

# Gallifrey, the long way round

Issue 9 - Spring/Summer 2023

**CYBER WARS!  
EARTHSHOCK AT 40**

**TWO NEW DOCTORS AND DONNA TOO!**

**BLAKE'S 7: MAKING THE GRADE**



# **Gallifrey, The Long Way Round**

## **Issue #9**

### **Spring/Summer 2023**

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**Earthshock—BBC VHS Cover by Andrew Skilleter ©**

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## EDITORIAL

*"People assume that time is a strict progression from cause to effect, but actually from a non-linear, non-subjective viewpoint, it's more like a big ball of wibbly-wobbly, timey-wimey... stuff."*

That now legendary quote from *Blink*, the 2007 episode of **Doctor Who** which introduced us to The Weeping Angels, is how the Doctor explains the true nature of time. It's as good an explanation of the true, flexible nature of time as any when it comes to **Doctor Who** or any narrative pertaining to time for that matter. It is also my subjective way of explaining the infrequent, non-linear timey-wimey frequency of this venerable fanzine's publication schedule.

Of course, that old bugbear "Real Life" always gets in the way of producing a free, not-for-profit, labour-of-love online fan publication. Contributors and editors alike don't get paid (except for the occasional advert or plug for their own projects, which is a fair trade-off for their time and effort), there's no production budget, but equally no publisher breathing down your neck(s) to get the issue out. Sadly, the planned January 2023 publication target disappeared into the ether with the tragic, sudden and totally unexpected death of my beloved wife Sheena on January 15th. I won't dwell on this here, but please check out the wonderful tribute to Sheena from my fellow editors on Page 4. Time is also said to be a great healer, and whilst grief at the loss of a loved one never goes away, time softens some of its rough edges. I know that Sheena would want me to complete this issue, if only to say that all the effort and hard work of all contributors didn't go to waste, whilst it also helps me get my scribbling mojo back.

Sadly, in order to get Issue #9 online, the Editors decided to drop a few items, such as regulars *Veering Off* and *Squaring the Circle*, whilst having to delay the final instalment of Rob Peasley's excellent appraisal of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and Brandon Mays' *Red Dwarf Insults*. But fear not, dear reader! We may have missed the 40th anniversary of the **Doctor Who** story *Earthshock*, but we put Tony J Fyler's excellent appraisal *Earthshock at 40* on our website late last year. We have similar plans for this issue's missing items, so watch this space!

So, here we are - 2023 and the 60th anniversary of **Doctor Who** fast approaches. There's plenty of news this issue about the upcoming series of specials featuring the Fourteenth Doctor - a returning David Tennant, accompanied by Catherine Tate — and the new ongoing series featuring the Fifteenth Doctor, played by Ncuti Gatwa, with Millie Gibson as his feisty sidekick Ruby Sunday. Of course, a 60th anniversary deserves a special tribute, so again — watch this space. All efforts will be made to traverse the vortex and land our planned celebratory issue online in time for the show's anniversary. Hopefully. Remember: It's all a bit Timey-Wimey...!

Nick

# In Memory of Sheena Mays



It's a truism that behind every great man is a great woman. And even truer that behind the editor of this fanzine lay an amazing woman – Nick Mays's wife, **Sheena**.

She provided unfailing support for our GTLWR endeavours, sourcing and editing photos, information, dates etc. and - vitally - fact checking articles and proof-reading Nick's contributions! Sadly, she never got round to writing her own feature, but it is no exaggeration to say that the Zine would not have been as good without her uncredited work.

Which is why we are honouring her here, in acknowledgement of the debt we owe her.

Sheena worked for over 20 years in the NHS, most of that time as a Community Nurse for People with learning disabilities and later as a tutor and then a Life Coach, again for disadvantaged people. Highly intelligent, with a PhD and more qualifications than most of us ever aspire to - it's significant that she was never one to flaunt her credentials. She had time for everybody and would always put others first.

Nick met Sheena online in early 2003- surprisingly not on a **Doctor Who** site – but one about the fantasy-based *Discworld* of Terry Pratchett. Both were divorced with children. A date followed, the families met and, well... the rest, as they say, is history. The couple had many shared interests, but Sheena was happy to embrace the fact that **Doctor Who** held a special place in Nick's heart, gifting him cuff links in the design of a Gallifreyan seal for their wedding day.

Although she never became a die-hard fan of the show, Sheena did like the rebooted series. In 2005, she and Nick watched *Dalek* together with her sons Dan and Jay, and then later, shared the experience with Nick's kids – turning them all into firm fans there and then! Formerly a sporadic watcher of "classic" **Who**, Sheena thoroughly enjoyed discovering and re-watching old episodes with Nick- even the recons! (She cited *Marco Polo* as one of her favourites). She was not, in any sense, a sci-fi geek, but she did take pleasure in several sci-fi and fantasy books, films, and series: notably *Discworld* (of course!), *Star Wars*, *Back to the Future*, *Lord of the Rings*, *Torchwood*, and *The Midwich Cuckoos*.

Sheena and Nick had twenty wonderful years together until, tragically, an undiagnosed condition took her from him, suddenly and unexpectedly, in January of this year. The legacy of their shared time can be found not just in this 'Zine but on Facebook where Nick charts the progress of their adorable grandchildren and shares photographs of the wildlife - friendly garden they created together.

The love of Nick's life, yin to his yang, Granny Weatherwax to his Archancellor Ridcully, Sheena was a warm and lovely human being who is greatly missed by everyone fortunate enough to know her.

In fact, in the words of the good Doctor himself, she was **Brilliant**.

*Annie, Lynda and Clare*  
*The Editors*





I have always regarded **Blake's 7** as a unique series. Blending science fiction with political and social drama that dares to touch upon some rather sensitive issues, equality, discrimination, and oppression to name a few. Taken in the context of 21<sup>st</sup> century thinking it would almost certainly be criticised for daring to screen such material. That would be a great disservice in my view, and thankfully we have this series as a legacy that continues to endure.

Exploration of the narratives within **Blake's 7** is certainly not for the feint hearted and from the opening scenes we are introduced to the idea that all is not well on planet Earth. It is hinted that during the period following a global conflict, referred to as the Atomic War, those who survived gathered themselves together to forge a new governing body, the Federation. This manifests itself as a quasi-totalitarian regime that seeks only to control the mass population for its own gain. Sound familiar? Parallels can be drawn with George Orwell's novel, *1984*. Whether or not Terry Nation was inspired by that I am uncertain, though many ideas contained within it are certainly reflected in **Blake's 7**.

Delving into the **Blake's 7** universe, the series sheds light on the citizens of the Federation who are categorised under a graded hierarchy, with Alpha grades assumed to be the uppermost. This is referred to sporadically, though never in any great depth. It is not clear what function the grade system serves, other than as a means of dominion by some over others. Nothing new there. Its reach is certainly not limited to Earth as there are numerous colonised

worlds, all of which follow the same pattern. Some of these are apparently more closely aligned to the Federation than others, suggesting a time before the Federation existed when humanity's exploration of space expanded. It is entirely possible that the social system predates it as well.

At face value the principal character, Roj Blake, is presented as a former agent for the cause of freedom. A free-thinker and unlikely leader who not-so-cleverly got caught, fell victim to the manipulation of the Federation and had his memories and past identity erased. The Federation, for their part, did all this for the sake of preserving the regime and avoidance of dissent. I did warn you it is not for the feint hearted! The series goes on to follow the adventures of Blake as he is drawn back into rebellion and the people he subsequently meets. After a rather intense, and dramatic start, the plotlines became rather toned down as the series was aimed at younger viewers. From my own perspective the toning down was something of a missed opportunity as I find the issues posed by those earlier episodes make a far more interesting work of drama.

So, what went wrong with human society that led to this rather depressing existence? Good question! Most likely the need to survive driven by determination and the desire for power. Certainly, the Federation character of Servalan exudes many of these qualities. Servalan is quite possibly the manifestation of the whole system rolled into one person. Formalising the concept that some people are better than others and equality is about as far

removed as it is possible to imagine. “I could destroy a planet by pressing a button”, she laments to Tarrant in the fourth series. Perhaps she hides a shred of humanity and femininity under that dark charade of hers? Interesting thought. Frequently a focus of interaction between the Liberator crew and the Federation, Servalan occupies a unique position and indeed she sees herself as unique. Both she and Avon are Alpha grade and yet they are quite different in their own ways. Not that that stops them from being attracted to each other! Although as Avon reflects, “I’d be dead in a week!”



**Alpha: The female of the species is deadlier than the male., Servalan tells Tarrant just how ruthless she can be**

Much has been written about the central characters of the series, what grades they are in relation to each other and whether this has any bearing on their relationships. I am certain that it undoubtedly affected their relationships. Raised in a Federation environment where their whole upbringing was inevitably geared towards enacting the concept of superiority and inferiority. The interplay between Servalan and Avon or Tarrant and Vila is a prime example of that in action and is enjoyed aplenty throughout the series.

stupor is hardly conducive to romance! Although compliant citizens are perhaps less drugged than those who dissent. This is open to debate as Vila appears to hail from a rebellious environment as does Jenna and Avon. Their apparent criminality is evidence that they were free enough to think about what they were doing and why. When introduced to Blake there is little sign of any form of suppressant from any of them, so what was fellow dissident Ravella referring to? This is perhaps one of those great continuity anomalies that all you can do is ignore it.

Further into the series we see an even more potent and disturbing form of control, Pylene 50. Higher doses of which reduce people to little more than walking vegetables. They are shown as hardly capable of anything other than mere existence. I cannot help but pose the question whether the Federation was deliberately sowing the seeds of humanity’s own destruction by reducing the gene pool, or so blinded by its own thirst for control that it could not see that potential outcome. I suspect the latter but either way it was entirely self-destructive.

It is worth focusing on that point for a moment. What is motivating the Federation to take those decisions? It is possible to understand the thirst for power, but defying evolution, and you don’t need to be conversant with Charles Darwin to see it, that is entirely something else. This has relevance to the social system as well. The Federation finds itself landed with a mass population that it seemingly doesn’t want to oversee and would rather enable its disappearance. Is that why they suppress the people so much, so the non-Alpha’s eventually die out leaving just an elite population that relies upon mechanisation and genetically engineered subservient beings to survive? There’s a word for this; *eugenics*. Yet another dark undertone that runs through the series.



**Delta: Conman Vila Restal—but was he really an Alpha?**

But what about the wider society? In the opening episode, The Way Back, those living in the domed city on Earth are reputed to be controlled by suppressants, breathing recycled air, and eating food that is hardly organic in origin. Population control is also alluded to, and no wonder, a drug induced



**Beta: Coser is one of the few Beta Grades identified in the series, specifically as a Beta Grade Technician**

While very organised and supposedly intelligent, the Federation has never struck me as particularly forward thinking. Living in the here and now and lurching from one crisis to the next as it fought for control of the human mind. A formidable adversary it must be said. The freedom to think openly is the greatest freedom of all is it not? Added to that, Federation Troopers, for all their tough guy appearance, on more than one occasion come across as about as professional a fighting force as my right elbow. Sorry! But it's the truth. Hesitation, blunders galore and hardly worthy of their uniform sometimes. Are they too subjected to suppressants to ensure their obedience and in so doing turned them into morons? It's at least a possibility.



Federation Troopers—possessed of the same shooting skills as Empire Stormtroopers in another well-known Sci-Fi franchise..

Mutoids, they are a curious blend of part human, part cyborg/bionic rebuild and part something else that is hard to define. What status or grade do they have? It isn't made very clear, but most appear to have been engineered for the purpose of serving the Federation as technicians, space pilots and foot soldiers.



Mutoids: a curious blend of human, Cyborg and... vampire?...

They too have a darker side in requiring blood serum to stay alive. What was that all about?! Well, you never see them eat anything that we would call food. I suspect it was done to try and make them different and it works, even if it is rather creepy. Space Commander Travis, Servalan's sidekick, gives Mutoids a higher standing than humans. Strange considering he is human himself. He openly considers them more reliable, by that I read more obedient. They follow his instructions almost to the letter, though they are not beyond self-preservation, as seen in the episode *Duel*. This does lend itself to the idea that they retain an element of free thought and I venture to suggest must need to, otherwise they would not be capable of technical functions. It's also notable that they come in different variants, so possibly Mutoids have their own grade hierarchy?



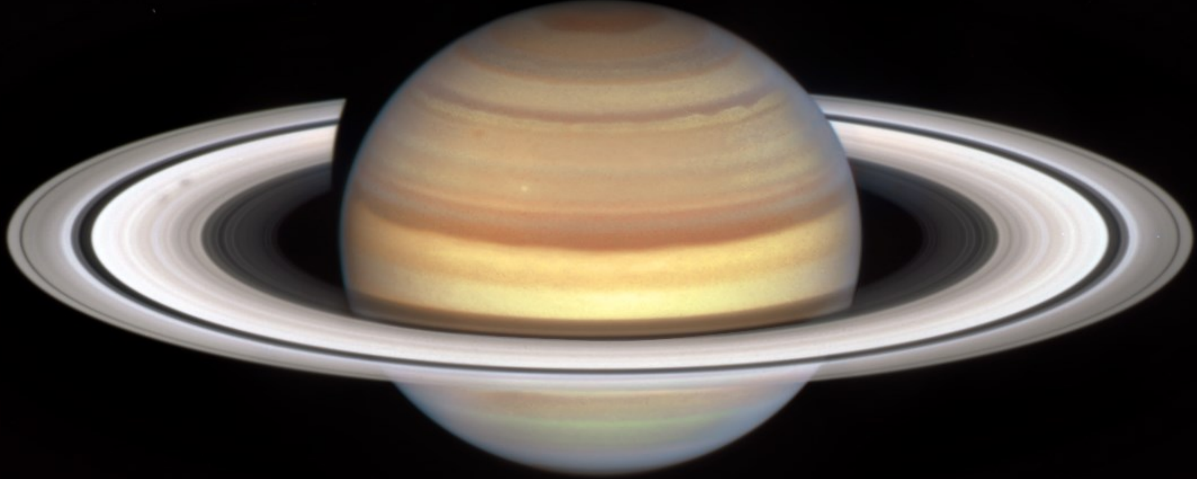
Servalan and armed Mutoids—a different Mutoid variant seen in Series 4 of *Blake's 7*

All in all, the **Blake's 7** universe is peopled by the haves and have-nots on a grand scale. Governed by a strict hierarchy that doesn't allow for much upward mobility, but plenty of downward. Depending on who you are of course. Those already at the top appear to have much more choice over their own lives than those lower down. A reflection of the real world of course. Terry Nation, I feel rather skilfully weaved this reality into his writing for **Blake's 7** and through the medium of science fiction, used it to great effect. Some of the most dramatic moments come from those very intense scenes that ask the audience who is right and who is wrong. Is Blake right to do what he does? Does the Federation have any positives? It's an interesting debate that continues to this day.

In conclusion I think it's fair to say that I dearly hope real life never finds itself in as bad a place as that seen in **Blake's 7**, though we are, sadly, dangerously flirting with it.



# THE RINGS OF SATURN



## A Blakes'7 fanfic by Sarah Bennett

"I've had a miserable life, me."

Vila, his mouth downturned and his gaze turned inwards to gloomy reflection, had been wallowing in self-misery for the better part of thirty minutes.

If he was thoroughly enjoying it, the others were less so. Jenna was busy with the flight systems, Cally was trying to read and not making much progress, thanks to Vila's constant interruptions, while Avon was wandering in and out, variously tapping buttons to put the auxiliary computers through their paces. Only Gan remained alert to Vila's complaints, and even his tolerant nature was being tested.

"It can't have been all that bad, Vila," he said.

Vila turned a lacklustre eye upon him. "It's been hell some days," he replied. "I tell you, Gan, if someone wrote a book about my life, they'd have to call it 'Misery'." He stifled a grunt of laughter. "Not that anyone will be writing anything about me. It would be too depressing. It makes me depressed just thinking about it."



He reached for his glass, only to find it empty. Staring at the drying dregs within, he sighed.

"Just my luck," he murmured ruefully. Seeing he was losing his audience, his gaze turned to Cally. "Story of my life, this empty glass," he said louder to attract her attention. When that failed, a well-placed nudge did the trick. "You couldn't get me a drink, could you, Cally?"

"I think you've had enough," she said, finally giving up and setting the book screen aside. "It's making you maudlin, Vila."

"Nah," he said, "the drink doesn't make me remember. It helps me to forget. You'd want to forget too, if you'd had a miserable life like mine."

"You keep saying that," Cally responded, "but you never say why it was so bad."

"Ah, well, since you ask." Vila sat up and began to warm to his subject. "I never had a proper home. Never had a proper job. Never had a holiday. Never been anywhere in fact."

Cally frowned. "That is not true. We have been many places aboard the *Liberator*."

"But that's not for fun. It's... work, I suppose you call it. Now I'm not saying it's not been exciting, but I've never been a fan of work."

"We've noticed," Gan noted in good humour. "Why don't you find something to do, Vila? Take your mind off things."

Vila looked pained at the suggestion. "Oh, I've tried, Gan. Believe me. You see, work to me has the opposite effect. It only adds to the misery."



"I'm sure many people would agree with you. But if we all felt that way, nothing would get done." Gan rose decisively to his feet. "Come on, Vila. You can help me. The teleport locators need recalibrating."

Vila gulped. "Oh, I would, Gan. But... er, I'm not feeling so good."

Gan folded his arms. "What's wrong with you now?"

"What's right?" Vila sighed and sank down onto the couch, shoulders slumped and glass hanging listlessly from his hand. He had the look of a chastised pet, not entirely accidentally. Calculated to gain sympathy, he was wasting his time on his increasingly unsympathetic audience.

"Well, I don't know what else to suggest," said Gan. "Jenna, do you know what's wrong with him?"

Up at the main console, she had only been half-listening to the conversation. Monitoring the flight computers while the *Liberator* harvested ice crystals for water was necessary but tedious. This close to the rings of the gas giant, Geras, in Sector Five, conflicting gravitational forces could cause even the most stable of ships to behave erratically. So far, the *Liberator* had performed impeccably. As she knew, however, that could change in time it took to look away from the screens.

"I can take a good guess," she replied. Vila's motives were usually obvious, unlike some people on the *Liberator*. "Vila, why don't you just tell us what you want?"

On the couch, Vila perked up a little. "Want? Me? Oh, nothing much."

Still playing on the sympathy card, Jenna thought. Time to call his bluff. "Very well," she said, "if there isn't anything—"

"No, wait!" Vila jumped to his feet and hurried over to her position. "There is something, actually. Something I've always wanted to do."

From his furtive manner, Jenna guessed that what Vila wanted was unlikely to be straightforward. Hence the reason for his hesitation in asking for it sooner.

"I did have a rotten life," he began. "Although it did have its good points. Best birthday present I ever had was one of those day cruises out to Saturn. It was the only year my father was able to come with us."

"Your father was a busy man?" asked Gan.

"He would have been," Vila said absently, lounging up against Jenna's console, "if he wasn't incarcerated so much. He did his best for us, though. He got three years in a penal colony for stealing the credits to get us on that Saturn trip, but it was worth it. The only thing was..."

The way he said it suggested he wanted to be asked. Gan obliged.

"We never got to ride the rings," Vila went on. "The captain said there had been a gravitational shift and it wasn't safe."

"Lost his nerve more like it," said Jenna.

"Why would he do that?" asked Cally.

"Because it is dangerous." Avon had appeared at the head of the stairs, never slow to answer a question when he thought he knew better. He descended and took up position in the centre of the flight deck, with the air of someone about to address an audience.

"Only a fool rides the rings of Saturn."

"It's not dangerous if you know what you're doing," said Jenna. If his tone of voice was not irritating enough, the smug look on his face was calculated to rile on every level. "I've flown them a few times."

"As I said, only a fool."

"Fortune for you then that this fool knows what she's doing."

Avon stared at her. "You aren't serious?"

Jenna shrugged. "Vila wants to see the rings."

