the Doctor realises he must get back to 'his' Earth to prevent that project from going the same way - and for that the TARDIS console needs power. The Doctor manages to convince the alternate Liz, Petra Williams and Greg Sutton (the latter a marked man as an outspoken radical) to help him run a power line to the console,

but to do so they have to fight off the Primords. Bullets have a limited effect: CO₂ gas from fire extinguishers works better, being cold and thus immobilizing the Primords, at least temporarily. The Brigade Leader, shorn of his power, deserted by his troops and abandoned by the authorities, throws in his lot to help the Doctor but demands to be taken with him, which the Doctor explains cannot happen. Liz shoots the Brigade Leader (after he's received a well-deserved, hard punch from Greg) and the Doctor engages power, just as a tide of lava engulfs the hut...

Back on our world, the Doctor eventually saves the day. "Our" Stahlman becomes a full Primord and is ultimately killed. It's interesting to note that Stahlman rushes his technicians to safety from the drill head, rather than infect them, showing that for all his pig-headedness and mania, he retains a vestige of humanity that the fascist Stahlmann did not.

The Doctor advises Sir Keith to shut down the project and to fill in the drill shaft. He notes, with obvious distress, that he's seen what will happen otherwise...



While it's true that some of *Inferno* looks a little dated now, the special effects are, for their time, extremely well realised (especially the heat haze outside the complex) and the main control room looks like it does what it says on the tin. The project computer with its memory-cube controls, is a departure from the usual tape-spools versions seen in the 1970s. And yes, the Primords look a bit like Lon Chaney-esque werewolf derivatives, but they're

scary enough to be convincing. Does it make sense that human beings degenerate into wolf-like creatures rather than ape-like ones? Why not! Who knows if Primords as a species are in our DNA and the green slime from the Earth's crust awakens those genes? Werewolf legends go way back in human history after all... The parallel universe idea is a great one and, at that time, very new to *Doctor Who*.² The episodes create a growing sense of impending catastrophe, especially on the parallel world when the drill breaks through the Earth's crust and everybody and everything is doomed. There's also a real sense of scale to the complex - it takes time to run or drive between the main complex, the switching room and the Doctor's hut. *Time* - or the lack of it - is the key element here. And time does, eventually, run out for everyone.

The cast sell the story completely, and deserve any plaudits they get: Olaf Pooley is brilliant as Stahlman (n), conveying his bullish sense of purpose, but also showing that this is really a highly intelligent, if flawed man who is genuinely doing what he believes is right.



Nicholas Courtney gives a tour-de-force performance as the Brigade Leader. Yes, he shouts and blusters a lot, but his performance is far more nuanced than that. Look at the nervous tics and the

way his voice breaks when the whole world begins to disintegrate around him. This is a man who is a bully, but a very controlled one. When everyone else is sweating with the terrible heat unleashed from the Earth and discarding clothing, the Brigade Leader doesn't so much as loosen his tie - he tries to cling to his militaristic persona to save himself from cracking completely.

Derek Newark plays both versions of Greg Sutton as a disrespectful but brave man who knows his work. It's quite an interesting point that Newark appeared in the very first *Doctor Who* story in 1963, as caveman Za. It's perhaps fitting that he's back at the start of the show's virtual re-set.

Although Sheila Dunn had her own problems to contend with when her husband, Director Douglas Camfield



suffered a minor heart attack during the filming and had to be rushed to hospital, ³ she carries off her performance remarkably well, creating a convincing Petra Williams, torn between loyalty to Stahlman and her duty to the State. A consummate professional.

Special mention of course, to Caroline John who plays both versions of Liz Shaw here, managing to convey the fact, that, even under her harsh military training, the alternate Liz is still the same as our Liz, and just as intelligent and resourceful. Sadly, this was to be the last appearance for Liz until a cameo performance in *The Five Doctors* in 1983. Producer Letts didn't feel that Liz's character was quite right for the show, and so she was replaced with the ditz Jo Grant from Season 8, denying Caroline John the chance to give Liz a proper goodbye - although this omission has since been addressed in novels and *Big Finish* audio plays.

Of course, Jon Pertwee as the Doctor is brilliant. In fact, if any story cemented his position as the Third Doctor, then *Inferno* is it. He is, by turns, angry, arrogant but also very caring - he is trying to save two worlds and it almost breaks him that he can't save both. He leaves knowing that Section

Leader Shaw, Petra Williams and Greg Sutton are going to die in a tide of lava and die horribly - he can't save even them. No wonder then, that in *The Mind of Evil* next season, his deepest fear is shown to be the fire of *Inferno*: the time he lost everything. It affects him - deeply. We may only see a very few people die on screen when the planet finally erupts and "screams out its rage", but you really believe that people *are* dying and can believe the world *is* going to end. Compare this with the throwaway scene in *Logopolis* (1981) when the Traken Union of 100 planets dissolves into entropy - presumably billions of people die but all we see is a planet blinking out of existence on a scanner screen - there's no sense of scale as there is, 11 years earlier, in *Inferno*.

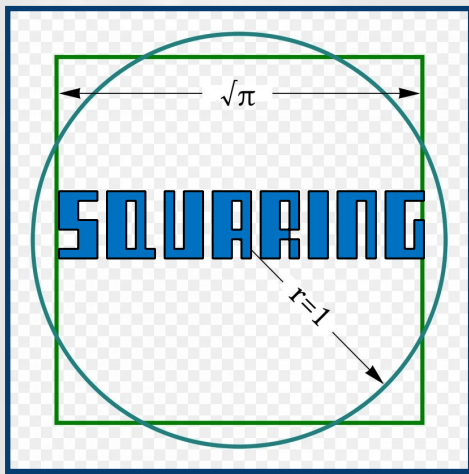
The story, along with the rest of S7's stories, feels a lot more *Doomwatch* than *Doctor Who*. From Season Eight onwards, the horror and grittiness were toned down, the UNIT family was established, and the Pertwee's era was never again to stray into truly 'adult' territory. But if *Inferno* was the last story of this type, rounding off the massively important and innovative Season Seven as it did, then all I can say is - what a way to go!

Nick Mays



FOOTNOTES

- 1 During the scenes set on the parallel Earth, images of the British Republic's leader are seen on posters. The image used is that of BBC visual effects designer Jack Kine, in a neat homage to the 1954 BBC adaptation of Orwell's novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in which the face of Big Brother was actually that of the BBC's head of television design Roy Oxley (Kine had worked on the visual effects for that production).
- 2 Seeing the same familiar characters' counterparts in the fascist British republic is a jarring shock, as they're almost an anti-UNIT. An interesting point to note is that in the parallel universe Stahlman's name is spelt *Stahlmann*, which sounds much more Teutonic - so this, in a small, but telling way, emphasises that Britain became at the very least a dominion of Nazi Germany in 1943 when the Republic was declared. Terrance Dicks expands on this a little further in his novelisation of *Inferno* which was, rather fittingly, published in 1984. Dicks re-visits the same kind of alternate Nazi Britain in his own *New Adventures* novel *Exodus* (1991).
- 3 Producer Barry Letts took over directing duties for all internal, studio filming from Episode 3, but was able to do so with minimal disruption, as Camfield's preparatory and notes and stage directions were so comprehensive. He insisted that Camfield should be credited as Director for all seven episodes. Camfield, who had directed several *Doctor Who* serials in the 1960s later recovered and went onto direct two more *Doctor Who* serials and numerous other programmes. He died of a fatal heart attack in January 1984.



SQUARING THE CIRCLE

By BOK

Analysing and attempting to explain and reconcile all those annoying continuity contradictions and outright gaffes in our favourite Sci-Fi and Fantasy franchises.

This issue **BOK** goes into orbit to make sense of the Moon Madness that is *Doctor Who's* Kill The Moon...

The late actor David Niven may have titled his autobiography *The Moon's a Balloon*, but I bet he never thought the Moon was an egg. No, not even made of cheese. An. Actual. Egg. Well, it is according to the *Doctor Who* story *Kill The Moon* (2017) at any rate.

Basically, the plot of *Kill The Moon* posits that in 2049, the Moon's gravity seems to be increasing and making its orbit fluctuate, causing massive tides and devastation on Earth. The Twelfth Doctor, Clara and Courtney, one of Clara's pupils from Coal Hill School arrive on board a space shuttle filled with nuclear bombs which is on a suicide mission to destroy the moon and prevent further devastation on Earth. Captain Lundvik explains that space exploration has long since been abandoned by Earth and that the dilapidated space shuttle was the only ship capable of reaching the moon.

During the course of events, the Doctor finds that there are millions of large, spider-like creatures scuttling up from the Moon's surface. These he surmises are enlarged bacteria, which are feeding off amniotic fluid, leaking up from beneath the Moon's crust. The changes in gravity and density are because the moon is not a satellite composed of rock, but is, in fact, an egg and it is about the hatch after millions of years in orbit around the Earth, trapped by Earth's gravity.

Thankfully, the travellers escape in the TARDIS and from Earth observe as the moon cracks apart, releasing a winged, dragon-like creature which immediately lays another egg before flying off into space. The new egg, which apparently is the same size as the old "Moon Egg" now occupies the old Moon's orbit, thus stabilising tides and tremors on Earth. As a result of this occurrence, interest in space travel is re-ignited and mankind once again reaches for the stars.

Kill the Moon is widely derided by fans and casual viewers alike. There's not only the wonky science involved in the story itself (a lot of that, in fact), there's also the little fact

that it contradicts *Doctor Who* TV continuity going back decades...

Taking it chronologically in terms of Earth's history, we learn that the Silurians went into hibernation because of the appearance of a "small planet" hurtling towards the Earth. Their scientists predicted that the planet would bypass the Earth, but draw off its atmosphere, wiping out all life in a mass extinction event. But they surmised the atmosphere will eventually return, triggering sensors, at which point the cryogenic "locks" on the Silurians' underground shelters would open and they can repopulate the Earth. However, the small planet does not pass by the Earth but instead is caught by its gravity and begins to orbit the Earth as the Moon. Although great devastation is caused, the Earth's atmosphere is not destroyed, so the shelters' cryogenic locks are not triggered and the Silurians sleep on... (*Doctor Who and the Silurians* 1970).

The sudden arrival of the Moon between Earth and its twin planet Mondas undermined the gravitational equilibrium of Mondas, causing it to escape its orbit and drift through space. The Cybermen then evolved on Mondas (*The Tenth Planet* 1966).

In "real history" and "in Whoniverse" Mankind sent several manned missions to land on the Moon between 1969 and 1972.

In the late 20th century, the Cybermen had established a base on the dark side of the Moon, with the base serving as the staging area for a fleet poised to invade Earth. (*The Invasion*, 1968). The Cyber Moonbase apparently still existed in 1985, housing Cybermen who had time travelled to divert Halley's comet into the Earth and thus allow their historic 1986 invasion to take place (*Attack of the Cybermen* 1985). A manned expedition to the Moon encountered early Mondasian Cybermen in 1986 when they attempted to conquer the Earth (*The Tenth Planet* 1966). A few years later, the Cyber-Fleet orbited the Moon and waited for the Cyber-Leader, already on Earth, to acquire the Nemesis

Statue so the Fleet could land, conquer Earth and convert the planet into New Mondas. (*Silver Nemesis* 1988)

By the 21st century, the Moon was considered neutral ground under galactic law. This meant the Judoon law had to transport the Hope Hospital from London to the Moon in order to catch an alien murderer. (*Smith and Jones*, 2006).

By 2010, there was a Moonbase operated by the Unified Intelligence Taskforce. Dr. Elizabeth Shaw was stationed here at the time. (*Death of the Doctor*, *Sarah Jane Adventures* 2010),

In 2070, a Moonbase housed the Gravitron which controlled the Earth's weather. Cybermen attempted a stealth invasion to control the Gravitron and thus conquer the Earth (*The Moonbase* 1967). This base was later refurbished as the central T-Mat relay, co-ordinating the T-Mat transportation system on Earth. An attack squad of Ice Warriors attempted to sabotage the relay and disrupt Earth's transport systems prior to the Martian invasion fleet landing on Earth. (*The Seeds of Death*)

By 2540, the Moon base – or a similar one, was established as a penal colony for dissidents against the war between the Earth Empire and the Draconian Empire. The Doctor was briefly imprisoned there. (*Frontier in Space* 1973).

In 5123, River Song graduated from the Luna University with a degree in archaeology. (*Let's Kill Hitler* 2011)

By the time of time of the Fourth Great and Bountiful Human Empire, several hundreds of thousands of years into the future, the Earth had five moons. A penal colony still existed on one of them. Were these moons natural satellites, man-made satellites or more eggs? (*The Long Game*, *Bad Wolf*, 2005)

So, as you can see, the Moon has figured many times in *Doctor Who's* long history and at no point has it ever been even *hinted* at that the Moon is, actually an egg. Then Showrunner Steven Moffat prided himself on being a fan of the original series, but *surely* he must have realised this? Why not set the story on the moon of another planet, say one with a human colony, or New Earth, which had featured many times previously?



A Multiverse of Moonbases...



Housing the Gravitron (*The Moonbase*—1967)



Controlling T-Mat (*The Seeds of Death*—1969)



The Lunar Prison (*Frontier In Space*, 1973)

It's pretty clear that writer Peter Harness didn't do so much as a Google search when considering the science of the premise. What's more, nobody on the Production team either challenged or double checked the science. OK, so *Doctor Who* is science fiction, but good science fiction must always be rooted in *scientific fact*. It seems likely that we're supposed to accept that, over time, the massive egg has accumulated a crust of dust, rock and other debris which has been drifting through space and has been trapped by both the egg's gravity and that of the Earth, this making the egg look like a natural, rocky satellite. So much, so plausible. But key among the scientific bloopers here are:

- As an egg (of any size) prepares to hatch, it doesn't gain mass, if anything it loses mass.
- The "Moon Bacteria" couldn't grow to the size of badgers, as they wouldn't be able to absorb enough nutrients from the surface of the moon, egg or not.
- When the Moon Egg hatches, why didn't tons of debris (eggshell, moon rock etc.) fall onto the Earth causing massive destruction? creature which hatches out of the Moon Egg immediately lays another Moon Egg of the same size! How is that even possible?
- When the egg hatches, the Doctor and co hear the creature roar from Earth. The moon is 238,900 miles away, and the speed of sound is only 761 miles per second. Sound doesn't travel that far that fast, let alone in space... they'd have to wait nearly two weeks to hear the roar.
- Space Shuttles were only built for low-orbit space travel; they were never designed to fly to the Moon. In any event, they would need solid rocket boosters to launch them and we've been told there's no space programme on Earth.

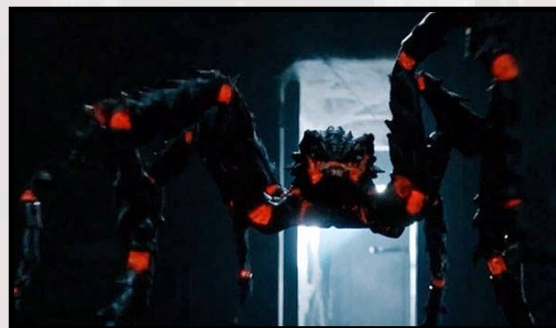


So, how can we square *Kill The Moon* with all the previous adventures involving the Moon?

First off, you could simply say that the TARDIS has visited yet another one of those multiverse realities or different timelines. As the Thirteenth Doctor told her "fam", different futures and timelines evolve from different events. I've personally thought that the presence of the Doctor *causes* multiple timelines to develop every time he/she arrives in each situation. Sometimes the TARDIS will revisit one of those timelines so events follow on sequentially e.g. *The Abominable Snowmen*, *Web Of Fear* and *The Invasion* all occupy the same timeline, and from there onwards so do all of the Third Doctor's Earthbound stories. In that timeline *Ambassadors of Death* which is set around 1977, Britain has its own space programme making manned missions to Mars. However, in *The Christmas Invasion*, which is set on Christmas Day 2005, only an unmanned satellite has been sent to Mars by Britain, so this is clearly set in a different timeline.

So maybe there's a Moon Egg timeline and others where the Moon is a natural satellite. (The Moon Egg hatching is also referenced later in *Under the Lake* (2015).

Or... Let's say the Egg had been travelling through space for quite some time, accumulating a layer of rock, dust etc. and looked set on a collision course with the Earth, causing the Silurian race to identify it as rogue planet. The Egg then was caught by Earth's gravity and then had same effect as a natural satellite, affecting the tides and the weather patterns. Or maybe the rogue planet actually was a planet which became Earth's Moon and the Space Dragon came along later and kicked the "natural" Moon out of the way and laid its Egg in the same orbit? Maybe this is what Space Dragons do to ensure their eggs remain safe in a larger planet's orbit.



(ABOVE RIGHT) A spider-like Moon bacterium
 (TOP LEFT) The Doctor encounters the sticky web ,made by the Moon-Egg "bacteria"
 (MIDDLE LEFT) The intrepid adventurers—L to R: Lundvik, The Doctor, Clara, Courtney
 (BOTTOM LEFT) The crashed space shuttle, sent on a suicide mission to destroy the Moon.

As to the scientific anomalies listed above as the egg starts to hatch (deep breath):

- Maybe by its very nature, the Moon Dragon hatchling does gain mass as it prepares to hatch? It's an alien life form after all. For all we know it could absorb dark matter or solar energy to do so. It's an alien life form, after all.
- The Moon bacteria are, similarly, alien and they grow exponentially as the egg prepares to hatch the creature gains mass.
- Due to the alien-ness of the hatchling, the Moon Egg's surface pretty much atomises when it hatches, so every piece of rock is broken down in minute grains, which burn up harmlessly in Earth's atmosphere.
- It is not unknown for some species of Earth insect to be born pregnant, a process known as Parthenogenesis, Aphids (Greenfly) being a common example. So, the Space Dragon could be such a species, essentially cloning itself. As for the new Egg being laid the same size as the old egg, yes, that would be impossible, but let's assume that it's a massive egg to start with and it will most likely be pliable when it is laid. It immediately begins to swell up once it leaves its parent's body. It reaches approximate Moon size within minutes and hardens off; it may even begin to attract some of the dust from the now hatched egg that is floating around and will do so from now on as more space debris gets drawn into its gravitational field, thus creating a moon-like shell. Over hundreds and thousands of years, this will become cratered with meteorite impacts just as the old moon egg did but suffering no internal damage thanks to its massively hard natural shell and its acquired shell of rock and dust.
- Hearing the roar from Earth... maybe it's a telepathic roar and not actual sound as such? The Dragon creature may be highly developed and communicates by telepathy if it inhabits the vacuum of space where sound cannot travel as its natural habitat. Presumably there's more Space Dragons out there, so they need to "call" to each other telepathically across the void, (in a similar way to how whales call to each other from hundreds of miles away in Earth's oceans, albeit by low frequency sound. Who knows... Maybe whales are also telepathic?).
- The Space Shuttle – possibly some booster rockets were hurriedly built for it. Maybe the shuttle was fitted with an engine which could at least get it to the moon. Possibly a new range of Space Shuttles had been developed some years before for deep space flight but

never used and this is the dilapidated last one of its kind.

There's also an interesting point for which I must thank GTLWR's own Alex Pinfold: When the Doctor, Clara, Courtney and Lundvik are watching the Space Dragon hatching from the moon, they are standing on a beach. The sea is calm, the sky a clear blue; there's no evidence of raging tides and land or weather disruption. Okay, the moon can and is often visible in the daytime, but somehow, although the Moon Egg is closer to Earth, it doesn't look or feel like it's really there. In fact, the whole hatching looks positively ethereal, with the Space Dragon simply fading away. Could it be that the Doctor brought the little group to a *different* Earth, one where the Moon is a natural satellite and they are watching events unfolding across dimensions in a different timeline by some Time Lord/TARDIS trickery? (Later on, presumably the Doctor drops Lundvik off somewhere safe – let's hope it's on the right Earth in the correct timeline, because if she meets that timeline's Lundvik, it could be a bit embarrassing...).



Above Left: The Moon-Egg hatches!

Above Right: The Space Dragon Creature flies free...

Below: The Doctor and co watch from Earth (although which one?) as the Space Dragon hatches and the Moon Egg dissolves into dust.



As to why nobody has ever mentioned the Moon being an egg in any Moon-based *Doctor Who* story set after 2049; it's either *not* a Moon Egg is those timelines or everybody *knows* that it's an egg, but because it won't hatch for at least a million years, it's simply not worth remarking on. Besides, surely that's just a legend from the mid-21st Century?

Then again, you could factor in the effects of the Time War... or the Timewrym...

Also, a further point to consider: Given the fact that most other planets in our solar system have more than one moon, this does rather beg the question as to how many of these are natural moons and how many others might be Space Dragon eggs?

In *Destiny of the Daleks* (1979), The Fourth Doctor is reading aloud from a book about a similar life form which has been mistaken for a planet: *"The conditions existing on the planet Magla make it incapable of supporting any lifeform."* 'Huh. Huh. Huh. He obviously doesn't realise the planet Magla's an eight thousand-mile-wide amoeba that has grown a crusty shell. I wonder what he does know?'

Kill The Moon still won't be my favourite *Doctor Who* story by a long chalk (and *that's* calcium based tool!), but, well, it's probably as realistic as an alien with two hearts who can regenerate his/her body, travelling through time and space in a dimensionally transcendental craft that looks like an old fashioned police box. You never know though – I may grow to like it more.

Circle Squared? Or am I a raving Luna-tic? You decide...



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6B

OR NOT

6B?

