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THE CANADIAN DOCTOR WHO FAN MAGAZINE

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THE CANADIAN DOCTOR WHO FAN MAGAZINE

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DALEK'S ADVOCATE



The Case for Melanie Bush

Doctor Who would not be quite the same without its share of controversy and debate. Whotopia's resident Skarosian advocate reassesses some of the more contentious characters, stories, and events from the series' past, unashamedly presenting the case for the defense.

As companions go, Melanie 'Mel' Bush should have it all: an optimistic personality, intelligence, and seemingly boundless energy. In short, Mel possesses the ideal qualities for someone wishing to travel through time and space, risking life and limb to save a civilization here and a planet there. Yet her character has been on the receiving end of enough flak to shoot down a squadron of Validium-plated Cyber-ships. Why is this the case? And is it not long overdue that the carping was put to bed, and Mel's positive attributes brought to the fore? To answer these questions I will consider how Mel came to be so censoriously treated, and then set out to dismantle some of the arguments against her. Finally, I will present my reasons as to why she deserves to be heralded as a positive addition to the maverick Time Lord's pantheon of companions.

To begin, Mel's introduction into *Doctor Who* could not have come at a more inopportune moment. Arriving midway through Season Twenty-Three, Mel followed hot on the heels of the hugely popular Perpugilliam 'Peri' Brown. With enough fans to stretch from Television Centre to the moon and back again, Peri was the highlight of many a story for a great number of fans. Put another way, any female companion who took up residence in the TARDIS directly after Peri was going to have a hard act to follow.

Next, Mel's first adventure was sandwiched into a season which was up to its neck in darkness. To make matters more complicated, the actor who played the part of Mel, Bonnie Langford, was perceived by some as a specialist performer in light entertainment and thus perhaps not entirely suited to a role in a drama series. Considering the extensive CV held by Langford at that time, this criticism was unfounded, but that didn't stop some people from believing it.

The lengthy shadow of her predecessor, combined with the ominous rumour that *Doctor Who* was quite literally fighting for its very survival, meant that the timing of Mel's series debut was hardly fortuitous. Plus, with Langford's light-entertainment background fast becoming an issue for some fans, Mel's misfortunes were coming in droves.

As if things could not get any worse, at the end of Mel's first season the BBC chose not to continue *Doctor Who* with Colin Baker in the lead role. The fallout over the departure of Colin Baker was huge, but crucially the character of Mel stayed on. This point was



“ *...her bright and effervescent personality was the ideal foil for the somewhat darker persona of the Sixth Doctor.* ”

not lost on those fans who argued that the computer programmer from Pease Pottage was part of the series' diminishing popularity, and not its lead actor.

Marked as the companion who survived the chop, Mel's increasingly negative image was further compounded by her limited character development over her remaining stories. This was particularly the case through much of her second and final outing in Season Twenty-Four. A new lead actor with apparently little idea of how to play his Doctor and a new script editor seemingly just as much in the dark made this season experimental to say the

least. The fact that Mel's second bite of the apple coincided with this tumultuous period in series' history did little to relieve the disapproval circling about her character.

The main causes of Mel's unpopularity are not so difficult to identify; equally they are not so difficult to counter. In the first place, it is hardly a sound argument to mark down a character purely because he or she happens to follow in the footsteps of a noteworthy predecessor, however instinctive that action may be. Mel's bubbly, curious nature was a breath of fresh air after the complaining, let's-go-back-to-the-TARDIS attitude of Peri. Of course, Peri and the Sixth Doctor had a wonderful on-screen chemistry, but to have had a Peri-esque assistant turn up after the character's apparent demise in Part Eight of *The Trial of a Time Lord* (1986) would have been a disaster. Mel offered contrast – the perfect quality for making her own unique impression on the series.

Secondly, it's equally poor thinking to judge a character by circumstances beyond their control. Indeed, Season Twenty-Three was a difficult time for *Doctor Who* but why should Mel become a scapegoat for this criticism? In fact, it's reasonable to conclude that her arrival in Part Nine of *The Trial of a Time Lord* coincides with Season Twenty-Three taking a turn for the better – so why not give her some of the credit for this improvement?

Thirdly, Bonnie Langford was – and remains – a highly versatile actor. As such, her work in light entertainment was neither here nor there. Similarly, Jon Pertwee came to the role of the Third Doctor with an armload of experience in comedy, yet this was rightly disregarded when he went on to portray a serious, no nonsense Doctor. Considering that Langford played Mel as a dynamic and independently-minded young woman, why was her past work – which bears no relevance upon her actual portrayal – used to criticize her?

Fourthly, and perhaps most ill-conceived of all, any negativity she may have received for not getting axed along with Colin Baker simply beggars belief. The events surrounding that time are still a sore point for some fans, but how on earth would have writing out Mel helped to heal a floundering series? The powers-that-be made their decision regarding the lead actor, and that decision has been roundly criticized ever since. But there is not one ounce of sense in the argument that Mel should have gone in the Sixth Doctor's place. In the scale of things, her character was very much peripheral to the storm that was rapidly closing in on the series. Abruptly ending her time in *Doctor Who*, therefore, would have solved very little.

Lastly, it is hardly the fault of the character, or the actor who played her, that Mel was given a fairly poor deal during the fourteen hit-and-miss episodes of Season Twenty-Four. A serious lack of thought on the part of the production team left her character development high and dry – apart from excessive screaming which did little to endear her to the fans. It is not the first time that one of the Doctor's sidekicks has been letdown in this way. Over the course of a season or two some have flatlined (see Harry Sullivan), some have gone from being perfectly useful to perfectly useless (see Adric), whilst others have debuted in a blaze of originality, only to become sidelined a few stories later (see Vislor Turlough). Mel is not the first companion to fall backwards development-wise in her second season, and if anyone is to blame for this state of affairs it is the script-writing department. Once again, criticizing the character or the actor misses the real target.