"It's true," Vila concurred. "People used to tell me the rings had ice mountains." His gaze went to the main screen and the image of the ringed planet before them, rainbow-swirled as though bright pigments had been dripped into its dust-infested atmosphere. "The way things are, I'm not likely to see Saturn again. This is the closest I'll ever get now."



It was a sobering thought. In an unforgiving universe, Earth Sector was a small corner some on the *Liberator* still called home. As usual, Vila, in one of his moments of perspicacity, had touched upon an uncomfortable truth. And as usual, it took Avon to break the spell.

"Archive images will show you all you need to know."

"It's not the same thing," Jenna responded.

"You've seen the ice mountains?" Vila asked.

"Many times. The rings were convenient for covert exchanges of goods until the Federation closed the planet to tourism."

"Too many dead free-traders were bad for business, no doubt," Avon remarked.

"That wasn't the reason," Jenna countered. He was doing his best, and succeeding, at being objectionable. Boredom probably lay at the heart of it, she decided. Several hours of staring at monitors was not improving her mood either. "The increased traffic was speeding up the dispersal of the rings. Although accidents did occur, yes."

Avon had the ill-grace to smile again, believing her admission had proved him right. It rankled. The temptation to wipe that smug look from his face become irrepressible.

"Zen," she called out. "What is the composition of Geras' rings?"

"Water-ice is the primary material," Zen intoned, "with lesser quantities of solid matter, comprising a mix of silicate and—"

"Do any of the rings have shadows?" Jenna interrupted.

"Shadows have been recorded throughout the rings."

"Show me. Close magnification." She studied the screen with its image of section of the rings, several bearing the ragged edges betraying the structures tall enough to make their presence known. "There," she said. "Those appear to be the largest, towards the middle. Zen, is there an embedded moon in that gap?"

"The moon is called Moros. Along with Keres, it acts as a shepherd moon for the ring."

"I'm not sure I understood any of that," said Gan.

"The moons keep the ring stable and the gap clear," said Jenna. "Zen, where are the moons now?"

"Grid reference three one nine."

"That should be far enough away. Vila," Jenna said to him, "do you want to see the ice mountains?"

"You're not thinking of taking us in there?" Avon interjected. "The tidal gravitational forces that close to the planet will tear us apart."

"I'm not planning on staying that long. Well, Vila? It's not Saturn, but it's close enough."

"I wouldn't say no," he said, brightening.

"Cally? Gan?"

"While we're here, I don't see why not," said Gan. "I'd like to see what all the fuss is about."

"Oh, you'll like it," Vila enthused. "I had a friend who used to take all his girlfriends to Saturn. He said it always worked. And he would know."

"Worked on what?" asked Cally innocently.

Vila reddened. "Well, you know."

"Is it really as dangerous as Avon says?" Gan asked, sparing Vila further embarrassment.

"It depends on the skill of the pilot," said Jenna.

"Which is not a recommendation, considering you ended up on a prison ship," said Avon.

Jenna stuck out her chin and held his gaze. "It wasn't because of my flying skills."

"We'll have to take your word for that."

"Remind me again, Avon, how much did you *actually* get away with?" The barb found its mark and Avon backed down. "That's what I thought," said Jenna. "Zen, set an intercept course for the Moros gap."

"Information," said Zen. "There is a Federation prohibition order on entering the rings of Geras. The penalty is summary execution."

"They can only hang us once. Zen, give me manual control."

"Blake won't like it," said Cally.

"Then don't tell him." The rings rose to the top of the main screen and vanished as Jenna manoeuvred the ship onto a new course. "The trick is," she said, gritting her teeth slightly as proximity alarms started to sound, "to come at it from underneath, match the orbit of the moon and compensate for gravitational forces. Not difficult in theory."

"In practice?" Vila queried.

"Very difficult. Raise the force wall."

Avon beat him to it.

"I thought you didn't approve," Jenna remarked.

"I'd rather my final words were not 'I told you so'." The ship shuddered suddenly as something smashed into the hull. Avon staggered, catching at the back of the seating to steady himself. "Switch to automatics."

"No, I've got it." Her fingers were turning white as she drove the controls forward. A rolling solid block of ice and rock was on a direct collision course. A slight correction and it passed by, leaving the *Liberator* unscathed.

"Outside pressure on the hull is approaching the maximum design tolerance," said Zen.

"Fascinating!" Orac chirruped. "Are you aware that the *Liberator* is now under the influence of twelve conflicting gravitational fields? The ship is being both squeezed and pulled in different directions simultaneously causing a bilateral strain on the *Liberator's* infrastructure. I calculate that hull integrity will be fatally compromised in eight point three nine minutes. The termination of human life aboard should follow at ten point one six minutes."



"And you soon after," said Avon. "Jenna, pull back now!"

"No need." She nodded to the screen. "Look."

A narrow black corridor rose into view. Lazily turning, suspended in space, a field of shining ice crystals spun out on every side. As the *Liberator* rose through the debris of a long-lost moon, the line between shadow and light moved, carving the irregular bodies of drifting rock into sharp profile.

Ghostly shapes appeared, rising high above the flattened belt. Not solid ice, but instead the outlines of mountains, created from threaded crystals, gossamer fine, glistening as if touched by morning dew, sculpted into extravagant contours by the influence of passing moons. Even as the ship moved between them, they seemed to change and grow, reaching out delicate fingers to the distant stars.

Jenna watched the screen, allowing time to stand still, revelling in the moment. Then looking round at the others, she saw the effect was universal. Gan, now on his feet, nodding with approval. Vila, mouth hanging open, spellbound by the spectacle before him. Cally was entranced and Avon... well, Avon had been silenced. It was the closest he would ever come to admitting he was impressed.

"Information," Zen announced. "Outside pressure has now exceeded the maximum design tolerance. Stress fractures have been detected on the hull. Repair monitors are assessing the damage."

"All right, you've proved your point," said Avon, turning to her. "Was it worth it?"

"Oh, yes," said Gan. He gave Jenna a knowing look. "It was worth it."

More than he would ever know, she thought. Constantly running and hiding meant the beauty of all the cosmos had to offer often slid by unheeded. In the brittle silence of space, there were sights few had ever been privileged to glimpse and wonders that fragile humans could never regulate or destroy. They had watched the birth of galaxies and the death of stars. Long after the Federation had gone, they would endure.

And for Jenna, there was something else too. Flight was unequivocal. There was no such thing as a routine mission. Every moment presented a new challenge. The margin between life and death turned on skill and experience, and if she were honest, a fair amount of luck. When things went right, it was the greatest high the universe had to offer. Like now, with a ship at her command, capable of withstanding the battling forces of gravity from numerous celestial bodies and making dreams come true. Even so, every pilot was tested sooner or later. Some lived, most died. One day, Jenna knew, that test would come. But not today.

She dropped the *Liberator* below the debris belt and began the slow retreat back to the edge of the rings in free space.

"Zen, inform me when hull pressure falls to an acceptable tolerance," she said. "Did you see enough, Vila?"

He nodded. "Thanks, Jenna. It's just like my birthday all over again. If it was my birthday, I mean."

"All these worlds, it must be your birthday on one of them."

"Well, if you put it like that..."

Zen announced that hull pressure had returned to acceptable limits and repairs were underway.

"There," said Gan. "No harm done. No one will ever know we were here."

"As if we had never been," mused Vila. "That's a bit sad, when you think of it."

"Then let's change that," said Jenna decisively.

Gan was thrown back onto the seating and Vila clung to the back of her chair for dear life as the ship surged forward and upwards into the outermost ring. Ice and rocks rattled in muffled succession on the hull, their impact softened by the intervention of the force wall, as the *Liberator* sheared a path through the heart of the debris. Levelling out, ignoring Avon's protests, Jenna instructed Zen to set a powered orbit, standard by one half, and sat back in her chair.

"Have you lost your mind?" Avon yelled, picking himself up from the floor.

"Maybe I've found it again."

"Information," said Zen. "The detectors have registered three pursuit ships on an intercept course from the Federation base on Chella Three. Battle computers propose evasive action."

"Stay on course," she said. "We'll be long gone by the time they get here."

The sound of running footsteps heralded Blake's arrival. Roused from his bed, he was still in the process of pulling on his clothes as he hurried down the steps.

"Are we under attack?" he demanded. "What the hell is going on?"

"You may well ask," Avon returned.

Jenna fixed him with a bold look. "We're making our mark on history. Zen, direct vision three-sixty orbital scan."

The scanner screen expanded. A new channel in the

rings was being created by the *Liberator's* progress. Undulating waves of ice crystals scattered like spilled diamonds, winking and glinting with the reflected light of the system's distant sun as they tumbled away from the ship's hull, each resembling a vibrant miniature star in its own right. With a full circuit of Geras complete, the debris thinned and gave way to a clear path.

Blake came up and stood beside her, admiring the view. "Impressive. Is there any reason we're alerting the Federation to our presence?"

"I thought someone should know we had been here."

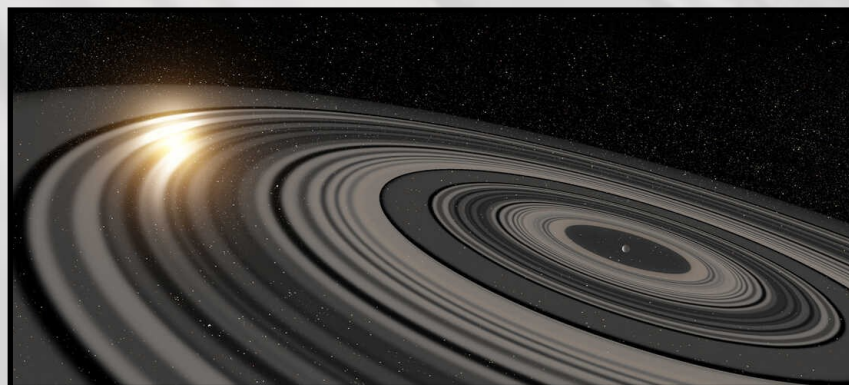
"I see." He remained quiet while she guided the *Liberator* out of orbit and instructed Zen to set a course out of the system. "They'll know," he said to her. "We will make them remember."

She returned his smile and wished she had his faith. Many had thought that and many had died in the attempt. Their fate had been that of the forgotten. It was in the nature of things. In the vastness of the universe, it was easy to be lost. But for a while, in one small segment of it, this moment would remain for as long as the channel held, until Geras and its moons closed the gap and removed them from its memory. Even then, there was one last thing she could do.

"I think I'll take a break now." So saying, she stepped down from her console. Gan stood up ready to take her place. "No, let Avon take over. He looks like he needs the practice." The sullen look Avon gave her as she passed by was a thing of beauty. "Orac," she said, pausing at the computer, "make an amendment to the official records, on this day, of the first appearance of the Vila Gap in the rings of Geras."

"You're naming it after that cretin?" said Avon.

"Why not? It was his idea."



Vila looked stunned. "Thanks, Jenna!"

"A belated gift from your father," she said, giving him a weary smile. "Oh, and

Vila?" He looked up again expectantly. "The next time you want something, just ask. It's a lot easier – for all of us!"

**The End**

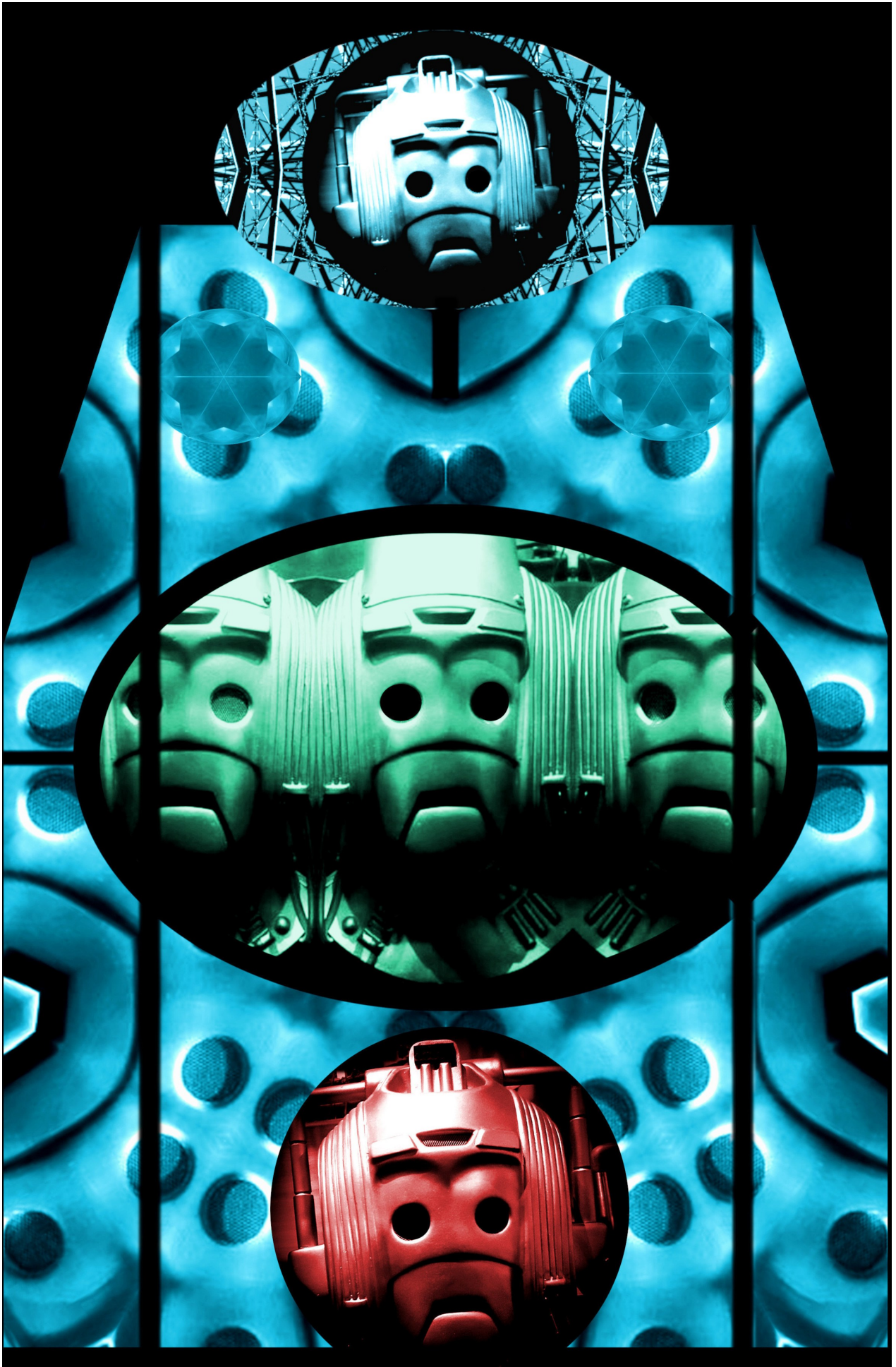


Image © Damian Whittle  
Instagram Account: the\_winter\_citadel

# Earthshock

## AT 40

BY TONY J EYLER

Looking back from 2022, it's possible to miss the huge significance of the Season 19 **Doctor Who** story *Earthshock*. These days, we live in a world of "Nu Who" where companions frequently die (Calling Lone Centurion, Rory Williams, and Grace O'Brien), or have their memories wiped (Oi! Watch it, Earthgirl!), or get trapped on the wrong side of dimensional walls, or zapped back in time to live to death. Right from the first episode of Nu-Who, *Rose*, people who followed the Doctor's adventures warned us that wherever he went, death was sure to follow. And then, to be fair, having delivered their warning, they usually died (Sorry, Clive!).

Death, back in 1982, was Something That Happened to Other People. People who didn't stand next to the Doctor or do as he said. There hadn't been a companion death since *The Daleks' Master Plan* in 1965-6, and even then, when we got two for the price of one, it was very much a marker of exactly how evil the Daleks were, how unstoppable by anyone but the Doctor. The deaths of Katarina and Sara Kingdom were brutal, and horrifying, because they proved there were some situations in which even the Doctor couldn't save us. They were deaths that meant that being scared wasn't fun anymore. That the monsters were real, and powerful, and that sometimes, even the Doctor couldn't stop them.



Sara Kingdom: Another companion bites the dust

It's significant that those two deaths stood out in the history of Classic **Doctor Who**, both confirming the Daleks as the worst creatures in the universe, a whole other league of evil above everything else, and showing the Doctor defeated in his ongoing quest to be a good host, showing his friends the universe without allowing genuine harm to come to them.

It was – very sensibly – never tried again.

Until *Earthshock*.

*Earthshock* was destined to kill off a companion for the first time in 16 years, and it's worth reflecting for a moment on quite how brave a decision – or how reckless a gamble - that was.

Tom Baker had been in the Tardis for seven years. He was then, and for lots of fans, remains now, the ultimate Doctor. Into his massive footprints had stepped... "that nice young man from the vet programme," Peter Davison. It would be a ridiculous mistake to underestimate Davison's performative power or his ability to deliver the Doctor in a way that was both utterly different to his predecessor, and still very much the clever, universe-saving alien. But in his first season in the Tardis, a good deal was made of the idea that this fair-haired fellow in the cricketing gear might not particularly be up to the same *level* of universe-saving as the striding, mad-eyed, wildly grinning banter-merchant who had gone before.



Imagine a run of stories which has the Doctor, more or less to camera, admitting “That’s the trouble with regeneration – you never quite know what you’re going to get.” A run that saw him accidentally start the great fire of London, rather than staying to help out and save people. A run that included gloriously dark psychological stories let down by seriously poor inflatable snakes, and tales of space frogs who thought they were “God,” and wanted to go and have a chat with themselves...

And then imagine that the Doctor who did all that would also have to shoulder the burden of being the first Doctor *since* the first Doctor to have a companion die on their watch.

If you’re going to establish your new Doctor as inherently more flawed than their predecessor, you could hardly go about it with more precision. As we say, incredibly brave if you pull it off. Incredibly risky if you don’t.

So *Earthshock* has a very special place in **Doctor Who** history, both for being the first story since 1965 to kill off a main companion – in this case, Adric the Alzarean – and for being an intentional, brave, shaking-up of the fan-base to say “Keep watching – anything could happen with this Time Lord at the helm. Cosy time is over.”

What’s at least as important is that **Earthshock** is the first *real* flourish of Eric Saward’s particular dark genius in action. Certainly, his script for S19’s earlier story *The Visitation* was trim, and it began to show his exceptional talent with characterization in the person of Richard Mace, the highwayman embodied by Michael Robbins. But it’s in *Earthshock* that Saward first revealed his skill as the anti-Holmes.

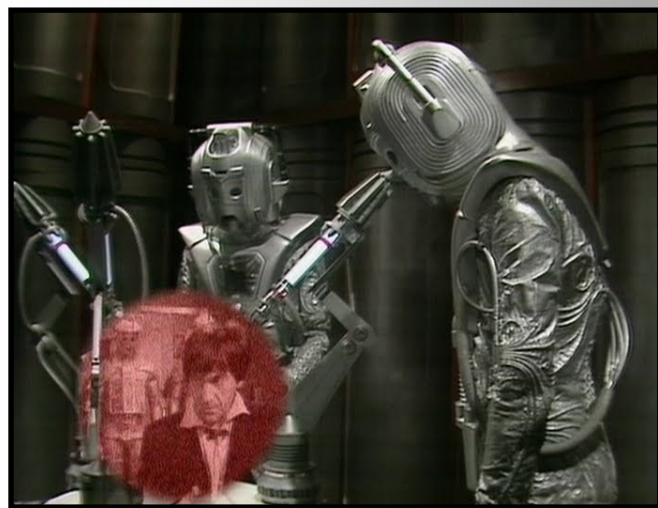
Robert Holmes, apart from famously creating several new creatures and species, scaring generations of children and feeling altogether pretty good about it, was a master when it came to side-characters, especially double-acts. Irongron and Bloodaxe, Jago and Litefoot, Garron and Unstoffe, and later, Glitz and Dibber were all written to feel like real people in extraordinary circumstances, double-acts that were worth tuning in for when they filled the screen (and papered over any cracks in the script). But Holmes’ double-acts were often comic, or at least uplifting.