THAT IS THE QUESTION

PONDERS CHARLES HAMPSON

If we consider about *Spearhead From Space*, the debut adventure for the Third Doctor (as played by Jon Pertwee) it would seem it must logically follow on directly from *The War Games*, the last story of the preceding season. We will recall that at the conclusion of the story, the Doctor is captured and put on trial by his own people, the mysterious Time Lords, charged with interfering in the affairs of other races and stealing a TARDIS to escape the boredom of Time Lord society. His companions Jamie and Zoe are returned to their own times with their memories of the Doctor erased, except for those of their first meeting and adventure with him. The Doctor himself faces a sentence of death for his 'crimes'. However, the fact that he has always acted on the side of good against evil is accepted as mitigation for his actions by the Time Lord Tribunal, and the recognition that he still has a part to play in that struggle, leads it to commute his sentence to exile on Earth in the late 20th Century. His TARDIS is to be disabled, and the secret of time travel blocked from his memory. Worse, still, perhaps, he will be forced to change his appearance again (the 'term "regeneration" not yet having been coined in the show). The last we see of the Second Doctor is him spinning away into a black void, complaining that the Time Lords will make him giddy. Six months in Earth time later, the TARDIS materialises in Oxley Woods, Essex, and the newly regenerated Third Doctor, confused and disorientated stumbles out of the TARDIS.

But did it *really* happen like that? Did the Second Doctor enter exile immediately? What if he went on to have other adventures before his exile began? These adventures would have taken place between Seasons Six and Seven, and this brought about the fan theory – and later BBC acknowledgement – that

the Second Doctor's adventures continued in the unseen, so-called **Season 6B**.

Let's consider the evidence for this theory.

In *Spearhead From Space* The Doctor has several items on his person that he clearly did not have at the end of *The War Games*, including a ring, a bracelet and a TARDIS-homing wrist watch. Also, when the Doctor takes a shower, we see that he has a serpent tattoo on his upper arm. If he's just regenerated, how did he get that tattoo, let alone everything else? (The tattoo is also clearly seen in the following serial *Doctor Who and the Silurians*).



In subsequent stories over the years, other clues point to a different post-trial scenario.

The Three Doctors (1973), the first multi-Doctor adventure, has both the First and Second Doctors taken from their own timestreams by the Time Lords to aid the Third in fighting maverick Time Lord

Omega. As the First and Second Doctors were both, effectively, outlaws, this begs two questions: (a) if the Time Lords could locate them in time that easily, why didn't they do so and arrest them before? And (b) why are the First and Second Doctors willing to help the Time Lords anyway? The answer to (b) is easy – it's literally self-preservation. (a) is a little more tricky to answer unless we consider there really *was* a Season 6b.



In *The Five Doctors* (1983), the Second Doctor visits the Brigadier on the eve of his retirement, saying that he's read about it in "tomorrow's

edition of *The Times*". Also, he says that he shouldn't really be there, but he's "bending the laws of time a little" (which doesn't surprise the Brigadier one jot). What is clear, however, is that the Second Doctor has accurately piloted the TARDIS to a chosen destination – something he was unable to do in his official televised adventures. How, if the Second



Doctor regenerated immediately into the Third, has this come about?

The Two Doctors (1985),

muddies the waters even more. The Second Doctor looks noticeably older, his hair now grey instead of black. Also, his travelling companion Jamie seems to know all about Time Lords, which is puzzling because he didn't know about their existence until the events of *The War Games*.

Further, it is explicitly mentioned that the Doctor is on a mission for the Time Lords and he again demonstrates that he has somehow learned to steer the TARDIS accurately. We're also told that his other current companion is Victoria, although she is off studying cartography and will be picked up later. However, by *The War Games* she had long since left the TARDIS crew.



Then there is the Sixth Doctor's astonishment that the Second Doctor has a Stattenheim Remote Control Device for the TARDIS – something he (Six) had always wanted. What's more, the Sixth Doctor has no recollection of the circumstances in which his previous self acquired it. Equally, he has no memory of meeting this particular meeting with his earlier self.



Finally, there is yet another indication that the Second Doctor had adventures we didn't know about in the Fourth Doctor story, *The Masque of Mandragora* (1976). The Fourth Doctor shows Sarah Jane the wood panelled secondary control room in the TARDIS and finds the Second Doctor's recorder (or one of them at least) on the console. (The Doctor also picks up a frilly shirt and velvet jacket from a chair by the console, indicating that the Third Doctor must also have used this console room at some point – once his exile was over, presumably.)



Of course, there are easy explanations for all of these inconsistencies, both in the show's Production terms and "in Whoniverse". Actor Jon Pertwee acquired his serpent tattoo during his time in the Royal Navy during WW2 and it was just unfortunate that nobody thought to cover it up with make-up or better still, not to show it at all. The Second Doctor appeared older with grey hair because Patrick Troughton was older by the time of *The Five Doctors* and *The Two Doctors* and his hair had greyed. Also, in the latter, his wig was left behind during location filming in Spain (or, as is sometimes reported, he simply refused to wear it). Having Jamie and Victoria travelling with the Doctor on missions for the Timelords came about because Robert Holmes, who scripted *The Two Doctors*, wasn't too bothered about canonicity or continuity.

But then again... The key (or keys) to these puzzles may well lie with Robert Holmes and with Terrance Dicks, the script editor during Pertwee's tenure as the Doctor, who novelised several *Doctor Who* stories and penned several original novels in the Virgin New Adventures, BBC DoctorWho books and elsewhere.

It was Holmes who wrote the Third Doctor's first story *Spearhead From Space* and a lot of the Time Lord mythos which starts with this story. However, it's unlikely that Dicks and Producer Barry Letts would have sanctioned anything so far reaching and profound if they hadn't agreed with it, or even colluded with it. Six years after *Spearhead*, Holmes massively upset the *Doctor Who* Appreciation Society fanbase with his portrayal, in *The Deadly Assassin*, of a Gallifrey populated by old men in robes and fancy headgear who had eschewed technology for rituals and academia. But Holmes cannily went to the trouble of writing to DWAS via their newsletter *Celestial Toyroom*, explaining that it was his deliberate intention was to showcase the hypocrisy of Time Lord society and the duplicitous activities of the Celestial Intervention Agency. Also, obviously by chance but fitting the narrative quite well in retrospect, the traitor Time Lord Goth is played by Bernard Horsfall, the same actor who played one of the Tribunal members at the Doctor's trial in *The War Games*. Was Goth a CIA double agent all along? Was he complicit in using the Second Doctor for covert missions after his trial? It would seem possible.



As for *The Three Doctors*, (later novelised by Dicks) here it is the President of the High Council who directly orders that the First and Second Doctors are

lifted from their own timelines to aid the Third Doctor, much to the objection and horror of his associates who protest that this violates the First Law of Time i.e. that a Time Lord cannot cross his own timeline. But needs must and on his orders, this happens. On the Time Lords' scanner screens we see both Doctors being plucked from specific points; the First Doctor enjoying a garden at some secret retreat he frequents (later said in the *New Adventures* to be a house he owns in the English village of Cheldon Bonniface), whilst the Second Doctor is scooped up from a Cyberman attack during *Invasion*, presumably to enable him to work better with the Brigadier and UNIT when he joins the Third Doctor, as he will then already know them at that point in his life. This instance of using the Second (and First) Doctor seems to be an exception as the action is sanctioned by *mainstream* Time Lord hierarchy, *not* the shadowy CIA. The story also implies that when Time Lords have crossed their own Time Stream, as soon as they return to the rightful places in time, their memories of meeting their past and future selves are lost.

The Season 6B hypothesis, as it became known, was first raised in *The Discontinuity Guide*, written by Paul Cornell, Martin Day and Keith Topping, although for many years it remained purely theoretical. Then Terrance Dicks wrote his original *Doctor Who* novels, *Players* and *World Game*, explaining in them that, at the end of his trial, the Second Doctor was reprieved by the CIA to work as an agent on their behalf. After several solo missions, the CIA allowed the Doctor to regain Jamie and Victoria as companions, and gave him the Stattenheim remote control device to summon his TARDIS.



Dicks also added to this sequence of events following the Second Doctor's trial in his posthumously published short story *Save Yourself*, part of the *Target Storybook Anthology* (2019). One of these missions included that depicted on TV in *The Two Doctors*. Eventually however, the Doctor's work with the CIA came to an end and his forced regeneration and exile to Earth began. In addition, he was marked with a tattoo to brand him as a Time Lord criminal. This all may have happened at the

at the behest of mainstream Time Lord hierarchy, which would explain the apparent exception I've noted in *The Three Doctors*, viz; that it was the Lord President, rather than the CIA, who ordered him to join his previous and succeeding regenerations and then granted him his freedom when Omega was defeated. Whether the Third Doctor retained any memory of being a Time Lord agent is doubtful – the CIA always covers its tracks.

Soon after *Doctor Who* was relaunched in 2005, the BBC officially embraced the Season 6B hypothesis as fact and included it on their official *Doctor Who* website. It had, after all those years of confusion, become canon. Robert Holmes and Terrance Dicks, both of whom were prolific *Doctor Who* writers and had served as Script Editor to the series, had said so. So there!

Today, it's possible that we will have to add in the events of 2020's season finale *The Timeless Children*, depending on how they unravel. We've already learned that the Doctor is, in fact, the mysterious "Timeless Child" from whom the Time Lords gained their regenerative powers. She has had almost countless previous lives both as a male and female, operating for "The Division" who may, or may not, be the CIA. These adventures happened centuries before the Timeless Child – by now an adult – was forced back into childhood, memories wiped, to grow up as a Time Lord who eventually became known as The Doctor. Or not.

Then there's the matter of the "unknown" Doctor, who we met a few episodes before in *Fugitive of the Jodoon*. Neither "our" Doctor (played by Jodie Whittaker) or the "Ruth Doctor" (played by Jo Martin), have any recollection of each other. And let's not forget the seven or eight "pre Hartnell" faces glimpsed in the mind battle between the Fourth Doctor and evil Time Lord Morbius in *Brain of Morbius* (1976).



We also know from *The Day of the Doctor* (2013) at some point the Doctor will "retire" and become the mysterious Curator of UNIT's Black Archive, inhabiting an aged version of the Fourth Doctor. "Revisiting a few of the old favourite" faces, as he cheerfully tells his Eleventh self.



So where, you might ask, do these revelations put Season 6B? Yes, well, that's yet to be decided...

Lastly, no examination of Season 6B would be complete without considering the very first depiction of what the Second Doctor *might* have done after his trial and before he became the Third Doctor. *TV Comic* had been carrying the comic strip escapades of the Doctor since 1964. They offered no explanation to their readers when Hartnell became Troughton. However, once *The War Games* had been screened on TV in June 1969 and a new Doctor was imminent but not yet cast, *TV Comic* still had the rights to publish a *Doctor Who* strip, but only the rights, at that stage, to use Troughton's image. Also, the show's return was six months away and they didn't want to rest the strip.

So, taking their lead from the BBC, they explained that the Doctor had been exiled to Earth by the Time Lords - as seen on TV - and was without his TARDIS, so had installed himself in a sumptuous suite at the Carlton Grange Hotel in London from where he proceeded to solve Earth-based mysteries. (People with a problem phoned in, or visited the Doctor in person, but UNIT was, for the present, nowhere to be seen).

For the next six months, the Second Doctor enjoys a limited freedom until his final story, *The Night Walkers*, where he appears as a celebrity panellist on the TV show *Explain My Mystery*, a game show of sorts that asks experts to explain supernatural phenomena. Farmer James Hogan claims that his scarecrows have been walking at night, much to the amusement of the audience, but the Doctor believes him. He duly accompanies Hogan to his farm one night and does indeed observe the scarecrows walking around a field. This turns out to be a trap set by the Time Lords to recapture the Doctor. The scarecrows have been animated purely to draw the Doctor in. They paralyse him with an energy beam

beam and carry him into the TARDIS which has materialised in Hogan's field. There, the Doctor is informed that the second part of his sentence is to be carried out – the change of appearance. The TARDIS dematerialises, the scarecrows revert to normal and Hogan runs off in a blind panic.

Shortly after, on 3rd January 1970, some miles away from Hogan's land, the TARDIS materialises in Oxley Wood, Essex on our TVs, and the disorientated, newly regenerated Third Doctor staggers out of its doors and collapses. Meanwhile, the Third Doctor also starts his comic strip adventures in *TV Comic*. It is, in fact, a very neat tie-in *between TV Comic* and TV programme. Planned or Coincidence? Who knows?

Ah, says the wise, regular fan - *but is it really canon?* Well, let's put it like this – *Doctor Who* inhabits a multiverse of mediums: TV, comics, annuals, *Big Finish* audios, radio plays, fanfic, even films if you want to count the two 1960s Dalek films. The best way to deal with this dilemma is surely to say they are *all* canon – from different realities and universes. After all, everything is canon until it's not, right?

6B or Not 6B... What do I think?

The scarecrows did it!

Then again...



TV COMIC, 22nd November, 1969

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SPEARHEAD WITH ZOE

A Fanfic By
Nick Mays

It had been the strangest day of Elizabeth Shaw's life and it was just about to get a lot stranger. Early that morning she'd been virtually kidnapped from her laboratory at Cambridge by an Army Officer in a rather odd-looking, beige uniform, working for some Government-sanctioned spy outfit called UNIT. She'd hardly had time to arrange tutorial cover for her students with a colleague, let alone pack a change of underwear, before she'd been whisked off to London in a sleek, black car and brought to an office situated at the back of an anonymous cul-de-sac somewhere near King's Cross station. Throughout the journey, the officer had hardly spoken a word, other than to reassure her that it was a matter of national importance and that everything would be explained to her by his superior officer when she arrived.

After being searched by another officer (thankfully female), dressed in the same beige uniform as the officer accompanying her Liz had been issued with a security pass and led down a series of anonymous, confusing corridors (which all looked the same) until she was brought into an equally anonymous office and introduced to the senior officer, one Brigadier Alistair Gordon Lethbridge-Stewart. He was a tall, dark haired man, in his early forties, with a neat, trimmed moustache. Like all the other soldiers she'd encountered, he was dressed in the same beige uniform. Liz found her initial annoyance at the manner in which she'd been brought there softened slightly before the Brigadier's impeccable manners and his seeming inability to be rattled by her spiky and somewhat sarcastic manner. She was presented with the mug of hot, sweet tea which another soldier (a short corporal this time) plonked down on the Brigadier's desk in front of her. "I shouldn't be doin' this by rights, see?" he muttered in a broad Welsh accent. "I'm a driver by rights, me." The resentment with which he said it suggested that Liz was somehow responsible for his posting.

"Yes, *thank you* Evans!" snapped the Brigadier. "That'll be all!" Evans slouched off with ill grace, which caused Liz to smirk somewhat. She suspected the Brigadier's bark was worse than his bite, but even so, he could bark very loudly.

After this, things had turned decidedly stranger. The Brigadier had explained that UNIT – the United Nations Intelligence Taskforce – wasn't "some kind of ridiculous spy outfit" as Liz had indignantly described it, but was, in fact, a military/scientific organisation which "deals with the off, the unexplained, anything on Earth, or even beyond." And Dr Elizabeth Shaw had been recommended as exactly the "scientific all-rounder" that UNIT needed to recruit as a Scientific Advisor... clearly at very short notice!

Liz's initial scepticism (and sarcasm) about "Little Blue Men with Three heads" had swiftly evaporated when she realised that the Brigadier was in earnest. Not only that, he was telling her about a shower of about fifty meteorites which had come down from space and landed in rural Essex early that morning – *directed* in a funnel of thin, superheated air. And as if that wasn't strange enough, he claimed that a similar, but smaller shower of meteorites had landed in the same area, under the same circumstances, six months earlier. But directed by whom? By some extra-terrestrial agency? He'd then gone on to tell her that there had been two attempted alien invasions of Earth since UNIT was formed two years ago.

Putting aside her interest in the strange meteorites, Liz had scoffed at the alien invasion story.

'It is not my habit to tell lies, Miss Shaw,' said the Brigadier gravely.

Liz sipped her hot tea carefully, then said: "I'm sorry Brigadier, but it *is* a fantastic story."

The Brigadier continued, apparently in all seriousness. "We were very lucky on both occasions. We had help from a scientist with a great experience of other life forms."

"Really? Who was this genius?" asked Liz with genuine curiosity. Despite herself, she realised her scientific interest was growing. "An expert on alien life forms?"

"Well, it's all rather difficult to explain," said the Brigadier, distractedly. "We used to call him... the Doctor."

At that precise moment, the telephone on the Brigadier's desk rang. The Brigadier carried out a brief conversation with one of his men, an officer named Munro, who was stationed at Oxley Woods where the meteorites had come down. Apparently, he was calling from a nearby cottage hospital, much to the Brigadier's surprise.

"What the dickens are you doing there? Have you found any of those meteorites?" snapped the Brigadier. Munro said something else which caused the Brigadier to stiffen in his chair. "This police box Munro? Two civilians unconscious beside it? A man and a young girl... at the hospital you say? Listen,

Munro. I want an armed guard put on that police box *at once*. Nobody is to be allowed near it, do you understand? *Nobody!*"

The Brigadier grabbed his beret and swagger stick, called out for Evans to get his car ready and hurried Liz out of the office.

"What is this about a police box?" Liz asked, incredulously. "And who did you say was unconscious beside it?"

"Miss Shaw," said the Brigadier gravely. "If I'm right, then our alien expert, the Doctor has turned up again!"

"Am I going back to Cambridge?" asked Liz hopefully, as she hurried to keep up with Brigadier's long-legged marching strides.

"Not yet, Miss Shaw. I'd rather like you to come to the hospital to meet the Doctor," answered the Brigadier.

"But what's this got to do with a police box?" muttered Liz to herself as she ran to catch up with the Brigadier.

Just over an hour later, having driven at breakneck speed, accompanied by four motorcycle outriders, the Brigadier's car arrived at Ashbridge Cottage Hospital in north Essex, not far from the picturesque Oxley Woods. It all looked so incongruous to Liz, so peaceful and tranquil, completely at odds with the number of UNIT soldiers she'd seen combing the area by the woods with some kind of hi-tech detecting equipment. There was a greater surprise awaiting when they entered the hospital. There was a literal scrum of reporters in the reception area who all descended upon the Brigadier; as one shouting out questions about "the man from space".

A very harassed looking UNIT officer forced his way through the pack and saluted the Brigadier. The Brigadier merely raised his swagger stick in acknowledgement and snapped: "How the devil did this lot get in here, Munro?"

"I've no idea Sir," answered Munro, clearly not wishing to shoulder the blame for the melee. "I can only assume someone in the hospital tipped them off. He nodded in the direction of a shabby little man in an overall standing near the main doors. "My money's on him Sir – Mullins. He's a porter here. Welshman."

"Hmm," muttered the Brigadier. "I wonder if my driver Evans is any relation – they look alike!"

Liz was quite happy to shelter behind the Brigadier and Captain Munro as the Brigadier deftly deflected

the journalists' shouted questions with practised ease, dismissing the notion of a man from space as "an unfortunate civilian who just happened to be in the area where some meteorites had possibly landed." Clearly the journalists didn't believe a word of his explanation, but thanks to some persuasion by a couple of UNIT soldiers, the scrum parted to allow the Brigadier, Munro and Liz through a door leading to the hospital wards. The little porter, Mullins, hurried over, blocking the doorway with the help of the UNIT soldiers, telling the journalists that they couldn't go any further.



Liz and the Brigadier followed Munro to a private ward. They were met by a cheerful, but rather harassed looking doctor named Henderson. Munro quickly introduced them both to him.

"Well, how's your patient, doctor?" asked the Brigadier promptly. "Can we see him?"

"You can see him, certainly," said Henderson, pushing his spectacles back to the bridge of his nose.

"He's not making much sense yet. He has brief moments of consciousness and then slips back again."

"What's actually wrong with him?" asked Liz, who was medically qualified herself, amongst her many other disciplines.

Henderson gave her an odd look and replied: "I can't say. Never had a patient quite like him before."

"How do you mean?" asked Liz.

Henderson took a deep breath and then said, quite simply: "Well, his whole cardiovascular system is quite unlike anything I've ever seen. And I'm told his blood can't be identified."

Before Liz could reply, the Brigadier said with a smile. "Splendid. That sounds like the Doctor!" He made as though to open the door to the private room then hesitated. "What about the girl who was with him?"

"Oh, she seems... normal enough," said Henderson. "Inside and out. She's conscious now, doesn't appear to be harmed in any way, although she seems to be a bit vague about how she and this man came to be where they were found. Some kind of memory loss maybe, or she may just be holding something back. She's insisted on sitting by this chap's bed, so she obviously knows him. She was wearing odd sort of clothes too, but then again, so was he." Henderson chuckled. "A bit like they were on their way to a fancy-dress party or something."

"Yes, well..." said the Brigadier pushing the door open.

Liz followed Henderson and the Brigadier into a pleasant room, obviously reserved for patients who needed peace and quiet. She saw a young woman wearing a white hospital gown and bed socks sitting beside the bed. She had dark bobbed hair and dark, bright eyes. She didn't appear to be very tall and was looking profoundly serious, intently studying the patient who was lying in the bed, with his head turned away from everyone. When she looked up and saw the four of them enter the room, she immediately jumped to her feet. Liz observed that she was quite petite and looked younger than she perhaps truly was.

"Brigadier!" the girl exclaimed, a smile breaking out across her face.

"Miss Herriot!" said the Brigadier equally delightedly, striding over and shaking her hand briskly. "How very nice to see you again!" He nodded to the bed. "So... what's the Doctor been up to this time?" He bent down and gently rolled the patient onto his back. Liz saw that the man was quite tall, with a shock of white-grey hair, a lined face and a rather beaky nose. However, a look of confusion crossed the Brigadier's face.