Having gone some way to dismantling the criticisms leveled at Mel, I will now consider why her character is such a positive addition to the series. In the first instance, her bright and effervescent personality was the ideal foil for the somewhat darker persona of the Sixth Doctor. In particular, her fitness regime for the less-than-enthusiastic Time Lord made for entertaining viewing. Also, as I have already said, her intrepid mindset offered a refreshing change after the decidedly more cautious nature of Peri.

Next up is Mel's strength of character. Loyalty, courage, and curiosity are clearly three of her watchwords. Her investigations aboard the space vessel *Hyperion III*, and her assistance against the fiendish Valeyard during *The Trial of a Time Lord* clearly demonstrate her considerable value as an assistant to the Doctor. She also risked the wrath of the Rani by breaking into the renegade Time Lord's base in *Time and the Rani* (1987), and faced lethal mechanical cleaners in *Paradise Towers* (1987).

Of course, Mel could be a touch too direct at times and was more than willing to speak her mind (note her reaction to the Doctor's apparently impending execution in Part Fourteen of *The Trial of a Time Lord*). But her feisty nature lends her character the very substance which any member of the TARDIS crew would do well to cultivate. Standing up to power-mad conspirators takes courage, if not a little blunt speaking at times, and Mel was demonstrably endowed with both.

Furthermore, Mel's optimism made her well qualified for redeeming the seemingly unredeemable. She gave support to the cowardly Pex in *Paradise Towers* and was prepared to see the better side of the petty thief and con-man Sabalom Glitz in *Dragonfire*. This trusting side of her personality could lead her into danger (see the Rezzies in *Paradise Towers*), but it also presented an excellent character development opportunity for those writers with the mind to make use of it.

Given the arguments set out above, let me summarize the case for Melanie Bush. First, the various criticisms raised against her character are, at best, poorly founded and, at worst, wholly invalid. Issues beyond the character's influence made for a stormy start and clumsy character handling made for an unsatisfactory finish. What is more, holding Langford's experience in light entertainment against her conveniently ignored an earlier and far weightier precedent (namely, Jon Pertwee's casting as the Third Doctor). Not to mention the fact that Langford was more than capable of playing a straight role.

Second, the positive qualities of Mel's character far outweigh any drawbacks. Energized and curious, brave and caring, Mel presents all the attributes of a top-quality companion. Yes, she did tend to scream a lot, but that trait only became emphasized during her second season, when her character was somewhat neglected. Still further, we must not forget that Mel was hardly the first female companion to use her lungs to good effect when in distress. Thus, it does seem a touch harsh to hold that particular tendency against her.

In closing, the case for Melanie Bush, it is my considered opinion that the character of Mel is a first-rate companion, long overdue a serious reappraisal. I rest my case.

The Dalek's Advocate would like to acknowledge the invaluable help of the Melanie Bush Web Page at: <http://www.tetrap.com/drwho/mel>

ARTICLE BY JEZ STRICKLEY



Interview with actress, singer and dancer Bonnie Langford

Every now and again there comes along a performer for whom the term 'multi-talented' doesn't quite cover it; Bonnie Langford is just such a person. For fans of *Doctor Who* she'll always be remembered as the bubbly, energetic Melanie Bush, computer programmer and companion to Doctors Six and Seven. But for those with a wider focus her career covers a gamut of roles, including performances in a string of West End productions. Her acclaimed portrayal of Roxie Hart in the musical *Chicago* followed in the wake of her headlining the 2004 UK tour of *Fosse*, and more recently she embarked upon a series of *Dancing On Ice*, followed by the 2007 *Dancing On Ice* UK tour. Now, with ice skates firmly packed away – at least for now – we talk to Bonnie Langford.

Whotopia: How did you get the part of Melanie 'Mel' Bush, and was the character written with you in mind?

Bonnie Langford: Yes, I think it was. I met JNT for a coffee, he showed me a paragraph describing Melanie Bush and asked me if I fancied it. How easy and unusual was that?!

Whotopia: Have you portrayed any other characters which have been written specifically for you, and which sort of characters do you prefer to play?

Bonnie Langford: I did a play with Sandi Toksvig [*Short And Curly*] which was written for me as well as a couple of other things. But it's great as an actor to play a part that portrays a new area for you and the audience. That way you 'bring something of yourself to the part' (that's always a good ruse!) and yet you have the comfort of hiding behind a dif-

ferent persona.

Whotopia: What was it like acting alongside Colin Baker?

Bonnie Langford: Fun, delightful but I felt extremely small.

Whotopia: The BBC's decision to drop Colin Baker from the role of the Doctor shocked fandom. What was your reaction to the news and how did you find adjusting to a new



lead actor in the part?

Bonnie Langford: I knew Colin was in dispute and that it ended unhappily. Being the new girl, I wasn't party to all that but it wasn't a great time for Colin. As an actor one is all too used to working with different people and I knew Sylv from before – it was fine.

Whotopia: **Of all the stories in which you appeared do you have a favourite, and if so why?**

Bonnie Langford: I have never watched my episodes back. I loved working with some terrific actors though. It was a perk of the job.

Whotopia: **Conversely, with which adventure were you least satisfied?**

Bonnie Langford: Ditto the last answer!

Whotopia: **In your view, was Mel given enough character development during her time in the series?**

Bonnie Langford: No!

Whotopia: **Is it fair to say that actors don't tend to have as much influence over the parts they play as they would like?**

Bonnie Langford: Actors generally are great at moaning about something! But if a part is well written then it's a joy. I think we all like the opportunity to play a role that is well-rounded and with many facets.