Eric Saward had a similar gift with characterisation, but his double-acts tended towards the mordant, the piquant, even the embittered, and again in *Earthshock*, he really began to infuse the screen-time with these characters, into whose lives you bought utterly, and who filled the story with a richness of real human emotion while the story went on around them. There are actually several pairings we see in *Earthshock* that pull this trick - not least Troopers Walters and Snyder, and Professor Kyle and Lieutenant Scott. But most magnificently mor-

dant in the story is the trio that quickly becomes a double act, Briggs, Berger, and Ringway – the bridge crew of the space freighter that is for the most part where the action happens. While Ringway (Alec Sabin) is an easy spot for the traditional role of “corrupted human who’s betrayed everyone to the Cybermen,” it’s the bitter banter between Briggs (Beryl Reid proving what a consummate actress she was despite not having the faintest idea what the story was about) and Berger (June Bland, giving strong support) that really cements your interest once events move to the freighter and before the Cybermen make their move.

Because, oh yes. In case this has somehow slipped your notice in the forty years since *Earthshock* was broadcast, that’s the other big news about this particular story. *The Cybermen... are back!*

Except for most viewers at the time, they weren’t



Reflecting on the Cyber Glory Days of the 60s...

“back” so much as “appearing for the first time in living memory.” The Cybermen had had a tough time escaping the Sixties after what, bless their fashion-conscious, constantly-changing silver hides, was probably a little over-exposure in the Troughton era. They had slunk all the way through Jon Pertwee’s transfer to colour without a single on-screen appearance as the main villains (Just for fun, imagine *Ascension of the Cybermen* playing out with *Invasion*-style Cybermen and the original Roger Delgado Master – enjoy yourself, we’ll wait), then they appeared once in Tom Baker’s first season, and vanished again for the whole of the rest of his run, turning up in his successor’s first season too.

Just as the gap between the Troughton Cybermen and the Cybermen who appeared in Baker’s first season story *Revenge of the Cybermen* was at least one full generation of **Doctor Who** fans (and let’s make the necessary if tiresome point here that back in those days, if you missed **Doctor Who**... you just missed it. It was gone, as far as you knew, into the aether forever), so the Troughton fans had often moved on by the time the Cybermen came

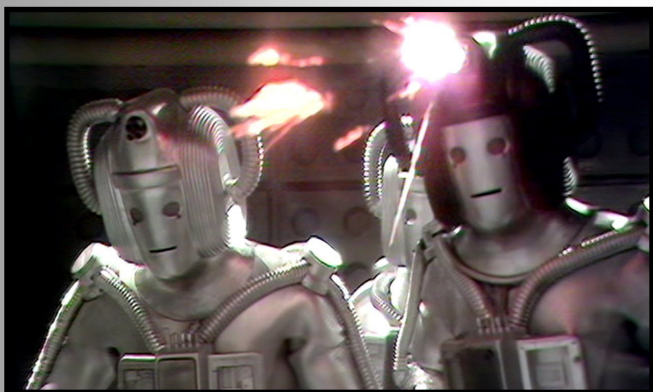
back in *Revenge*, so the viewers who had seen them in *Revenge* had more than likely also moved on by the time they came back in *Earthshock*. So these were brand new Cybermen to a whole generation of viewers. And oh, Mama, how gorgeous and new they were!

First of all, this was, as has been mentioned, a whole different and simpler age. It was possible, back in the early Eighties, not only to conceal the return of one of the best and most exciting monsters in **Doctor Who's** history from absolutely everybody *right until the day of transmission* – when fans around the nation collectively lost their minds – but also to conceal the imminent death of one of the Doctor's more or less unmasked-for young companions in the same story *until the moment that it happened*.

While modern **Who** has managed, through the unsurpassed duplicity of its showrunners, to still pull off the occasional big reveal, the early eighties was a time when **Doctor Who** had to fight and claw its way into the headlines when it wanted some media spotlight. So to consciously play against that instinct for the big splash, and let both these things be revealed as new right there on screen when they happened was a move that took an impressive amount of bravery.

And when they appeared, they were – and we're going out on a limb here – absolutely pitch perfect. If you were there, watching *Earthshock* live on transmission, we're going to bet the *Earthshock* Cybermen are *the best* Cybermen for you, even today, when they've been redesigned more times than they had been even up to that point. They were just *perfect*.

We'll get to exactly *why* they were perfect in a moment, but before we go there, let's deal with the Cyber-elephant in the room. The challenges faced by the writers of *Revenge of the Cybermen* (Gerry Davis and Robert Holmes) and the writer of *Earthshock* (Eric Saward) were largely the same. They had to reintroduce a monster that had once been scary and important in a way that made them relevant again for the young audience.



Excellent! It's time for *Revenge*!

Wait, you don't believe *Earthshock* is essentially

*Revenge of the Cybermen* with an Eighties makeover?

Let's take a look...

- ◆ Main objective of the Cybermen – destroy a planet that can, if left to survive, destroy the Cybermen. Voga with its gold in *Revenge*, Earth with its conference of anti-Cyber powers in *Earthshock*.
- ◆ Plot-filler – fanning about in caves, in which are things that can kill people. Both stories.
- ◆ Cyber-bombs – mobile in *Revenge*, static in *Earthshock*.
- ◆ Crew of three humans on board a space vessel – one of them's a traitor. Both stories.
- ◆ Cyber-massacre – both stories. Cybermat-plague in *Revenge*, Cybermen marching upstairs in *Earthshock*.
- ◆ Black-handled Cyberleaders who, against all logic, emote when they speak – both stories. And ultimately, a plot that makes no logical sense whatsoever – not just *Revenge* and *Earthshock*, but most Cyber-stories, fairly judged.

For all the Cybermats are replaced in *Earthshock* with the sleek, humanoid, moderately bizarre androids, *Earthshock* is fundamentally a re-run of *Revenge of the Cybermen* with an Eighties makeover. Ohhh, but *what* a makeover.

The trouble with *Revenge of the Cybermen*, ultimately, is that everything that's new about the Cybermen is either poorly considered, minimized, or just ends up feeling wrong.

Having them have to bow their heads to get through the doors on Nerva Beacon, so their headpieces wobble – *eesh*. Filming them largely straight on – meh. Having the voice of the Cyberleader seem a little too ordinary and quippy – unff. And of course, putting them front and centre in the story's title – great for advanced PR, useless for shock return value.

Ultimately, *Revenge's* Cybermen had some great things to recommend them – the black handles, the head-guns, etc. But all together, they left very much a “villain-of-the-week” impression, rather than a “Holy Hannah, who are *these* guys?!” impression. *Earthshock* – and the whole production team – learned the lessons of *Revenge of the Cybermen*, and corrected them.

First, they went back to a key sequence from major Troughton Cyber-stories – the Cyber-awakening and birth – and they went nuts with it, to the point where it's gloriously gratuitous that, in an empty Cyber control-space, a lever mysteriously self-activates, just so we get to see more Cybermen escaping from their tubes. We know it's not technically *necessary* to have a Cyber-awakening sequence to make an attention-grabbing Cyberman story, but on the other hand, it was pretty much all



story, but on the other hand, it was pretty much all of what made classic stories like *Tomb of the Cybermen* and *The Invasion* must-see TV, so if you're going to bring them back after some years away, have the Cybermen awake, it can only bring you dividends.

television from which you cannot tear your eyes as the Cybermen emerge – it's enough to swell the pressure in your chest to this day, and that metal-clanky marching tune that seems to die off with every line into an inevitability of defeat for anything that comes across the path of these implacable warriors makes the Cybermen feel threatening



The Invasion—the Cyber army awakes and marches through key London locations—it all pays dividends

Then, there's the *other* thing that made *The Invasion* such must-watch, hypnotising Cyber-television – the emergence of the threat, with some serious marching. Both *Revenge* and *Earthshock* replayed this trick, but it's fair to say, *Earthshock* got it much, much righter – the army of identical Cybermen marching forward rank by rank, oh yes, yes, a thousand times yes. In fact, *Earthshock* probably even outdoes *The Invasion* on the marching front. Yes, *The Invasion* has home-style London locations, essentially matching *The Dalek Invasion of Earth* for creepy super-monster right on our doorstep vibes, but the way that the *Earthshock* Cybermarch was lit, shot, and directed by Peter Grimwade is probably second to none in **Doctor Who** history – certainly in the Classic era.

Add in a distinctive Cyber-theme for the first time since the Troughton era and you're in the middle of

again. As, for that matter, does the way they're shot to emphasise their height.

Then, let's talk about the redesign, by Dinah Collin and Richard Gregory.

When *Revenge of the Cybermen* redesigned the monsters, it did so essentially because the *Invasion* costumes were looking tatty, and wouldn't have survived the closer examination that colour television was bound to give them. Nevertheless, they were only really a step-forward design. The helmets were similar, the bodies were similar – and unfortunately, they looked on-screen pretty much as disappointing as the production team had feared the *Invasion* versions would have. They did not at any point inspire genuine fear, or body horror, or anything that lifted them above monster-of-the-week status.

Likewise, the voices they used felt thrown away, and while Christopher Robbie as the Cyber Leader and Melville Jones as the other speaking Cyberman took the species forward by having them emote through the mask, they ultimately ended up feeling more middle-of-the-road than they should have done as such potentially iconic monsters.

When Collin and Gregory redesigned the Cybermen for *Earthshock*, they looked like they'd been redesigned from the moonboots up – still entirely valid as Cybermen, but with fewer laces and zips than in previous iterations to spoil the immersion in their danger. The costumes themselves were fairly simple – looking essentially like boiler suits, moonboots and work gloves pained silver. But the chest and head pieces looked brand new and superb, and they didn't – at least not in *Earthshock* – wobble, or look like they might fall off at any minute. They were properly implacable.

Something about the initial *Earthshock* face plate spoke of the body horror that was at the heart of the Cybermen, because you could see David Banks' silver-painted chin moving inside the head-casing – a nod back to the original Mondasian Cybermen of *The Tenth Planet*. And these were Cybermen that were unique in one other way. While several designs over the decades had played with the slightly twee addition to the eyes that looked almost like a Pierrot's crying-clown teardrop to symbolise the loss of emotion within the Cybermen, when they returned in *Earthshock*, they were the first Cybermen in history to have mouths that curved down from their straight-line slit.

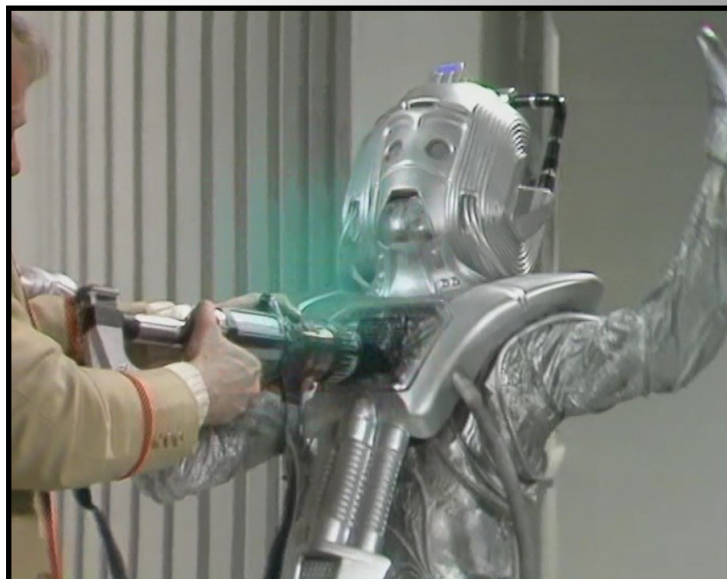


Watch my lips—A return to the original Cyberman body horror

While the *Earthshock* redesign was essentially the basis of all Cybermen for the rest of the Classic run, that downward-turning mouth had never been tried before, and had never seen the light of day again until a modern version was implemented in

the CyberMasters.

And then of course, there's the stroke of casting genius that was getting David Banks and Mark Hardy in to play the Cyber Leader and Cyber Lieutenant. *Revenge* had tried the trick of having Cybermen emote, but the performances and the voices simply weren't up to making the idea *work* in 1975. By 1982, with Banks and Hardy in the Cyber-suits and a tweak to the treatments on their voices, the leading Cybermen were absolutely *commanding* presences in the story – absolutely the equals of the Sixties Cybermen, but able to engage with the Doctor in philosophical debates about the uselessness of emotions. They went on to reprise their roles in stories with the Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh Doctors, so irresistible was the combination of the *Earthshock* Cyber-redesign, the performances from Banks and Hardy, and the voice treatment that took the Cybermen to the next level for a whole new generation.



The Battle heats up!



Why do we still remember *Earthshock* at 40? Well, as we've just discussed at length, there are lots of reasons. Mostly though, it still resonates in the memory because:

- ◆ It punched the audience with a genuine double shock – the return of the Cybermen and the death of Adric.
- ◆ It announced to the audience that nothing about Doctor Who was as safe or as cosy as they may have thought it was, because this Doctor could do everything – and people who trusted him could still die.
- ◆ It began a new era of classic double-act supporting characters, that felt like a richer storytelling vein than we'd been used to in recent years.
- ◆ And above all, it brought back the Cybermen in a way that not only worked one time on screen, but connected back to The Invasion and put the show's Silver Medal Monsters of the Sixties back on top. While The Invasion equalled The Dalek Invasion of Earth in terms of having the Big Bad on the streets of London, it wasn't until *Earthshock* that the Cybermen *really* earned their equality with the Daleks, taking blood from among the Doctor's companions.

Above all, when the Cybermen were redesigned and brought back in *Revenge of the Cybermen*, they had their one shot and disappeared again for another seven years into the wilderness of deep space. When Eric Saward, Peter Grimwade, John Nathan-Turner, Dinah Collin and Richard Gregory, David Banks and Mark Hardy collaborated to bring back the Cybermen for *Earthshock* – and had them kill a companion – they became a mainstay of the show again, just as they had been in the Patrick

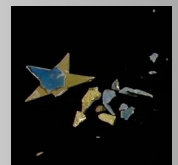
Troughton era, facing every on-screen Doctor until the end of the continuous Classic run. They took an enormous risk with the show – and they knocked it out of the park.

*Earthshock* was what happened when you brought the Cybermen back and got it so right it practically hurt. When you got it so right, the audience would even cry over Adric.



It's the story that went on to ensure that when the show was brought back in 2005, at some point it was a certainty that the stomping metal-skinned sleepless upgrade-zombies would inevitably come marching back to terrorise and terrify the universe once more.

It's the story that made sure the Cybermen could never be forgotten again.



### The Doctor and the CyberLeader discuss emotions in *Earthshock*:

*LEADER: I see that Time Lords have emotional feelings.*

*DOCTOR: Of sorts.*

*LEADER: Surely a great weakness in one so powerful?*

*DOCTOR: Emotions have their uses.*

*LEADER: They restrict and curtail the intellect and logic of the mind.*

*DOCTOR: They also enhance life! When did you last have the pleasure of smelling a flower, watching a sunset, eating a well-prepared meal?*

*LEADER: These things are irrelevant.*

*DOCTOR: For some people, small, beautiful events is what life is all about!*



# DOCTOR WHO

## THE POWER OF THE DOCTOR

Review by  
Annie Worrall

How can you not love a *Dr Who* episode that brings back Ian (aka William Russell, my first crush, though in Sir Lancelot rather than *Dr Who*)?

There was merit in the fact that everybody had something to do in furthering the plot and Yaz was finally allowed to show her mettle. Nice to see Grahame again too. After the mind-bending convolutions of the Moffat era, I welcomed this straightforward story telling.



Sir Ian of Chesterton?

There were other things to love as well. To be candid this was in my view, one of the better regeneration episodes of recent years – not ill-conceived like *The Time of the Doctor* and less overblown than *Twice upon a Time*. The plot required attention but it stood up through a second viewing, though I still haven't a clue why the Master chose to assume the person of Rasputin (apart from the urge to dance to Boney M) or how he cloned Ashad, the Lone Cyberman – just

how **do** you clone metal? But the episode looked good, zipped along nicely, and created a real finger biting final section largely because of the near miss to Dan and his abrupt departure. It was a shock which made the danger seem very real.

Of course, there wasn't much depth to the adventure. It was more a departing Showrunner's tribute to the power the show had for him, as Chris Chibnall referenced key moments in the canon (not the least being the call back to Troughton's forced regeneration) and reintroduced some of his favourite Doctor incarnations and companions.



LEFT:  
Ra-Ra-Rasputin—  
or is It Ma-Ma-  
Master?

BELOW:  
Dan decides his  
time in the  
TARDIS is at an  
end ...



Nor was there much that was new or surprising. The main conceit – that the power of the Doctor lay in their ability to inspire devotion in their companions and use them to defeat evil – had already been hinted at in Tennant’s *Last of the Timelords*, when the Doctor utilised the psychic energy from millions of humans all thinking about him at the same time to defeat the Master. Even the idea of a celestial waiting space at the edge of ‘beyond’ where some of the Doctor’s spiritual energy clustered (in the form of some of her/his previous incarnations), seemed a hark back to the end of time sequence in *Hell Bent*. But while the Master was given little motivation but his hatred of the Doctor, his wish to **become** his nemesis did make sense- a way of dealing with the conflict left in his psyche when Missy decided to stand with Twelve in *The Doctor Falls*, by subsuming their existence in his own.

utilise it. The lack of easy authority, which Jo Martin displayed in spades, was something I (and many of Jodie’s critics) had struggled with and unnecessarily pointing up the contrast here seemed



**Old Faces...**  
**ABOVE:**  
The Former  
Companions  
Support Group



**RIGHT:**  
Some of the  
Doctor’s  
previous  
incarnations in  
his/her spiritual  
“Beyond”



a bit insensitive.

That said, I did totally warm to this Doctor in her last moments with Yaz and in the child-like enthusiasm with which she greeted her regeneration. To (mis)-quote Shakespeare:

*Nothing in her life  
Became her like the leaving it.*



**Friends Reunited: The Doctor, Tegan, and Ace**

Where this did fall down for me, was in the sidelining of Jodie’s Doctor in her last performance when she should have been the undisputed star. Nice though it was to see Jo Martin’s Doctor, it made no sense since Thirteen’s memory of her had been locked away in the that fob watch and it also undermined something central to Jodie’s performance – that this was an incarnation at the very beginning of her adventures and as such, able to call upon knowledge obtained in previous existences but not yet sure about the right way to



**A fond  
farewell  
to  
Doctor  
13 and  
Yaz...  
and  
look  
Who’s  
back!**



**“/am the Doctor and you’d better get used to it!” The Master and reluctant companion Yaz**

# OBITUARY



Bernard  
Cribbins  
A Life Well-Lived



**Bernard Cribbins:** What can one say about such a legend? Where can one start?

I have loved hearing and seeing the wonderful Bernard all my life. so much so that it's impossible for me to say when I first saw or heard him. It could be that it was as the voice behind the safety advice film shorts of *Tufty the Squirrel*, advising us children on how to be safety aware on the roads and shown during the 1960s, that I first heard and loved his voice. Or maybe it was a song on the radio. Released in 1962 when I was 4 years old, and already a huge fan of music, radio and children's TV, *Hole in the Ground* would reach No. 9 in the charts ... I'm still singing it to this day, along with *Right Said Fred* released the same year and reaching No. 10 in the charts.

In 1966 Bernard began his long career reading stories on *Jackanory* a show that I never missed. I was an ardent reader of books and having someone sit and read them to me was wonderful, and Bernard was one of the best. From 1966 to 1995 there were only 7 scattered years when Bernard wouldn't be a part of that programme.

Although I wouldn't have seen them at the time, he was also making a name for himself in such films as *The Yangtze Incident*, *Dunkirk*, *Two Way Stretch*, *The Wrong Arm of The Law*, *The Mouse on The Moon*, *Carry On Jack*, *Carry On Spying*, *Crooks In Cloisters* and the unforgettable *SHE* - all between 1957 and 1965 - that I would later come to know and love.