"Do you know him?" Liz asked.

"No," said the Brigadier flatly. "I've never seen him before in my life."

The young girl, Miss Herriot spoke. "But Brigadier – this is the Doctor!"

"Don't be ridiculous!" said the Brigadier dismissively, "He doesn't look a bit like the Doctor!"

Before Zoe could answer, the mystery man's eyes opened and he looked up at the Brigadier. "Why Lethbridge-Stewart my dear fellow!" he exclaimed in a rich, cultured sort of voice.

"He knows *you* sir," said Munro. "So does the young lady."



After this, things had got, well, *bizarre* was the only word for it...

The man – the Doctor (perhaps) – muttered that he surely couldn't have changed that much and asked for a mirror. Liz pulled her make up compact from her handbag and passed it to him. The Doctor thanked Liz, then looked intently into it.

"Oh, no! Oh, no. Well, that's not me at all. No wonder you didn't recognise me. Oh, that face. That hair!" he exclaimed. Then he began to look more closely, tilting his chin and wiggling his eyebrows. "Oh, I don't know, though. I think it's rather distinctive. Don't you agree?"

He was met with a blank stare from the Brigadier.

"No, you don't?" added the Doctor. "Oh, anyway, I'm tired. All this exercise and exertion. It's been too much. Have to get some sleep now." And with that he simply closed his eyes and lapsed back into unconsciousness. Despite the Brigadier's cajoling he wouldn't wake up.



The Brigadier reluctantly agreed to this, instructing Munro to keep a guard on the mysterious patient and to report to him as soon as he was awake and fit to travel. He asked if there was a private area where he could talk to Miss Herriot. Henderson obligingly led them to a staff restroom.

"Do feel free to make yourselves a drink," said Henderson indicating an electric kettle standing next to a small sink. "There's spare mugs, tea and coffee in the cupboards. I'll see to it that you're not disturbed." With that he bustled out.

"Perhaps you'd be kind enough to make us all a drink, Miss Shaw?" asked the Brigadier. He noticed Liz bristle visibly at his rather chauvinistic request and quickly

added, "I'd like to talk to Miss Herriot and I do feel things proceed more amenable with a decent cup of tea, don't you?"

Once everyone had been provided with tea and were each sitting in one of the many mis-matched armchairs in the restroom, the Brigadier leaned forward to the young girl. "Now Miss Herriot, perhaps you could tell us what the dickens is going on here?" he said. His words were gentle, yet firm. This was a man who clearly needed answers and was determined to get them.

The young woman took a sip of her tea, flicked her hair back and said. "Oh, do please call me Zoe, Brigadier!"

The Brigadier harrumphed, and Liz quickly interjected. "I'm Liz," she said smiling. Tea certainly made things more amendable, but a friendly face also counted for a lot. Zoe smiled back. She had a nice smile, thought Liz, it made her look even more elfin and vulnerable.

Zoe took a deep breath. "Well," she began, "The TARDIS landed us – Jamie, the Doctor and me - in what we *thought* was a World War One battlefield, but it was really an alien planet. These aliens – we never found out where they were from – had been kidnapping thousands of soldiers from wars and conflicts throughout Earth's history and were making them fight their wars on this planet in different time zones. They wanted to use the survivors, the strongest and fittest, as an army of conquest..."

As the story unfolded, Liz grew ever more dumbfounded; it sounded like the plot of a science fiction programme on television, like that 'Doctor X' series that her little sister had loved, but she noticed that the Brigadier was listening intently, nodding here and there and occasionally saying "Yes, do go on."

Apparently, this mysterious Doctor – who was formerly a little man with dark hair dressed in baggy trousers and a frock coat – had managed to create a force of soldiers resistant to the aliens' brainwashing. The aliens were being led by some character called the War Chief that the Doctor recognised as "one of his own people", who, in turn, was working for some senior alien called the War Lord. The aliens had been defeated and the War Chief killed, but the Doctor still had to get all these stranded human soldiers back to their own time zones. So he'd sent a telepathic distress call - in a box no less - to his own people - who were called the Time Lords - to come and sort this out. He'd then urged Zoe and Jamie to hurry up and get back to the TARDIS (the police box which she claimed travelled through time and space) because he was a wanted criminal amongst his own people!

"But they chased us through time and brought us to this strange place, which might have been on the Doctor's own planet," said Zoe. "He was put on trial by this tribunal of Time Lords who accused him of not only stealing a TARDIS but of interfering in the affairs of other races, which was against their law. Well, from what I can recall..." Here she paused and screwed her eyes tightly shut in an effort to remember. "... They sent Jamie and me back to our own times, where we'd first met the Doctor, but I can't remember *how* they did it. They said they would erase our memories of our time travelling with him, but we would still remember how we first met him. I was back on the Wheel – that's the space station where I worked as an astrophysicist - and I felt like I'd forgotten something. My colleague Tanya came by and said that the Doctor and Jamie had left and that there was a lot of tidying up to do after the Cybermen had attacked us. I said I'd be along in a minute. I just felt so... confused.

"Next thing I knew there was a man standing there. He wasn't one of the Wheel's crew, but I felt I'd seen him before somewhere. He was holding out some sort of chunky bracelet and asked me to take hold of it... His voice was very compelling, I just had to obey him, so I reached out and gripped the bracelet... I felt like I was falling, falling... and then suddenly, I was back in that place where the Doctor had been put on trial and he was there! But he looked, I don't know... he looked a lot *older*. His hair was grey, and he looked so, so tired. He was in his shirtsleeves and they'd put some kind of band on his bare arm. He was

shouting at those Time Lord people – the same ones in the Tribunal who'd conducted his trial. When he saw me, his face lit up and he tried to run over to me, saying 'My dear Zoe...' but a couple of men, who looked like guards of some sort, stopped him, saying that the band would become his criminal brand when he... re- re- *regenerated* I think they said. Then the Doctor got angry again, grabbed his coat and put it on – I don't think he could remove the band - and then he started shouting at the tribunal: 'Oh, so you don't trust Jamie and me on missions together, but you want to consign poor Zoe into *exile* with me? You've already put her back in her own time once with a memory wipe and then you've yanked her out of it again, brought her here again and interfered with her mind! *It's outrageous!*' They ignored him and then the leading one said: 'It is time, Doctor!'



"The Doctor was about to say something, but he suddenly began to... glow... with a kind of golden light and his face began to stretch... blur... and he seemed to get... taller. I tried to go and help him, but my legs wouldn't work, I was paralysed somehow, as though some sort of voice in my head was compelling me not to. The Doctor was protesting to start with but then he started to cry out with pain. He... he *changed* Brigadier! It was amazing... but horrible, just *horrible*. He changed into the man who you saw in that bed."

Tears were rolling down Zoe's cheeks now and she began to sob uncontrollably. Liz immediately went over to her and hugged her, comforting her, stroking her hair, using soothing words to calm her down, just as she used to do

years ago when her little sister was upset about something. She saw that the Brigadier looked distinctly uncomfortable and had stood up, tapping his swagger stick against his leg, clearly at a loss of how to deal with a hysterical female.

Gradually, Zoe's sobs subsided, and she flopped back in her armchair, exhausted. She thanked Liz who offered her a handkerchief to dry her eyes. Zoe blew her nose loudly and proffered the handkerchief back to Liz who smiled and told her to keep it.

Zoe looked directly at the Brigadier. "The next thing I knew, Brigadier, the Doctor and I were lying on the floor of the TARDIS and it was in flight. No-one was operating the controls, the central column on the console was rising and falling. Then we landed. The Doctor – the new Doctor I should say – was stirring. Mumbling words that I couldn't catch. I was feeling shaky and faint myself. My brain felt like it had been turned inside out. I found that I could remember my adventures with the Doctor again, but it was like on a vid programme or something, like they'd happened to someone else. Then the TARDIS doors opened and I could see trees and grass outside, so I helped the Doctor to the door, thinking some fresh air would revive us both. We'd only managed a step or two outside when he collapsed. I tried to help him, but I must have fainted. Then I woke up here, in hospital. I asked to see the Doctor and eventually the medical staff realised who I was talking about. I've been sitting with him ever since. He occasionally stirs, mumbles something and then drops back into a deep sleep, almost as if he's comatose."

"And did he bring anything with him from those... Time Lord chaps?" asked the Brigadier gently.

"Not that I could see," said Zoe, "but his hospital gown has short sleeves and I saw on his arm where that strange band had been, he'd got a tattoo: it looks like a snake. He's never had a tattoo before. That must be the criminal brand those guards were talking about. I asked one of the nurses whether he'd had an arm band on, but she said he didn't. She let me look through the clothes he'd been wearing, but the band was gone. It – it must have branded him and then, well... vanished."

"That is an... incredible story, Zoe," said Liz, choosing her words carefully. She looked to the Brigadier. "What do you think, Brigadier?" she asked. To her astonishment the Brigadier didn't dismiss Zoe's account out of hand.

"I can't say whether I believe it or not," he said, equally carefully, "But knowing the Doctor, anything is possible. It seems that, for whatever reason, he has a new face and a new body. Now all we need is for him to wake up and tell us what to do about these blessed meteorites. In the meantime, Miss Shaw, I've asked you to become our Scientific Advisor, so I think it's a case of over to you."

Some hours later and Liz was reflecting on the day's events. The Brigadier had ordered that the police box be taken back to London in a UNIT truck. If it really was a space and time machine, then clearly UNIT didn't want it falling into the wrong hands. Zoe had reluctantly accompanied her and the Brigadier to the UNIT building in London. She had taken some persuading to leave the Doctor, despite the Brigadier's assurances that he was perfectly safe at the hospital with a UNIT guard. A helpful female officer had found some clothes for Zoe to wear – a thick green army jumper and combat trousers, plus a pair of black PT plimsolls. Everything looked far too big on her, enhancing her fragility, but an improvement on the hospital gown she'd been wearing. She had cheered up considerably when she joined Liz in a hastily set up laboratory. The equipment was certainly of a high quality – money didn't seem to be any object to UNIT, but the most incongruous thing was the police box—this 'TARDIS'— standing in one corner of the laboratory, looking like some silent sentinel, awaiting orders.

Despite Liz's gentle cajoling, Zoe was saying nothing about how it operated and besides which, she didn't have the key, so she couldn't get in. Liz was more than a little sceptical that such a rickety looking object could transport anyone through time and space - and it would certainly be cramped, although from Zoe's earlier account and her subsequent re-affirmation, it seemed that it was somehow bigger inside than out. Liz decided not to get bound up in an argument about the laws of physics and instead concentrate on analysing some pieces of meteor that UNIT soldiers had discovered near Oxley Woods.

Zoe had enthusiastically helped Liz in this task. She had proved that she was extremely intelligent, and Liz was finding that her knowledge was far in excess of her own on many matters. Together, they had deduced that the fragments were some form of high grade plastic of a type that was made up of polymer chains quite unlike any plastic either of them had seen before. It was almost as if it was organic and had been *grown* rather than manufactured.

"It's also clearly resistant to high heat, or how else could it have got through Earth's atmosphere?" declared Zoe.

"It just defies scientific explanation," Liz mused.

"Certainly for *this* time period's technological capabilities," added Zoe, enigmatically. Before Liz could challenge that statement the door to the laboratory burst open and Corporal Evans barged in, red faced and out of breath. "Sorry to disturb you ladies," he said, panting with the exertion of running, "But the Brigadier says to tell you..." He began to puff and pant, doubling over to catch his breath.

"What? What does he want you to tell us?" snapped Liz. She could see that getting along with the little Welshman was going to be uphill struggle.

"Sorry... sorry..." panted Evans. "Shouldn't be runnin' like that, see? I'm a driver me! Didn't want to come over to this UNIT set up, happy in the Guards I was!"

"Oh, just *tell* us, man!" shouted an exasperated Zoe, surprisingly loudly.

Evans almost (but not quite) snapped to attention, clearly responding to the voice of authority and took a deep breath.

"It's that mystery fella at the hospital, that Doctor," he said. "He's been kidnapped and the Brigadier says... well... he doesn't think the kidnappers were human, like!"



Interview With:

JIM MORTIMORE

Interview Conducted by Alex Pinfold

To coincide with our review of the *Doctor Who* - inspired novel *Blood Heat – The Director's Cut*, itself a new edition of the mid-90s novel *Blood Heat* from the *New Adventures* range, GTLWR recently corresponded with author Jim Mortimore about his work as a writer and his views on certain *Homo Reptilia* matters.

First of all, we asked Jim about the amazing level of detail in his work. The evocative environments, atmospheric settings, and the deep internal thought processes of his characters have made a big impact on many readers. We asked where his writing comes from, for example in terms of influences or personal experiences?

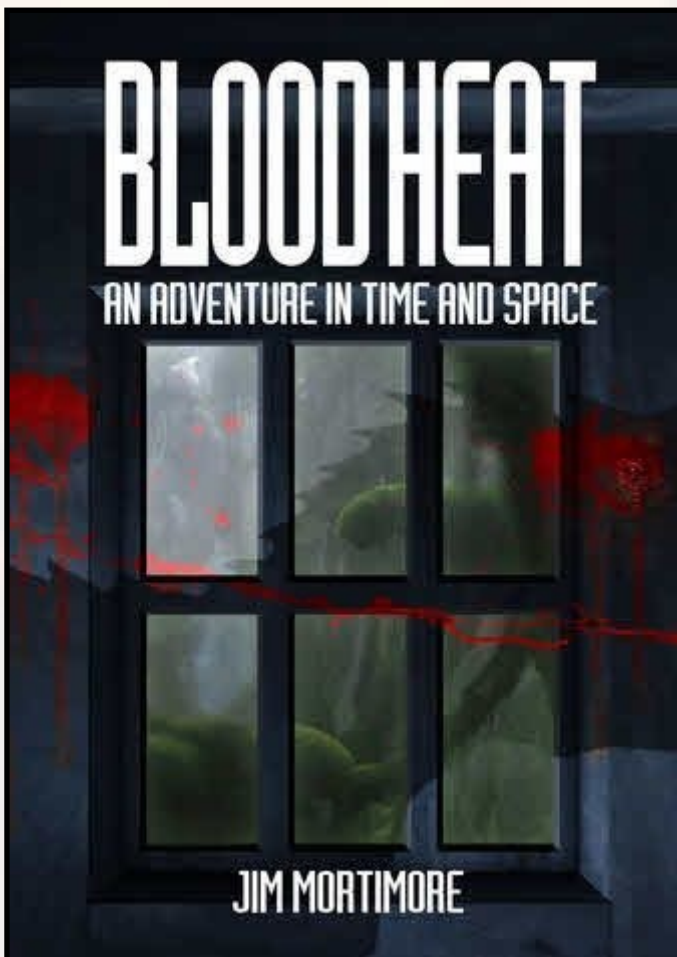
"They say every artist has a monkey sitting on their shoulder, poised to rub hand-fuls of monkey-mud-pie into their faces when they don't do as they're told. I have in the past found this to be true (see *"Me & My Monkey"* in *Campaign*, another of Jim's novels).

But there are other influences beyond good ol' monkey-madness" Jim explains. "While working on *Lucifer Rising*, Andy (Lane, co-author) was a lot better at characterisation than me – I remember having a conversation with him about it while writing *LR*, after which the writing chores seemed to fall out with him doing the people-y bits and me doing the action sequences. That worked pretty well for *LR*. *Blood Heat*, of course was a different thing again. Having to pick up the whole job was... well, a job and a half, really. I learn by the time-proven method of *monkey-see-monkey-do*. Once I've monkeyed about with something for a bit, I've generally acquired enough of a tool set to be able to improvise when using it, and that's where the funk kicks in."

"The influences which seem to have worked best for me are the ones that first got me into writing. It's not hard to detect flavours of Ray Bradbury, Alfred Bester, Alan Garner, Alan Moore, Arthur C. Clarke, Stephen King, and all the other usual suspects. As I've got older, I've become more of an art-stoner, though, so nowadays the bigger influences tend to be the wackier ones. *Campaign* was directly influenced by reading the mighty Alfred Bester's *Golem 100*. *BHDC* came about through an addict's interest in quantum physics. Once I acquire a toolset there's really no going back. Curiously, and ironically, these days, the wackier storytelling always seems to arise from real life rather than fiction. Go read up on quantum physics and try not to feel like you've experimented with some mind-altering substance or other!"

Looking at wider influences, Jim continues: "For me writing is a bit like using a synthesizer, where a raw oscillator tone is filtered, modulated and combined with other tones to produce a final output. I would count experimental electronica, indie movies, comics, the news, YouTube and having a beer down the pub among the most useful sound sources. My dad used to read my *Doctor Who* Fanfic when I was a nipper. He once advised me to try writing *Doctor Who* like Charles Dickens. That comment stuck in my head for decades, filtering and modulating ideas that would later occur."

"Synthesis is something everyone does every day. Gathering data, forging links between apparently



disparate objects or moments or people, forming opinions, referencing research, exaggerating for demonstrative purposes, and so on. Human beings are imaginative beings. In a sense we are all synthesizers – whether wishing for the moon or conceiving a way to go there – and the main way this ability manifests, it seems to me, is storytelling. Whether the story takes the form of myth or roadmap, penny dreadful or love song, instruction manual or limerick or cautionary tale for our kids... it's what we do. It's one of the things – perhaps even the most important thing – that makes us human.

Since the original *Blood Heat* novel was excellent its own right, with the Director's Cut expanding upon the text and making a lot of changes, we asked Jim if revisiting finished novels and effectively starting over with them is something that he enjoys as an exercise or if it is more to do with an artist never feeling that their work is ever truly finished, merely abandoned for a deadline?

"Someone famous, but not so famous I remembered their name, once opined that films are never released – they escape! My stories have always just sort of... sneaked out when I wasn't looking. I think of them a bit like adventurous kids sliding open their bedroom windows when everyone else is asleep, shinning down the old oak tree at the side of the house and then running madly away into the night, fully inflated with glee, as if no uncertainty or danger or carnival freakshow could ever touch them. Sometimes the wee buggers are smart enough to distract me before they go, with the notion they might actually be ready for the real world. Either way, they're gone. But as with any kid that's escaped into adulthood, occasionally one has the privilege of meeting them again, much transformed, and rapping over a beer about what they think of the world outside the bedroom window, and the changes it has wrought on the lives of each. I like to think of the Director's Cut edit of *Blood Heat* as the iterative result of one such hooch-riddled conversation. If I'm very lucky – and pace the hooch – there might be others."

Returning to the introspective style of Jim's character's viewpoints, we asked if he imagines the events in the novels 'through their eyes' or if the writing experience still feels very objective, as though looking in on their lives from outside? "It's all inside looking out" he explains; "someone asked me a riff on this question a long time ago and my answer was that I try to visualise the story I'm telling as a movie or TV show. I couch surf, watch the pictures, and write what I see. I sometimes reverse that procedure too. If, after visualising a scene as moving pictures, the scene doesn't ring true then I change it."

Although many of Jim's individual settings and descriptions are very real and intimate, his work leans towards a very epic scale! We wondered if he has ever had a story in mind to tell that was so epic

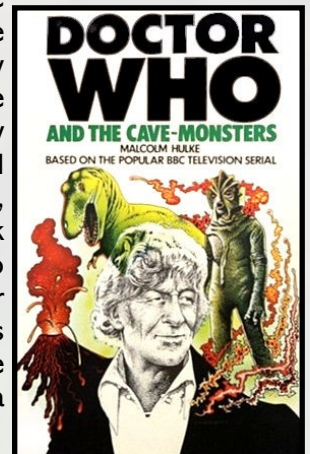
that even Jim's imagination backed off and put the idea on the shelf? "I have a dozen of those, every week! I literally have hundreds of ideas written down that I probably won't live long enough to research and write. It's why I'm jealous of songwriters or artists, and it's why I compose music. Look at my *Bandcamp* output over the last six years. Immensely more finished work there than the writing, because it's a much faster process to completion. There's a minor coda to this question, of course, which is this:

one of the things that I love about literature is its ability to take its own idea as far as it can go. Only rarely, these days, do I bump into a story I could not have seen develop more towards completion. When I do find one, I leap about with glee like a stoned pixie (which, honestly, is not a pretty sight, if you only have the two eyes!)"



A stoned Pixie—yes, really! ©

Turning the conversation more towards *Doctor Who* generally, we wondered if Jim has a favourite *Doctor Who* story that depicts any of the various races of *Homo Reptilia*? "Mac Hulke's novelisation of *The Silurians* [published as *Doctor Who and the Cave Monsters* in 1974] without a doubt," says Jim; "It just puts all other attempts in the shade. I'll enlarge on that a bit – the book and screen story are both so complex in terms of their moralities and the actions, especially concerning what had previously been relatively one dimensional characters, that I find them among the most inspiring of *Who* stories – and of fiction in general, now I think about it. One of the reasons I like old *Who* the best is that, as it was first put on screen, the show dealt much more with the idea of humanity being an issue to contend with rather than a villain to overcome. *Marco Polo*, *The Aztecs*, *The Ark*, name any of the old shows... they all have a similar, somewhat complex, slightly fuzzy-edged feel about them. Like real life. But then over time this concept seems to go away for a while in favour of the simpler presentation of purely monstrous "monsters" and then, quite out of the blue, Hulke brings the concept back again into very sharp focus. So sharp in fact, that every writer who has since used his creation can only really use them the same way – as a morality play."