Whotopia: **A little over a year after the joining *Doctor Who* you decided to leave the series. What were your reasons for moving on?**

Bonnie Langford: I agreed to do two series so that was what I assumed I would do. I never thought that there was an option to stay actually, it didn't cross my mind! However, I always think it best to move forward so that's what I did.

Whotopia: **If you could have your time again, is there anything you would change about the way in which you portrayed Mel?**

Bonnie Langford: Lots and lots, I'm sure!! I'm my biggest critic, believe me.

Whotopia: **You've recorded a number of new *Doctor Who* stories alongside Colin Baker and Sylvester McCoy, as part of the Big Finish Productions audio adventures. How have you found returning to the role of Mel, and do you find audio any more or less than challenging than television or stage?**

Bonnie Langford: I love the Big Finish Audios. They are good quality productions and pretty well written. Audios are great too because you don't have to look good or learn the lines!!!

Whotopia: **Your background in light entertainment raised questions amongst some fans as to the direction the series was appearing to take. As a result, did you see yourself as facing criticism before the cameras had even started rolling?**



Bonnie Langford: I never read reviews either before during or after a job.

Whotopia: **On that point, established actors have long been a staple of the *Doctor Who* production. Do you think that having well-known performers, such as yourself, appearing in the series is always a wise move?**

Bonnie Langford: I think that actors are employed to do just that – act. It should only add to the interest if you recognise someone from another job and, if they are good actors, then they will enhance a drama every time. I think you are mixing up 'actor' with 'celebrity' – that's a whole other subject.

Whotopia: **What was your awareness of *Doctor Who* before you appeared in it, and were you wary of comparisons with previous companions?**

Bonnie Langford: If you've lived in the UK at all then you have to be aware of *Doctor Who*. However it was not a programme that I watched.

Whotopia: **Have you had the chance to watch the new series and, if so, what's your opinion on it?**

Bonnie Langford: I love the new series. The writing and production is superb on every level. I haven't seen the latest series yet, but I hope to make time to catch up with it soon.

Whotopia: **Finally, whether it's a musical or a play, do you have a preference for doing either live or recorded performances, and why?**

Bonnie Langford: I like the variety of my job, so live or recorded suits me whatever the weather!

Many thanks to Bonnie Langford for answering Whotopia's questions, and for more information see her website at www.bonnielangford.co.uk.

INTERVIEW BY JEZ STRICKLEY

Who is Matt Smith?

January the 3rd and the tension is palpable. Who would be the Eleventh Doctor? More importantly, who would have the bragging rights over guessing the actor to replace David Tennant? Turns out, none of us, because Steven Moffat and Piers Wenger came completely out of nowhere in announcing that Matt Smith would be taking over the role. This prompted a massive outcry amongst the six million odd people watching, an outcry along the lines of 'eh? huh? wha?' Yes, like some protracted Abbot and Costello routine, which you will be seeing on topical comedy shows in the near future. 'Who' is Matt Smith!?

At 26, Matt is the youngest actor to play the role of the Doctor. This, interestingly, means that he was born at the time the second youngest, Peter Davison, was taking over the reigns as the Fifth Doctor. His age, also, means that he will have grown up in the 'wilderness' years of Doctor Who and he does admit that his knowledge is a bit lacking:

This next 6 months, for me, is about... preparation and learning and learning about you know the history of the show and the world of the show and soaking it all up.

His age has sparked controversy with the viewers, many of whom believe that he is too young for the role; however, in an interview about casting the Eleventh Doctor it is clear that he has the full support of the rest of the team:

Piers Wenger, Head Of Drama, BBC Wales added "With two hearts, a ferocious mind and over 900 years of experience behind him, it's not every 26 year old actor who can take on a role like the Doctor but within moments of meeting Matt he showed the skill and imagination needed to create a Doctor all of his own."

Although an unknown to the public, Matt Smith has played in some substantial roles in the theatre appearing in 'Cast B' of *The History Boys* at the National Theatre; he also received critical acclaim at the Royal Court Theatre in *That Face*.

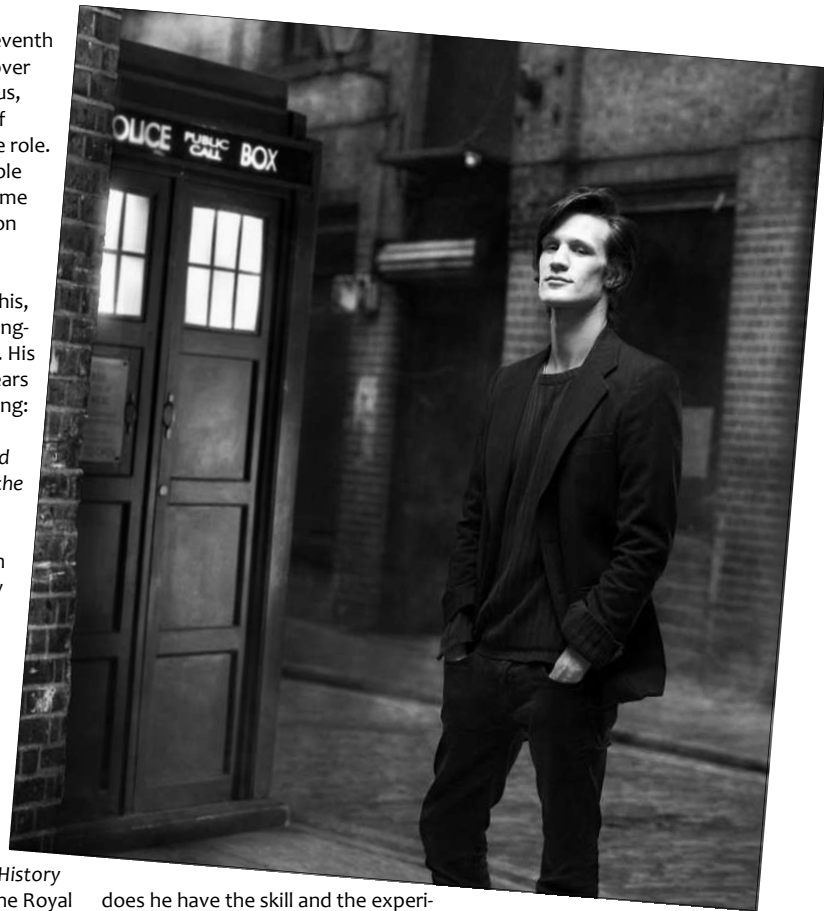
His major television roles involved him starring next to Billie Piper in *The Ruby in The Smoke* and *The Shadow in The North*. He later had a lead role in the minor BBC 2 drama *Party Animals* and for all those who want to see him perform before he takes on the role of the Doctor, he has just completed work on the BBC drama *Moses Jones*.