These days it's seen as "celebrity culture" to have well-known personalities on all kinds of shows, but it was ever thus. In the early 1960's Bernard appeared on the judging panel of pop shows *Thank Your Lucky Stars* and *Juke Box Jury*, as a guest contestant on quiz shows *Call My Bluff* and *Celebrity Squares*, as a guest performer on the shows of others such as Cilla, Roy Castle, and Val Doonican. He even had his own show, *Cribbins*, for 12 episodes running from late 1969 into 1970.

Then came, perhaps, one of his most iconic moments when, in 1970, he appeared as Station Master Albert Perks in the much loved and enduring *The Railway Children*. I can't help but think but that he played himself in that character, for he has always seemed such a friendly, good humoured, kindly man. For some people a screen persona is just that - a screen - but Bernard comes across as absolutely genuine.

Then, in 1973, another enduring show imprinted him even more firmly in the hearts of young and old, as the narrator of *The Wombles*.

He would continue to appear on television, instantly recognisable in any part - such as the difficult hotel guest in *Fawlty Towers* - throughout his life, even having his 'own show' twice more as *Dangerous Davies: The Last Detective* in 1981 and *Cuffy* in 1983, when he would also have another children's show to narrate: *Moschops*. In 2015, at the age of 87, he would have another series, "Old Jack's Boat" that would run for 62 episodes, where he was the titular *Old Jack* recounting his tales. In 2021, at the age of 92, he was in the audio dramatisation of *The Jungle Book - The Mowgli Stories*. It was not quite the last thing he did.

Of course, one the roles which introduced him to a whole new fanbase (as well as old time fans too) was when he joined *Doctor Who* in 2007 in the role of Wilfred Mott, grandfather to companion Donna Noble. He remained in the role as a semi regular until 2010. Of course, Bernard had some history with **Doctor Who**, appearing as policeman Tom Campbell alongside big screen "Dr Who" Peter Cushing in the 1966 film *Daleks Invasion Earth 2150 AD*.

Shortly before he died, Bernard reprised the role of Wilf Mott in the upcoming series of Specials to celebrate **Doctor Who's** 60th Anniversary .

At the time of his death, he was working on turning his autobiography into an audiobook - sadly never finished.

He will live on in our hearts, dear Bernard Cribbins.

Lynda Pinfold



**Good night, sweet prince, and flights of angels sing thee to thy rest.-  
Hamlet V ii**

## **A Memorial to David Warner - Actor**

**By Brad Black**

David Warner - Actor. That seems a bit trite, doesn't it, a bit obvious, a bit lazy? 'David Warner - Actor.' Well, obviously, I mean, what else could he be? Let's call that The Second Question and come back to it later.

When offered the task of writing a memorial for the late, great, David Warner, I leapt at the opportunity. Not only is he one of my favorite actors, but with so many stage, film, and television credits, a brief essay of his career seemed an easy task.

These things usually start off something like this. David Warner recently passed away. He was an accomplished actor best known for.... Hmm. I seem to have hit a snag. What *was* David Warner best known for? Let's call that the First Question. (Yes, I write backwards, it's my style.)

As this is a science fiction publication, let's narrow it down to his appearances in science fiction television and film. Was David Warner best known for his appearances in **Star Trek**? He was in two motion pictures (*The Final Frontier* and *The Undiscovered Country*), one series (*Next Generation*), and one video game (*Klingon Academy*, and yes, video game voice acting counts, more on this later).

Was he best known for his appearances in **Doctor Who**? He appeared opposite Matt Smith in *Cold War* and opposite David Tennant in the animated *Dreamland*.

Anything else? Let's see, there was *Babylon 5*, *The Alienist*, *Penny Dreadful*, *The Secret Of Crickley Hall*,

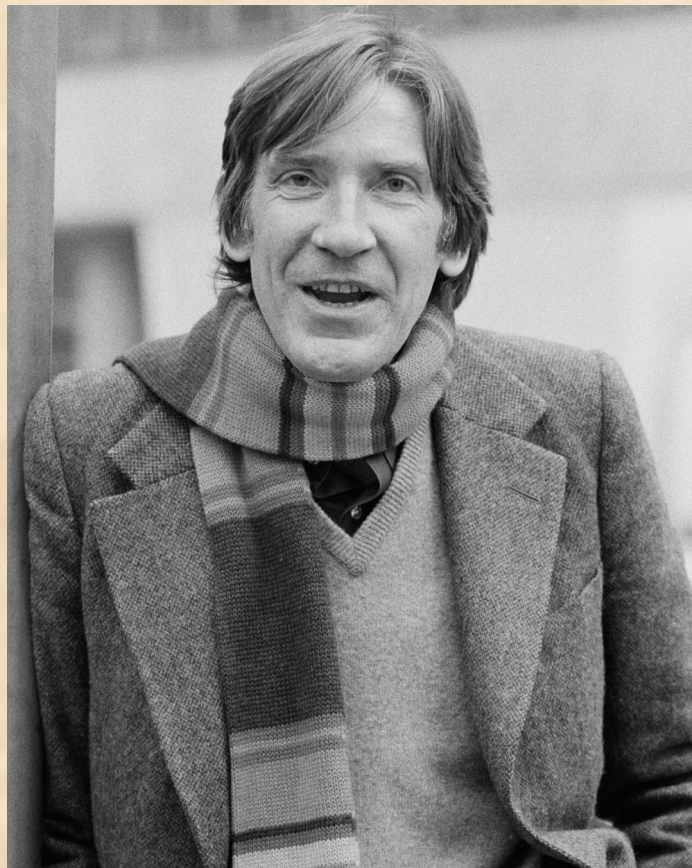
*Tron*, *Black Death* (opposite Shaun Bean and Eddie Redmayne. If you have not seen it, find it and watch it), Terry Pratchett's *Hogfather*, *Sweeney Todd* (a non musical version with Ray Winstone and Essie Davis), *Cyber Wars*, *Doctor Jeckyl and Mister Hyde*, *What's New Scooby Doo?*, *Men In Black* (animated series), *The Secret Adventures of Jules Verne*, *Buzz Lightyear Star Commander*, *Batman Beyond*, *The Outer Limits* (twice), *Beastmaster 3*, *Gargoyles*, *Lois and Clark*, *Tales From The Crypt*, *The Lost World* (and it's sequel), *Twin Peaks*, *A Christmas Carol* (it has ghosts, so, genre?), *Frankenstein* (as the Monster in a 1984 TV movie), *Time After Time* (as Jack The Ripper, no less), *The Man With Two Brains*, *The Omen* (with

Patrick Troughton), *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and a few others I won't bother to mention. This paragraph alone makes for quite an impressive CV, and yet it only represents his work in one genre, and not even *all* of his work in said genre.

Hmm... restricting his career to *one* genre doesn't seem to have helped us answer the question at all. As you can see, David Warner appeared in an awful lot of productions. He also appeared in a lot of awful productions. That is not intended as a slight. He was, after all, a dedicated, professional actor, and dedicated professionals work as

much as they can, be they in the arts or the trades. In the words of Sir Christopher Lee: 'Every Actor has to make terrible films from time to time, but the trick is to never be terrible in them.'

And David Warner never was. In fact, he often brought a touch of class to some of the otherwise worst films I have ever seen.





One of his appearances that I left out in the above paragraph was *Quest for the Delta Knights*, a 1993 low budget sword and sorcery mess of a film, so bad it was parodied by *Mystery Science Theater 3000*. Its primary redeeming quality is David Warner, playing two roles, one, a calm, wise, soft spoken Obi Wan Kenobi style mentor, and the other a loud, over the top villain, both performed with equal authenticity, and no similarities in posture, expression, tone, or cadence.

And then there is Big Finish, where he appeared in sixteen audio stories. If you are a David Warner fan and a **Doctor Who** fan, give a listen to the *Doctor Unbound* series featuring David Warner as a non-canonical Doctor with Nicholas Courtney as the Brigadier. During the heyday of young Doctors played by Tennant and Smith, David Warner's performance made me pine for the older, wiser Doctors of the classic series. David Warner as Doctor Who, possibly the greatest casting that never happened at the BBC.



David Warner as an alternative Third Doctor in the Big Finish Audios *The Doctor Unbound* series

I have several times had the pleasure of speaking to Jason Haigh Ellery, the head of Big Finish. Once we had been talking about Shakespeare (as Big Finish was beginning to release Shakespeare Plays as audio dramas, including David Warner as King Lear). Noting my interests in the Bard of Avon and Mr Warner, Jason mentioned that in the 1960's, David Warner was THE Hamlet on the West End of London. Patrick Stewart eulogized David Warner by saying he was, 'Dazzled by David's Hamlet.' So renowned was David Warner's performance that well into the 21st Century, actors playing Hamlet for the first time would seek him out for advice, including established film and television stars like David Tennant and Benedict Cumberbatch.



"Alas poor Yorick." "David Warner in the RSC's *Hamlet* (1965)

So, was David Warner best known for his Hamlet? Perhaps, at least among those lucky few who got to see him play Hamlet. Then again, perhaps not, as his Hamlet does not count toward the nine different times he was nominated for an acting award.

What is my personal favorite David Warner performance? Well, thank you for asking. I mentioned earlier that Video Game Voice Acting counts. A sentiment that no doubt will raise a few eyebrows, even though IMDb gives credit for such endeavors, although they do not credit audio plays for some reason.

One of my first, and most favorite video games, was *Baldur's Gate: Shadows of Amn*, the second installment in the renowned *Baldur's Gate* trilogy, a game from 2000 that still rates on many lists as one of the best video games of all time. It was a time of 16 bit graphics and isometric displays, when disk

space did not allow for every line of dialogue to be voiced. An eight-line speech might only have the first three lines voiced, with the rest displayed as text.

David Warner voiced the antagonist, Jonaeth Irenicus. He was a wonderful character, a mad wizard intent on chaos and revenge, but in his own mind, the hero of his own story, a visionary trying to better his people, even if some of them suffered and died because they lacked the courage to do what he *knew* must be done. In his mind he was wronged by his own people, and out for justice, not revenge. It's a difficult task to convincingly pull off such a character without lapsing into melodrama, especially with so few lines of dialog, but even a few lines was more than David Warner needed. He could always do so much with a subtle dramatic pause or a barely noticeable change of tone, conveying anger, grief, loss, and regret in a single line of dialog.



**Video Nasty: Jonaeth Irenicus, voiced and given life by David Warner**

That's my opinion, and I've already mentioned Patrick Stewart's praise for David's Hamlet. What do his peers think of him?

The RSC also remembered David's Hamlet. Company artistic director emeritus Gregory Doran said that David played Hamlet as a 'tortured student in his long, orange scarf. David seemed the epitome of 60's youth, and caught the radical spirit of a turbulent age. He was a generous spirit, a kind man, and a huge talent.'

Mark Gatiss added: 'I grew up in awe of David Warner as a stalwart of so many of my favourite

movies. To work extensively with him and to call him my friend was a gift beyond words.'

I won't delve too deeply into David Warner's early life, as I don't think this humble man would want us to. In a BBC interview (available on Youtube), David states that his upbringing was 'messy,' academically and athletically he was 'no good,' his family 'dysfunctional.' As a schoolboy, David had a teacher who encouraged his love of drama and cast him in a school play, where acting gave David a sense of identity. David states that he went into acting as a means of escape, that as a young man he had a choice between joining an amateur dramatic society, or standing on the street corner causing trouble. He could become an actor or a juvenile delinquent. While one teacher started young David on his acting career, another told him that he would never be accepted by RADA.

**Spoiler:** He was.

David Warner graduated from RADA in 1961 and quickly rose to prominence. He made his professional stage debut at the Royal Court Theatre in January, 1962, playing Snout, a minor role in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. He had a mere seven lines in the play, but that was enough to get him noticed by a member of the Royal Shakespeare Company, who invited him to audition. The audition must have gone well, he would soon be playing leading roles.

He joined the Royal Shakespeare Company in Stratford-upon-Avon only two years after his graduation from RADA, in April 1963. For his first appearances with the RSC he played Trinculo in *The Tempest* and Cinna the Poet in *Julius Caesar*, and in July was cast as the title character in the John Barton adaptation of *Henry VI, Parts I, II and III*. At the West End's Aldwych Theatre in January 1964, he again played Henry VI in the complete *The Wars of the Roses* history cycle. Returning to Stratford in April, he performed the title role in *Richard II*, Mouldy in *Henry IV, Part 1* and again played *Henry VI*. At the Aldwych in October 1964, he was cast as Valentine Brose in the play *Eh?* by Henry Livings, a role he reprised in the 1968 film adaptation *Work Is a Four-Letter Word*.

He first played the title role in *Hamlet* for the RSC in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1965.

Turning to Cinema, In 1963, he made his film debut as the villainous Blifil in *Tom Jones* (his first film speaking part), and in 1965, reprised his role as Henry VI in the BBC television version of the Royal Shakespeare Company's *The Wars of the Roses* cycle. Another early television role came when he starred alongside Bob Dylan in the 1963 play *Madhouse on Castle Street*. A major step in his career was the

leading role in *Morgan: A Suitable Case for Treatment* (1966) opposite Vanessa Redgrave, which established his reputation for playing slightly off-the-wall characters. He also appeared as Konstantin Treplev in Sidney Lumet's 1968 adaptation of Anton Chekhov's *The Sea Gull* and starred alongside Jason Robards and Stella Stevens as Reverend Joshua Duncan Sloane in Sam Peckinpah's *The Ballad of Cable Hogue*.



Playing the title role in *Morgan: A Suitable Case for Treatment*, opposite Vanessa Redgrave

While most of David Warner's stage roles were Shakespearean heroes, he was often cast as the villain in television and film, as in *The Thirty Nine Steps* (1978), *Time After Time* (1979), *Time Bandits* (1981), *Tron* (1982), *Hanna's War* (1988), and television series such as *Batman: The Animated Series*, playing Ra's al Ghul. He also played the anti-mutant scientist Herbert Landon in *Spider-Man: The Animated Series*, as well as rogue agent Alpha from *Men in Black, the Animated Series*, the Archmage in Disney's *Gargoyles*, and The Lobe in *Freakazoid!* He also played Henry Niles in *Straw Dogs* (1971).

To understand why David Warner was so frequently cast as a screen villain, you need look no further than *Titanic* (1997). David plays Spicer Lovejoy, an ex Pinkerton agent and right hand man to the film's primary antagonist, Cal Hockley.



Lovejoy—the Manservant who Gets Things Done

His performance is exemplary, his posture, cadence, and facial expressions tell you in no uncertain terms of his motives, and leave you in no doubt that he will let nothing stand in the way of doing his job,

however unpleasant that job may be. David's performance makes Lovejoy by far the more credible threat to the main characters, even though in the script he is only the valet to the primary antagonist.

By contrast, David played Bob Cratchit in the 1984 telefilm *A Christmas Carol* opposite George C. Scott as Scrooge. If you were to stand David's kindly Cratchit next to David's villainous Lovejoy, the casual observer might not realize both roles are played by the same actor. Everything about the two performances is different. Such is the range of a consummate professional.

In addition, David played German SS Obergruppenführer Reinhard Heydrich both in the film *Hitler's SS: Portrait in Evil*, and the television miniseries *Holocaust*.

As a supporting character, a hero who comes to a sticky end, he was cast as photographer David Jennings in *The Omen* in 1976 playing brilliantly opposite Gregory Peck.



Getting a head start on the search for Anti-Christ in *The Omen*

In 2001, Warner returned to the stage after a nearly three-decade hiatus to play Andrew Undershaft in a Broadway revival of George Bernard Shaw's *Major Barbara*. In May 2005, at the Chichester Festival Theatre, David Warner made a return to Shakespeare, playing the title role in Steven Pimlott's production of *King Lear*. Tim Walker, reviewing the performance in *The Sunday Telegraph*, wrote: "Warner is physically the least imposing king I have ever seen, but his slight, gaunt body serves also to accentuate the vulnerability the part requires. So, too, does the fact that he is older by decades than most of the other members of the youthful cast."

In October 2005, he appeared on stage at The Old Vic theatre in London in the one-night play *Night Sky* alongside Christopher Eccleston. In December 2006, he starred in *Terry Pratchett's Hogfather* on Sky1 as the head of the assassin's guild, Lord Downey. And in August 2007, as an RSC Honorary Artist, he returned to Stratford for the first time in over 40 years to play Sir John Falstaff in the Courtyard

Theatre in revivals of *Henry IV, Part 1* and *Henry IV, Part 2*, which were part of the RSC Histories Cycle. He is one of the few actors to play Hamlet (RSC), Lear (Chichester Festival Theatre), and Falstaff (RSC).

In February 2008, Warner was heard as the popular fictional character Hugo Rune in a new 13-part audio adaptation of Robert Rankin's *The Brightonomicon* released by Hokus Bloke Productions and BBC Audiobooks. He starred alongside some high-profile names including cult science fiction actress and Superman star Sarah Douglas, Rupert Degas, *The Lord of the Rings* actor Andy Serkis, *Harry Potter* villain Jason Isaacs, Mark Wing-Davey and Martin Jarvis.



David Warner as Professor Grisenko in the Doctor Who story Cold War

In October 2008, Warner played the role of Lord Mountbatten in the BBC Four television film *In Love with Barbara*, a biopic about the life of romantic novelist Barbara Cartland. He played Povel Wallander, the father of Kurt Wallander, in BBC One's *Wallander* opposite Sir Ken Brannagh.

Now, despite that long list of accomplishments, the above can only be considered a brief overview of David Warner's decades long career. So, let us revisit our two questions. What was David Warner best known for? No one role leaps to the forefront, rather, every role must be considered in his long and varied career. Therefore, I humbly submit that what David Warner was best known for, was being David Warner, a talented, consummate professional actor who could always be depended on to give a first class performance, whether he was playing an uncredited role in 1962's *We Joined The Navy*, or the title character in a Shakespeare tragedy.

In 1967 he was nominated for a BAFTA for his performance as Morgan, in *Morgan: A Suitable Case for Treatment*.

In 1969 he was nominated for a German Film Award

for Best Performance by an Actor in a Leading Role in Michael Kohlhaas - *Der Rebell*

In 1978 he was nominated for an Emmy for his performance as Rheinhardt Heydrich in *Holocaust*.

In 1980 he was nominated for a Saturn award for his performance in *Time After Time*.

In 1981, Warner received an Emmy Award for Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Miniseries or Special for *Masada* as Pomponius Falco.

In 1998 he was nominated for Outstanding Individual Achievement for Voice Acting by a Male Performer in an Animated Television Production *Toonsylvania*

Also in 1998 he was nominated for a Screen Actor's Guild Award for *Titanic*.

In 2000 he was nominated for Outstanding Individual Achievement for Voice Acting by a Male Performer in an Animated Television Production for his performance in *The New Batman Adventures*.

In 2019 he was nominated for Best Ensemble - International Competition for *Mary Poppins Returns*.

And, despite that long list of accomplishments, David Warner remained humble. I asked Jason Haigh Ellery why Big Finish had never published an audio interview with David Warner, as they had for so many of their other veteran actors, and he told me they had tried repeatedly, but David's response was always, 'I am not important enough for that.'

It is one of my life's regrets that I never met David Warner, as I would have loved a chance to change his mind on that count.

And that leads us directly to the answer for our other question: How else would you refer to David Warner's life and career, other than to simply refer to him as an actor? There are no end of superlative, hyperbolic adjective that could easily and justifiably be added to the simple noun, 'Actor,' but I believe David Warner would wish to be remembered, at least professionally, simply as:


***David Warner, Actor.***



# —SO WHAT WENT WRONG?

## An Overview of the Chris Chibnall Era

By  
Annie Worrall



It's ironic, but it took me to her regeneration before I had any understanding of the concept behind the thirteenth Doctor. Up until then Jodie Whittaker's ditzzy portrayal had simply irritated me. It wasn't that her Doctor didn't do anything, but what she did tended to be reactive and, often, morally inconsistent (blasting Tzim-Sha with a shotgun deemed worse than imprisoning it alone in a stasis chamber for eons to reflect on its murder of Grace. *Really Doc?*).