“As for recent *Who*’s treatment of them... well, the fact that they have been reduced to a lesbian/mixed race relationship commentary speaks more of the failure of the writer than failure of the concept. Nowadays I think of them sadly as a bit like the result of hiring da Vinci to render a Lego brick and then giving him a blunt pencil to do the job. Of all of *Who*’s great pantheon of characters, the Silurians are the ones with the most potential. It is why *Blood Heat* was such a joy to write, and why revisiting it for the *BHDC* was the same joy squared and cubed. Even now, years after both, I’m getting ideas for other stories set in the *BHDC* world, and have been mulling the idea of a book of short stories featuring other familiar characters and how they too were affected by the changes to their world.”

There have been three versions of the Silurians in Doctor Who, with the 'Nu-Who' Silurians seeming much more human in appearance. Does Jim feel there are or were several different races of Silurian/Homo Reptilia?

“I like the idea that there are different species of intelligent reptiles. That’s why I put them in the Berenice chunks of *BHDC*. I also like the idea of relationships between characters who, at first glance seem to have nothing in common except mutual aggression. Writing a storyline where a mammalian woman is compelled through circumstance to adopt a reptile baby and then has to deal with the consequences of her parental ability when the kid flees into adulthood, offers the perfect opportunity to explore multi-species relationships with an eye to making them metaphorical, while at the same time more directly exploring the human character’s guilt at the loss of her own offspring, which takes place prior to the story.”

We also asked Jim for his opinion on whether this explains why Madam Vastra and Jenny are so compatible.

“As to Jenny and Vastra? Well, not to be negative, but I find this relationship disappointingly shallow, poorly explored and somewhat unbalanced in terms of the relationship between character and drama in storytelling.”

“Given the lack of context and circumstance, one can only draw the conclusion that both Jenny and Vastra may be considered some kind of pervert, in that they each desire and are aroused by conjoining with the biologically alien. Given the flimsy world-building, that two such like-minded individuals would meet at all, let alone find each other attractive enough to break all social, political and sexual taboos for, is presented here as little other than poorly handled coincidence, while their survival as a couple in the world of Victorian England is little short of unjustifiable, in story terms. Watch *Carnival Row* if you want a depiction of how such a relationship would more likely have been! Sure, one might argue that there’s a meeting of minds going on, but unfortunately all the potential for wonderful drama this has (for example as a window into relationships between abled and disabled, or very differently aged people) is outweighed by what appears little more than the decision to promote lesbian/LGBTQ/S&M/ other type relationships without ever bothering to actually write a meaningful story in which they feature legitimately. As presented, the characters exist unchanging and without context or balance. And nothing of their relationship as it stands really drives the stories which, given this is *fiction* we’re talking about, should definitely be the case.”



(Left)
Silurian
Madam
Vastra and
her human
wife Jenny
Flint,
Victorian
adventuresses
from *Doctor
Who*

The 3 Species of Silurian seen so far in Doctor Who:
The original from *The Silurians* (1970—Top Left)
The second variant from *Warriors of the Deep* (1984—bottom)
The more 'humanoid' species from *The Hungry Earth/In Cold Blood* (2007) - Top Right)

"As things stand, as a viewer, I get no real sense of these characters beyond production virtue-signalling. No sense of balanced or realistic characterisation, with genuine peril to overcome, with whom one can – and should – empathise if they are to lead a drama. All of which is a roundabout way of saying that I don't think Jenny and Vastra *are* compatible, at least not in purely story terms. A decent writer would recognise this and tailor their characters, history and dramatic arc accordingly, to either bring them together legitimately, against all odds, or drive them apart forever due to circumstances beyond their control. There's a reason that the story one tells should be the most important thing that ever happens to one's main character. Anything less is soap opera, and, given its current infection of nearly all media, soap opera may well be nature's Malthusian control for imaginative beings who have got out of balance with their environment."

Does Jim feel that it is possible that the more humanoid Silurians are some kind of Silurian/Human hybrid that came about after The Great Catastrophe hit the Earth? "That seems unrealistic to me" he replied; "It also doesn't seem especially original, drawing as it does on every human-alien hybrid cliché since the printing press! It would also involve a large portion of an entire culture openly overcoming the holy trinity of driving taboos: social, political and sexual. And we already know how hard it is for a culture to do that, don't we?"

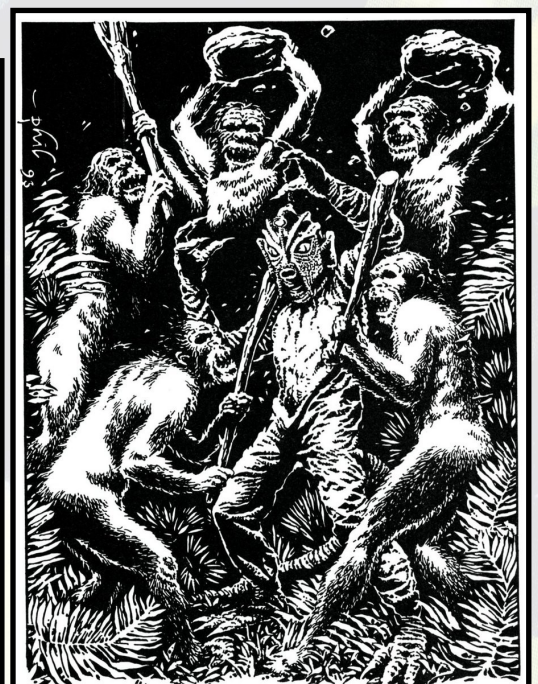
We love Blood Heat, it's easily one of the **GTLWR** Editors' favourite Virgin *New Adventures* books. However, it is more of a sequel to Malcolm Hulke's novelisation *Doctor Who and the Cave Monsters* than it is of the 1970 televised version *Doctor Who and the Silurians*. Was this a deliberate choice on Jim's part? "Yes. I won't boast, but they do say genius steals. I just stole from the best!"

Blood Heat essentially tells of an alternate timeline where the Silurians won. It was published at around the same time in 1993 that *Doctor Who Magazine* published their own take on an alternate post-Silurians timeline, *Final Genesis* where humans and Silurians live in (relative) peace. We asked Jim his opinion on whether such a scenario would ever have been possible, given both race's natures? "Yes, absolutely! Ask history. Today's friend is very often yesterday's enemy. So much so that I object to the term 'won'. One of the things I like about the Silurian scenario, that lets it stand head and shoulders above the rest, is that it observes what happens when technologically advanced species encounter insurmountable natural forces such as evolution or Malthusian controls that place them in direct physical and psychological conflict over reduced resources *for exactly the same, morally justifiable, reasons.*"

Our final question,; whether Jim feels that the Brigadier was right to blow up the Silurian base in Wenley Moor caves, in their original appearance in the 1970 story *Doctor Who and the Silurians*? "He certainly thought he was, whether reluctantly or unequivocally. I would argue that it's one of the reasons his character has survived the test of time. Maybe we like him for it, maybe we don't. Either way it makes him more complex, more believable, and more realistic than he was before. I sometimes wonder what might happen if one were to take that Brigadier and write a story featuring his response to modern terrorism. But then I wonder if maybe there's no audience for that now. Maybe the world has changed to the point where we need entertainment that presents clear villainy? If only so we can get the occasional win. What do you reckon?"



Cover art for the original *New Adventures* version of *Blood Heat* (left) and artwork for the prequel to the novel as written by Jim Mortimore in DW< issue #205 (right), both 1993





Reviewing *Doctor Who* Season 12

Before you read this review, I should make it clear that, while any *Who* is better than no *Who*, I have criteria for what I consider an entertaining episode:

- It should show a Doctor who vigorously opposes bigotry, abuse, exploitation, discrimination, and who challenges the establishment view of society, even if he is forced to work with it. I don't care what sex he/she is.
- If she makes moral misjudgements, (which she will, she's not infallible) then I want her companions, or guest characters, to challenge her about this.
- Stories should demonstrate intriguing, unexpected, and logically rigorous plotting, together with thematic cohesion. They can throw a light on current world concerns, or just be an exciting adventure, as long as they convince.
- Companions should have a valid role to play in unfolding plots, or personal challenges which reflect the themes of the narrative.
- Guest characters should have clear and convincing motivations for their actions and we should get to know them well enough to care about their fate.
- Villains should display motivation a little bit more interesting than "I want to rule the world because, I'm bad, me."
- Aliens' or monsters' motivation for invading Earth, or destroying humanity, should either be explained by their cultural inheritance, or by a compelling reason.
- Dialogue should sparkle, be fresh, and above all memorable.
- If an episode which achieves all the above, rewrites the *Doctor Who* canon, I'm old enough to cope with and encompass the change.
- If an episode does not achieve all the above, I will probably be ok with it as long as it doesn't bore or offend me.

So... with all that in mind:

Spyfall

Was I gripped? Yes I was. Part One gripped me because it was non-stop, exciting action. Part Two took an unexpected route, and was, consequently, intriguing.

Was I confused? Yes. Things happened for no reason I could readily understand, apart from the fact that they were exciting to watch.

Take the sequence in the Australian bush with the Kasaavin. The Master (as we later learn to be O's identity) has the Doctor and her 'fam' in his Tardis. He has a miniaturiser. They do not suspect him. Why not simply miniaturise them all? Why the elaborate plot to disguise his identity and get them all on a plane with him (where he's set things up for them to die); apart from an audience- pleasing reveal, that is? This is especially relevant because we learn that he is furious that the Doctor did not die on the plane and makes it clear to Barton that her death was what he intended. Making the Master an idiot does not enhance his 'supervillain' status. (And surely if he had succeeded with his plane plot, the later, 'fate of Gallifrey' reveal could not have happened, leaving the Master as the last, remaining Time Lord. I guess revealing its fate may have been a later plan on his part... perhaps hatched for revenge - but it leaves a lot of unanswered questions.)

As well as these baffling plot bunnies, the characterisation remains uneven. Yaz is traumatised after her enforced visit to Kasaavin space and has a clichéd, 'touching' scene with Ryan. A couple of scenes later she's completely gung-ho on a motor bike, chasing villain Daniel Barton. We have seen nothing in between that would have changed her so dramatically, except perhaps the weak promise made by Ryan that he'll never let her die. (Explain how



The Doctor and Fam channel James Bond in *Spyfall*

you're going to achieve that, mate: though this is the same Ryan who can't ride a bike or get a ball into a baseball hoop, but can suddenly fly a plane, so I guess anything's possible.)

The Master, played by Sacha Dhawan, was a plus as far as performance went. Completely likeable as O, his transition to evil demagogue was not only a surprise but convincing. But his motivation for aiding the Kasaavin? Just megalomania, apparently. No plan but a desire to rule the world for his pleasure. Ho, hum.

When we got to Part Two, my intrigue was tempered by unease, as the same moral vacuity that characterised the Doctor in series 11, raised its head again. Ok, the writer hadn't realised that the Nazis would have been quite happy to have an Asian man in the S.S. (thus making the perception filter completely unnecessary), but the Doctor didn't know that. Outing the Master as a double agent, well that's one thing and justifiable. Jamming the perception filter and exposing the Master to Nazi racism as well as retribution, not only seems malicious, but by using it for her own ends, the Doctor seems to be endorsing discriminatory policies.

I have an issue anyway with scenarios which show the Doctor conferring her admiration for and affirmation of, the actions of real-life heroes and heroines. Inevitably, this takes the focus away from the historical figures and places it on the Doctor as the 'all seeing' arbiter of human endeavour, making it more about her than them.

Meanwhile the problem of three companions, all needing something to do to justify their pay cheque, proliferates. Yaz just stood around a lot, looking

appalled. Graham's laser spy shoes, with their link to James Bond fantasy adventures, mixed awkwardly with the real-life horrors of World War II, and the unpleasant scene between Barton and his mother. Adventure, fantasy, history, psychology, contemporary life issues. Which of these was the focus of the episodes? The Facebook warning seemed to be an aspect we were to take seriously, but as that thread was left dangling (much in the manner that the fate of Robertson, in the season 11 episode *Arachnids in the UK*, was unresolved), it's difficult to tell if it's been forgotten or will be revisited. And have the Kasaavin given up, or is there more to come from them? More importantly, do I care? The jury is out on that one.

On a positive note, I enjoyed Jodie's performance. She is more secure in the role and showing more grit - though I wish she wasn't so often placed in the position of explaining the plot to us and had a moral backbone. And I'd like more variety in her response to danger. Open mouthed horror? Well okay, but you've seen it many times before, love.



The Master: Still barking mad!

Orphan 55

Too politically correct? Too political?

No. Too many characters, none of whom were developed in any meaningful way. Too much running up and down corridors. Naff romance. Unfunny 'comic' moments. And monsters who, although nicely realised, were familiar to anyone who has watched *Alien*, *Predator* or even *Primeval*, and whose most interestingly monstrous moment (the torture of Benni) appeared off screen and was unexplained, while their on screen presence consisted mainly of roaring and drooling.

When you have a furry dog creature with an unconvincing tail, and a green haired father and son, in the same episode as a young girl, so traumatised after abandonment by her mother and the years spent as a young carer for her dying father that she is prepared to blow up a leisure resort to get her

own back; well you know something is awry. And I, at least, was rendered speechless by the fact that both mother and daughter dying, side by side, in a doomed assault on the monsters, was apparently meant to represent a redemptive act that made the abandonment okay: while the practical side of me was questioning, "When the hell did Trixabelle find the time to make bombs, given she's still in her teens and has been nursing her Dad?"

Did I mention all that running back and forth between the outside and the dome for the flimsiest of reasons? Something which the Doctor insisted on, (*'If there's any chance, we must save Benni!'*) and then berated Kain for complying (*'You've led us all into danger!'*). Actually, that was you Doc. She seems also to have spent some time on Vulcan between regenerations and learned to mind meld. I had a little bit of fun working out who was going to be the next to die (regrettably not the annoying kid), but since I was given no time to get to know or like the characters, I was largely indifferent to their fate. I found the thumb-sucking romance creepy, while the elderly couple were exceptionally irritating.



Orphan 55—was it the Dregs of the series?

Finally, cherry on the top, the reveal that Orphan 55 is Earth and the Dregs are the mutated human survivors of a nuclear war which has, somehow, reversed the mechanics of their respiratory system. And an impassioned plea by the Doctor for us all to take climate change seriously before it's too late.

It's fine for *Dr Who* to be political, but do it with some subtlety, please. Don't sledgehammer it in, in the dying seconds of the episode, if you want me to take the message seriously. Better yet, let me infer the message from events. *The Face of Evil* delivers an effective message about the dangers of technology without beating its audience over the head with it.

But for all that, I might have forgiven the episode its lapses of taste and judgement, if it hadn't bored me to tears. Watching the Doctor confront the Drooling Dregs for the umpteenth time, knowing that she and

her companions were in no jeopardy, and then having to endure implausible and icky romance scenes between Ryan and Belle, was so awful that I actually found myself praying that the episode would end. And I never want to hear the word, 'Benni', ever again.

Nicholas Tesla's Night of Terror

I didn't expect to enjoy this episode as much as I did. It was informative and helped enormously by a charismatic performance by Goran Višnjić as the eponymous hero of the episode.

The fact that the action at the start concentrated on Tesla and his assistant Dorothy Skerritt (nicely played by Hayley McGee) before the Doctor and companions made an appearance, was a plus, as it gave us time to get to know and warm to them.

Personally, I found the plot involving the Skithra somewhat underwhelming, having seen variations of it many times before, but I'm guessing young viewers would have found the monsters suitably scary. Anjali Mohindra gave it some welly as their Queen, though why she was saddled with such bad dentistry is a mystery: her gnashers seemed totally unsuited to any practical ripping of flesh, and scorpions of course, don't have teeth.

Combining a Sci Fi plot with historical fact, is something *Who* has always done, and its perhaps churlish of me to find it problematic. But I do. We know from the start that none of the principals are going to die, however much the Queen hisses at them and swishes her sting, so the tension level is pretty low, and we have to rely on the Doctor escaping from danger through her ingenuity to engender it. In this instance, the sonic screwdriver made far too many appearances; a predictable *deus ex machina*. I'd have welcomed more plot devices like the Doctor's manipulating the Queen into picking up the transporter gizmo.

Thematically, the parallel between the businessman Thomas Edison (the wonderful Robert Glenister) and the scavenging Skithra, was subtle enough not to grate, and certainly tipped the balance towards a genuine appreciation of Tesla's technological vision. I also liked the understanding between Tesla and the Doctor and the (again subtle) call backs to her loneliness and the fate of Gallifrey. There was, however, no direct challenge made to Edison's assertion that, without the profit motive, theoretical breakthroughs would never become reality. Nor was it clear to me why he was portrayed as caring for his workers after the revelation that he had cheated Tesla when he employed him, except to present him in a less contentious light. His veiled reference to



"Don't let Edison Nikolai your ideas, Tesla!"

Brexit trade deals in his statement that the British did not understand business, with its echoes of Donald Trump rhetoric, hinted we should be wary of his stance; but I would have liked to see some righteous indignation for the shabby way he treated Tesla, and some explicit acknowledgement that the role of big business in delivering technological breakthroughs to the masses doesn't necessarily lead to a golden age, but to something more akin to Orwell's 1984.

I had one major continuity quibble. Given that the Doctor had brazenly wiped the memories of Ada Lovelace and Noor Inayat, in Spyfall, why did she not do the same with the protagonists here? Not that I wanted her too. I was disturbed to see her do it previously without any qualm about her right to do so. But it made a nonsense of her former insistence that doing it was essential.

Towards the end, there was a clever use of a newspaper headline to explain the title, and some of the sadness that accompanied the Rosa Park's story, as the Doctor explained to Yaz, that Tesla died in poverty, his genius unacknowledged. But the urging by Yaz that he shouldn't give up, even when faced with this miserable and dispiriting death, could be seen as a bit sadistic, or at least an unwillingness to risk losing the pleasures of disco lighting. Die miserably Tesla, so that future generations can enjoy day at night!

Ultimately, this episode rested on the excellent performances of its guest stars rather than its plot, ideas or creativity.

Fugitive of the Judoon.

I had a frisson of anticipation as I tuned into this episode; a sure sign that season 12 is, for all its faults, an improvement on season 11. However, it didn't excite me as much as I feel it should have done. I'm at a bit of a loss to explain why.

I'm all for a story that has big ideas and invites speculation, and the reveal of another Doctor was certainly a big idea: huge in fact; surprising and cleverly done. Jo Martin was totally convincing in the role: sassy, clever, taking no prisoners. OK, slightly worried that she may be the military wing of the Time Lords, and eager to hear the explanation as to why her Tardis seems to have a faulty Chameleon circuit; but intrigued? You betcha.

I was less thrilled about the return of Captain Jack, a character I never really warmed to, but he did bring vigour to his scenes (although I wish he wouldn't forcibly kiss people without asking); and the "lone cyberman" warning was also thought-provoking.

Could the "Ruth Doctor" be a creation of The Faction Paradox? The Master's mother? Does the Lone Cyberman have something to do with Bill Potts? (Not very likely since Bill transformed into a travelling, sentient, puddle of oil!) We'll just have to wait and see!

Stories that juxtapose comic and dramatic moments to ramp up the tension, are favourites of mine, and there were plenty of these in this episode. Some were more successful than others. The Judoon narrative managed to present the rhino police as both funny and scary; the moments of comedy (their repetitive, nonsense, rhyming chant, for example) highlighting the horror of their mindless adherence to orders, and the unanticipated violence of Ruth's attack on their leader. The frantic, absurd, and



Could this be a "Bo Faux Ro" Doctor?

inclusive energy of the Captain Jack section made the Doctor's bleak journey with Ruth to the lighthouse the more poignant, emphasising the isolation of both women.

That said, the cafe episode was implausible and clichéd - the stereotyped, love-smitten owner not remotely believable, and the comedy tame. The Pollyanna-ish optimism that Ruth displayed on her way to work, rather than endearing her to me (which I assume was the purpose) left me irritated and disinterested, even if it did help to disguise that she was, in fact, a kick-ass Time Lady. This all undermined my belief that these fantastic events were taking place in a real universe and should be taken seriously; so neither the death of Maisie, or the confrontation between Lee and Gat, packed the punch it should have. (Though, swings and roundabouts, the unrealistic comedy did make Graham's abrupt disappearance from the cafe more shocking, because it was so unexpected and out of key.) I also felt that the obliteration of Lee, nicely played by Neil Stuke, a character foregrounded for the opening fifteen or so minutes, although it was necessary to the plot, left me more concerned about him than Ruth, and in consequence, slightly reduced the emotional impact of her transformation.



"If you're the Doctor, why don't remember you?"

Overall, I think there were just too many surprises. There had been relatively little ground laid to prepare us for them, so they felt shoehorned in, and mainly there for the purpose of shocking us - or to give Graham something to do. As one followed hot on the heels of another, I felt their impact dulled. There were at least three stories going on, and having to switch my allegiance from one protagonist to another meant there wasn't enough emotional build up for me. In short, I found myself (not for the first time this series) nostalgic for the four (or even six) part serial.

Apart from the cafe owner scenes, this was a better written episode than has been the norm. The dialogue was sharper (I loved the "platoon of the

Judoon by the lagoon") and, yes, at last Yaz got to strut her police stuff. I could have done with a shorter speech from Ryan at the end, though.

Like the curate and his egg, I only found this episode excellent in parts. I suspect I may be alone in this. But it did pose a potentially exciting addition to Time Lord Lore, and, depending how this is developed by Chris Chibnall, I may yet look back on this episode as something really special in the history of the show.

Praxeus

Well it passed the time. Nice acting and settings. No money spared. The relationship between the missing astronaut and his reluctant to commit, ex-policeman husband, won applause from me for its matter-of-fact presentation, though their narrative, and the character development of Jake, was pretty predictable. I enjoyed Joana Borja as Gabriella. She lit up the screen whenever she appeared.