As to his performance as the Doctor, he is keeping it all very quiet now. Although, it appears that he is still developing the style and manner that he will bring to the last of the Time Lords.

I've got this wonderful, this wonderful sort of journey in front of me where... I've got this, kind of, 6 months to build this ... Time Lord. You know that's such an exciting prospect because I love that part of being an actor. I love the discovery of it and the being a detective bit and that excites me hugely... but I don't know... I've got to build him up.

He has confirmed, however, that episode one and episode four of Series Five are completed and he has implied that Steven Moffat pens them.

Matt Smith has a lot ahead of him. His main dilemma will be following David Tennant's popularity without becoming a carbon copy of the Tenth Doctor. He, also, will have a tricky time with the viewers who have reservations about his ability as a newcomer. The question on people's lips is



does he have the skill and the experience to bring to life such a revered character as the Doctor. Steven Moffat certainly thinks so:

The Doctor is a very special part, and it takes a very special actor to play him. You need to be old and young at the same time, a boffin and an action hero, a cheeky schoolboy and the wise old man of the universe. As soon as Matt walked through the door and blew us away with a bold and brand new take on the Time Lord, we knew we had our man. 2010 is a long time away but rest assured the Eleventh Doctor is coming – and the universe has never been so safe.

Will Matt Smith will be a Doctor to rank with the classics? The only response right now is the old cliché 'time will tell'. I will say this, he does improve with a second viewing, and once you are past the shock of his age, hair, face, lack of being Patterson Joseph you can see something that is unique. He could be brilliant – let's hope he is.

And let us leave the last words to Matt:

David Tennant has made the role his own, brilliantly with grace, talent and persistent dedication. I hope to learn from the standards set by him. The challenge for me is to do justice to the show's illustrious past, my predecessors and most importantly to those who watch it. I really cannot wait.

ARTICLE BY MARGARET BROWN

Speculation Accumulation

The Method behind the Madness of Eleventh Doctor Gossip

“Brnng... Brnng...”

Hello?

Are you watching the National Television Awards?

Nah, I don't...

TURN IT OVER, TURN IT OVER NOW!”

The 29th of October and David Tennant shocks fandom with the revelation of his departure. Children cry, Outpost Gallifrey goes into meltdown and I'm turning the mobile airwaves blue.

Cut to the offices of every newspaper in Britain. Editors are bouncing up and down and hugging themselves with unrestrained glee. Now's the time for filling up the blank spaces in their newspapers with anything from the departure of Tennant to the arrival of the Eleventh Doctor.

Doctor Who has been going from strength to strength ever since it returned in 2005. It is now one of the top shows watched in Britain and nothing sells papers better than gossip about television. The press loves to print stories about who is coming and who is going for all the big hits of the airwaves and *Doctor Who* is no exception. It has now reached a fever pitch with the handover from the Tenth Doctor to the Eleventh. Never before has the speculation been so frenzied, thanks largely in part to the Internet but also because the transition from the Ninth to the Tenth was uneventful, namely because the revelation of Christopher Eccleston's departure was leaked after the first episode and he hadn't been in the role long enough. We contemplated the replacement for Billie Piper but that was nowhere near as fun or as big as a new Doctor was. The departure of David Tennant from the show is monumental. Never before had the identity of the next Doctor garnered so much attention, speculation and downright nonsense. The role has become huge, influential and most importantly respectable.

Now it's all done bar the shouting (and don't we fans love the shouting) because on the 3rd of January the Eleventh Doctor



was announced, but wasn't it a fantastic two months of endless guesswork and unutterable claptrap. A time of people mentioning any British actor ever born be they black, white, male, female, young, old, alive or dead. All the while members of Outpost Gallifrey make promises never to watch the show again if they cast certain people. So, what can we learn from the speculation surround the casting of the Eleventh? Nothing really, I mean if you want to learn something then try French, First Aid or Cookery. However, if you had the inclination, general nerdiness or just downright boredom to trail through the various suggestions, you would have noticed a few themes emerging in the public's choices. But let's face it, you all have better things to do, so I have spent the last few months trawling through the announcements, arguments, dead certs and waffle to bring you the ultimate guide to the rumour mill that is Doctor casting.

◆ **The Colin Baker Effect** – One of the major themes to appear this time is the idea that the next Doctor would be someone we'd already seen in *Doctor Who*. Colin Baker, who after playing Commander Maxil in *Arc of Infinity* went on to become the Sixth Doctor, set this precedent. Saying that, Commander Maxil was one of the few people to shoot the Doctor, so if we were to go down that path the Eleventh Doctor would have been a Dalek. I'm not sure if Terry Nation would have agreed to that.