Then, as she embraced her upcoming change in *The Power of the Doctor*, it occurred to me (duh!) that the intention all along had been to portray a 'newly hatched' Doctor, dealing with the uncertainty engendered by Twelve's rejection of the role as it stood ("*Doctor, I let you go*") and having to rediscover what she wanted it to embody – which in her case was wonder and exploration.

If that was the case, then the *Timeless Child* plot was obviously intended to underline the notion - a Doctor at the beginning of their journey- but the point became lost in the speculation that raged around this canon challenge.

To my mind, the decision to force Thirteen to remember a 'prior mind wipe' existence was always going to be problematic. When Jo Martin's identity was revealed, she changed instantly from ditsy care worker to an ass kicking Doctor completely secure in their authority – carrying on the legacy of most of the previous male incumbents. This was the female Doctor many of us viewers had wanted to see. But Jo's Doctor was building on thousands of years of acceptance of the role she had been brain washed

into, whereas Jodie's was questioning everything that it had stood for.

We viewers were being forced to do the same and not always liking it.

In many ways, Chris Chibnall was recreating a First Doctor vibe here – a less forthcoming Time Lord, concealing what she learned about her origins from her companions, her curiosity leading them into danger: more warm than Hartnell towards them, but keeping a similar emotional distance. This makes sense when you recall that Twelve's hubris had lost him all his companions in tragic circumstances and explains her unwillingness to open up to Graham about his cancer fears. At the same time, like the First, she relied heavily on their independent agency to help her achieve, rather than taking on the central kick-ass role of Pertwee et al – which is why Dan's decision to abandon 'The Fam' in *The Power of the Doctor* was shocking and seemed almost a betrayal. Thirteen was more advisory matriarch than a daring-do leader which saddled her with pages of exposition in episode after episode, and an over- reliance on her sonic screwdriver.

The dissonance between what we'd expected and what we got intensified the criticism levelled at Jodie's performance. It didn't help either that she was costumed as a child from a fairy tale, while Jo Martin was given a grown up, executive suit.

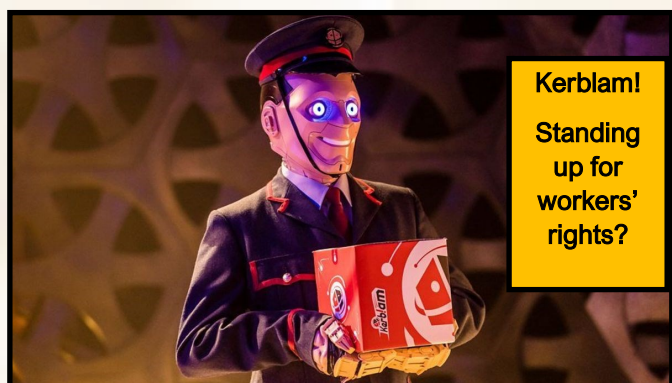
And, apropos of nothing, I didn't like the interior of her Tardis.



No, it's not the Tooth Fairy—it's good ol' Tim Shaw

Of course the ripples of disquiet about the presentation of the new Doctor soon spilled into complaints about the standard of the story telling. But, to be honest, I don't think the balance of well-realised and not so well- realised episodes in Chibnall's era was much different to any other season of *Doctor Who*. Every era has had a few 'dire' ones and *The Battle of Ranskoor av Kolos* or *The Tsuranga Conundrum* are no worse than, say, *The Creature from the Pit*, or *Sleep No More* in my opinion. I enjoyed almost all of the episodes to some extent; they looked very good and, bonus, I didn't find myself screaming at the screen, as I did during the Tennant era because I was so fed up with the 'lonely God' concept, or switching off as I did in Eleven's reign because it required more attention than I thought was reasonable to work out what was going on. But while it was a relief to enjoy adventures that weren't as Moffat-era intense, convoluted, and heavy on lectures about how we humans should behave, I have to admit they were light on pithy dialogue.

There were other aspects that riled me beyond those I've already mentioned. The dearth of tales in which the different plot strands interwove to create a depth of thematic meaning, is one. Too often, scenarios were introduced, not because they reflected the main idea, but to give companions something to do, like the pregnant man scenes in *The Tsuranga Conundrum*. There were also few episodes about modern world problems, and those that did raise them failed to do so in any meaningful way. For instance in *Kerblam!*, the System responsible for murdering one of its loyal employees was left running the company because, apparently, getting it to agree to paid holidays for the workers was improvement enough.



Kerblam! Standing up for workers' rights?

The twist in *Praxeus*, that the real problem was plastic pollution not aliens, got solved in a matter of minutes by the Doc, thereby implying that it wasn't really that big an issue. *It takes you away* didn't even recognise the abusive relationship between the blind girl and her dad, blithely returning her to his care in what we're supposed to believe was a happy ending.

Moving on, the introduction of Historical episodes was laudable but worked better when exploring past history (*The Witchfinders*) than incidents within living memory. *Rosa* exemplifies the problem, which, despite its best intentions, leaves us with the impression that the fictional Doctor's efforts to thwart the racist mass murderer, Krasko, are as important and relevant as Rosa Parks' real life iconic defiance – indeed that it was only because of (white) Thirteen's intervention that the defiance happened at all!



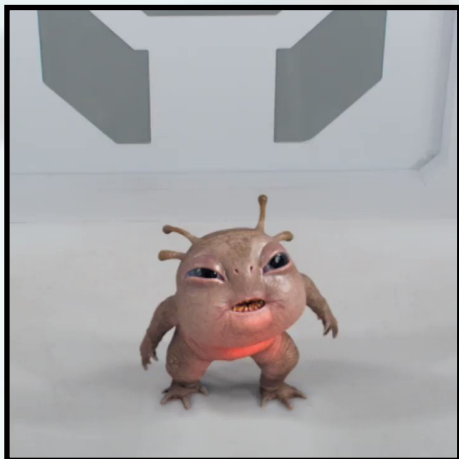
The Doctor helps Rosa Parks in her act of defiance of 1950s racism —but does Rosa actually need her help?

But for me, the most annoying aspect of this era has been the unrealised promise of some of its plot lines: the build- up great, if sometimes controversial, canon busting, and confusing, but too often abandoned unresolved. I won't list them all but they range from 'Whatever happened to Barton?' to "Really? All that speculation and we're left with a fob watch?"

Well, that's enough of the negatives (nearly).

Arguably, **Dr Who** stands or falls by its monsters and there were a plethora both new and old in this era.

Okay, it's a bit of a thumbs down for most of the new. The Stenza (Rosa and Battle of Ranskoor etc.) looked good but had no original motivation, while the Pting (Tsuranga nonsense) was obviously designed as a kid's collectable. The Thijarians in *Demons of the Punjab* gave us a genuinely surprising twist when they were revealed as witnesses to the conflict not assassins, but were too similar to the Testimony (*Witchfinders*) and Kasaavin (*Spyfall*) never appeared in person (sic) and, like the Stenza, were simply motivated by a determination to conquer Earth- something so



A mixed bunch of monsters:  
 The Pting (left)  
 The Thijarians (centre)  
 and, well... The Dregs (bottom)



familiar to *Who* fans that it's become 'ho hum'. At least the talking frog or Solitract (*They Take You Away*) showed imagination, although it did prove to be more victim than monster. The Queen of the Skithra attacked Nikolai Tesla (*Nikoai Tesla's Night of Terror*), in fine, fang gnashing fury, a little undermined by the fact that Scorpions are toothless, the reveal that The Dregs (*Orphan 55*) were mutated and abandoned humans, was signalled in their name and the Immortals in *Can You Hear Me?* could have been imported from Star Trek.

Things started looking up in the final series, with some creative and expertly realised, albeit frequently underused, baddies. Take the wonderful Grand Serpent (*Once upon a time* and the *Flux* episodes) set up to be a major villain and then... Same with Time's Ravengers, Storm and Azure: fantastic costumes and make up, great performances... gone in a flash. But the Judoon were used to hilarious effect and the reimagining of the Sontarans was terrific (I shall long treasure the sight of Commander Skaak astride his horse) making them once again, rather terrifying; as did the design and treatment of the Cybermen, the

hybrid Ashad bringing a palpable menace to the species- though it was a pity they still couldn't shoot straight... The appearance of the Weeping Angels was extremely creepy but not properly resolved. But the Dalek episodes were something of a highlight, particularly the 'bottle' special *Eve of the Daleks*: great fun and capturing their absurdity without minimising their threat.



The old 'uns are the best 'uns:  
 Judoon  
 Daleks  
 Ashad the half-Cyberman  
 and Sontaran Commander Skaak



Which brings us to the Master – the most iconic ‘monster’ of them all, who was given a brilliant reveal in *Spy Fall*. Sacha Dhawan’s unhinged performance outdid John Simms’ and peaked unforgettably (if improbably) in *The Power of the Dalek* with his dance to Boney M’s ‘Ra Ra Rasputin’. It could be argued he was a bit over the top, but the motivation he was given, of wanting to become the Doctor, and thereby unalterably corrupt their legacy, was original, and made psychological sense given the conflict Missy had created in his head.

lockdown hadn’t curtailed the development and proper conclusion of some of the plot threads. I guess we’ll never know what might have been, but I suspect that too much was attempted in too little time.



Sacha Dhawan as The Master, giving a wonderfully batsh\*t performance



The Fam(ily) Dog: Kalvanista

Finally the Fam! Graham, Dan with his wok, very successful. Ryan, not so much. Yaz didn’t come into her own until the last episode but then smashed it. My favourite was Professor Eustacius Jericho, closely followed by Kalvanista– though I guess neither were true companions. And the Doctor definitely should have been allowed to kiss Yaz goodbye if the thread wanted to avoid the accusation of ‘gay baiting’.



The Thirteenth Doctor and the Fugitive Doctor (played by Jo Martin)



The Thirteenth Doctor as her ‘Fam’, going the full James Bond in *Spyfall*

The mark of an era however, must ultimately rest with the viewers’ willingness to revisit the episodes and I am surprised to find, here at the end of things, that there’s quite a number I’d willingly watch again.



Overall, I applaud Chris Chibnall for trying something brave and different. The production values during his run at the helm were consistently high, perhaps more so than the writing and some of the performances. And enjoyable though the journey was, it feels like the opportunities afforded by featuring the first female Doctor were wasted, though it might have been different if the Covid



And so it ends... but the moment has been prepared for...





## Always Reliable:

### Steven Taylor and Peter Purves A brief appraisal of two mid-1960s Doctor Who icons

By Alex Pinfold



The final instalment of *The Chase* and the opening episode of the following story, *The Time Meddler*, introduced a character who is arguably, according to interpretation, the longest serving Tardis crew member in the show's history, apart from the Doctor...

The first thing that strikes you, looking back at archive audio and video recordings of these episodes and those that follow up until *The Savages* in the following season, is that Steven Taylor as a character and Peter Purves the actor are both confident and easy to watch right from the start. They draw you into the adventures, but not in a melodramatic way. Rather, both form instant friendships not only with other characters (Steven) and other cast members (Peter, see the accompanying interview), but also in both cases with the viewers. The character and the actor who brought him to life have enjoyed long and prosperous relationships with fandom until the present day, especially since the era of home media and a greater number of fan activities such as conventions and a growing fan-led, but highly professional, industry producing spin-off audio & video productions.

In practical terms, Peter Purves was cast as a direct replacement for the departing William Russell, but Steven Taylor was a different type of character in a number of ways with a personal storyline that developed in different directions. Whereas Ian Chesterton was, like Russell's previous leading roles as *Sir Lancelot* or as Hephaestion in Rudolf Cartier and Terence Rattigan's *Alexander the Great* epic *Adventure Story*, a traditional television hero of the era, Steven is a qualified space pilot but subverts expectations by breaking the Dan Dare mould, taking these travels with the Doctor in his stride and in an unassuming manner lacking the usual ostentation associated with Buck Rogers or Flash Gordon. In an era when most television adventure took the swash-buckling form, whatever the setting or the hero's attire, Steven does not seek confrontation. He remains pragmatic and humorous, always absolutely reliable, and is a strong team player.



Astronaut Steven Taylor — pragmatic and humorous

We might ask at this point whether we can observe any of Peter Purves' own personality in that of his creation? This is often the way with drama that lacked the rehearsal time necessary for more complex method acting, but in this instance, we have the rare opportunity to compare Peter, in and out of character, in two BBC shows that shared a close relationship; **Doctor Who** and **Blue Peter**. Here, we can see Peter channelling a genuine sense of wonder into Steven's reactions, exploring new destinations because he is sincerely interested in learning where he is, that would bring to life many Blue Peter reports, engaging with his young audience in the same memorable manner. Even in Steven's first journey, back in time to 1066, when he is dubious of their destination, scepticism should not be confused with ambivalence. This depth of feeling is equally well conveyed in Peter's audio novels, in which he reads the novelisations of Steven's adventures.

This discussion will now look briefly at some other themes associated with the character, beginning with solitude as an aspect of Steven's life that is revisited over and over again. We asked Peter about this in the interview that accompanies this appraisal, but will also mention it here and in each of the subsequent themes. Steven is alone when we meet him in *The Chase*, and has been a prisoner of the Mechanoids

for some time. However, despite being part of a flight of space ships, Steven makes no mention of his crashed vehicle having contained any other crew besides himself when it crashed. So, we can conclude that Steven's work as a pilot might have involved long hours alone too. Ian and Barbara are brief acquaintances, but so too is Vicki, even if you take spin-off media into account. In the stories that follow, Steven befriends and then loses Katarina, Brett, Sara, and Anne Chaplet in rapid succession. Even though we do not see Anne die, his assumption that she is killed in that story's titular massacre makes her loss arguably the most traumatic. In his final story *The Savages*, Steven loses both Dodo and the Doctor, but arguably loses himself too in terms of the freedom and agency offered by travelling through space and time in the Tardis.

The Doctor's justification for this act of leaving Steven behind on this unnamed planet is that he will make a good leader for its people. But what do we actually *know* about Steven's leadership potential? Returning to our first meeting with the character, and those early exchanges in his cell, it can again be noted that he makes no mention of any other ships or crew members. Thus, no mention is made of responsibility for losing a command during the mission that stranded him. We might then ask whether we see leadership skills emerge in later stories, and the answer here is not really. Having struggled to assert himself in the martial environment of the Trojan wars, Steven clashes with Brett and Sara and finds himself more likely to argue with his fellow travellers, including the Doctor. So, from whom might he have learned the relevant skills from to prepare him for such an assignment? There is the Doctor, of course, but let us think about the bigger picture and the kind of adventures in which Steven finds himself embroiled.

the Doctor may feel that Steven has gained enough experience of politics generally to be equal to the task.



Steven engages in political intrigue in *The Massacre*

What can we learn from the episodes (as far as they survive) about Steven's romantic relationships while travelling in the Tardis? With Vicki, Steven enjoys more of an uncle/niece dynamic, playful but respectful and influenced by their age difference, while his connection with Dodo more familial, protective rather than affectionate, raising the question of whether he has a sister very much like her who is never mentioned but whose unseen presence influences his perception of Dodo and his attitude towards her. It is really Katarina, Sara and Anne who he bonds with in a sentimental if quixotic sense, and who knows how long his relationship with Sara lasts, off screen? The link between each of these liaisons is the abrupt manner of their parting from him, leading to the conclusion that there might be an element of sympathy in the Doctor's actions.

Having experienced the happy endings enjoyed by Susan and David, Ian and Barbara, and Vicki and Troilus, the Doctor will, despite his remonstrations in the sad aftermath of their Parisian escapades, have been acutely aware of Steven's feelings. The Doctor is neither callous nor ignorant and, in considering his decision to close one door while opening another for Steven in *The Savages*, we must recall the similar choice he made in the final episode of *The Dalek Invasion of Earth* and his reasons for doing so. This parallel, in turn, points to an interesting angle of continuity in the Doctor's personality, in a moment that is traditionally regarded by fans as being somewhat arbitrary.

The final theme we will consider with regard to Steven's personality is his quality of loyalty. This again references his military background, but we can also observe that his personal loyalty is not unthinking or unconditional. His loyalty to the Doctor is famously challenged by his feelings for Anne but his loyalty to Brett is transferred to Sara, thus demonstrating his flexibility and openness to reason.



"So what do you think it is then young man, mmm? A space helmet for a cow?"

He encounters political leaders in Paris and Troy, as well as the unnamed planet on which he is left behind, and he also becomes acquainted with Mavic Chen. While these might all be negative archetypes,



"You're here on *holiday*? Are you tryin' to be funny, son?"

Likewise, it is also interesting to note that Steven's allegiance to the Earth and its authorities was challenged by the betrayal of Mavic Chen, but was informed by his greater loyalty to the needs of the majority. This demonstration of fidelity to the human race as superior to that owed to political allegiance shows us a telling quality of idealism that is also noted by the Doctor and may have informed his reasoning that Steven will indeed be able to cultivate true loyalty to both Elders and Savages and bring peace and co-operation to that world

In conclusion, we can see that Steven Taylor is a character worthy of deeper consideration. His personal qualities and the circumstances of his life offer great potential for discussion and creativity, and we can only hope that we might see more of Peter's work on the show if further episodes can be rediscovered.

In the header of this essay, we also mentioned the longest serving member of the Tardis crew. Unlike most other travelling companions, we never see HiFi, Steven's panda mascot leave the Ship and we must assume that she is present each time we explore the Tardis' interiors, especially for example those scenes in Romana and Nyssa's bedrooms, although, as with Clara Oswald, we have to imagine her just out of shot...



Panda-ing to the fans—could Steven's mascot Hi-Fi be the longest serving companion in the Tardis?

## A REAL LULU!



You could say that Peter Purves has a history with elephants. Here in the impressive jungle set for *The Ark*, (1965) Peter, as Steven along with the Doctor (William Hartnell) and Dodo (Jackie Lane) meet an elephant specially provided for the first episode. Four years later in 1969, Peter, now one of the "dream team" of *Blue Peter* presenters, along with Valerie Singleton and John Noakes made the acquaintance of the loveable Lulu, a baby elephant from London Zoo, who literally stole the show. The only trouble was, Lulu loved the presenters so much that she didn't want to leave the studio when the team were trying to close the show! Cue one of the most famous and hilarious TV clips ever. Elephant poo was involved on both occasions...

# TRUE BLUE PETER

## PETER PURVES

Interviewed by NICK MAYS

**True Blue** *adj:* Marked by unswerving loyalty, genuine.  
*noun:* a person who is true-blue.

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In 1965, **Doctor Who** had been on air for two years when the last of the Doctor's original companions, Ian and Barbara left the TARDIS. From here on, the Doctor would acquire companions from various points in history or the future, a practice he (or she) continued throughout the show's long, long existence.

If any of the Doctor's companions could be said to be a "True Blue" then it would undoubtedly be astronaut Steven Taylor, who joined the TARDIS crew at the conclusion of the third Dalek story *The Chase* (1965). He was an intelligent, brave and, at times, cynical young man, but one who always remained loyal to the Doctor, through thick and thin. Steven's travels with the Doctor saw him encounter the Daleks (twice), pitched him into history in ancient Greece, 16<sup>th</sup> Century France, ancient Egypt, the Wild West in 1880 and Saxon England in 1066, as well as Liverpool 1966. Along the way he encountered the villainous Draivins, the Meddling Monk (a renegade from the Doctor's "own people"), the mysterious being known as the Toymaker before finally remaining on an un-named planet to unite its people, the Elders and "savages".

Steven was portrayed by **Peter Purves**, who appeared in an earlier episode of Steven's debut story *The Chase* as a completely different character, the somewhat naive and confused hillbilly Morton Dill. He impressed the Production team so much that he was quickly cast as Steven.