Once again, an episode with an environmental message. This one, thankfully, wasn't hammered home, but what were we supposed to make of it? It seems we don't need to cut down on our reliance on plastic, because if an alien virus that feeds on it strikes, the Doctor will be there to save us all, pretty easily. (Presumably if it doesn't, we'll all be fine.)

The plot (owing a bit to Alfred Hitchcock's *The Birds*) was disjointed. There was no "ah ha" moment for viewers, as a final piece of the jigsaw slotted into place. Instead Jodie was forced, as usual, to explain the sequence of unconnected events. It turned out that the missing spaceship, which had been presented as a key to understanding what was going on, was nothing of the kind - just randomly caught up in an alien plot. The revelation that the aliens were using Earth as a laboratory experiment came out of nowhere.

And there were some things even Jodie couldn't have justified.

Why, for instance, was the dying Alan taken to the laboratory rather than kept on the Tardis? The Tardis is the most advanced space ship in the Universe, dispensing custard creams and antibiotics in syringes with ease, so surely he'd have had a better chance staying on board? Narrative convenience I guess.

Were we meant to conclude that Aramu was an alien like Suki? A personable, and apparently human boy is horribly killed while keeping an eye on the birds, and nobody mentions him. Nobody asks where he is. He just disappears. Since, to all intent and purposes, he'd sacrificed himself to allow the Doctor time to do her stuff, I found this indifference rather shocking.

And why were the masked aliens such abysmal shots? Honestly! They'd have struggled to hit a barn door. *[They always are. I blame the atmosphere! - Ed]*

Jodie was authoritative and assured, and I have warmed to her portrayal during this season, but she does often seem sidelined in her own show, particularly in episodes like this when the 'monster of the week' is a non-sentient virus, so there is no opportunity for a face to face confrontation with it.

It was nice to see Yaz going it alone, but why is she so over-determined to win the role of teacher's pet? Ryan appeared much more secure as a companion than she did, accomplishing the tasks he was set with quiet confidence. Graham was sidelined, but had an understated, rather moving scene with Jake, with a call back to his relationship with Grace by virtue of a sad smile. But the problem of how to occupy three companions meaningfully, persists.

Somewhat undemanding entertainment, with just enough to keep me interested in switching on next time. But it did seem odd, and a bit of a cheat, that nobody mentioned last week's revelations - not even in passing.



Skin care is important—even in space!

Can you hear me?

An important topic, handled with an appropriate seriousness. The central conceit, Immortals stealing humans nightmares to pass the time, seemed a bit Star Trekkie to me, but at least it had its roots in early *Who* canon.

There didn't seem to be much thematic connection between the two halves of the story, unless the god figures were intended to represent the negativity that accompanies mental illness and feeds on itself. More likely it was just the nightmares that the humans didn't want, and the gods lived for, that

connected them, so two narratives seemed butt - jointed rather than dove-tailed.

It was a pity that the message, 'get help if you are in distress', was somewhat negated by the Doctor's response to Graham's attempt to talk about his fears. Mind you, her persistent avoidance of any mention of Doctor Ruth does smack of serious mental disturbance, so maybe it was intentional. And I was a little baffled at how quickly Ryan's friend got counselling help. There's quite a waiting list where I live.

I also wasn't convinced of the necessity to set the open scene in medieval Aleppo. Setting it in modern day Syria might have been more effective, and the projection of the monsters make more sense - kids from war zones often paint monsters in an attempt to master their fear. Aruhan Galieva performed very well, but the dialogue she was given was far too modern to persuade me we had travelled back in time. The intrusive fingers were a horribly repulsive idea and the Immortals had the necessary sadistic but calm authority to make their threat believable.

Well-acted in the main, but this Doctor is too daffy to bring off the 'talking to herself' scene. She came over as a stressed housewife who'd been hitting the gin a bit too hard. I think her performance here needed more Tom Baker eccentricity and arrogance to give it authority.

And did her nightmare involve a little Celestial Toymaker daughter? Daddy Who perhaps?



"I am your worst nightmare!"

The Haunting of Villa Diodati

Every horror trope under the howling moon chucked at this episode. Don't get me wrong, towards the end, it built up a powerful head of steam. Ashad was a terrifying creation (brilliant make up and design) and I genuinely feared for the baby. The shrinking house was a clever idea, as was the walking through walls, but the pacing was wrong - either full-on action or sitting around emoting. It's the slow build up to a shock that packs the biggest horror punch.



It was a dark and stormy night...

And I do get irritated when something is foregrounded just for a plot point, and then dropped. Dr. Polidori started out as a disturbingly creepy character, sinister and aggressive. Once he'd walked through walls and the Doc had worked out this was because his somnambulism stopping him from noticing the perception filter, he became normal and rather cheerful.

Not sure if the story made a lot of sense, (apart from the injunction not to snog Byron). Why did the Cyberium hide itself on Earth? Was that Captain Jack's doing, and if so, why didn't he email the Doctor with the information, rather than mutter cryptic stuff about The Lone Cyberman? And it did all rather short-change Mary Wollstonecraft's creative achievement. But in between the boring, emoting bits, it was very entertaining.



Ashad—the lone Cyberman gone to pieces!

Why, though, did the Doctor get so het up that she couldn't save both Shelley and the humans? If she hadn't arrived on the scene fortuitously, then the Human race was doomed to a cyberwar and Shelley would have died. None of that was her fault, and at least she got to save someone. It wasn't, in my book, a dilemma on a par with Tom's, "*Have I the right?*" And given that she told her 'fam' that millions of

humans are going to be converted to soulless borgs if she chooses to save Shelley, I'm with Ryan. Saving the poet seems a bit of an indulgence, and Frankenstein, rather a nasty foreshadowing of how we humans are going to end up.

Graham and Fletcher were the stars of this show in my book. But please, no more Yaz pining for the Doctor. We had all that with Rose and Martha. Though at least we now know why she wants to be teacher's pet!

Ascension of the Cybermen

Why was an episode that had so much money spent on special effects, was really well acted, and had some intriguing plot points, so boring in places? Yes, I will tune in next week, because I'm curious to find out about the Master/ Gallifrey back story, but honestly, I'd almost be as happy to read about it.

I think one of my issues is that the episode seemed like a number of separate scenarios that joined up, solely to create a shock. We didn't have nearly enough time with baby Brendan and his parents as he grew up to really care about his fate, (what twee background music they played during those scenes) and I'd guessed he had a place in the cyberman story, long before the fall from the cliff, because really, that was the only plausible link there could be between the two stories; so the final 'shock' (no pun intended) left me cold.

I did fleetingly wonder if Mr Chibnall had killed off Ryan, which added a tinge of tension to the running about and bangs, and the cyber head attack was a bit scary, (especially after Handles; it was a shock to see it turned bad) but that was about it until the final scenes. In the middle, Ashad seemed to have a pretty sketchy plan to annihilate everything, and to be succeeding more by luck than judgement, and there was a lot of wandering about corridors without any sparky dialogue to enliven it. Just a bit of clichéd chemistry between Ravio and Graham.

The lack of follow-through for character moments, continues to irritate me. Graham and Yaz are separated from Ryan. They have every reason to believe he could have been killed. Cue a brief scene in which they express their anxiety, and then, not a mention. The younger, mute brother is killed. Cue brief scene where grief-stricken older brother cries over the body and has to be persuaded to leave; an even briefer one when he expresses anger that the 'fam' didn't save him; and, he's over it. It's all an attempt to get us involved with the characters, but it really doesn't work for me. I felt much more interest in the emotionless Ethan, who'd known nothing but war: his lack of reaction and a throw away exchange with Ryan, made me work out why he wasn't

emoting, and consequently, I began to care for him. Serve me right if he turns out to have been cyber-borged!

But how far into the future of Earth is all this set? Why are the surviving humans called Fuskil, Bescot, Feekat and Yedlarmi? Why not something that might plausibly have developed from 20th century human names, rather than those of pedigree cats?

If the intention was to portray the Doctor as ineffectual and out of her depth, they certainly succeeded. Frankly, if she'd told me that most of the human race had been wiped out thanks to her decision last episode to save Shelley, I'd have decked her. Anyway, as things turned out, the cyberwar seemed to have been inevitable whatever she'd done, and she arrived when it was virtually over, so the angst seems masochistic.

And while we're on the subject of things I didn't like, why did the cyberman speak in such squeaky, strange voices?

Things I did appreciate: the beginning, the end, the acting, the design of the Cybermen, Ashad, the teasers that are not that easy to work out, and the fact that the figure that burst through the worm hole from Gallifrey (what!?) wasn't Captain Jack.

Will Brendon turns out to be both Ko Shamus AND Ashad? Surely all that back story we witnessed wasn't real, but a mind trick of the Master? Is he planning to put Jodie through the emotional wringer by planting false, painful memories, as he seems to have done to the Cybermen, and turn her bad? I'll have to tune in next week to find out.

The Timeless Children

Well *that* wasn't what I expected. (Don't ever come to me for football result predictions, or narrative developments in *Dr Who*.)

My immediate reaction? It was reasonably entertaining tosh. Later reflections? It didn't make complete sense, was boring in parts, and there were definitely a lot of plot threads left hanging, but at least it got the fandom debating. Which is always fun.

I do however have some issues to share. (Now there's a surprise!)

For a show that had touted its feminist credentials, it was a mistake to have its female lead spend much of the episode paralysed inside a coil cage, while a man explained her history to her and told her how she was feeling: a mistake compounded by having another man rescue her when she was unable to face killing an army of Cybermen (who are practically immortal, bent on destroying the Universe and able

to time travel) controlled by a certifiably bonkers psychopath. Her reason? Because that would make her the same as the Master. No it wouldn't, love. It really wouldn't.

The depiction of Tecteun abusing her adopted child in a series of horrific experiments (which had to have



The new Cyberman: A fan-pleasing mixture of old and new designs

involved killing her/him multiple times to force regeneration) should, indeed, have broken the Doctor, but she seemed more concerned about the number of Doctors there have been before her. The Master's suggestion that the Ireland story had been implanted in her mind as an apology by that abusive mother (to help her regain the memories forcibly ripped from her - gee thanks Mum), uncomfortably echoed the way this and season 11 have dealt with the subject. I am happy to concede that people can and do triumph over an abusive past, but it takes more than an apology and a few words reminding them that they are still themselves.

It was disappointing too, that these words were spoken by Doctor Ruth, present here in a stereotypical 'magical negro' role which denied her agency.

As for the Master, how competitive would you have to be to annihilate your home planet and turn the bodies of its elite into cyborgs, just because you had discovered that you owed your ability to regenerate to your enemy?

Of course you may argue that there wasn't time to elaborate on all these issues, and that the audience was required to fill in the gaps. But I am reminded of how sensitively, and truthfully, *Star Trek TNG* dealt with the aftermath of Picard's assimilation by the Borg. It's possible, of course, that there's the intention of exploring the emotional consequences of such traumatic discoveries in the next season. I do hope so.

So many niggling questions have been left unanswered both in the series and this episode.

What happened to Robinson and Barton? How and why was Ashad created? Why did the Doctor wait until after the cyberwar before turning up to make things right? How come the Matrix chose Ireland as the setting for the Brendon/Doctor metaphor/aide memoire/story thingy? Who was Ko Shamus and why did he delay until he was shot before triggering the death particle, allowing the Master time to escape? What was the reason the Cybermen could only manage to kill an unimportant guest character, despite their awesome firepower, or the Time Lord bodies in cold storage were not able to regenerate? How will Sheffield Council, and the neighbours, cope with the sudden appearance in their midst, of three immigrants without passports, blue or otherwise? Why does a ruined Gallifrey still have apparently unlimited, functioning Tardises?

How many of these can be explained by the exigencies of the plot rather than seen as part of a well thought out plot arc?

Personally, I was more upset by this careless plotting (a characteristic of Chibnall's tenure) than by his re-writing the Doctor's past; which didn't seem to have much point to it beyond establishing that the Morbius Doctors *are* canon.

So the Time Lords have been messing with the Universe in secret, probably unpleasant ways, and either manipulated the Doctor into doing their dirty work, or co-opted her as an enthusiastic participant? Haven't they always done that? And how much does it matter now that Gallifrey, and presumably The Division, have been destroyed? If she has been complicit in past atrocities, then whatever guilt she might feel must be tempered by the knowledge that she has compensated for them many times, in her post Totter's Yard existences.

So the Doctor is even more alien than we thought? She's always been posited as a superior being anyway, so it shouldn't make much difference. It may even turn out to be an advantage if her race ever decides to cross the barrier and invade our universe, or when she has to deal with the Master and his cyber-timelord army. (Speaking of which, how many would he realistically have been able to get into his Tardis before the death particle activated? They didn't seem able to move beyond a fast trot, so if he ends up with thousands, I shall be pretty disbelieving.)

Nor were these revelations canon-shattering. Everything we fans have witnessed up to this point is still intact: they are just things that happened post 'Doc memory wipe'. The circumstances that led to the Doctor's escape have always been vague, and given the First was a curmudgeonly, selfish soul with a superiority complex, who gradually became more

likeable and caring, then we could speculate that the history of the character we've seen 'til now, has been an unconscious journey to purge him/her from any fascist tendencies.

I have more of a beef with the clumsy way information was delivered, the inexplicable motivations given for important actions, the abrupt abandoning of a central narrative for plot reasons, and the naff dialogue ("In Yorkshire, that's a love letter", undisputedly the best, and only, memorable line). The net result, for me, as zippy action sequences segued into yet another Master scene of lengthy exposition, was that I could never lose myself in the events. (Sacha Dhawan seemed to realise this, and over-acted wildly to compensate).



The Timeless Child falls to her first(?) regeneration...

Big villain Ashad, whose plan and back story I wanted to see developed, was, literally, cut down to size and only there to provide a means of killing the Master. Ko Shamus managed to be both unlikely and cliched, and, out of the blue, Graham professed undying admiration for Yaz for no reason I could discern except to give us a 'heartwarming' moment. Most shameful of all, the Doctor was sidelined in her own episode and became an ineffectual force, rather than the clever problem-solver I expect her to be.

Final verdict? Messy, underdeveloped, visually impressive, sometimes gripping, manically crowded, but ultimately rather hollow and pointless, with a message that implied, unintentionally, that a female Doctor is pretty useless without a back-up team, or a man.



The implications of The Timeless Child on Doctor Who lore will be covered in the next issue of GTLWR



VEERLE BLAJIC-KIK: VEERING OFF ABOUT...

BOOKS vs MOVIES

I'm a reader. I've always been. But I'm also a child of the early 80's so I grew up with television too. Maybe that's why I can't 'choose' between the two, like so many want you to. I don't think books are better than film or vice versa, exceptions granted. (Looking at you here *Lord of the Rings*, those books are impossible to get through!). I do think they're different and not everyone gets that, that's why once in a while the translation from one to the other fails, and another log is thrown on the fire that is the discussion about which is better.

But by joining in that conversation, I think we neglect the fact that books and film have different *purposes*. In the broader sense both are just ways to tell a story, obviously, but when you dip just beneath the surface, you'll notice they haven't the same appeal. Written stories rely on your mind to create the corresponding images, by feeding you words and sentences that describe characters and events. And "Bookists" have decided that this means your brain is more active, therefore books are better.

However... whilst it's true that in visual stories you're already given the image, I don't believe that the mind is any less active. OK, so your brain doesn't have to work for the image? But according to scientific evidence, your brain has been cheating anyway. You see, it really can't create a new image out of nothing. What it can do instead is piece one together like a puzzle that fits the written description out of other images it collected through the eyes. Just like kids in school, it simply makes a collage out of scraps it didn't even collect itself! And worse, once it's decided on the appearance of a character, its work is as good as done for the rest of the book. Sorry to burst your bubble, but the truth is, it never really had to work as hard as it had you believe.

Now with moving pictures, the brain has an entirely different task. For every tiny bit of imagery it's been given, it has to interpret the feelings and relations and implications of what it sees. And those keep on changing. So there is no resting until the end of the story, and even then it may have to "redo from start" if there is a sudden plot twist at the end. So who's lazy now, book readers? *Ha!*

All silliness aside, if the story is sound* and told in a way that fits the chosen medium, both should engage your mind though. That is what makes it fun!



* For those spitting on soap operas and mindless reality tv, let me remind you that for every one of those shows there is a tabloid or magazine equal to it.

What are you implying?! - Ed

It's mainly because of this that I am completely in awe when someone manages to successfully carry a story from one medium into another. It is a big feat to pull off. And that brings us to the next issue: It is almost impossible for a story to remain the exact same when transferred. So I get it when people moan about the story 'not being right'. Your brain got attached to the way it imagined it, and because our brains are lazy by default; they don't want to start over. It's a survival thing: consume less energy, live longer. Your brain is Not Happy when you make it repeat the same thing it already did, just in a different way.

But I may have some good news for it too. There is something to soften the blow. Or maybe downright *trick* it: Just remind yourself of the *spirit* of the book before watching the movie (it's usually books into film), and then it won't matter as much if the *letter* is different.

Of course, the Big Names of the Holy Woods take their liberties and have made some questionable changes to perfectly good stories in the past, just so they could make an extra few pieces of silver; I'll be the first to concede to that. But good stories and the dreamers that bring them to us will always be there and pour their hearts and souls into it. And those stories will show you their soul, no matter what the medium.

Now, confession time, because I realise that it seems like I've got it figured all out. And I think I do. Now. But for years I had a policy of *not* watching a film or TV show without first reading the book. And I must admit that I, too, have complained about stories on the screen not being exactly like they were when I read them. I would be so disappointed when they got it *wrong*. It was only over the past few years I gradually came to see the beauty of the differences. The *necessity* even.

Take Neil Gaiman's *American Gods* for example. By chance I had access to the show before getting my hands on the books, and since there was so much buzz about it on the Internet, I gave it a go. It gripped me from the very first minute. The visuals are stunning and perfectly set a backdrop for the dramatic events that occur. Even before anyone speaks of it, you can already feel it. It crackles up and down your spine, that knowledge that very soon, something will go horribly, terribly wrong. It's instant. Pure movie magic. Yes, Gaiman has written it like that in the book, too, but it takes a few pages, it *gradually* builds up. The impact on the brain is very different. Seeing it on screen is like you're living it yourself. It was translated to perfection, even though the show didn't follow the letter of the book after the first few episodes. But boy was its *spirit* honoured!

Of course, some people will claim that this is just because the book was really, really good and it's all credit to Neil that it worked so well in the show. But if that were true, then how do you explain what happened to *Neverwhere*? Because after I got so much enjoyment out of *American Gods*, I revisited Gaiman's literary body of work. Imagine my delight when I found out they made a television series of that too! And now you've gone and imagined that, don't stop there, but continue on to imagine my *horror* when I actually saw it. Yes, yes, of course I realise that there is over 20 years between the two. But the story was so... well, *flat*. Everything that happened was said out loud. There was very little to experience outside of the lines they were saying. Nothing for the brain to do. The image was the image and that was all. It almost reminded me of that time when I tried to act out those three-panelled *Garfield* comics for my friends when I was a kid. I thought they were the pinnacle of hilarity, and for the life of me I couldn't understand why my friends weren't even smiling. I even got costumes and all!



Neil Gaiman—Man of Mystery



Garfield—you had to be there...

© Jim Davis

For a while I thought *Neverwhere* too was just a bad translation from book to moving story, but then I found out that the series came *first*. Which made me realise the translation was actually *better* than the original. And unlike *American Gods*, Neil had worked on it himself, he just didn't know how to properly show his ideas on screen yet. Personally I think he felt the same way and that's why he went ahead and wrote the story how it was *supposed* to be in the first place.

But Gaiman is just one author, and he himself is very interested in film and has been involved in better movie adaptations of his own works. How about writers that are just that— *writers*? When they write a story and leave the actual translating to someone else? I am pretty sure myself that if I do manage to write a book in, say, the next 10 years, and if it turns out to be successful, and if someone wants to make it into a movie... after the miracle of overcoming all those ifs, I would very probably still not like the movie version. Well, maybe like, but not *love*.



Richard Mayhew under attack in a world he doesn't belong to – *Neverwhere*

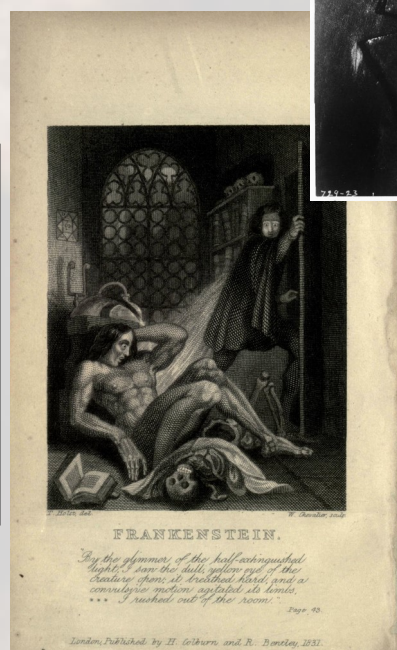


Mr Wednesday from *American Gods*

And the main reason for that would be that it would be too *small*. Like with *American Gods*, film is immediate, it's hit or miss, it's in your face and over your head. You don't get the

luxury of the slow build spread out over 5 chapters. You don't get to spend 3 pages to describe how the light of the morning sun hits the dew drops on the petals of a specific rose that's slightly moving in the breeze that's still cool at the moment, but pregnant with the promise of the heat of a late summers' day. No, you have to show it *all* in one dazzling shot.