◆ **Doctor Daddy** – All I can say is thank you Georgia Moffett for helping to add fuel to this idea. Her self-referential/Post-modern/ironic (delete where appropriate) appearance in *The Doctor's Daughter* put the idea into people's heads that any actor whose father was the Doctor would be in the running for the Eleventh. However, think about it. Would you really want to play a part your dad played? Does any actor want to traverse that psychological minefield? Just be grateful that Tom Baker's children aren't in the profession. We would never have heard the end of it.

◆ **Crazy Comedian** – The most annoying and virulent of all speculations. The Doctor's personality has always been off-centre and mildly eccentric. However, that does not mean that



any comedian can perform the role; this particularly applies to stand-ups. Okay, so Jon Pertwee was known for comedy before he donned the cravat and cape, and you can even use Catherine Tate as an example, but just because someone makes you laugh or makes surreal observations does not mean that they can pull off the darkness also needed for the Doctor. Just because someone is a bit kooky doesn't make him the Doctor.

◆ **Curls, Scarf and a Hat** – I think most of us know exactly what's wrong with this, however, if you have a day on your hands nip into Outpost Gallifrey and notice how many fans championed people whose only qualification was that they could wear a hat well, has curly hair or looks a little bit indie. Yet, you don't see people championed because they look like a multi-coloured clown or dress like a cosmic hobo.

◆ **Wishful Thinking** – I can't really blame people for this, it's only when it gets out of control does it get annoying. You're talking to your mates, coming up with ideas for the Doctor and you're bound to bring up a few names. However, you end up picking a person who could never play the role or could not commit to the performance. Let's take Christopher Eccleston for example, he said yes to the role and only through filming realised that he couldn't continue in the same role for a long time. Grade A Hollywood stars are touted as well but a worldwide career doesn't sit well with the time and effort needed to play a role that is, admit it, not as big internationally as we would like it to be. Older actors as well present a problem, the new series is action packed with the Doctor being right in the centre of it and the filming schedule is tight. It's just too intense, which is a shame as we all have an older actor we'd love to see as the Doctor.

◆ **Goading Fandom** – The previous assistants, the Master, Captain Jack, any of the previous Doctors. Written by lazy journalists to sell a few

papers, believed by idiots and used by non-fans to drive the rest of us up the wall; and my God does it work. I promised my dad that if Billie Piper got the role I'd eat my left leg. Moreover, John Barrowman was being mentioned, Captain Jack and the Doctor? It would have been worse than going around wearing an 'I'M A CLONE' T-shirt. How any in this category got odds at all is beyond me.

It's a cut-out and keep guide because next time this debate rolls around (and let's hope that's a long way off) the same old themes will appear again. You know, as I waded through the endless debates I came across some fantastic suggestions for previous doctors, and I would like to share my...

Top Five Ultimate Contenders For The Doctor... Ever... In The World... For All Time

Geoffrey Bayldon –

The alternative for William Hartnell and who later appeared with Tom Baker in *The Creature From The Pit*. Would he have had the ability to make *Doctor Who* the success it is; a listen to Big Finish's *Auld Mortality* may give you a clue.



Ron Moody –

Cited for the Fourth Doctor, he declined due to the success of *Oliver*. This meant that the Doctor became the, relatively young, 40 year old Tom Baker. After that, well, the Doctor would never be old and grumpy again.



◆ **Mark McGann** – Possibly the saddest or funniest person ever considered to be the Doctor (depending on the mood you're in). Mark auditioned for the Eighth Doctor only to lose out to

his brother Paul. Horrible thing is that he looks very like Paul – go on, look him up. What did they see in Paul that wasn't in him? You wouldn't want to be at that family Christmas.



Hugh Grant –

Russell T Davies' choice for the Ninth Doctor but I can't help thinking that Christopher Eccleston's performance, which has been described as "kicking open the door" for *Doctor Who*, was a better choice. Hugh's fop-pish bumbling charm may have stopped the new series before it had the chance to start.



Patterson Joseph –

Oh Fandom you do love your favourites and assume that because you say so, that it must be so. However, just like the fact that no female companion has ever turned out to be the Rani, Patterson Joseph was not going to be the Doctor. Of course, I say that now. If the Eleventh Doctor hadn't been announced I wouldn't have said a word.



So, Matt Smith is the Eleventh Doctor and all the fun is over, or is it? It's now time to raise a glass and let the unending debate begin about how he will ruin/save *Doctor Who* begin, because being at the heart of a good squabble is what fandom is all about.

"To Days to Come. All My Love to Long Ago."

ARTICLE BY MARGARET BROWN

Your online spot for all things Whotopia

My Matt Moment

Tom Baker was my childhood Doctor. I can just about remember the last Pertwee days, and how frustrated I was that it all took place on Earth with UNIT (boring, boring) and too many guns and soldiers. Then Tom burst onto our screens, took off into space, and I was firmly ensconced behind the sofa. To my five-year-old eyes, the sets never wobbled, the monsters were anything but polystyrene, and the quarries really were desolate alien landscapes.

Tom and Peter kept me captivated through my childhood, but *Doctor Who* and I parted ways in the Colin Baker era. I was 15 years old then, and not yet old enough to be young again, as it were. As The Tenth Doctor says in *Time Crash*, "I was always trying to be old and grumpy and important, like you do when you're young." I felt far too grown-up to be watching a 'kids show' like *Doctor Who*.

Fast forward to 2005: by then I was living in Canada, and rumours of a new *Doctor Who* barely registered on my subconscious. Fast forward again to fall 2007, when I was back in the UK for a visit, staying with my ex-boyfriend Michael and his lovely girlfriend Kay (we're a friendly bunch!). They sat me down in front of their big TV with the box set DVDs of Series One to Three, pressed the remote in my hand, and solemnly intoned, "You must watch this." Thus started a whole new obsession with this wonderful, moving, exciting, brilliant show, strengthened by the fact that 9/10 Canadians will look at me and say, "Dr what??" I found a little national pride creeping back in where I least expected to find it.