After he left **Doctor Who** in late 1966, Peter became the longest serving presenter on the children's magazine programmed *Blue Peter*, in its 60s and 70s heyday. From here Peter's career included presenting toles on *Blue Peter Special Assignment*, sports shows *We Are The Champions* *Stop Watch*, *We're Going Places* and *Kick Start*. He was the voice of the world's most famous dog show *Crufts* for no

less than forty-one years. He founded and co-edited the specialist dog magazine *Mad About Dogs*. He also produced, directed (and occasionally starred in) several pantomimes and founded a successful corporate training video company. He also kept his hand in as an actor appearing in *EastEnders* and *The Office*.

In recent years, Peter has reprised his role as Steven in several *Big Finish* audio adventures, as well as narrating **Doctor Who** audio books (sometimes voicing the Doctor too) and appearing in many special films and audio commentaries on **Doctor Who** DVDs and Blu-Rays, as well as appearing as a guest at **Doctor Who** conventions. Now approaching his 84<sup>th</sup> year, Peter is still busy and shows no signs of slowing down. I am proud to have met Peter on several occasions and to have worked with him on *Mad About Dogs* and in other canine-related endeavours. I have to confess to still feeling a bit star struck when we meet, because he, along with his fellow *Blue Peter* presenters John Noakes, Valerie Singleton and Leslie Judd were so much a part of my childhood, whilst my vague memories of him as Steven in **Doctor Who** have been clarified by watching his **Doctor Who** stories on DVD and recons where no episodes still exist.

In all respects, Peter Purves, like Steven, is and always will be, a True Blue.



**GALLIFREY THE LONG WAY ROUND:** How did you originally land the role of Morton Dill in *The Chase*? How did your casting as Steven follow on from this, and was Steven becoming a regular character a decision made quite late in the day?

**PETER PURVES:** I have answered this question so many times, but here we go again. I was interviewed for a part of one of the Menoptera in the *Web Planet*, by director Richard Martin. As luck would have it, my first leading TV role was in a Thames Armchair Theatre Play called *The Girl in the Picture*, and it had been shown the evening prior to my interview. Richard had seen it, and decided not to cast me in "an unworthy part" (his words). But he promised that he would look out for something more suitable in the future for me. True to his word, he cast me as Morton Dill several months later. This was a turning point. Unknown to me, Jackie Hill and William Russell had decided to leave the show, and Verity Lambert was looking for a replacement. I got on really well in the rehearsals with Bill and Maureen O'Brien and the director, and Maureen suggested to Bill that I might be a possible replacement. Bill liked the idea, and asked Verity to take a look at me in the recording, with a view to my taking over from Russ and Jackie. the rest is history.



"Are you folks funning' me?" Morton Dill meets the TARDIS crew at the top of the Empire State Building in *The Chase*

**GTLWR:** While making allowance for William Hartnell's ill health and his poor relationship with the producer, John Wiles, how would you describe your own working relationship with the leading member of the cast?

**PP:** Bill was a delight to work with. He rather took me under his wing and was forever passing on small acting tips so that working was a genuine pleasure. he became a good friend - we would socialise at least once a fortnight, when my wife and I would take Bill out for a curry or a Chinese meal, and he was often round at my flat in Cornwall Gardens for a drink or a chat. Our principal rehearsal room was an old

Territorial Army hall at the bottom of Wood Lane, close to Shepherd's Bush Green. It was literally 100 yards across the Green to an excellent Italian restaurant, Bertorellis, and Bill would treat me to lunch on a couple of time a week. I used to like my steaks well-done, but Bill taught me the pleasures of a 'blue' fillet. And he had excellent taste in red wine. So workdays were often very pleasant indeed. He was a generous actor - he had the leading role, but he liked it if you were able to shine in your own role, and he encouraged the few idiosyncrasies I gave to Steven. I think he was pleased that he had a companion with which the Doctor could argue.

Compare that with the non-relationship I had with producer John Wiles - the less I had to do with him, the better. It was a disappointment that the two most important people on the show prior to my arrival, Verity Lambert and Story Editor Dennis Spooner, were no longer "hands-on" with the production.

**GTLWR:** You worked with two wonderful co-stars in Maureen O'Brien and Jackie Lane. What qualities would you say each brought to their roles and the regular cast as a company?

**PP:** Maureen was well-established as this lovely gamine travelling companion, but for her, the part was less rewarding than mine. She was often the helpless girl, almost totally reliant on the doctor or me for her survival. However we established a good and happy working relationship during *The Time Meddler*, which continued until her untimely departure from the programme. I got on quite well, also, with Jackie Lane, particularly having fun on both *The Celestial Toymaker* and *The Gunfighters*. But it was a time of flux - I was shortly and unceremoniously dropped by the incoming producer, Innes Lloyd, and Jackie had an equally abrupt departure - as did, more surprisingly, Bill.



Steven and Vicki (Maureen O'Brien) in Steven's first full adventure, *The Time Meddler*

**GTLWR:** Your departure as Steven was very abrupt, followed shortly afterwards by Jackie Lane as Dodo. How did you feel about this? Was the series facing problems at this time?

**PP:** [Incoming Producer] Innes Lloyd gave me no reason for dropping me from the show, other than to say it was now programme policy that the doctor's companions would only stay with the show for a year at a time, and my year was up. I got the news that I was dropped from the show as I received the script for my final serial, *The Savages*. It was short, and not so sweet! "I just want to let you know that we will not be renewing your contract," was all he said to me. To say I was shocked is an understatement. Bill too, was furious, and started muttering that if I went so would he go. Little did he know how pre-scient he was being. The intention to change the entire show must already have been in the pipeline, with new producer Innes Lloyd wielding the broom to sweep out the old. Bill may well have been losing his ability to remember his lines but it was still an unwelcome and unexpected shift. The audiences were holding up well, the leading actors being brought in to supplement the cast in each new story were of the highest calibre, so I would not say the show was in trouble. However, none of the cast was party to the backstage manipulations.



Steven and Dodo (Jackie Lane) ponder the clues for the next deadly game in *The Celestial Toymaker*

**GTLWR:** You've previously said that your favourite story was *The Massacre*, which was very much a Steven-led story. It sadly no longer exists in the BBC's film archives. However, recons and audios have introduced it to many new fans. You yourself provided narration and audio links on more than one version. What do you think it was about *The Massacre* which makes it such a favourite "historical"?

**PP:** The great thing about the historical dramas was that they were not really anything to do with Sci-Fi. We were in the historical location because of the Tardis, but that was all. Everything else was seriously good drama. No monsters or mad aliens. *The Massacre* was an incredibly awful period in French History, and a very little-known true story. It had many very strong moments in it for me as an actor to get my teeth into. To a large extent, my character led the serial, and Steven was a really strong element in the story. His horror at the end of what the doctor was planning (to leave the city prior to the disastrous Massacre) was one of the best sequences in my year on the show.



The plot thickens: Steven with the Protestant Huguenot plotters—including Anne Chaplet—in *The Massacre*

**GTLWR:** You've also said that Steven's tough-guy character was very watered down as the stories progressed after *The Chase*. Was this down to a production decision or merely a lack of guidance for the writers, do you think? You obviously worked hard to make Steven interesting with quite spare material in many cases – was this a conscious effort on your part?

**PP:** Very much lack of time in the communications. The next two stories after *The Chase* were already approved, and William Emms, the writer of *Galaxy 4* had written a great role for Jackie Hill, which he had, at the last minute, to adapt for Steven to have the leading role. It was OK but was not the Steven I had been asked to play. But that was the last time I had

a problem with Steven's character. Of course, it meant the John Wiles and I really got off on the wrong foot. In my mind, Wiles had removed Steven's character from the show, and I made my feelings known at the first read-through of the script.



Steven the hero: From *The Daleks' Masterplan* and *The Myth Makers*

**GTLWR:** From being a 'forgotten companion', Steven has enjoyed something of a revival in recent years, largely thanks to you starring in a number of *Big Finish* audios. Do you feel that Big Finish have given Steven a better deal as a character than his television stories allowed, do you have a favourite audio adventure, and can you describe for our readers how much you have enjoyed bringing the character back to life?

**PP:** Big Finish came into my life in 2003, I think, when I was asked to record *Mother Russia*. It was a joy to perform, and I also made the discovery that my impression of Bill Hartnell was not too bad. Since then, I have made more than 35 further appearances as both Narrator/Steven/Doctor. It would be invidious to pick out which stories I think were the best, but there are reasons why I liked some a little more than others. Simon Guerrier really kicked new life into Steven with a trilogy which took Steven on from the moment he left the Doctor. (in *The*

*Savages*). Steven became ruler of the planet, and the trilogy begins with *The War to End All Wars*. To be honest, if I could make another **Doctor Who** TV play it would be that story, and the subsequent two. I also had a deeply moving and clever trilogy to perform with the fabulous Tom Allen. The first of the series is *The Perpetual Bond*, followed by *The Cold Equations*, and ended with *The First Wave*. These are the plays I would recommend as a further look at Steven's life.

**GTLWR:** So, you left *Doctor Who* and was out of work for several months. As the anecdote goes, did binning the "lucky" Trilogic Game which you took home after filming (*The Celestial Toymaker*) work in getting you the *Blue Peter* gig?

**PP:** If one is superstitious, the answer is Yes. I had a bad time after I left *Doctor Who*, as did almost every actor from the early series. I was out of work for almost 18 months and was on the point of giving up the business entirely. I had been ferrying cars, and driving the sound crew on a movie, and even driving trucks, and working for a laundry. But getting a letter from my agent saying they could do nothing more for me was the last straw. I decided the marvellous original Trilogic Game that I had taken home from the set after the final recording, was bringing me bad luck, and I binned it. The following day (literally) I received an invitation to go for an interview for a children's programme called *Blue Peter*. In fact, a wonderful director called Giles Vavergal, whom I had met just once at my old repertory company in Barrow-in-Furness, had passed my name on to a friend who had been asked for suggestions for a replacement for Christopher Trace, the original BP presenter. Superstition or just good luck? I rather suspect the latter.

**GTLWR:** At the time, young whipper-snappers like me had very vague memories of you as Steven, but I remember that famous *Blue Peter* episode when you revealed that yes, you used to be in *Doctor Who* (with short hair!) and the clip of you arguing with the Doctor to save Katarina in *The Daleks' Masterplan*. *Blue Peter* had a very close association with *Doctor Who* over the years, with anniversary updates, 'Design a Monster' competition the return of the Daleks, Jon Pertwee's space age WHO 1 vehicle and so on. Were these fun segments for you, as you always seemed to front them?

**PP:** As I was involved in the original it would have been absurd for me not to take the lead in those presentations. And yes, they were enjoyable segments, which also gave me credibility on the programme.

**GTLWR:** You could say, through the *Blue Peter* clips, that you got to work with two more Doctors, Patrick Troughton and Jon Pertwee. How were they to work with?

Patrick was a really nice man, but I did not get to know him very well. I would see him around the TV Centre, but that was all, apart from his judging a BP competition for us. Jon was a different matter. I got to know him very well, both in the UK and on holiday several times in Ibiza in the 60's and 70's. We were members of a Gourmet dining Club in Battersea, and me, my wife, Jon and his wife, Ingeborg, used to eat out once a month over a couple of years. I can remember us also making short films in Ibiza for his son, Sean. Once it included Jon supposedly throwing me off the roof of his house to my death! Luckily the warm pool was below! I wonder if Sean kept the film?



**Peter, John Noakes, Val Singleton and Patrick Troughton (in character as "Doctor Who" judging entries for the *Blue Peter* "Design a Monster" competition, aided by Patch (the son of Petra) and a Dalek!**

**GTLWR:** You were the longest serving *Blue Peter* presenter from 1967 to 1978. You then moved into presenting *Stopwatch* amongst other programmes. How did it feel after so long on *Blue Peter*?

**PP:** I needed a new challenge, and *Stopwatch* was it. I had always enjoyed all sports, although I was only average at most of them. Actually, I was quite useless at my favourite sport, football. It was a great show to do, though we were never allowed to use any football clips. Very odd. We did five series, one of which I co-presented with Nigel Starmer-Smith, and another one was with the truly great Daley Thomson. It was great to meet him again at the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Pageant. It also gave me one of my worst moments in work. I was awaiting news on another series of the show, when Hazel Lewthwaite, the Producer rang me to say she had some good news and some bad news, which would I like first? "The good news is we have got a new series.....the bad news is you are not doing it!"

**GTLWR:** You are (as I know very well) a great dog lover and have co-presented *Crufts* for many years. What dogs have you owned over the years? Have you ever been tempted to enter the dog show ring yourself with your own dogs?

**PP:** My folks inherited a dog when they bought a pub in Derbyshire in 1949. He was a large Spaniel, not a true Cocker, more like a Field Spaniel. His name was Rusty, and was my first, and for a long time, my only dog. He died when I was fifteen. Dogs don't work well if you can't spend time with them, so it did not suit my proposed acting career. But when I joined *Blue Peter* and was asked if I would take on Petra, who had been on the programme for five years or so, I thought it would be a good idea. Petra would feel more at home in the studio, and I would have a dog as my companion on some films. A perfect arrangement. Petra died in 1977, the year before I left *Blue Peter*.

When I met my second wife, Kate, she owned a Pekingese bitch called Georgie. We added two more, Billie and Freddy (all bitches.) We decided to "go large" when we left London in 1987, and kept two wonderful Newfoundlands - Mishka (a bitch) and Gulliver (a dog). Mishka died, aged only 5, and we bought another, Kent (Karazan Superman), the son of Crufts Reserve Best in Show in 1996. We also kept on replacing our favourite Pekingese - Jamie, Holly, Tilly, Bea, Lillie, Max and Vivien. We downsized our dogs again with Hattie, a Red and Woody a Brindle, both Standard Wire-Haired Dachshund.

In 2007 we bred a litter of seven with them. we kept two of the puppies, Dottie and Teddy. We also bought Bertie, a Miniature Wirehaired Dachshund. So that brings us up to date. We have never been without at least two Pekingese. Our current five dogs are Teddy (aged 14.8) Lillie (aged 11.9) Vivien (8) Bertie (5) and Max (3). Very evenly spaced in age! Three Pokes and two Dachshunds.



**One Man and his Dog: Peter Purves and Petra, stars of *Blue Peter***

I have never been tempted to enter the showing ring - only two of my dogs, Kent and Woody would have been good enough specimens, but Kent damaged his cruciate ligament and had a permanent limp, and Woody was neutered.



**GTLWR:** You co-owned Petra, one of the *Blue Peter* pets (the dream team of Petra, Patch and Jason, later John Noakes's famous Shep). She was somewhat difficult with most people but seemed to get on well with you. Any amusing anecdotes there?

**PP:** I spent a lot of time training Petra, and she became quite a good Obedience dog. She was very good on Distant Control, and her recall was always good. But she was an Alpha dog, even though she was a bitch! I used to walk her on Wandsworth Common, near my house in Battersea. A close friend who lived up the road had a very good quality Doberman bitch. If she was on the common when I arrived with Petra, the Doberman, would immediately turn for home, and leave. She knew her place!

**GTLWR:** And of course, you and John Noakes were a great partnership on and off *Blue Peter*. I'm sure you have a few anecdotes to tell... Time travel-wise there was the infamous reveal of the Time Capsule buried in the *Blue Peter* garden in 1971 for the year 2000...

**PP:** John was a close and lifelong friend. I still miss him, and often think of him. We had some marvellous times - let's face it, although we were working, our summer filming trips took us away for a month in some of the most exotic places in the world, at a time when world-wide travel was very rare. We visited the south sea islands, Tonga and Fiji, Borneo, Brunei, Thailand, Sri Lanka, The Cote D'Ivoire. Morocco, Spain, Italy, France, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Poland, Iceland, Norway, Denmark, The USA, Brazil, Hawaii, Mexico. You name it. I am absolutely sated with travel and have no bucket list left! Too many stories to tell, too many wonderful happy memories. Not to mention a few accidents - I nearly lost my foot when a railway track we were laying in Fiji's sugar plantation, fell across my left heel. Somehow Johnny was not accident



**Peter Purves and John Noakes being put through their paces in fitness training with England goalkeeper Peter Shilton in a 1974 feature for *Blue Peter***

prone, and I was. But neither of us were insured for any of the stunt work we did. And we nearly lost a cameraman with a serious accident whilst filming in Ethiopia, and again when another cameraman was dropped on a parachute on a loose line in Acapulco Bay and was almost knocked unconscious. And Noakes and I were capsized in heavy surf off the coast of West Africa with local fishermen... I could go on for hours.

**GTLWR:** You've also been a motivational speaker and producer of corporate training videos (I remember that from *The Office*) and you were even in an early episode of *EastEnders*. You also produce pantomimes. Are you still keeping busy nowadays? Do you ever fancy producing a *Doctor Who* pantomime maybe? The TARDIS lands on a planet circling Sirius the dog star and the inhabitants are dogs who need help getting rid of a plague of cats...?

**PP:** Interesting idea Nick, but no thanks. I directed over thirty mainstream pantomimes with some of the biggest names in the business, Canon and Ball, The Chuckle brothers, John Inman, Hale and Pace, Colin Baker, Dennis Waterman, Bonnie Langford, Paul Daniels, Ross Kemp.... it was very satisfying, but extremely hard work. I directed John Noakes and my wife, Kathryn Evans, in seven pantos, in which I also co-starred. That was even harder than anything else. I can honestly say I have been there, done that, got the T-shirt... and no more.



**Peter as reporter Martin Hunter interviewing a very sceptical Lou Beale (Anna Wing) and local GP Dr Legge (Leonard Fenton) about the growing number of incoming yuppies to places like Albert Square, in episode 280 of *EastEnders* (October 1987)**

As far as the Corporate productions were concerned, Yes I was CEO of Purves Wickes Video Projects for 13 years, but in *The Office*, the training video was created and directed by Ricky Gervais - it was made specially for the programme and intentionally cheesy. I don't think we made corporate videos at Purves Wickes quite as cheesy as that!

**GTLWR:** For many years you resisted having anything to do with *Doctor Who* fandom, but now seem happy to attend conventions and so on. Is this because the whole thing is much more professional now? (He says, plugging *Gallifrey*, *The Long Way Round* as a professional fanzine...)

**PP:** Much more professional, and it is one source of my diminishing income. I was not asked to attend fan events for years, and until Mark Ayres reintroduced me to the series in which appeared, that I began to show an interest. Then along came Big Finish, and people seemed keen to meet me. I have attended events in LA, Baltimore, Chicago, Long Island, Wichita, Prague and Kassel and many Comicons, Fantom Films and other smaller events. It is good to meet the fans, who are all incredibly respectful and pleasant, and I really enjoy chatting with them. I enjoy the panels when we have good interviewers, so what is not to like? Sadly, at the last London Comicon at Olympia, after avoiding the dreaded Covid throughout the pandemic, it finally got to me. Maureen O'Brien and I both had to withdraw from Utopia 2022 because we both got Covid at the same Comicon! The Fanzines have also given me good coverage over the last ten years, for which I am really grateful.

**GTLWR:** You didn't seem to enjoy the rather slapdash live event of Doctor Who's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary get-together in 2013. Have you been approached about a similar event for the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2023 and, crucially, would you do it?

**PP:** If asked, I would consider it, but as Frazer Hines (who played Jamie) said to me at the 50th. "I have never ever been an extra in my career, and I am very annoyed with what has happened at the Excel." Like him, I was disgusted at the way we were treated. Oh yes, and although we had a Green Room, we were not allowed to mingle with the then current Doctor and companion, who had a separate room. No respect at all. So the invitation would have to be considerably more appealing than the rubbish that was served up at the 50th. I am not holding my breath.

**GTLWR:** Do you still watch Doctor Who? And how did you feel about the Doctor regenerating into a woman, played by Jodie Whittaker? Would Bill Hartnell have had a view on this?

**PP:** I am not a regular viewer of *Doctor Who* - in fact I stopped watching during Jon Pertwee's era. I just hated all the UNIT stuff and the fact that it was all taking place in the UK. However, I always made sure I caught the odd programme to see the current cast etc. I thought the show had run its course in 1989. The Paul McGann film recreated an interest in the USA, and I was pleased with what I saw from

Christopher Eccleston, but I never got back to watching it on a regular basis.