Writers have it easy in that respect, they can basically do whatever they want, as long as it comes together as a coherent story in the end. Readers will cherish it even, discuss it in literary groups, compare your style to the "Greats". The fuzzier your writing is, the more you are appreciated it seems. Enthusiasts will drool over a particular sentence and all the different meanings and implications it could have, both in the story, as for language in general. Did I say writers have an easy job? Well, maybe this phenomenon also explains 'writers block' and the soul-crushing insecurity one can feel about the placement of a mere comma. It's going to be Noticed!



The Literary Classic—have you read it ... or seen the film?

Anyway. The cold truth is, in movie making, if you don't follow the exact prescribed structure for plot stages, your flick might never even happen. Ever notice how all movies can be broken down into the same 5 steps? That's no coincidence. If it seems rigid and overly strict, remember that the story needs to be completed in one go. On top of that, it needs to be accessible for everyone at the same time.

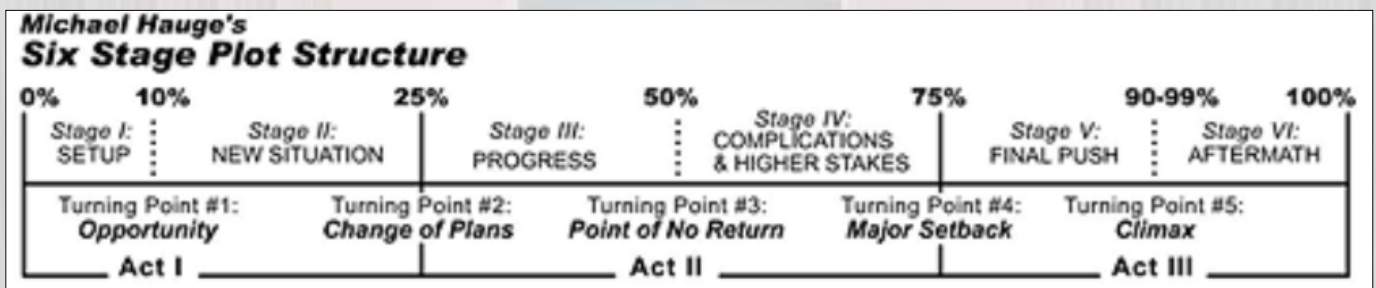
In books you can reread a beautifully constructed sentence 20 times over before continuing, without the story suffering. You can take your time and linger. Imagine having to do that with a spectacular shot in a movie. Just rewind and watch it again? There's just no coming back from that. No, in film we need everybody on board, facing the same direction and going the same speed. And if your main character hasn't thrown all precaution out the window and goes for broke by the middle of your story, they might as well pack up and call it a day. It must be a tough job, making movies. I can't seem to find the lazy option here, no matter which way I turn.

At the end of the day, I think we will always need both ways of storytelling. Perhaps one day people will accept that and the debate will cease. In the meantime, maybe we can find a middle ground. Something that is both written *and* visualises the stuff around the dialogues. Maybe something with text and some sort of image sequence to go with it... I may be on to something here...



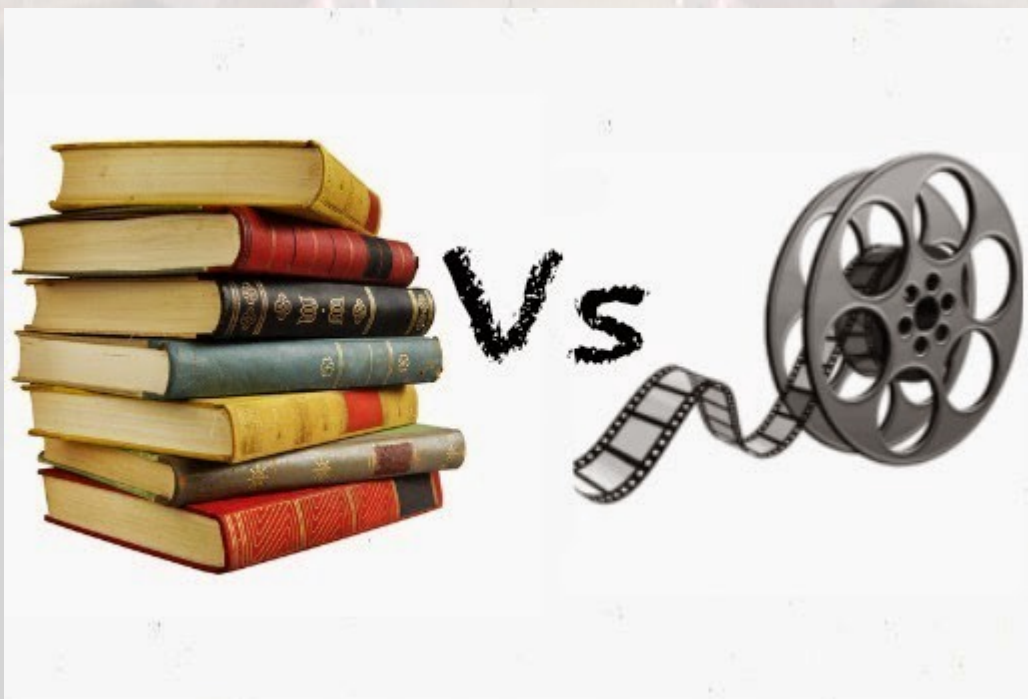
Veerle has a very active mind that sometimes thinks strange things. Prone to act like her name she veers off in any old direction and you never know where it will bring you. Neither does she. In this series she shares some of that strangeness on random subjects. Have a suggestion? Do submit it, maybe next time you get to follow her mind's wanderings along the paths of your chosen idea.

Please drop us a line at the e-mail address on Page 2...



A visual representation of basic Hollywood plot lining.

(source: <http://www.movieoutline.com/articles/the-five-key-turning-points-of-all-successful-movie-scripts.html>)



THE Watch

When?
What?
How?
Huh?



by Rachel Anthony-Rowlands

The late Sir Terry Pratchett said : “A Lie can run around the World before the Truth has got its Boots on.”

There are so many different things being said about the various TV adaptations of Terry Pratchett's works that I felt it was time for a truthful article about the upcoming BBC America series **The Watch** and how it came into being what it is today.

For a series that had its roots in a very well established book series, there are huge expectations that it will be as funny if not funnier than its origins and faithful to the source material.

As very little is in the public eye about the series (which is currently being filmed in South Africa) what little is known is causing a huge amount of people to apportion blame onto Terry's family on social media.

What I have tried to do here is to give a very factual timeline and analysis of Huh? What? Why? Huh? about *The Watch*...

WHEN: A not-so-brief public history of The Watch development:

1989 - 2011: The first **City Watch** novel *Guards! Guards!* was published in 1989 and the City Watch came into being. In the following years another seven novels, one spin-off book and one short story about the City Watch were published with *Snuff*, the final City Watch book being published in 2011.

2011: Prime Focus Productions entered talks with Terry Pratchett to produce a series entitled *The Watch*. Prime Focus Productions' managing director Rod Brown had previously produced three live action adaptations of Terry Pratchett's novels while working for **The Mob Film Company**.

2012: Narrativia Ltd. was formed by Terry Pratchett and consisted of Rob Wilkins, Rhianna Pratchett, Rod Brown and Terry himself. Narrativia took control of existing Pratchett projects, previously being produced by Prime Focus, as well as starting to develop new ideas.

Narrativia owns and controls the exclusive multimedia and merchandising rights to all of Sir Terry's works, including his Discworld characters and creations and continues to do

so to this day. The day to day management of Narrativia is performed by Rob Wilkins, Sir Terry's long-time assistant and friend .

2012: At this time, it was mooted that *The Watch* would be a police procedural, post-watershed, drama series based on characters from the books and would consist of 13 episodes with each episode being 60 minutes long. The estimate at the time was that the series would have a budget of £2 million per episode. Rhianna Pratchett would be one of the writers on the series as well as Guy Burt (who previously worked on *The Borgias*) with rumours citing Terry Jones and Gavin Scott as the heads of the writing team. At the Discworld Convention in 2012 it was announced that Rhianna had been working out how forensics might work on the Disc and was planning on bringing an Igorina (a female Igor) into the watch as their forensics officer. Then things publicly went a bit quiet.

2014: September: Colin Smythe (Terry's literary agent) went on record saying the scripts were in development and that filming was planned for 2015.

2015: March Terry Pratchett took Death's hand and walked across the sands and Great A'Tuin the Star Turtle stopped swimming through space for a moment.

2015: Autumn Rob Wilkins announced via a video for the German Discworld Convention that the series was still in production and nothing more would be announced until they started filming.

2018: March: *Deadline Hollywood* made a statement reporting that BBC Studios was developing a six-part series called *The Watch* as the basis of a returnable franchise. There was no official word from either Narrativia or BBC Studios at this time.

2018: April: Rod Brown left Narrativia Ltd.

2018: October: There is an official announcement from BBC America, that they have greenlit a series called *The Watch* with Simon Allen at the helm. It will be an 8-part series of 60 mins per episode and will be produced by BBC Studios.

2019: September: Details of the cast started being announced. Adam Hugill as Corporal Carrot was the first cast member, followed swiftly by Richard Dormer as Sam Vimes, Jo Eaton-Kent as Constable Cheery, Marama Corlette as Corporal Angua, Lara Rossi as Lady Sybil and Sam Adewunmi as Carcer Dun.

2019: September: Rhianna Pratchett makes her position known on Twitter with regards to *The Watch* series:

"Getting all the questions again, so I'm reiterating—I'm not involved with #TheWatch. I was years ago when Dad was alive, the BBC weren't involved and it was a very different beast... But there have been many changes since then and although @Narrativia_Ltd are involved, I, personally, am not. AS a result I can't address your comments/concerns on #TheWatch cast or any other aspect of the production."

"To those grumbling about why I 'signed off' on many aspects of #TheWatch. I didn't. Neither did Rob. Deals differ, but generally IP holders don't get sign off. They can have discussions, if they're in the production mix (often they're not) & sway if they showrun, but that's it."*

[*Intellectual Property]

The Ankh-Morpork City Watch as depicted by official *Discworld* artist Paul Kidby.

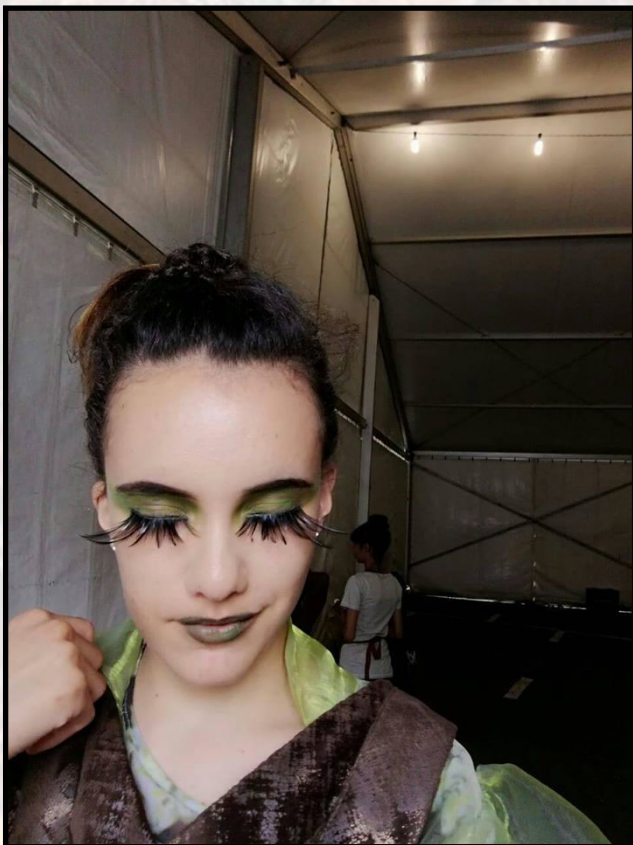
© Paul Kidby



2019: 30th September: Filming started in Cape Town Studios, South Africa. Images started being leaked online such as... Adam Hugill (*Cpl Carrot*) in the make-up chair. Descriptions of the series included “punk rock thriller, ...following a group of misfit cops as they fight to save a ramshackle city of normalized wrongness from both the past and future in a perilous quest.” *Cyberpunk* was also a word that kept cropping up in the news reports about the series.



2019: Oct/Nov: More images got leaked such as one showing some of the costume artwork on the walls and an extra special close up of an extra in costume (below).



2019: Nov: We as Discworld Monthly exclusively revealed that Hakeem Kae-Kazim will be Captain John Keel.

2019: Nov: A week later, an official press release confirms this and also reveals the following cast members. Anna Chancellor as Lord Vetinari, James Fleet as The Archchancellor, Ingrid Oliver as Doctor Cruces, Ruth Madeley as Throat and Bianca Simone Mannie as Wonse.

The press release featured the following nuggets:

“Anna Chancellor said ‘... With the combining characteristics of Dracula and Elvis - Lord Vetinari has sprung to life in the most alarmingly joyful way.’

Ruth Madeley says: ‘The character of Throat was male in the original books so for the team to cast me was extra exciting. I’m really looking forward to seeing how Throat develops and what mischief she can bring.’

2020: Jan: First look images get released with a new press release. New things in the press release:

“Set in a fictional city where crime has been legalized, The Watch is a genre-busting series that follows a group of misfit cops as they rise up from decades of helplessness to save their corrupt city from catastrophe.

Uniquely anarchic and thrillingly entertaining, the character-driven drama follows several of Terry Pratchett’s best-loved creations from his Discworld novels on a riotous and emotional odyssey.”

What? we know about series. (For clarity I refer to the TV series as The Watch and the book series as City Watch)....

Not a lot is the short answer.

We know The Watch is “Inspired by” not “Based on” as the @terryandrob twitter account informed the world back in November 2019 so we don’t expect direct adaptations of the books.

The sets of The Watch look like they came straight from the set of *Blade Runner 2049* with the extra layer of dirt added.

In the following image of Angua and Cheery, we can visibly see some things that are not around in the book version of the *City Watch*.: Piercings on police officers are not the most sensible thing, especially on a werewolf, and the plastic framed glasses around Cheery's neck don't fit in the *City Watch* world the book readers know and love. That coupled with the electric fans, lights and what seems to be a white plastic kettle in the background and rubber soled boots, it is a step further away from the original *City Watch*.

What we do love though is the poster and the sense of disarray to the place though.



There is so much going on in this image of Sam Vimes and Angua. First thing we noticed was their badges. No number on Vimes' badge and Angua's badge is not quite visible enough to be able to tell if its identical to his or not. We like this iteration of the watch badge a lot but it should have numbers visible. In Vimes' case it should be 177.

Some people have suggested that it is Death in the background having a curry but whoever it is they are dressed much more like Carcer is in the next image. They just don't have enough presence to be Death.

The huge amount of Electric lamps here is off-putting for a world which doesn't have electricity in the books.



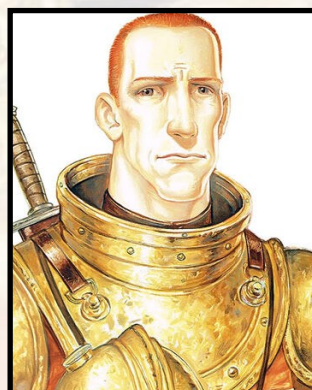
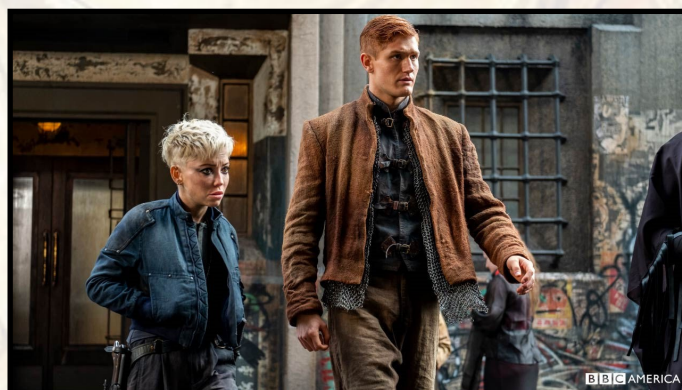
A plastic zip on Angua's jacket is also out of place for those who expect to see the Discworld from the books.

Carcer is here with what appears to be a couple of Deep Down Grags, although our sources have informed us that they are in fact Carcer's Goblin henchmen. For those who don't read the books, Deep-Down Grags are Dwarfs who don't like open air and bright light, but considering these are Goblins which in the books are around 2ft tall, the sizing of the species in this production is all wrong. They carry their crossbows like they are guns.



Our first look at Carrot. Of all the watch costumes, this is the closest to what is described in the books. Chain main, buckled shirt, whoever read the brief obviously looked at the books too.

Again electric lights are seen here and graffiti? Those paint colours are too modern for the *City Watch*.



**Captain Carrot
Ironfoundersson:**

**As depicted in
The Watch TV
series (above) and
(left) in the
Discworld books.
(Artwork © Paul
Kidby)**

Lady Sybil Ramkin looks nothing like we would expect which isn't a bad thing, but an opportunity to place a larger lady in a prominent role has been missed here.

The vented box / generator on the floor is not something we would expect to see in Ankh Morpork.



We know who some of the cast is, but equally we know who they haven't mentioned as yet.

The characters seem to be a far cry from the characters the fandom loves from the books.

We felt a comparison is needed to note the major differences between *The Watch* and *City Watch*.

The Watch - Sam Vimes, Captain of The Watch, disempowered by a broken society

City Watch - In the books he was a solid idealist with a strong faith in the justice system, whilst also being a committed cynic who knew that his ideals would never be met.

The Watch - Constable Cheery, the ingenious non-binary forensics expert, ostracized by their kin and finding a new home and identity.

City Watch - Constable Cheery is a dwarf, one of the first to be openly female. Dwarfs on the Disc all look alike, distinguishing between their differing genders was almost impossible, with beards being a notable feature along with the fact that they are shorter than humans. Cheery decided that she would rather wear a heel on her iron boots and wear a leather skirt with lipstick to show the Discworld that she was a female dwarf.

The Watch - Constable Carrot, the idealistic new recruit, raised by dwarfs, but really a human abandoned at birth.

City Watch - Not a huge amount of difference here, except he trained Angua in the books. Even in looks Hugill makes a passable Carrot, he's not quite Carrot shaped (the pun in the books was he that his build was Carrot shaped).

The Watch - Corporal Angua who is tasked with Carrot's training and keeping the rookie alive.

City Watch - Angua has long hair and is physically beautiful with surprising strength and a tough attitude making her the officer most people feared the most.

The Watch - Lady Sybil Ramkin, last scion of Ankh-Morpork's nobility, who's trying to fix the city's wrongs with her chaotic vigilantism.

City Watch - Lady Sybil Rankin was most at home in wellies and a leather apron, wearing a wig to cover her singed hair from looking after the Swamp dragons at her Sunshine Sanctuary for Sick Dragons. She had faith in the Patrician and his ways to make the city work for all, certainly not a vigilante.

The Watch - Lord Vetinari, The Patrician of Ankh-Morpork, and architect of the city's normalized wrongness and ramshackle system of governance. Played by an Actress here, we have no clue as yet as to how Anna will come across as the Patrician although by the quote she gave in a press release ... With the combining characteristics of Dracula and Elvis - Lord Vetinari has sprung to life in the most alarmingly joyful way

City Watch - The Patrician aka Lord Vetinari is a calm calculating man who fears nothing and believes firmly in the one man one vote as long as he is the man.

The Watch - Throat, the city's best snitch, with a gang of freelance henchmen at her beck and call.

City Watch - C.M.O.T. (Cut Me Own Throat) Dibbler who is a street dealer selling Sausages inna bun and other delights such as a dragon detector. He works alone although he does have doppelgangers all over the Discworld who may or may not be related to him.

The Watch - Captain John Keel, former leader of The Watch and mentor to Sam Vimes, determined to save the corrupt and chaotic city.

City Watch - (Spoiler Alert for the books) Keel died in *Night Watch*, technically, and Vimes stepped into his shoes metaphorically so we have no clue how they are going to portray him.

The Watch - Wonse, a wizard hopeful in waiting that is frequently underestimated played here by an actress.

City Watch - Lupine Wonse is a former childhood friend of Vimes, and secretary to the Patrician, Wonse was not a Wizard. (Spoiler Alert) He died at the end of *Guards! Guards!*

So little is mentioned about the last three characters that have been cast, so I'll leave you with the only description we have from the press releases,

Archchancellor, wizard, magical advisor, and the Head of the Unseen University.

Head of The Assassins' Guild, Doctor Cruces.

Carcer Dun, wounded and wronged, out to hijack destiny itself, take control of the city and exact a terrible revenge on an unjust reality.

There has been no mention of **Sgt. Fred Colon** or **Cpl. Nobby Nobbs**, no mention of **Sgt. Detritus (the Troll)** either, all of whom are important members of the *City Watch*. Are they not in the TV Series?

How??

Fans have been throwing questions around online without getting any decent answers...

Unfortunately, a huge amount of the questions are of outrage and anger at what they perceive to be a slur on Terry Pratchett's legacy.

We've taken a few of the relevant questions to answer here.

So how did the City Watch get changed so drastically for The Watch?

The original plan back in 2012 was that these would be original stories written with input from Rhianna and at the time Terry himself and they would have been canon. If someone died in the TV series, they could never come back in the books, and the other way around.

Complications came in when Terry died. Clauses that would have stated Terry Pratchett had any form of input into the series would have no standing anymore as Terry Pratchett was no longer here. Terry Pratchett and *Narrativia* are two different entities on paper, so what allowed one to do things, it didn't allow the other to carry on once Terry had died.

When Terry did the deal originally with the BBC, the team they had dealing with it was a completely different one to the team that has now made the series and as a result have negated any real input that Terry gave them when he was alive.