And of course, like many people of the female persuasion, I fell willing victim to a deeply enjoyable David Tennant obsession, which finally resulted in a burned-out hard drive when I tried watching the whole of *Blackpool* on YouTube and my poor computer just couldn't cope! So when David finally confirmed he was leaving the show, I was gutshot. I love his Doctor; I think he's wonderfully versatile, so energetic, and of course David's such a fan too. Need I mention those big brown eyes?

I kept away from most of the speculation on the Eleventh Doctor; although I did think Gary Oldman would be cool, and that, although I'm all for equal-



ity, a woman would be plain silly – the Doctor is a Time Lord, distinct from Time Ladies; they don't switch over sexes à la *Left Hand of Darkness* (Ursula Le Guin).

And then come Saturday morning, January 3rd, 8.30 am Vancouver time, I find the news that the Eleventh Doctor will be announced in a special *Doctor Who Confidential*, at 5.35 pm UK time. I hurriedly phone my dear ex-boyfriend and beg a favour of him. Thus, at the appointed hour, I am present with them by the graces of cyberspace, a webcam, and Skype. They point the webcam at that same big TV upon which I first saw new *Who*, and we wait.

Michael asks me how I'm feeling – I'm actually quite nervous. I can feel a lump in my stomach. What if it's someone hideous? Then the show begins and we sit, barely daring to breathe, as David Tennant starts to talk about the next Doctor's extraordinary journey. The Skype connection just about works – I can't quite hear all that's said; sometimes the image freezes and sometimes a random cat strolls in front of the screen.

When Steven Moffat says the new Doctor is a 26-year-old we all shout, "could be Russell Tovey." I'm on IMDB straight away – Russell's birthday is the 14th November 1981, so it depends when they filmed this special. At least we know it's not James Nesbitt! And then Steven



Moffat says "... and it is the single most exciting thing about *Doctor Who*, the fact that the Doctor, who is the most familiar character on television, can become brand new..." and BANG! There's this deep-eyed, intriguing-looking young man on our screen and we're all yelling, "Who the hell is he?????" Michael recognizes him from

The Ruby in the Smoke, I'm back on IMDB typing furiously; he's the Eleventh Matt Smith listed – woo Whoo! Googling him brings up almost nothing, for the very last time in his life. And as I watch (and re-watch later), I begin to see

“**There's this deep-eyed, intriguing-looking young man on our screen and we're all yelling, "Who the hell is he?????"**

that he is going to make a very fine Doctor indeed. He has an amazing face and his enthusiasm and delight for the show clearly shines through. I know it's all going to be okay when I find myself thinking about him just before I sleep, and feeling excited to see where his Doctor will go with Steven Moffat's guidance and fantastic scripts. I think the future (and the past) is in very safe hands.

ARTICLE BY HELEN CRAY

ANIMATED ADVENTURES IN TIME AND SPACE

An Interview with Doctor Who Regenerated



Doctor Who fan fiction is not just a pastime for some of us. Many an aspiring fan writer dreams of becoming the next Marc Platt or Paul Cornell – both enthusiastic Whovians who made the leap from keen amateur to professional scribe. What is more, today's fandom storytellers fill many a hard drive and forum with all manner of wares, as plain text and comic strip compete with computer animation and diorama model-making. But to be sure there are some enterprises that deserve an extra special mention, and *Doctor Who Regenerated* is one of them.

Bringing together a mixture of artistic flair and smart writing, *DWR* has been steadily building momentum in the *Doctor Who Forum* for some time. It can lay claim to its very own custom-made canon, and in ani-

matung its stories it is realising a seismic shift in fan-produced adventures. Planning, script writing, editing, visual design and computer-based animation are all part of the package, making *DWR* one of the most promising series of fan fiction around.

But an online surfer can only learn so much. So, instead of another article by an enthusiastic devotee, this issue *Whotopia* sits down with the team behind *Doctor Who Regenerated*, Hamish Steele and Barney McKenna, to find out what makes this choice example of fan fiction tick.

Whotopia: Let's start with the basics.

What initially got you into Doctor Who fan fiction and how did Doctor Who Regenerated get launched in the first place?

Hamish Steele: I think all fans like to come

up with their own stories and ideas for the shows they love. And we were no exception. The project has actually been developed for years and years as we've always wanted to work on something of this scale together.

Barney McKenna: I guess it all started when we both watched the episode *The Parting of the Ways* (2005) when it was first broadcast. Following that we were both on a sort of *Doctor Who* high and started coming up with plot ideas and monsters all the time. After posting our ideas in the *Doctor Who Forum* we found that there was a lot of interest and support out there. *Doctor Who* fans are such kind, helping people.

W: What was it about *The Parting of the Ways* that triggered your fan-fiction



From the episode "The Flight of Geheim"

'epiphany'?

BM: I think because back in 2005, we'd never seen anything like it. Nowadays, we take huge fleets of Daleks for granted but in the Classic Series they could never do it convincingly. Same goes for Cybermen and Sontarans – although we knew they had huge armies we never got to see them.

HS: But even when we used to watch the Classic Series, we'd be dreaming up our own plots. What made the first series of new *Doctor Who* so special was the fact that it was being written by a true fan, one of those kids that always dreamed of those Dalek armies but never saw them.

W: For those of us who aren't quite so technically clued-up, what's basically involved in the production process of an online animation series?

HS: There are loads of ways you could do it but we're using Adobe Flash. It's what most online cartoons are made on and is easy to learn but hard to master. This cartoon has been as much about both of us learning to use the program as it has been actually producing the show. Apart from that though, we make our show just as any TV show would be made. We start with the scripting and the redrafting of our stories. We then produce concept art and storyboards and slowly (very slowly) we begin animating our cartoon. We also have to record all the dialogue and sound effects which takes ages. But animation is very rewarding and it all seems worth it.