I never had any issue with the doctor being a woman, but I thought it was unnecessary except the BBC has to carry on "ticking boxes", but I thought Jodie made a decent fist of the part. I make a point of watching the debut performance of each Doctor, just so I have some idea of how they perform. But it is entirely up to the producer as to the direction the programme takes. For me it is too technology inspired to the detriment of good stories. I also have a preference for the older type of story that has clever and interesting "cliff-hangers" for which one has to wait for the next episode to discover how it moves on. The mores of the time would probably have found Bill Hartnell not accepting the idea of a female Doctor. but until he was regenerated, there was only one possible Doctor. Anything else would have seemed absurd to him.

**GTLWR:** When we first meet him, Steven is a prisoner of the Mechanoids, all alone, apart from his treasured panda mascot Hi-Fi, and in later stories we see him face bereavement and loss in various traumatic situations (Katarina, Bret, Sara, and Anne) before he is abandoned on an alien world surrounded only by strangers. This dramatic theme of solitude is probably not intentional from the writers, but you seem to recognise and embrace it in your acting choices. Do you have any recollection of this being intentional or more instinctive?

**PP:** My performance was totally instinctive. I was never told or asked how to play the character. I just learned the script and played it as realistically as I could. There was one exception to that - *The Gunfighters*. The clothing for Steven was pure Roy Rogers, and the performance was me having fun, and playing it for as many laughs as I could. Nothing to do with Steven - Peter Purves having fun!



Sara Kingdom (Jean Marsh) together with Steven (Peter Purves and The Doctor (William Hartnell) in *The Daleks' Masterplan*

PP: The biggest pleasures have been recording with two wonderful old friends - Maureen O'Brien and Jean Marsh. My friendship with Maureen was curtailed when she was abruptly dropped from the show by John Wiles. That was a huge disappointment to me, because, not only had she been instrumental in my getting the role of Steven, but we had forged a really good, strong and believable relationship. We also had an off-screen friendship with she and her husband, Michael, and me and my wife, Gilly Fraser occasionally would have a meal together. So when we met again in about 2009 it was such a nice moment, and we enjoyed chatting when we were not recording. And Mo paid me the most wonderful compliment when she said that in the recording booth, it was as if Bill Hartnell was in there with us.

And at the same time, I must also say that the Big Finish team including the wonderful Lisa Bowerman, (Director) and David Richardson (Producer) have become great working colleagues and friends. The writers also have been brilliant, and I wish to thank them all, with apologies to any I inadvertently leave out: Simon Guerrier, Ian Potter, David Bartlett, Una McCormack, David K Barnes, Robert Khan, Tom Salinsky, Mat Coward, Jonathan Morris, Paul Morris, Ian Atkins, Andy Frankham-Allen and Justin Richards.

GTLWR: Peter Purves, Thank you.

PP: You're very welcome.



Peter and Maureen O'Brien reprise their roles of Steven Taylor and Vicki in the Big Finish audio *The Suffering*



Recreating the excitement for Big Finish— Peter with Jean Marsh

With Jean Marsh it was a little different, because she was only in the show for eight weeks, but we formed a great bond in that time, and *the Dalek Masterplan* recordings were always so pleasurable to perform. In the Big Finish studio we were able recreate the excitement that Sarah and Steven had in the original serial, and it was a joy to hear her voice again. Sadly, she was losing the ability to read the scripts - she seemed to develop a sort of dyslexia and I know that our wonderful editor, Toby Hryceck-Robinson at Moat Studios, did a brilliant job in making her totally real again.

Steven introduces Vicki to his Panda mascot "HiFi"



## PETER PURVES' DOCTOR WHO TV STORIES

The Chase (1965) Ep 3 *Flight Through Eternity* as Morton Dill and Ep 6 *The Planet of Decision* as Steven Taylor

The Time Meddler (1965) - All episodes as Steven Taylor and in subsequent stories

Galaxy 4 (1965)

The Myth Makers (1965)

The Daleks' Masterplan (1965/66)

The Massacre (1966)

The Ark (1966)

The Celestial Toymaker (1966)

The Gunfighters (1966)

The Savages (1966) - Steven's last story

# OUT OF THE VORTEX

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

### So Who's Who?

Well, you read it here first, dear readers! As we said last issue, David Tennant is back in a fan-pleaser fanfare as the Doctor in the upcoming **Doctor Who** 60th Anniversary specials, due to be broadcast in November this year. Except he's not the Tenth Doctor - he is, in fact, the *Fourteenth Doctor*!

This is all part of the master plan of Showrunner Russell T Davies - himself returning to his old role.. Tennant will be reunited with his old companion Donna Noble (another fan favourite), as well her grandfather Wilf Mott, played by the late Bernard Cribbins, in his last acting role before he passed away last year.

Of course, all **Who** fans will remember that Donna's memory of her time with the Doctor had to be suppressed to prevent her brain from exploding (or something) after she absorbed part of the Doctor's psyche and... well, I'm sure it will all be explained neatly to allow her to carry on accompanying the Doctor in his adventures.

The Fourteenth Doctor will face off against returning



Friends Reunited: The Fourteenth Doctor and Donna

nemesis the Celestial Toymaker (only seen on TV once in 1966, but a returning threat in comics, books and Big Finish audios). He will also face intergalactic villain Beep the Meep, another fan favourite from the pages of *Doctor Who Magazine's* comic strip, harking back to 1980!

Also appearing will be "temporary" companion Rose Noble, played by Yasmin Finney. As her name suggests, she is Donna's daughter and has been named after earlier companion Rose Tyler, who met Donna in the 2008 adventure *Turn Left*.



Box of Delights: Yasmin Finney as Rose Noble

The titles of the 3 Specials have been confirmed as: *The Star Beast*, *Wild Blue Yonder* and *The Giggle*.

In the final Special the Fourteenth Doctor will regenerate into the Fifteenth Doctor, to be played by Rwandan-Scottish Ncuti Gatwa, whose first story will be broadcast on Christmas Day 2023 (big cheer from the fans again), and then in the new season sometime in 2024.

As reported in **GTLWR** lsh #8, Gatwa said that he was “deeply honoured, beyond excited” to become the Fifteenth Doctor. He added: Unlike the Doctor, I may only have one heart but I am giving it all to this show.”

Gatwa is not the first actor of colour to portray the Doctor; Jo Martin played a previous unknown incarnation of the Time Lord as part of the “Timeless Children” storyline in Seasons 12 and 13, surprising both the 13th Doctor (Jodie Whittaker) and the audience.

Gatwa’s Doctor will be accompanied by new companion Ruby Sunday, played by former Coronation Street actor Millie Gibson.

Gibson commented: “Whilst still being in total disbelief, I am beyond honoured to be cast as the Doctor’s companion. It is a gift of a role, and a dream come true, and I will do everything to try and fill the boots the fellow companions have travelled in before me. And what better way to do that than being by the fabulous Ncuti Gatwa’s side, I just can’t wait to get started.”

Russell T Davies promised plenty of excitement in the upcoming specials and Ncuti Gatwa’s debut as the iconic Timelord, saying: “The path to Ncuti’s 15th Doctor is laden with mystery, horror, robots, puppets, danger and fun!”

If the publicity photos being sent out by the BBC PR team are anything to go by, the Doctor and Ruby are going to be visiting several different eras of Earth’s history and doing their best to blend in. In the same way that the Doctor becoming female in his/her Thirteenth incarnation presented its own challenges to the Doctor’s usual air of authority, it will be interesting to see how he fares in certain historical settings, when people of colour had little or no agency.



**LEFT:** Ruby and the Doctor rock the late 60s look, with mini dress, afro and added sideburns!

**BELOW:** They pose as a Regency Beau and his lady, alongside a dashing Darcy-like gent, played by Jonathan Groff

**LEFT TOP:** Ncuti Gatwa IS the Doctor!

**LEFT BELOW:** Ncuti Gatwa and Millie Gibson in a *Doctor Who* trailer (sorry!)



## Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?

The BBC and Disney Branded Television have come together to "transform **Doctor Who** into a global franchise for UK audiences and the rest of the world."

A spokesperson for the BBC said: "Under a shared creative vision, they will deliver this quintessentially British show to future generations on an unprecedented scale" with Disney+ as the exclusive home for new seasons of **Doctor Who** outside the UK and Ireland. The announcement "begins a new collaboration between BBC and Disney Branded Television."

Both partners have aligned under returning showrunner Russell T Davies' bold vision, who takes control of the TARDIS in 2023. New episodes will premiere on the BBC and Disney +. The show will be produced in Wales by Bad Wolf with BBC Studios Production.

Russell T Davies says: "I love this show, and this is the best of both worlds – with the vision and joy of the BBC and Disney+ together we can launch the TARDIS all around the planet, reaching a new generation of fans while keeping our traditional home firmly on the BBC in the UK."

There are certainly a number of exciting guest stars lined up for the new series. These include Hollywood star Jonathan Groff, who starred as the new Agent Smith in *The Matrix Resurrections*, as well as being renowned for his major voice acting roles in the *Frozen* films. Other big names include Ronak Patani who has appeared in *Andor*, *Call The Midwife*, and *The Suspect*, along with soap stars Anita Dobson and Michelle Greenidge. Gemma Redgrave also returns as Brigadier Kate Lethbridge-Stewart, the head honcho of UNIT.

Meanwhile, **Doctor Who's** first drag queen villain has been revealed. Jinx Monsoon, the winner of the 5th series of *Drag Race* was announced as a new (as yet unnamed) villain.



Life's a Drag...  
Jinx Monsoon comes to rain on the Doctor's parade...

## Pure Gold

Re-joining the series will be composer Murray Gold., who originally joined **Doctor Who** when Russell T Davies first revived the show in 2005, going on to compose the show for over 12 years. Gold has scored some of the most iconic moments in Doctor Who's history.

From revamping the theme tune, to creating the music for the Dalek and Cybermen to name just a few, Gold has been widely celebrated for his role in forging a new musical identity for the show.

RTD has stated publicly that he wants to expand the Whoniverse with more spin-off shows, as he did with *Torchwood* and *The Sarah Jane Adventures*. It looks like an exciting journey ahead for all **Doctor Who** fans!

## The Omens are Good!

After much speculation and PR teasers, an exact release date for **Good Omens** season 2 has been announced - and fans don't have to wait long until they can watch it on Prime Video.

The new season of the hit fantasy series starring David Tennant as Demon Crowley and Michael Sheen as angel Aziraphale will officially land on the platform on **28th July 2023**.

Series creator Neil Gaiman has helmed the second season as he did with the first, which was based on a single novel, (also called *Good Omens*) which Gaiman co-authored with the late Sir Terry Pratchett.



## Better the devil you know? Sheen and Tennant return

A book sequel was considered by Gaiman and Pratchett, to be titled *The Neighbour of the Beast*, but it did not come to pass. It also turns out that season 2 won't be based on this initial concept - although a third season could be.

In October 2022, Gaiman said on Twitter that the idea "would be a hypothetical season 3" and that season 2 "would be how we would get there".





**Reviews from the worlds of Sci-Fi and Fantasy: Do you agree with our resident reviewer Alex's assessments? All Vote Now!**

### TV: Star Wars: Andor

The first season of *Star Wars: Andor* on Disney+ is a mixed bag, so we will assess a couple of the main issues and then look at the positives. The greatest flaw in the show is a title character who is the least interesting player in the narrative, who is portrayed by the member of the regular cast with the least screen presence. Diego Luna simply does not have the charisma or gravitas to hold viewers' attention in this kind of serial, and the showrunners' policy of keeping him apart from stronger actors only makes his scenes feel more superfluous.

When he shares the set for a couple of episodes with Andy Serkis, it only reinforces the point that Luna is a lightweight actor in a show with a format that demands more. The other problem with the show overall is the amount of plot that occurs off-screen, with at least a couple of the episodes filled with little more than characters telling each other about important events that viewers have missed because we were watching other characters do nothing in particular at the time. Shakespeare often used this method to give accounts of events that could not be performed on stage, but the art of making an audience engage with events they have actually missed was in making those accounts sound interesting.

On the plus side, however, the political and espionage elements in *Andor* work quite well, and a show that was shorter and more focused upon these storylines would have been a better watch. The visual world-building is to the high standard expected of the *Star Wars* franchise now that it is in Disney's safe hands, with some spectacular CGI backgrounds. Overall, this is not recommended unless you are a *Star Wars* or Disney+ completist and at twelve episodes is too long for story that adds up to so much less than the sum of its parts.



**Andor-nother Star Wars series or two...**

### TV: Star Wars: Obi-Wan Kenobi

*Obi-Wan Kenobi*, a sequel to the so-called *Star Wars Prequel Trilogy* and now available on Disney+, is an enjoyable and fun adventure serial that, while not perfect, does come more highly recommended than the films it is based upon. First of all, we will get the criticisms out of the way. At least three times in just six episodes, the writers paint themselves into corners and rely upon highly dubious *Deus Ex Machina* scenarios to save the day; much of the time, Ewan McGregor is reduced to reciting pseudo-heroic rhetoric, with the quality of some dialogue falling far below his acting abilities; and all of the characters with special powers, courtesy of The Force, become Avengers when any action is required, although on this point it is reasonable for the channel to aim both franchises at the same target audience.

However, the production values overall do conceal the superficiality of the writing, with a show that looks stylish and fits the modern Disney aesthetic well enough. And the scripts do have moments of excellence, with Ewan McGregor sharing powerful scenes with Indira Varma and Moses Ingram. The latter plays probably the most outstanding guest character, as Reva develops from a two-dimensional pantomime baddie in the opening episodes into a much deeper and more nuanced creation with actual motivation and shades of grey in her actions and personality. In general, the Dark Side is not as well represented as it could have been. Darth Vader is authentic to previous appearances but is underused, and The Inquisitors are generally a hopeless bunch of stooges.

Of special note is Fortress Inquisitorius, a citadel standing in the oceans of a water moon and a superb creation with real depth and character in its command centre, communications room, landing deck, underwater galleries, futuristic dungeons, and even a few corridors to run along. Also noteworthy is the discovery of another young talent in Vivien Lyra Blair (also seen recently in *Bird Box*) as Princess Leia, confident but not precocious in the role and an actor to look out for in the future.

Overall, this show created by Joby Harold might not be in the same league as Jon Favreau's outstanding *Mandalorian/Boba-Fett* series but is certainly worth a watch.

## She-Hulk: Attorney at Law

Jessica Gao's new Disney+ series may not be the kind of show that you wish to watch repeatedly but, after hitting its stride in episode four, it does prove to be an amusing and creative show. The humour is unconventional and eccentric, breaking down the fourth wall on numerous occasions, with a number of special guest stars joining in the fun across the nine episodes. There are the ubiquitous tie-ins with other Marvel brands, but *She-Hulk* is still its own show and Tatiana Maslany definitely deserves an opportunity to reprise the character.

There are a couple of trends in Phase Four that reoccur here, such as the metafictional aspect of blurring the lines between fiction and the real-world production of the MCU and its fandom, and the shift towards more relatable characters over the overtly confident 'superhero' stereotype. The latter approach is aided by Jennifer Walter's frequent asides into the camera lens, a case of the character interacting directly with the audience that should not work when used to this extent, but which does because of Maslany's engaging on-screen persona.

There are interconnected plot elements, but the sitcom structure means that a lack of narrative coherence is not the problem that it might be in shows that take themselves more seriously. Similarly, the special effects have drawn criticism elsewhere, but this is a show just having a good time and inviting the audience the party rather than trying to wow them in a visual, ostentatious way. This is another good addition to Phase Four of the MCU.



**She-Hulk: Don't get legal—you wouldn't like her when she gets legal!**

## TV: Ms Marvel

For a franchise with a global scope – in terms of both narrative and audience – it makes sense for the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) to tell stories, and share stories told by, a variety of international cultures. Following on from the Central and North African inspired Black Panther and Moon Knight, and the Oriental themed Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings, comes the outstanding mini-series Ms Marvel created for Disney+ by Bisha K. Ali. This might well be the best of the television series created for the subscription channel so far, with a wonderful depth and complexity that evolves alongside the coming-of-age character development for the titular heroine.

The culture portrayed in the show has an authentic Indian flavour, with its colourful and vibrant energy undercut by a tragic theme that revolves around Partition and its effects upon the characters and their story in the present and the past.

The temporal aspects are a great addition to a plot that develops at a nice, steady pace and finds a perfect

balance between being an action adventure and a high school teen drama, while remaining at heart a story primarily about family. This is one of several recent Marvel entries, Hawkeye being another example, that explore the idea that the latest generation of heroes and heroines will have grown up in the world created from Iron Man onwards. Unable to paint new storylines onto a blank canvas, these new films and shows put the young leads into a world with intriguing parallels to our own in having an Avengers fandom very similar to that in the 'real world' albeit with the Avengers as celebrities rather than as fictional characters. The endless potential for meta-fictional humour is both obvious and exploited in this show and in *She-Hulk: Attorney at Law* which is also reviewed in this issue.

It is possibly fair to say that, to get into the first couple of episodes, a viewer who already enjoys Indian culture or fan creativity will have an advantage while others might find the characters and humour a little inaccessible. However, perhaps more than any Marvel series since or even including *WandaVision*, this is one that rewards perseverance for those who stay with Kamala Khan throughout her engaging personal journey and many adventures.



**Kamala Khan IS Ms Marvel**

## FILM: Don't Worry Darling

Beneath the convincing façade of tense psychological surrealism lies a foundation of very old school dystopian science fiction. The drama is strong in a plotline that never runs out of ideas or momentum, meaning that this is a production that does not allow its horror-themed elements to become graphic or gratuitous. Quite simply, it never requires shocks for its impact.

Florence Pugh and Harry Styles are excellent, with Chris Pine and Gemma Chan lurking in the background as an ambiguous and sinister threat that becomes progressively more effective, never spoiled by over-exposure or unnecessary cape twirling. The setting might appear bland and simplistic but, as with many other elements of the film and its performances, every stylistic choice comes together as the truth behind the fantasy is revealed. The psychological and physical tortures are thematically powerful but very subtle in their



**Don't Worry Darling**



are thematically powerful but very subtle in their realisation, carried by the strength of the cast, notably Florence Pugh in this typical but also challenging role. Also notable is the mature manner in which the themes of empowerment and the subversion of traditional gender roles is collectively handled not only in the script but in the direction and acting choices too. Not every question is answered, with some points left to the viewers' discernment to imagine as the narrative closes, but this is clearly an intentional creative choice that harmonises with the overall production, enhancing rather than detracting from the viewing experience.

### TV: The Midwich Cuckoos

Part of the genius of John Wyndham's timeless science fiction novel *The Midwich Cuckoos* is its almost limitless potential for adaptation in diverse forms, so long as certain elements are retained. This is the case with the new Sky Original drama of the same title, a production that relocates the tale to the present day, placing it into our smartphone dominated world of greater travel and instant communication. A sense of community and some psychic coercion by the titular 'cuckoos' – the children born during an otherworldly phenomenon – can no longer explain why this group of characters would stay isolated for long, and so the ubiquitous clandestine government department, without which so much modern SF cannot seem to function, is introduced but crucially does not dominate proceedings.

Despite these changes and the new directions taken by this new interpretation, overall, the story feels absolutely true to the source material and many of the classic moments are still there, but they happen at different times and not necessarily for the same reasons. The general motivations, moral ambiguities, and the central themes of the work are nonetheless satisfyingly intact, with the presentation taking no sides and leaving the viewer to consider the varied viewpoints on offer, including their own. This play is first and foremost a thought provoking drama, a parable that examines the alleged justifications for racial intolerance, domestic violence and other forms of collective and individual conflict and explodes them.

A principal viewpoint through which these themes are examined is that of Dr Susannah Zellaby, portrayed superbly by Keeley Hawes, a pivotal character in most versions of the story who maintains a prominent yet largely passive role here, a key character trait in the context of appeasement within a divided society. Aisling Loftus also stands out as a character with a very different set of motivations to Zellaby and manages to convey Zoe's frustration and anxiety without ever descending into soap opera. The whole cast is well chosen and performs well, including some young actors who might progress within the profession based upon their showing here as the children. Highly



Dr Zellaby: Down wiv da kidz

recommended, and definitely a serial that, although it does require patience, both deserves and rewards the viewer's full attention.