No sign of Sgt. Fred Colon, Cpl. "Nobby" Nobbs or Sgt Detritus in The Watch TV series... yet.



So why did Rhianna sign off on it then?

Rhianna stepped away from the project a long time ago to concentrate on other things such as her own writing career. Rob Wilkins is a fellow director at *Narrativia* and he handles most of the workload.

She didn't sign off on *The Watch* and neither did Rob Wilkins (see Rhianna's tweet above). Intellectual Property holders don't get sign off on anything generally unless they are the showrunners (as Neil Gaiman was with *Good Omens*). They can have discussions with the production team but the production team don't have to listen. They certainly don't have creative control of the production in any way, shape or form.

Why didn't they demand this to be stopped?

Once the rights are sold, the rights are sold. Deals done mean that the rights to produce an adaptation sit with those who have bought it until the time limit runs out. Because there is always a time limit on these kind of deals so that the IP holders can eventually get their rights back.

Sky did have the option to make *Unseen Academicals* into a TV production like they had done with *Hogfather*/ *Going Postal*/ *The Colour of Magic* but time ran out for them to do so and the rights reverted back to *Narrativia*.

It's like selling someone a mug and then after they bought it, demanding they can't drink coffee out of it. It's not done and they can't stop it unless it breaches the contract or they run out of time on the option to produce.

Why the guns/neon lights/electric fans/ cyberpunk feel?

I can't answer that. It does seem strange to place the Discworld in a timeline that has things that the original stories were nowhere near developing. I think that may be a question for Simon Allen if he appears at a Q&A somewhere.

Why have they destroyed MY Discworld?

They haven't. What is in the books is in the books and will always be the same every time you read one. No one is rewriting the books here.

You can choose to watch *The Watch* with the opinion that it is Discworld in another trouser leg of time (or as I said on Twitter, In another

trouser leg, in another pair of trousers, in a different shop on a different planet) or you can choose to watch it and sit there complaining at the screen over everything or you can not watch it at all.

It will never destroy the Discworld in your head unless YOU make it do that.

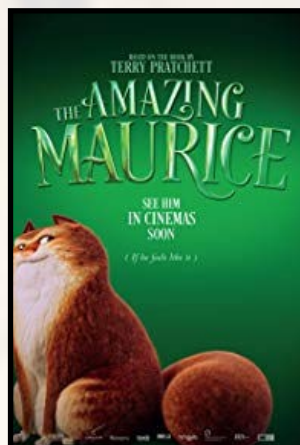
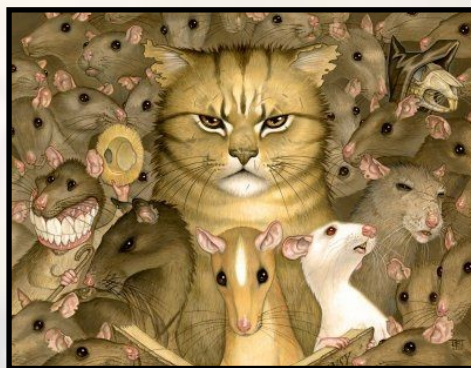
When is it on TV? Where can I watch it?

They are looking at a 2020 release date. Our best educated guess is late Autumn and it will be on BBC America with possible simulcast on the BBC in the UK as they have done with *Doctor Who*. Currently we just don't actually *know*.

What will happen next?

Personally, I hope it will attract a whole new crowd of people to the books which is what we have always loved and it will keep Terry's name being spoken which helps keep his memory alive.

Of course, *The Watch* isn't the only thing to look/not look forward to from the Discworld. *The Amazing Maurice* should hopefully be hitting our cinemas in the next year or so and we are so thrilled by the looks of what *Ulysses Productions* and the *Cantilever Group* has done with it. As an animated film of approximately 85mins long, the story of the street wise cat Maurice, the stupid-looking kid who plays a pipe and the talking rats is one that is worth waiting for.



Your choice:
***The Amazing Maurice and his Educated Rodents*—Artwork © Paul Kidby (above)**

OR...

***The Amazing Maurice*—coming to a cinema near you soon... (left)**

TV adaptations and films are nice enough but they aren't the books which is where we fell in love with that Star Turtle, the Discworld and its inhabitants. There are 41 novels and countless spin offs, just buy one, read it and join us somewhere around Pant-y-Girdl.

Huh?

If you really don't know what I am talking about, go and get the books and then come to the Discworld events which happen all over the world.

If you want more free news about Discworld, then head over to:

Discworldmonthly.co.uk and hit the subscribe button. We've been writing about Terry Pratchett for the last 23 years and we are the only independent news letter that used to get told off by Terry in person!



** Filming on The Watch has currently been suspended due to the Covid 19 Pandemic.*

** The original version of this article appeared in Discworld Monthly Ish #275, February 2020. Just before GTLWR #5 went to press, the following press announcement was made:*

ENDEAVOR CONTENT JOIN FORCES IN LANDMARK NEW PARTNERSHIP, SET TO BRING THE DISCWORD UNIVERSE TO LIFE IN A SERIES OF DEFINITIVE SCREEN ADAPTATIONS

In an exclusive relationship going forward, Narrativia, the independent production company launched by Sir Terry Pratchett in 2012, strikes new development deal with Motive Pictures and Endeavor Content to create truly authentic Discworld screen adaptations.

Discworld, the iconic and enduringly popular literary phenomenon, spans a series of beloved novels that sold in excess of 100 million copies around the world during Sir Terry's lifetime and remain as popular today. Now, Narrativia, Motive Pictures and Endeavor Content announce a brand new partnership which will bring this treasured world to screens in a series of prestige adaptations that remain absolutely faithful to Sir Terry Pratchett's original, unique genius.

The spirit of this new alliance has been forged from a shared love of the source material, and a commitment to create an epic series, which will kick off with some of the most iconic titles in Sir Terry's fiercely incisive and satirical universe.

Rhianna Pratchett, Co-Director of Narrativia, says: "Discworld teems with unique characters, witty narrative and incredible literary tropes, and we feel these should be realised on screen in a form that my father would be proud of. It's wonderful to embark on this journey with Motive and Endeavor Content, who both perfectly share our vision to make this a reality."

Rob Wilkins, Managing Director of Narrativia, says: "The Discworld books are a huge source of joy to millions of readers, and rightly so; every paragraph, phrase and footnote was crafted with brilliance and flair and we are committed to bringing Terry's world to the screen with the respect and care it deserves. With this partnership, we are delighted to say that Discworld has finally found its home."

Simon Maxwell, CEO of Motive Pictures says: "Discworld is a national treasure and we are thrilled to be forging this new partnership with Narrativia and Endeavor Content. Together we will produce shows that will be loved by millions of Discworld fans worldwide, whilst also opening up Sir Terry Pratchett's epic creations and legacy to new audiences. We launched Motive to make high quality British shows with global scale and impact and I can think of nothing that exemplifies that ambition more than this hugely exciting partnership."

Lorenzo De Maio, Head of TV Advisory for Endeavor Content adds, "We are honoured to bring Sir Terry Pratchett's Discworld to the screen, in partnership with best-in-class producers Narrativia and Motive Pictures. Discworld is a masterpiece of storytelling, and we look forward to working with our partners to bring it to audiences worldwide."

The deal was struck by Rob Wilkins of Narrativia and Simon Maxwell of Motive Pictures, with Endeavor Content. Executive Producers for Motive Pictures will be Simon Maxwell and Sam Lavender, and Endeavor Content will handle worldwide sales.

Out of the Vortex

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

Doctor Who: Time Lord Victorious

BBC Books has revealed that it will be publishing two novels to tie into BBC Studios multi-platform *Doctor Who* story, *Time Lord Victorious*.

Time Lord Victorious will tell a new and untold story, set within the Dark Times at the start of the universe, when even the Eternals were young. Following several Doctors across space and time as they defend their home planet from a terrible race, this is a story like no other.

Time Lord Victorious will feature the Eighth, Ninth and Tenth Doctor characters, companion Rose Tyler and monsters including the Daleks and the Ood, with more to be revealed over the coming months as products are announced.

The Knight, The Fool and The Dead by Steve Cole and **All Flesh Is Grass** by Una McCormack will be available to buy in the UK and US.

Doctor Who: The Knight, The Fool and The Dead by Steve Cole



We live forever, barring accidents. Just like everyone else in the universe.

The Doctor travels back to the Dark Times, an era where life flourishes and death is barely known...

Then come the Kotturuh – creatures who spread through the cosmos dispensing mortality. They judge each and every species and decree its allotted time to live. For the first time, living things know the fear of ending. And they will go to any

lengths to escape this grim new spectre, death.

The Doctor is an old hand at cheating death. Now, at last, he can stop it at source. He is coming for the Kotturuh, ready to change everything so that life wins from the start. Not just the last of the Time Lords. *The Time Lord Victorious*.

Doctor Who: The Knight, The Fool and The Dead is published on 1ST October 2020 by BBC Books, priced £9.99

Doctor Who: All Flesh Is Grass by Una McCormack



Even a Time Lord can't change the past.

A wasteland. A dead world... No, there is a biodome rising from the ashes. Here, life teems and flourishes, with strange, lush plants and many-winged insects with bright carapaces – and one solitary sentient creature, who spends its days talking to the insects and tending this lonely garden. This is Inyit, the Last of the Kotturuh.

In *All Flesh is Grass* we are transported back to The Dark Times. The Tenth Doctor has sworn to stop the Kotturuh, ending death and bringing life to the universe. But his plan is unravelling – instead of bringing life, nothing has changed and all around him people are dying. Death is everywhere. Now he must confront his former selves – one in league with their greatest nemesis and the other manning a ship of the undead...

Doctor Who: All Flesh Is Grass is published on 10th December 2020 by BBC Books, priced £9.99

I AM THE MASTER Legends of the Renegade Time Lord



Everything you think you know...is a lie.

The Doctor and the Master's conflict of light and dark has spanned many times across the universe. This collection – of five short stories and a novella – explores the darkness in the Master's hearts; his secrets and sinister ambitions revealed through brand new adventures and encounters.

Join six adventures of undreamed evil: a quest to free alien warlords, a dangerous mission to save a vital ally, a meeting with Bram Stoker, a shattering of lives on a distant world, a trial of wits to gain untold power and drop in on the Master's latest incarnation during his 77 years of imprisonment on Earth.

***Doctor Who: I Am the Master: Tales of the Renegade Time Lord* is published on 9th July 2020 by BBC Books, priced £12.99**

LOCKDOWN BRINGS SCI-FI BOOST TO TV

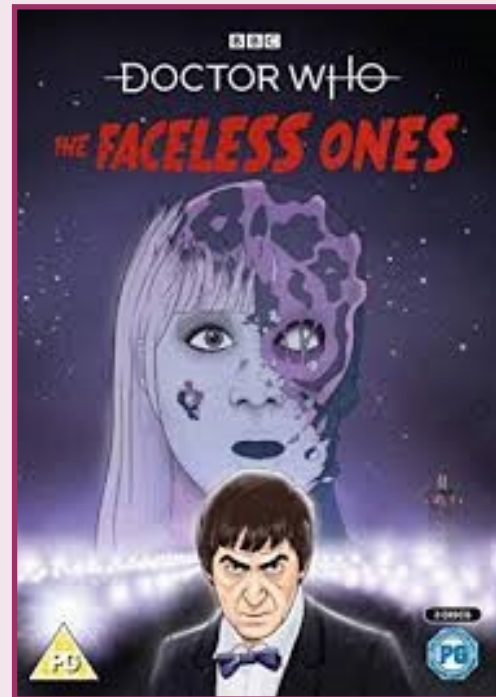
The UK-wide Lockdown due to Covid-19 was imposed on 19th March, leaving millions of Britons confined to their homes. But even in the darkest of times, there is a shaft of sunlight to be found, not least of which being the plethora of classic Sci-Fi TV programmes being added to the schedules of on-demand services such as BritBox, Amazon Prime, Syfy and Netflix, as well as the BBC's i-player service.

The discerning viewer can channel surf to their heart's content to take in such brilliant offerings as Doctor Who (Classic and Nu-Who), All of Gerry

Anderson's Supermarionation stable, including *Thunderbirds*, *Stingray*, *Captain Scarlet*, *Supercar* and even dear old *Fireball XL-5*! Then there's the *Twilight Zone*, *Black Mirror*, *Travelers*, *Timeless*, *The X-Files*, *Timeslip*, *Stranger Things* and many more. Look out too for the newer offerings such as *Picard* and the surprise hit of the year, the cerebral and literally mind-bending *Devs*.

REVIEW:

Doctor Who: The Faceless Ones DVD
Animated/part live. BBC—Released March 2020



Ben and Polly's Swansong and what a Swansong it was. An action packed suspense story, that will make you think about maybe passing up on that super cheap chartered holiday.

The DVD is available to view as animation only or surviving episodes and animation.

The race of people wanting to hide and take over has been used since, but the reason behind the situation has never been so thoroughly examined. Add in a romance for Jamie in the form of Pauline Collins and you can appreciate the missed opportunity of her not joining the Tardis crew.

The DVD animation does give a nod to latter series with the wanted posters, some fans have been upset by this but personally given the time on screen it's more a storm in a teacup. Should the Chameleons have come back? Maybe they share so much with the Zygons that they might be redundant in the modern faster world of *Doctor Who*, given time to develop in a season Arc they could claim a place in *Doctor Who* mythos all over again.

Ed McGuire

REVIEW: DOCTOR WHO LOCKDOWN PODCASTS

The latest season of Doctor Who on TV may have finished some months ago, but this hasn't diminished the good Doctor's presence in our lives, not that of friends and companions in his/her orbit.

The Doctor Who Lockdown Event was an ongoing project founded by Emily Cook from *Doctor Who Magazine* who proposed the idea online to *Doctor Who* fans as a simulcast watch-along of the show's 50th Anniversary story from 2013, *The Day of the Doctor*. This would take place worldwide as a way to pass the time in self-isolation due to the global pandemic of COVID-19. The story was shown on 21 March 2020.

For the first watch-along, former *Who* showrunner Steven Moffat penned a short introductory skit, *Strax Saves the Day*, which was released via Twitter. The home-produced video starred Dan Starkey as the Sontaran Strax, represented on screen with a stuffed toy of the character, and also featured the voice of Neve McIntosh as Strax's employer, and leader of the Paternoster Gang, the Silurian Madam Vastra.

The event was a success and more simulcasts and watchlongs followed, including a previously withheld prequel story written by another former *Who* showrunner, Russell T Davies. *Doctor Who and the Time War*, which was released onto the *Doctor Who* website. This depicted an alternate account to the Eighth Doctor's involvement in the Last Great Time War and how he regenerated into the Ninth Doctor. Davies also wrote a sequel audio story, *Revenge of the Nestene*, which was released onto YouTube and depicted the aftermath of the Nestene Consciousness's defeat at the hands of the Ninth Doctor in his debut story *Rose* from 2005.

Fans could enjoy many more watchalongs and original releases, bringing together established *Doctor Who* writers, actors and/or characters in a variety of new original content. *The Doctor Who Lockdown Event(s)* proved to be a massive success amongst fans and casual viewers of the series alike.



(Left) Strax: "I have saved the day, weakling human scum!"

(Right) Rory records a video message to his future son, in 1946.

Two original webcasts which stood out in particular involved former *Who* companions, Rory Williams (as played by Arthur Darvill), husband of Amy Pond (played by Karen Gillan), and Sarah Jane Smith, as played by the late Lis Sladen, who passed away in 2011.

RORY'S STORY

Rory's Story was timed to coincide with the global online rewatch of the *Doctor Who* episode *The Doctor's Wife* on April 8th 2020. Like the original episode, the webcast was written by renowned fantasy author and avowed *WHO* fan, Neil Gaiman. In the short webcast Rory Williams records a video message for him and Amy's son Anthony Williams, a character who was previously depicted in the previous webcast *P.S.* As a result, this short officially establishes Anthony as an in-universe character.

Rory is shown in his home in America, 1946, recording on "the only working smart phone in the world" to his future adopted son Anthony, who he is due to meet in about a week. Rory has apparently been logging stories about him and Amy and their adventures with the Eleventh Doctor. Admitting that he is not a writer (his wife Amy is, being the best-selling author of the *Melody Malone private eye books*), Rory proceeds to recount the stories that he has already recorded and hopes to inform Anthony on at some point.

Rory mentions several "teases" from the series for regular fans, including the fact that he was once a plastic Auton Roman Centurion for 2,000 years.

He is about to record the next chapter entitled "*I'm the Pretty One*", when Amy calls for him to come and help paint the baby's room, to which he hurriedly does so, in case Amy starts to nag.

As on TV, Rory is played by Arthur Darvill, with Amy being played by Karen Gillan—or at least her voice. Gillan recorded her lines from Hollywood, where she is working on her latest big screen movie. Both she and Darvill have gone on to successful movie careers following their time in *Doctor Who*.

The music which accompanied the webcast was composed by Blair Mowat.

The webcast can be viewed on YouTube.



FAREWELL SARAH JANE

This most moving of webcasts was also made specifically for the *Doctor Who: Lockdown!* event to coincide with the anniversary of Elisabeth Sladen's passing on 19th April.

Premiering on YouTube, the webcast was written by Russell T Davies and trailed as the official final *Sarah Jane Adventure*, in which the in-universe death of Sarah Jane Smith has happened at some point in the 21st Century.

The webcast was very much a hybrid, featuring most of the story read out by narrator Jacob Dudman, filmed in his recording booth, while other scenes were fully acted by original cast members of *Doctor Who* and the spin-off which starred Lis Sladen, *The Sarah Jane Adventures*. Illustrations by artist Sophie Cowdrey were also used to great effect.

Sarah Jane Smith has passed away and many of the Doctor's allies from throughout history have come together to attend her funeral. As everyone begins to catch up with one another and celebrate their time together, Sarah's long-time nemesis The Trickster suddenly reveals himself, attempting to replace Earth with a sinister duplicate. However, thanks to the combined efforts of those assembled, he is soundly defeated and shrunk "to the size of a doll and [locked] in a treasure chest at the bottom of the Atlantic for the next thousand years".

The wake is a time of sadness but also great happiness for everyone who knew and loved Sarah Jane. Jo Grant tells everyone that it would not be right for the Doctor to attend the funeral. "He's got two hearts, imagine them both breaking." Rani's mother Gita Chandra admits that she was initially wary and jealous of Sarah Jane because she thought her husband, Haresh fancied her. She ultimately accepted her as a close friend. Dorothy McShane, former companion Ace revealed that the Doctor admitted to her that out of all the people he missed, Sarah Jane was the one he missed the most. Upon meeting her, Dorothy saw why. She leaves, taking Sarah's faithful robot dog K9 with her.

Sarah Jane's adopted son Luke Smith, together with friends Clyde Langer and Rani Chandra—all now young adults, having grown up during the

course of the *SJA* series—are the only ones left. Sadly, they head down to her house, 13 Bannerman Road. All three remember that they were all out of the country when they heard the news that Sarah Jane had passed away. As Rani observes: "It felt like Sarah Jane had waited until they were out of sight to save them from any pain."

The gang head up to the attic, awakening Sarah's sentient computer Mr Smith who is also displays sadness at Sarah Jane's passing. As part of Sarah Jane's instructions, they are to completely leave the house vacant until the day someone else comes to continue what they all started. Luke finally expresses how happy he was to have her as a mother and how she helped him pursue a relationship with Sanjay, to whom he is married to now.

Luke and Clyde head off, but Rani stalls before talking to Mr Smith one final time. She states that she believes that Sarah Jane did not die, but was instead invited by the Doctor to come and explore time and space once again, forever. Mr Smith agrees with the sentiment before shutting down to remain dormant until he is needed again, as the trio leave the silent, vacant house, the scene where so many adventures began.

LIS SLADEN'S DAUGHTER RE-CAST AS SARAH JANE SMITH!

Meanwhile, Sarah Jane Smith is being recast for a new story from audio drama producers **Big Finish**, with Sadie Miller stepping in to play the character originally portrayed by her mother Elisabeth Sladen.

Miller will play Sarah Jane in *Doctor Who: Return of the Cybermen*, based on an unmade script originally written for the TV series in 1974.

She will appear opposite Tom Baker as the Fourth Doctor and Christopher Naylor as companion Harry Sullivan, standing in for the late Ian Marter who originally played the part.

Sadie Miller said: "When Big Finish asked me to play Sarah Jane for this story, I was very nervous. I didn't want to create a performance from someone else's. So I tried to approach it as I would with any other role. I've tried to find my own piece of Sarah – the part of my mum that's in me. Those. Other than that I just tried to keep it as separate in my mind as possible from the original.



"The fans of Doctor Who have always been so kind and generous to me and to my family... People have always been very kind in letting us come along for the ride really, through conventions and now things like Big Finish and, after mum passed away, the outpouring of love for her has been lovely."

Doctor Who: Return of the Cybermen will be released in January 2021 and is now available for pre-order as a collector's edition 2-disc box set or download from bigfinish.com.

THE SECRET OF NOVICE HAME

Just as GTLWR was about to go live, a brand new Doctor Who short story webcast made specifically for the *Doctor Who: Lockdown!* event, was released on 30 May; *The Secret of Novice Hame*. The webcast coincided with a tweetalong for the episodes *New Earth* and *Gridlock*. It featured cat nun healer Novice Hame discussing her final wishes as she lies close to death.

The story tells the final day of Novice Hame, a key character from both episodes. Read in character by Anna Hope, who played Hame on television, it is a moving story that expands on the character greatly.