W: Do you have a submissions policy for your series and, if so, how does it work?

HS: Originally, at the very beginning, we wanted as much help as we could get. We

asked for any budding fan-fiction writers to help out and the response was really surprising. Within a few days we had a team of about fifteen keen writers all submitting drafts. It was a little overwhelming. As we read through their scripts and worked out which writers fitted our style we slowly but surely whittled down our helpers to a smaller team which made the style of our show more consistent. They kept redrafting their plots until all the episodes of the first series were completed. Then, Barney and I simply went through every episode making sure that the whole series worked as a whole and redrafted the stories ourselves – adding in things such as character continuity and story arcs. There are a few writers we'd like to keep for the second series but hopefully we'll also get some fresh interest once the show is launched.

W: What timeframe are you looking at in terms of releasing your first set of stories?

BM: We don't know. Because this is for the Internet and is technically a side project we have chosen not to give ourselves a deadline. We want to make this great and not rush it. What we do know is that we won't be releasing the first episode until the second episode is completed and the third episode started. This means we'll have a steady flow of stories when we finally get going. We've also written a Christmas special and have planned future series.

W: On the topic of writing stories, what makes for a great *Doctor Who* adventure?

BM: I think a clever idea is more important than the setting. Some great episodes such as *Blink*, *Human Nature* and *Midnight* have worked because of a simple but scary idea.

HS: Our series has some scary ideas but because we are not bound by budget we can get to some really good locations. Our alien planets are far more ambitious than in the TV series.

BM: In some episodes we've taken 'ideas' which reference the TV series. In *Streets of Fire*, the sun is drawn closer to an alien planet meaning that you burn up unless you're in a shadow. It's an amusing play on the "stay out of the shadows" message from *Silence in the Library*. You've just got to come up with an idea which taps into something inherently scary. Childhood fears are a great starting point.

HS: "Don't let the bed bugs bite" is a phrase that may haunt certain people after watching our series.

W: Your Doctor is a relatively young incarnation. Was this a deliberate move on your part?



From the episode "An Unearthly Man"



From the episode "The Age of Thunder"

HS: I suppose it was all down to ease. We wanted to make an original Doctor so we didn't have to do David Tennant impressions and we could do anything with the character. And we didn't make him an elderly Doctor because most of our voice actors are relatively young. However, his personality is actually more in line with the earlier Doctors such as Hartnell and Troughton. Although he looks young, he's meant to stand out of a crowd by acting like a bit of an old man.

BM: We wanted to write the Doctor as a Sherlock Holmes type of character. The companions are pretty much the main characters with the Doctor remaining quiet, observing his surroundings. He doesn't shout a lot like David Tennant – instead he is the voice of reason. He is almost always level headed.

HS: Level headed but not always streetwise. We've made him a bit of an idiot when it comes to humans. The Tenth Doctor knows a lot about human popular culture but our Doctor's never really met humans before. He doesn't know how to deal with them. He spends a lot of time acting awkward. His relationship with his female companion is a bit like a shy, geeky teenage boy who's never talked to a girl. That of course, develops over the series.

W: How much does the character of your Doctor influence the style and content of your scripts?

BM: His personality has affected the arc of the series. While he is recognisable as the Doctor right from the get go, his character develops through the series thanks to his companion. Because this is a remake rather than a continuation of the TV series, the Doctor is seeing every-

thing for the first time. He's never had a human companion, never seen a Cyberman or Dalek and he doesn't own a sonic screwdriver (yet). Over the series he'll become more of the Doctor we know and love. It's the whole *Casino Royale* thing. But one thing we hope people aren't expecting is a darker, grittier *Doctor Who*. A lot of fan fiction does that but that isn't our style. The show has a lot of bounce. Yes there are dark moments (and lots of scares we assure you) but overall the show is quite positive.

W: Making a project like *Doctor Who Regenerated* work involves an awful lot of hard graft and teamwork. What's the most difficult part about managing an animation series?

HS: I think it has been contacting our writers

and making the series flow as a whole. Some of our writers seem to have disappeared. This isn't much of a problem because we can always redraft their scripts for them, but it is a bit of an unavoidable nuisance.

W: Dilemma time: there's a deadline coming up for an animation and it looks like the animator involved won't be finished in time – what do you do?

HS: Ha ha ha! Deadlines? We've been pretty slack when it comes to deadlines. I think the fact that this is our show and that we're not producing it for any channel means we can spend as much time as we like. This show has been about four or five years in the making... it'll be done when it's done.

W: There's a great deal of fan fiction around these days, with various *Doctor Who* forums hosting any number of budding writers. What do you think makes *Doctor Who Regenerated* stand out from the rest?

HS: I think the fact we want to make something unique. We really don't view *Doctor Who* with rose-tinted glasses. We recognise its flaws but still like the show. We've always loved the potential the show has had and the premise, and that's what we've wanted to take into our show. We want to make our own version of the series, not just copy the style of the current writers. Our show also inevitably stands out due to the cartoon style. Everything is done in my personal cartoon style so it all looks quite unique.

W: How would you describe your 'personal cartoon style' and how did you develop it?

HS: I guess it comes from copying, if I'm honest. I've always loved cartoons and have stud-



From the episode "The Order of The Kraken"

ied the processes and techniques of artists for years. And I cut and stick aspects of loads of styles that I like into one. I love the big facial features of Pixar movies, the melodramatic expressions of *Ren & Stimpy*, the modern edge of the Scott Pilgrim graphic novels. I have to tone some of the comic aspects down for *Doctor Who* though – Cybermen wouldn't be very frightening with huge grins and comedy strides. It's developed very slowly over time and it keeps on developing. But I try to make it very British – I don't think anime really suits *Doctor Who* and I've never been a fan of it.