### TV: The Capture

One definition of so-called 'pure science fiction' is that of the ordinary world that we, the observers of the narrative, find familiar and part of our 'comfort zone' to varied degrees, transformed in some way by a speculative advance in a field of established science. The more familiar and comfortable the version of our world, the more unsettling can be the invasive nature of the scientific threat, and there is also a relationship between the verisimilitude of this fictional alternate reality and our readiness to access the science fiction elements.

An excellent recent example of this is a show titled *The Capture*, available on BBC iPlayer and other online platforms. Starring Holliday Grainger and Ben Miles, this is superficially a standard police procedural drama that fits the format of six, one hour, episodes and in many ways conforms to the generic tropes of the genre. So much so that, should you look marketing for the series, your expectations would be led firmly in that direction.

The underlying premise of the first storyline revolves, however, around the ability of secret organisations to



#### Is this real life, or this fantasy?

use advanced computer infiltration technology to replace CCTV with staged recordings, and this fits in with the crime themed plot of these first half dozen instalments.

The second set of six episodes, a new storyline, then shifts the focus onto the previously clandestine Military Intelligence aspects of the show and also raises the science fiction possibilities of using live special effects and voice simulation to manipulate all forms of communication, taking over military operations and television broadcasts as just two examples. With the team we follow unable to believe their own phones or radios, the show asks the question of how our authorities might cope if thrown back decades to when these technologies did not exist, and we are in turn treated to one outstanding moment of high drama in which three of our leads are able to demonstrate their theatrical prowess in a wonderfully emotive scene in which their characters have to argue their points in a room with all technology literally taken off the table.

This second series really is a science fiction masterpiece although, as is the way with most modern television, you do need to have watched both seasons to know or understand the characters, settings, and issues presented. It definitely is a rewarding exercise though, with very good production values and performances to back up the deeper questions and ideas of these scripts. Very highly recommended.

## TV: The Sandman

*The Sandman*, created by Neil Gaiman from his own DC comic book series and now available on Netflix, is sadly a hit and miss affair but does have some good performances and excellent moments. The series is structured as two four-part stories and three anthology episodes, mostly based upon short stories. The opening storyline is too rushed, introducing and leaving behind too many settings and characters for a casual viewer to engage with them, visually stylish but short on memorable dialogue in scripts dominated by plot-driven statements and too much infodump. The excellent Victorian Gothic Steampunk vibes are matched by great performances by Charles Dance and Bill Paterson, but there are just too many sinister characters without enough sympathetic viewpoints.

Appropriately, for a show about mythical realms, a key member of the creative team seems to have been a Good Ideas Fairy, with the core idea of literally sending the main character to Hell remaining little more than an excuse for some neat but pointless special effects to fill up the episode. It is partly saved by a duel between Morpheus and Morningstar that becomes a battle of ideas and philosophy, a highly effective sequence.

Just as Charles Dance plays a typical role in the opening episode, likewise Jenna Coleman's Johanna Constantine is very much a character popped from the mould of her usual screen persona – so much so that this episode and her later appearance in the show could count as a *Time of the Doctor* spin-off about some of Clara's countless clones scattered through time.



Mr. Sandman, bring me a dream;  
Make him the cutest that I've ever seen

Episodes five and six are the best yet and are like a completely different show, and form three almost standalone plays; the first is a highly Pinter-esque play set mostly in an American diner and structured as a single sequence. It explores intriguing questions about human nature in a manner that makes you care about the characters portrayed such that you feel rather than just see the tragic outcome. Episode six is two half hour plays; the first is a two-hander between Morpheus and Death (a reaper who is anything but grim) and is both a simple and very moving piece that juxtaposes a stroll through London on a pleasant day with the tragedies that occur all around us every day even in such idyllic surroundings – as anyone who has taken a walk through the park on a sunny afternoon and listened to the sound of distant sirens will testify. This leads into a piece that is great fun, as we follow Morpheus' passage through time visiting the same public house once every hundred years. The end of each

scene leads into the next visit until finally catching up with the modern day. The costume, set and make-up designers must have had an amazing time recreating each period in such wonderful detail!

This is, however, an inconsistent show, not only in terms of tone and style (which is understandable considering the varied source material) but also quality. Episodes seven to ten rely heavily on gratuitous violence and graphic horror images to distract from their insubstantial superficiality when the show runs out of momentum and ideas, saved only by a memorable performance by Stephen Fry. Episodes nine and ten touch on a couple of interesting ideas, such as the 'reality' of people imagined in a dream state if dreams are themselves a form of reality, and a parody of science fiction conventions, but these are not really explored or exploited for the depth or humour they could have yielded.

The final episode is thankfully a return to good form, returning to the short story anthology format with a feline themed animation and a superb piece featuring Arthur Darvill and Derek Jacobi about a struggling author who seeks inspiration from a captive muse. This final episode is worth watching purely on its own merits, and therein lies the central issue with *The Sandman*. The over-arching storyline is underwhelming and simplistic, relying on pace and shocks to create the illusion of a fully developed idea when the reality is very much a case of style triumphing over substance. Except for the fourth episode, the asides from the main plot completely steal the show. They succeed where the main storyline fails, in being deep and meaningful and providing a narrative context for their more visceral moments, and in making you care about the characters you are spending time with. Tom Sturridge is good as the titular Sandman, and again shines best in scenes with Ferdinand Kingsley in episode six and Melissanthi Mahut in episode eleven. Seeing Jenna Coleman and Arthur Darvill in such excellent roles was a real bonus, but it does not save the show.

Fans of Neil Gaiman as a writer or the 'angels and demons' fantasy sub-genre will probably enjoy this on the terms and merits of those contexts, but as a casual viewer who is neither I can only recommend making time for episodes 4, 5, 6 and 11 on their own, as they are enjoyable as standalone dramas.

## TV: The Time Traveller's Wife

This year's Hartswood Films adaptation of *The Time Traveller's Wife*, from husband and wife team Steven Moffat and Sue Virtue, is both an obvious labour of love and representative of the new wave of deeper, sharper, wittier and more complex drama hitting our screens in the early 2020s. It is also a neat example of creativity coming full circle, with much of Moffat's work on *Doctor Who* (especially as show runner) having been inspired by Audrey Niffenegger's modern literary classic. In turn, this is a *Doctor Who* inspired retelling of the tale in which fans of that show will enjoy many moments that evoke not only Moffat's own scripts but those of Paul Cornell, Toby Whithouse, and Richard Curtis, amongst others, in the way particular scenes are structured or realised.

Theo James is quite credibly the best Doctor who never was, while Rose Leslie's interpretation of Clare is popped straight from the same character mould as Amy Pond and Clara Oswald. The many themes explored in this serial include the changeability or otherwise of time (with some subtle *Doctor Who* in-jokes along the way) and a

discussion of how our perceptions of places and people change with maturity, along with many other complex and fascinating ideas and questions about the hypothetical ethics of time travel, the nature of relationships and the human condition, and a very sensible dramatic debate on gender equality as explored through a fantasy prism. This should be remembered as one of the outstanding contributions to the scene of televised dramatic arts in 2022 and is an absolute must see for anyone who enjoys Steven Moffat's *Doctor Who* work.



A love story that spans time...

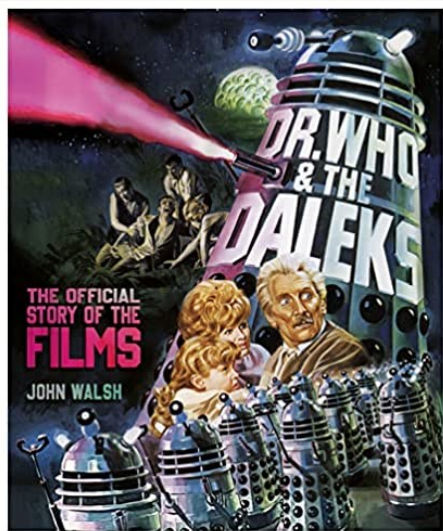
**BOOK: Who & the Daleks – The Official Story of the Films—By John Walsh**

First impressions count for much, and this fascinating volume definitely has a terrific WOW factor from the moment you turn the opening page. Even before that, just opening the cover reveals an attention grabbing two-page illustration which sets the scene for a book that is packed with a collection of some of the most amazing photographs and artworks ever assembled for a single book on the Doctor Who universe.

Visually, this is stunning, with many large-format reproductions of consistent clarity, all are well chosen, that show the cast, sets, props, posters, and so much more. The text falls short of these visual elements and does not appear to have been proof-read, with several typos and repetitions. The lack of detail is frustrating, sometimes leaving the reader turning the page for the next paragraph and finding

instead a new chapter.

The author writes as much about *Doctor Who* as a television series and creates the unfortunate impression that he would rather have written a book on the show but found the films to be new territory. The blurring of these lines goes beyond creating a context, with the text often referring to Peter Cushing's



Bigger, Bolder and in a Big Book

character as a Time Lord with only the occasional concession that he is a human scientist. However, the small amount of text is merely a nominal part of the whole and the illustrative aspects are the star of the piece. For the latter, this book is definitely worth its cover price.

**Blu-Ray/DVD: Doctor Who: The Abominable Snowmen**

The latest release in the BBC's *Doctor Who* Blu-ray schedule is the Gary Russell produced international co-production of *The Abominable Snowmen*, an animation that once again uses the original television soundtrack matched with entirely new visuals. As on previous releases, two versions are included that allow the option of viewing this in full-colour widescreen or in black and white with the same standard aspect ratio as the 1960s episodes. Arguably, the former is the more effective on this release due to the realism of the animation's more expansive reimagining of the Tibetan setting that has the side-effect of losing much of the original story's dark claustrophobia that made the use of monochrome so effective.

One intriguing aspect of the original show was that, whereas the Hammer film *The Abominable Snowman* was more like a *Doctor Who* episode, this serial was more like a Hammer horror film, and the challenges of this are felt in this new version of the show. Just as director Gerald Blake struggled to realise this in the 1960s, within the limitations of Saturday tea-time family entertainment, Gary Russell and his team are unable to realise it in 2022 either, although this is perhaps due to the creative boundaries of 2D animation in this form. The results are rather too much like something Hanna-Barbera might have produced several decades earlier, and this in turn requires a greater than normal suspension of the viewers' disbelief to overlook some unintentionally comical or visually dated elements that are more nostalgic of old cartoons. However, there are other particular highlights within this box set that are worth the cover price alone. Foremost amongst these is a new documentary film presented by Toby Hadoke that revisits the locations used in the original filming, where he is joined by his interviewees. You can also enjoy numerous audio commentaries, on the both the animated episodes and the restored recording of the surviving second episode. Overall, this is a recommended release, especially if you already have *The Evil of the Daleks* and *Fury From the Deep* (hint) in your collection.



The Great Intelligence: "I would've gotten away with it if it wasn't for you pesky kids and that darned Time Lord!"

**BLU-RAY: Doctor Who: The Collection – Season 22**

Colin Baker's first full season is the subject of the latest Blu-ray box set in the BBC's official collection of classic *Doctor Who* serials. The stories are generally well known, so this review will focus primarily upon the extras that can be found on the eight disks within. The extended edits of *Vengeance on Varos* are especially exciting as far as the featured episodes go, with the story (which was already a favourite of this reviewer) truly taking on the appearance of a BBC science fiction drama that just happens to be part of this popular show. The deeper content, the steady pace, and the memorable performances are even more outstanding in this version.

Other episodes that can be seen in alternate, extended versions include *The Two Doctors* part one and *Revelation of the Daleks* part one. Each story has its own production documentary and an episode of *Behind the Sofa*, in which celebrities from the show watch and discuss the stories in this latest evolution of in-vision commentaries. The much-maligned *Timelash* also benefits from new CGI, but the beloved sock puppet Bandril ambassador remains unchanged. The set includes three episodes of *In Conversation*, presented by Matthew Sweet, in which he interviews those directly involved with the show in various capacities over the years. The first of these, and a real highlight, features Colin Baker himself in a very moving and personal account of his interesting life, while the second is an intriguing discussion with Michael Grade about his perspective on *Doctor Who* in the mid-1980s and his wider career in television. In the final interview, Nicola Bryant reveals to Matthew Sweet the challenges that she faced working at the BBC as a young female actor. While the interview cannot appropriately be termed a highlight, **The ViewPol Verdict** does recommend it as absolutely essential viewing for those interested in the television world behind the scenes and the lives and work of those actors who brought to life our favourite characters.

Elsewhere on this set, there is a video telling the story of a group visit to explore the Seville locations from *The Two Doctors* with Nicola Bryant in 2006 and also a more recent tour of the UK locations used in the season, in which Colin and Nicola are joined in their reminiscences by the directors of those serials. Along with these outstanding productions can be found the usual assortment of recycled DVD extras and archive recordings, altogether making this a perfect souvenir of a season that still has much to recommend it despite its unfortunate flaws.



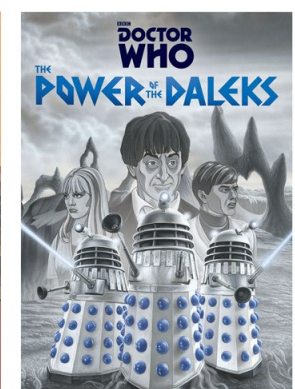
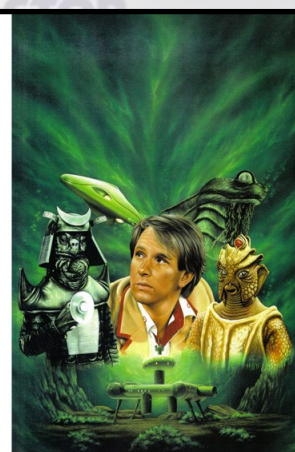
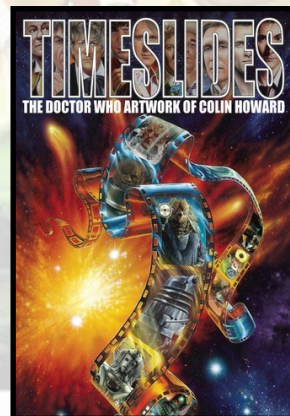
The Borad insists that there will be no more backlash against *Timelash*...

**BOOKS**

**TIMESLIDES: The Doctor Who art of Colin Howard and ILLUMINART: The Doctor Who art of Andrew Skilleter**

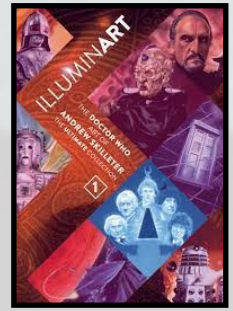
As a keen collector of the art produced by both of these outstanding artists, the almost simultaneous release of two volumes examining some of their *Doctor Who* related work was truly exciting. Looking first at *TIMESLIDES*, this new book from Candy Jar focuses upon Colin's published work, from his Target novelisation cover to his numerous video and *Doctor Who Magazine* covers, along with some of his private commissions, and contributions to the recent series of animated *Doctor Who* reconstructions. The reproduction quality is impressive, and we are treated to most of the finished illustrations as full-page images, with some sketches and other items added around the informative text. We learn about the techniques used by Colin over the years and how his style has developed and improved, and this is delightfully mixed with anecdotes and viewpoints of the art and the show and Colin's experience of working within the profession.

The conversational style of the text will be accessible and enjoyable for those who simply admire the end result as well as for those with a deeper personal understanding of artistic creativity. Many others have added their words to the story too, from Colin's wife Michelle to actor Colin Baker, writer Rob Shearman, museum owner Neil Cole, and many other voices who add their own plaudits. The artwork is a vibrant, powerful, and evocative display of Colin Howard's creative talent and passion for the show, filled with hidden depths and intriguing nuances that reward repeated study.





With his ILLUMINART book, Andrew Skilleter has taken full advantage of being his own editor to plan this as the first in a three-volume collection from the outset and feature a wider variety of creations than might otherwise have been possible. The familiar but always welcome Target book and BBC Video covers are complemented by material from calendars, books devoted to the Cybermen and other alien creatures, the *Doctor Omega* series of original novels, a feature on Andrew's opportunity to paint the cover for an issue of the *Radio Times*, and an impressive selection of private commissions. The text is occasionally concise but always informative, while other sections delve deeper into the processes and collaborative experience involved in creating the visual banquet spread before the reader. The artist generously shared the privilege of creating the text for this volume with some of those who, over the years, have supported his work, often collaborating creatively through the commissioning process in developing the concepts and ideas that Andrew in turn brings to life. The reproduction of the artwork is superb throughout the whole volume, with many stunning portraits to admire while studying some of the eye-catching backgrounds and imaginative imagery. The Gold Edition reviewed by *The ViewPol Verdict* also features additional artwork on the last few pages including an original, hand-drawn into each copy, featuring a portrait of the reader's chosen Doctor.



***Illuminart: The Doctor Who Art of Andrew Skilleter Volume 2* will be published in September 2023. For full details of Vols 1 and 2, plus Andrew's Doctor Who calendar, visit: <https://andrewskilleter.com/>**

In conclusion, both of these new titles would be a brilliant addition to the bookshelf of any collector of Doctor Who related merchandise and artwork.

AP



## DOCTOR WHO AND THE DALEKS

By DAVID WHITAKER

Illustrated by ROBERT HACK

With an introduction by NEIL GAIMAN

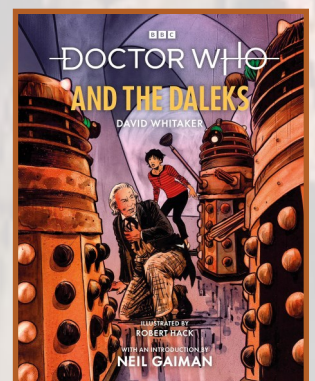
Published by BBC Books |  
3rd November 2022 | £25 | Hardback

| ISBN: 9781785948015

*Doctor Who and the Daleks* was the very first Doctor Who novel, published in 1964, the year after the show began. Written by Doctor Who's story editor, David Whitaker, its rich style and depth of characterisation helped set the bar for the hundreds of Doctor Who novels and novelisations that followed. Now BBC Books is delighted to be publishing an edition of Whitaker's classic that brings a visual element to match his peerless text, with lavish illustrations by acclaimed comic book artist Robert Hack.

Adapted from Terry Nation's first Dalek story, *Doctor Who and the Daleks* sees Ian Chesterton and Barbara Wright caught up in the flight through time and space of the mysterious Doctor and his granddaughter Susan. They travel in the TARDIS to the planet Skaro, where they strive to save the peace-loving Thals from the evil intentions of the hideous Daleks. Can they succeed? And if they do, will Ian and Barbara ever again see their native Earth?

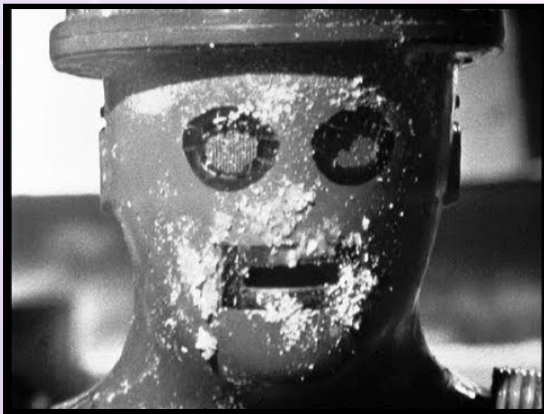
This is the ultimate edition of an iconic novel - a deluxe volume that embraces both proud tradition and modern innovation to present the drama of a Dalek dystopia as you've never seen it before...



# The Last Word...



*Honestly...! Doctor Who has become so Wok these days!*



**“Okay... Who threw that snowball?”**



**“Of course we are friendly, emotional humans, Zoe! Look - we can do the Birdie Dance and everything!”**

## See You Next Issue!