Hame is lying in a funeral bower, being visited by hundreds of beings – many of them animal people, who have come to pay their last respects. She imagines the Hippopotamus Guards watching as Dogkind relax in the bright sunlight in New New York's Apple-grass. She pictures visitors feeding swans and flamingos and by evening, Dolphin children to dance in the fire light and the Lionkind and Micekind to come to observe her. She holds in her hand two gold coins that her last visitor must place on her eyes as she dies to pay for her journey in to the Great Cat kingdom, her people's belief in the afterlife.

Hame recalls how she was born in the middle of battle as her mother and father were trapped in a refugee camp, the last of a litter of sixteen kittens. To feed the other kittens and escape the war zone, her parents sold Hame to the **Sisters of Plentitude** for ten shillings. Under the Sisters' care, she was taken to New Earth and given her name in honour of the Cat God of Harvest. Hame was eventually inducted as Novice Hame at thirteen years old.

Hame recalls that her adventures were captured in holograms. She remembers how she used to fight in

wars, sometimes alongside a Lord of Time, who we know to be the Tenth Doctor. As she aged, she decide to atone for her sins, eventually becoming a Senator, then Vice President, then Feline Imperator of the New Earth Order. Close to death, she has returned to calling herself Novice Hame.

Hame waits and then the last visitor arrives. It is the Tenth Doctor, himself on a final journey to look in on all his previous companions and friends before death – or at least regeneration, following the radiation poisoning he received during the events of *The End of Time*.

Hame is overjoyed to see her old Time Lord friend again and the two talk through the night until dawn, when Hame begins to slowly slip away. But she has a secret about New Earth which she needs to impart to the Doctor...

It's a charming, very moving piece, written masterfully by Russel T Davies. David Tennant reprises his role of the Tenth Doctor, adding his distinctive voice to Anna Hope's pitch perfect rendering of the aged Hame. It would be churlish of GTLWR to reveal what Hame's secret is, so we urge you to watch the video on YouTube for yourselves. Listen out too, for an interesting throwaway line that Hame makes about the Doctor's many lives and the forms he has regenerated in...

CAST & CREW:

Novice Hame - Anna Hope
The Doctor - David Tennant
Written by by Russell T Davies
Music by Murray Gold
Illustrated by Juanmao
Audio Edited by Emily Cook
Video Edited by James Barnett
Produced
by Emily
Cook



***Doctor Who: Star Tales* A BBC anthology (2019)**

Keeping on with the tradition of having *Doctor Who* travel to specific points in Earth's past, these stories are based on a clever set of what ifs: what if the Doctor was involved in lives of cultural icons and historical figures and the mysteries that surround them. Here it is the Doctor's presence, both in her previous and current manifestations, that explains such puzzles as the disappearance of Amelia Earhart, Albert and Mileva Einstein's lost child, and the development of Pythagoras' theories. Throw in strange encounters with a very different Elvis, Houdini and Audrey Hepburn, and you have an entertaining, if slightly gruesome, set of adventures, not without interest for adults, but mainly, I'd guess, targeted at the younger competent reader.

I particularly liked the fact that the 13th Doctor is much more proactive here than she sometimes is in her TV jaunts: providing practical help to Yaz at the onset of her period and confronting Pythagoras' daughter during a dangerous possession being two such examples. There are nods to more weighty themes such as the limits of power, the pressures of genius and fame, and Society's perception of the role of women, but thankfully, these are introduced with a light hand, often in glancing references, and integral to events or character interaction. It helps too that each narrative is crafted by an experienced writer so that the plots are logical and satisfyingly twisty - though I did wish, at times, for more sparkling dialogue, and they all struggled with (and fail to entirely solve) the problem of giving each of the Doctor's companions something meaningful to do.

These are minor criticisms however. Each tale sets a different tone, mixing real-life tragedies or concerns with science, gothic fantasy, mystery, or in one case, *Blazing Saddles*' type farce, so there should be at least one, absorbing adventure to please even the most picky of readers. Me? I enjoyed them all!

This anthology would make good lockdown entertainment, or a stocking filler for an obsessed fan. It might even persuade your non- readers that books can be rather good fun.

AW

***At Childhood's End* by Sophie Aldred. BBC Books**

What a brilliant story!

Sophie puts herself back in Ace's shoes and the years melt away. This could so easily be a tv story, or a Big Finish audio.

We start off with Dorothy all grown up leading a world-spanning charity organisation, but it comes as no surprise that she keeps her eyes and ears alert for strange goings on. When reports come in of inexplicable disappearances in her old home of Perivale, she decides to get involved.

What follows is a mad dash through the cosmos, meeting up with the 13th Doctor, Graham, Ryan and Yaz on the way, in a bid to save her friends and any others that have been caught up in a nightmare. When ACE finds herself a target, it's up to the Doctor to find her and save her from a cruel fate.

Sophie's grasp of the 13th Doctor and her companions is perfect, and there is so much depth to the various alien races we encounter, and their equally various reasons for being there, that it is a very hard book to put down.

With a riveting climax, and a very nice ending, I would welcome another story from Sophie anytime.

LP

***Doctor Who: Resurrection of the Daleks* *Doctor Who: Revelation of the Daleks* Target/BBC Books**

These two stories have been keenly awaited in novelisation format for many years since they were first seen on television in the 1980s, and have now been written by their original screenwriter Eric Saward. Despite being very different on screen, one an action adventure and the other almost an old school science fiction play, Saward has managed to draw their styles closer together through his prose style and the clever device of adding numerous references to *The Visitation*, another of his television scripts, to both books, making them feel like an unlikely trilogy.

Of the two novels, *Revelation* is the real page turner. Saward manages to capture the tone and pace of the original episodes in both books, but does especially well in this novel capturing the original performances. This is aided by the amazing quality of the original cast, but recreating such memorable characters on the page creates its own challenge! The writer does an amazing job of taking the rich ensemble of characters in this story and adding even greater depth to them, taking time describe their motivations and reactions.

Both novels benefit greatly from this level of detail in the settings and viewpoints, giving a fully rounded impression to the reader of who, where, what and why in the narrative. There is a lovely sense of immediacy, of being there alongside the characters as an observer with special insight into events, that was accomplished and that this

this reviewer certainly enjoyed. The extra details add so much, such as describing life aboard the prison ship in *Resurrection*, or a character rolling a cigarette before the action as we see it on screen taking their life.

At the same time as making the narrative and its players feel more real, however, Saward also manages a second impressive feat in his writing by evoking what it feels like to watch the episodes on television. The warehouse setting in *Resurrection* is explicitly named and described as the real-life filming location, Shad Thames, while the artificial settings that were created for the show are described in a subtly witty way that almost but not quite acknowledges them as film sets created under difficult budgetary conditions!

There is balance too between representing classic 1980s television and making the novels in their own right feel modern and relevant for a younger readership. So, there a few new series references and some modern technology, but neither is overwhelming. There is a joke about having seats in the console room that you can strap into, a mention of Hendrik's department store, and there may or may not be Weeping Angels lurking in Tranquil Repose!

Two highlights from *Resurrection* include a fantastic, speculative description of the Tardis, and a nice passage giving motivation for Tegan's apparently arbitrary and spontaneous choice to walk out on the Doctor. Worthy of special mention throughout both books is Eric Saward's use of humour. It is especially remarkable in the dark and violent themes of *Resurrection*, but works really well. Lots of it, as alluded to above, takes of the form of tongue in cheek humour where you are not sure if the subject of it is the setting and characters of the story or the sets, props, effects and actors of the original productions!

Both publications are highly recommended, and both score 9/10 from this reviewer.

AP

***Doctor Who The Target Storybook* Anthology—BBC Books, 2019**

BBC Books are cleverly mining a rich seam of nostalgia with their adoption of the *Target* brand, even down to the *Target* logo and the finely detailed dot-hatch illustrations of the book covers. For ancient fans like me, this evokes the 1970s thrill of finding the latest *Doctor Who* novelisation paperback in WH Smiths or John Menzies or—in my case—actually visiting the Target Offices to get the latest edition before it hit the streets!

But does this nostalgic feelgood factor make me feel like I'm being exploited? Not a bit of it!

There's plenty here which appeals to newer fans of *Doctor Who* too, fans who may have missed out on the "Target treat" back in the day.

So... to the *Target Storybook*. It is an anthology of stories featuring the Doctor in his or her various incarnations, and/or his/her companions in their own adventures.

Space (and time) doesn't permit a review of each story, but my personal favourites were as follows:

Save Yourself, a Second Doctor story written by the late, great Terrance Dicks. In fact, this is the last piece of *Doctor Who* fiction that Terrance wrote before passing away in 2019. I wouldn't say it's his greatest work (that accolade goes to his *New Adventures* novel *Exodus*), but it ties in very neatly to the Season 6B story arc, which Terrance himself built upon (see feature pa54). The story follows on from the end of the TV story *The War Games* in which the Second Doctor is sent by the Time Lords to track down the War Lord on the planet of Karn, home to the mysterious sisterhood (another Dicks creation).

Then there is *The Dark River*, written with great aplomb by Matthew Waterhouse, who played companion Adric between 1980 and 1982. The story is set part way through the events of the TV story *The Visitation*. In an attempt to pilot the TARDIS to rescue the Doctor, Tegan and actor Richard Mace from the clutches of the Terreleptils, Adric and Nyssa accidentally travel forward in time to America's Deep South in the mid 1800s. Adric tries to save an escaped slave named James from his master, but is shot in the process, and both are left for dead. Thankfully, Adric's enhanced Alzarian recuperative powers ensure his swift recovery. He and Nyssa help James, to get to safety. Together they embark on a trip down the Mississippi River on a stolen raft. They have many adventures on the way, before a sudden plot twist which the reader didn't see coming.

It's very nearly a "true historical" story, with the violence and prejudice of the slave-owning Southern states of America being invoked brilliantly by Waterhouse's engaging prose. I was particularly taken with Nyssa and Adric's naïve amazement when James tells them that white men enslave black people. Both being aliens (from Alzarius and Traken respectively) neither has encountered racial prejudice based on skin colour before. As Nyssa laments: "But our skin's not white—it's pink!" It's powerful stuff without being at all preachy.

For sheer thrills and spills, I loved the Seventh Doctor adventure which takes place during the Shoreditch Incident, the TV story *Remembrance of the Daleks*. This involves a madcap chase through the streets of Shoreditch 1963 in a stolen hearse containing the Hand of Omega, pursued by a biomechanically enhanced Slyther.

This book is packed with great stories and the reader can dip in and out at leisure. After all, time is relative. A solid 10/10 from this nostalgic old fan!

NM

BOOK REVIEWS

BLOOD HEAT—*An Adventure in Time and Space (The Director's Cut)*

By Jim Mortimore

Our time travelling heroes, who might or might not be from a popular television drama series that describes the adventures in space and time of an extra-terrestrial and his (usually) human travelling companions, land on the Earth during a pre-historic time period. All is not as it seems, however, and their time vessel might not have taken them as far back into history as they originally thought. History has taken a wrong turn, and ancient species that should no longer exist are acrimoniously sharing the planet with its post-apocalyptic human survivors.

This review will attempt to be spoiler free, but any meaningful discussion will reveal something of the book's contents and therefore you will likely learn a few things that you would not have known if you had not read this review first. So, apologies for that. But first, a little background. *Blood Heat* was a novel in the *Doctor Who: The New Adventures* series that continued the show beyond its "temporary" pause in production during the 1990s. It was the first part of a five instalment series that explored the effects of Time Meddling upon established history within the show. Sometime later, Jim Mortimore decided to revisit the work and expand upon it, also changing a few things along the way.

For the purpose of this review, we will look at this later edition mostly on its own merits rather than by comparison with the original. Copyright enforced changes included changing some of the names of the characters, adding entire new storylines for some of them that explore additional times and places to those seen in the original work, and there are alternate outcomes for these alternate characters as well. The more liberal style of the work, not having to fit a publisher's requirements, is apparent from the very beginning. The reader is tempted in by a sequence of curious quotations, apparently spoken by the Doctor but presented in a sufficiently ambiguous way. These lead in to an abstract dream type sequence from Ace's viewpoint. The context of this sequence is also

left ambiguous.

The prologues are lengthy, but set the scene for the novel in a nice way by witnessing the viewpoints of some human and reptile characters, at various points in time, before the story starts for real with a scene in which the Doctor and Ace arrive in their time ship. This detailed account of landing in an (apparently) pre-historic landscape is intercut with a second viewpoint of the same time and place of another character whose identity becomes progressively apparent. This latter view is interesting, and well realised by the author, as it portrays the experiences of someone driven to a kind of insanity and no longer able to communicate, but mixes these subjective pseudo-primitive expressions with a neat form of written prose that more eloquently describes the viewpoint than the character could themselves. The section as a whole is reminiscent to this reader of the *Jurassic Park* film series, with its impressive pseudo-pre-historic world building as seen through the eyes of recognisable viewpoint characters.

The narrative then switches scenes twice. The first of these picks up the story first told in the television serial *Doctor Who and the Silurians*, of a biological weapon attack on mankind, and realises it in the manner of the classic template and benchmark for this genre, Terry Nation's *Survivors*, with versions of two characters introduced in the following season of *Doctor Who*, Mike and Jo. This is especially effective, albeit with one or two reasoning flaws, such as services remaining operational because of technology continuing without human oversight. This was not very plausible with very manual 1970s technology and probably would not even be possible today. There is a possible explanation presented later in the novel, when we observe technology that would have been anachronistic for either our real world, or that of the television show, to suggest a different version of history altogether, but the issue is never addressed directly and remains an inconsistency.

The final section in the opening part of the novel deals with Bernice (named Berenice in this version of the book for copyright reasons) living in the actual pre-historic period, meeting and mixing with the reptilian civilisation that

ruled the Earth before man. Despite the show building this early civilisation up on screen as being great and advanced, the demands of the *Doctor Who* adventure format meant that the race as encountered had to be primarily antagonistic and conquest motivated. Although the original screenplay of *Doctor Who and the Silurians* and the subsequent novelisation are excellent examples of creating 'alien' characters with depth and variety, there were limits on how far this could be taken until Steven Moffat's policy of creating Silurian or Sontaran characters as protagonists. But here, Bernice meets Silurians who are brave and heroic, and essentially good people. Not outwardly good people who have a hidden objective or dark secrets or evil schemes, but *actual* good people who love and save lives. Even the original *Blood Heat*, taking a lead from the original story, could only explore this so far within the demands of a *Doctor Who* adventure book, even in a progressive series like the *New Adventures*. But the sequence in the version here is extraordinary.

Benson (a version of Sergeant Benton in the television show) and Ace lead a party from the secret base located at Cheddar Gorge, in a detailed and evocative world building expedition, to London, expanded from the original novel with new locations and incidents that make the scenario feel so much more real and helps sell the combination of post-apocalyptic and pre-historic as a theme. There is an especially emotive moment involving Ace and a horse that she names Avenger, and, overall, the whole book (though this section makes the point especially clearly) is notable because it takes a lead from the work of Mac Hulke in avoiding making the prehistoric and modern animal life into a mere monster of the week to be fought and killed. Jim Mortimore's work gives a sympathetic portrayal of even dangerous predators that makes you feel a kind of sadness as they are hurt or killed in the fight for survival.

Back at the Cheddar base, there is more time for character building. The author has taken the opportunity of an unlimited word-count, not just to pack it with more action, but also to allow the reader to spend more quality time with the characters. There is more natural conversation, humour, introspection, the thoughts of characters, including dream sequences, philosophical exchanges and speculation, and a use of metaphor that sits the narrative style effectively within the so-called Seventh Doctor era.

There is a whole extra storyline, set in the 'past' as defined by the timeline of the novel, with Jo and Mike. We see a different base of operations amongst a variety of new settings, and hints at the multi-verse structure of space/time favoured by the author, that not only build this post-apocalyptic world but also paint a picture of this 'world' as a very different one to our own, or that seen in *Doctor Who*, prior to its destruction. Another additional storyline shows us a world often alluded to on screen but never shown. The original reptilian civilisation with its impressive cities and unique culture, examining more about Silurian biology and psi-powers, really comes to life, with a city circumventing the world but also reaching up into space. This concept ties in well with 21st Century ideas of the reptile people as dwelling in space as well as on and beneath the surface and the oceans.

Part three of the novel goes for a metaphorical wander in various directions, losing its momentum and direction. The strength of the novel's earlier sections was world building, but here the narrative drifts from the strengths of both author and work when it becomes side-tracked by destruction, breaking apart what had been carefully put together and concentrating on acts of violence and elements of gruesome horror. The result is a shift to a less effective style.

There are references and characters that parody or homage or simply tie the book into other parts of the *Doctor Who* universe and have varying degrees of success. The parody of a particular cliff-hanger in *Dragonfire* is a little incongruous, and a homage that ties the book into *The Green Death* and *Survival* is amusing but superfluous. The reference to the Big Finish continuation of the *New Adventures* continuity arguably does not work at all. Other points of interest in terms of comparison with other in-universe works include certain passages reminiscent of the author's own Big Finish audio play *The Natural History of Fear*, in which the main characters are cleverly represented in the form of insect life (sort of, but to reveal the true nature of the story would be tangential and an unnecessary spoiler. Just buy the play).

The vivid description of the reptile civilisation as a space-faring race ties in really nicely with one of this reviewer's personal favourite modern episodes, Dinosaurs on a Spaceship, and elements of the Joanne storyline feel like a nod to the Watcher in *Logopolis*.

A challenge faced by the author of this revised version of *Blood Heat* is that, taken out of its context within the 'alternate universe cycle' of the original print line, which revolved around a character who does not even feature in this story, a new backstory was necessary to explain the alternate timeline in which this story takes place. This is done by exploring the nature of multi-verses, by means of unstable interfaces between different realities and apparitions that appear to be shadows or 'ghosts' of other worlds. With multiple timelines, multiple viewpoints following many greatly distanced plots, and a completely non-linear narrative model, this work as a whole would, in modern *Who* terms, be called "timey-wimey". Whether this approach gains or loses any one reader's attention is subjective, and as dependent upon the reader as the work.

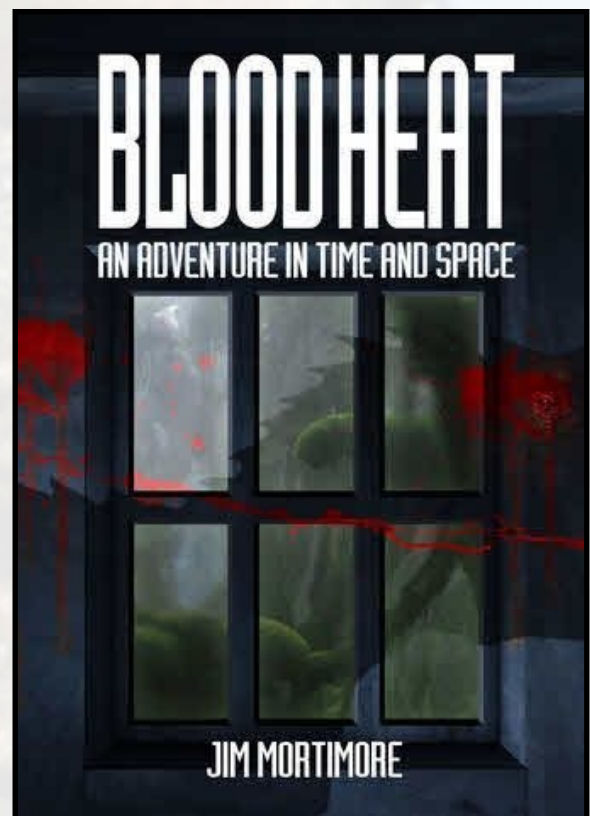
Parallels with the alternate timeline from *Inferno*, broadcast in the same season as *Doctor Who and the Silurians*, are inevitable up to a point. This is especially the case with the sadistic portrayals of an alternate Brigadier and Sergeant Benton (or, at least, their copyright friendly equivalents in the case of this revised edition). There is even a name check for Stahlman's Gas!

The final section of this book opens with some especially evocative descriptions of some very different environments, of the natural, man-made, and reptile-made varieties. There are some really good exchanges between key characters, and there is a feeling of the narrative becoming more focused as the story closes in on its conclusion. Without the need for a happy ending in which the main characters live to fight another day, in the next novel in a series, or the need for a definite conclusion to satisfy a publisher at all, the author goes for an ambiguous ending that defies its definition as an ending. Again, whether this works for the reader is subjective. Personally, it seemed to this reader as though there was a lot more potential to tie up the concepts and ideas about multi-verses and lead the world into somewhere new, even if it was something absurd like the planet flipping through a wormhole into its own future. There is an underwhelming sense that the complex ideas, and readers' invested time in understanding them, does not get paid off in the final act, remaining as mere ideas rather than being a key that unlocks a solution. This is more *Blake* (the final episode of *Blake's 7*) than *The Doctor Dances*, and yet it had so

much potential to be spectacular in a positive way.

Overall, is this a good book? Yes, absolutely. The quality of the prose, the descriptions, the building of an alien world within the context of a familiar one, are all worthy of special praise. Does it successfully enhance and improve upon the original version? Yes, and no. The extra characters, settings, storylines and viewpoints are all amazing, and it is where the author is adding and creating that his work is at its most effective. Where this version takes elements away from the original, or spends too much time knocking things down and destroying them, then it is less satisfying. Should you buy it and make your own mind up? Definitely, and you do not need to have read the original or followed the original series on screen or in print to enjoy this work on its own merits.

AP



***BLOOD HEAT The Director's Cut* is published privately by Jim Mortimore.**

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THE BACK OF BEYOND

Social Distancing— Doctor Style! Artwork Copyright © - Ian Wells, 2020



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At Silurian weddings - the bride's train was always carried by a pet ape...



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