BM: My style is very different. I draw quite gloomy, Tim Burton-y stuff. But we chose to put the show in Hamish's style because it fits the tone more. Certain aspects of my style can be seen though. I tend to draw all the backgrounds and make them very detailed.

W: Let's get controversial for a moment. Some fans might think that fan-produced stories are largely a waste of time. They might claim that the writing quality is questionable, and none of it's canon anyway. How would you respond to this kind of comment?

HS: The worst thing about *Doctor Who* is canon. It's rubbish and we don't care about it at all. That's why we've invented our own canon that the show will remain faithful to. Our show is a... dare I say the word... re-imagining of the ideas of the show. But to be honest, I actually agree with much of that statement. I much prefer producing my own original work and so I've been working on all that as well. Hopefully by making this fan series, my own creations will get more exposure.

W: What is the canon you've established for *Doctor Who Regenerated*?

BM: We're going to say, before the first episode, to forget everything you know about *Doctor Who*. I know that sounds kind of corny but we don't want hundreds of fans sending us messages saying "Time Lords don't do that!" or "Cybermen aren't from there!" We've really created our own continuity.

HS: I won't spoil too much but what I will say is that Time Lords and Gallifrey have changed quite a bit. They're not exactly the do-gooders they've been made out to be in the New Series. Regeneration is actually a very different process and is really quite frightening. The Doctor's never heard about it and it was kept secret by the Time Lord Elders. We're also making unique and slightly different origin stories for the monsters. They're very recognisably similar – I

mean they don't contradict the original's that much – but by making a fresh start we can do away with the long and convoluted history of some of these races.

BM: The Cybermen appear in our final story *March of the Cybermen*. Although they aren't seen until then, their origin story plays throughout the entire first series. Viewers should look for references.

HS: When we come to do the Daleks, we're planning on making a remake of *Genesis of the Daleks*. Like all our remakes, they are very different plots but use the ideas from the originals as a basis. Then the story goes off in all directions.

SEASON ONE EPISODES

An Unearthly Man
The Order of the Kraken
No Rest for the Wicked
The Age of Thunder
The Flight of Geheim
The Sad Tale of Jolena Falls
Mother Russia
Streets of Fire
The Doctor's Diary
March of the Cybermen

For example, our first episode is a remake of *An Unearthly Child*. It features the Doctor's daughter going to a school and being noticed by the teachers as being extremely bright. But apart from that it is a different story. It's got Sontarans in it!

W: Tell us about your upcoming projects.

HS: *Doctor Who* is taking up a lot of time and it is by far the biggest project. I'm actually working on another animated series called *Qinc and the Ramblers of the World* but the animation style is much more simple (think *South Park*) and the episodes are much shorter. That's based on a comedy book that I've been writing for years with a friend and it has lot of potential thanks to its bizarre nonsense world. It's a bit like *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. I'm also working on a graphic novel called *Sky Rider* which is sort of a romantic comedy set on a *Star Trek*-like spaceship. But I'm actually really into comedy and so I've also been writing and filming lots of comedy sketches for YouTube. We're developing a mockumentary series about the hidden life of YouTube celebrities (all played by me). I think comedy more than animation is where I'd like to head in life. Thankfully the two can be pretty interchangeable.

BM: I'm starting university soon but I am also working on a graphic novel. Mine's called *Wastelanders: the Last Well in the*

West and features pirates, dinosaurs and sports cars in the Wild West-esq world of Pangaea. It's done in a B-Movie style and concerns the efforts of a Sheriff defending a small ghost-town on his own from invaders. The town is the last place in Pangaea with water. It's actually almost done and I'll be uploading it in instalments over the next few months.

W: Are you planning to launch your own website and, if so, when?

HS: All the episodes will be available on their own YouTube channel but we're going to set up a website for the show as well. This website will have deleted scenes, trailers, downloads, commentaries, a forum and other little extras for fans.

W: Do you have any advice for newbie fan-fiction writers who are looking to set up their own series?

BM: Buy a little book and write down all your thoughts. I've got three volumes of notes and doodles and I refer to them constantly. Also, forums are a great way of getting your ideas and finding support. This project would not have been possible had it not been for the *Doctor Who Forum*, and that's why they're thanked at the end of each episode's credits.

W: Speaking of online fandom take us to our final question. Right now, many fan-fiction writers are keenly displaying their efforts on the various *Doctor Who* forums. Yet, strange as it may sound, some well established fan-fiction series and fanzines have a hard time attracting submissions. Why do you think this is the case?

HS: We were lucky finding such support for our series. We got help from many fan-fiction writers. But there a lot of projects which seem to die. I think that fandom has existed for so long that people might have seen everything fan fiction has to offer. That's why our project has a chance of standing out – because it is in a rarely seen medium.

BM: But fan fiction will always exist. People will always be able to see something they love in new and original ways.

Many thanks to Hamish Steele and Barney McKenna of *Doctor Who Regenerated* for answering *Whotopia's* questions. *Whotopia* is pleased to credit Hamish Steele as designer of this issue's cover – thanks Hamish.

For further information about *Doctor Who Regenerated*, visit www.spune-who.deviantart.com

James Moran has written episodes for popular television shows such as *Torchwood (Sleeper)*, *Doctor Who (The Fires of Pompeii)*, and *Primeval*. James took time out from his busy writing schedule to expound on the joys and pitfalls of becoming a professional writer in the *Doctor Who* world. *Whotopia* Associate Editor Nancy Gross interviewed the very prolific and gracious writer. Part One of our interview follows. Part Two will appear in the next issue.

Whotopia: Were you aware David Tennant was planning to leave *Doctor Who* at the end of the specials, before his official announcement at the National Television Awards? What was your reaction when you heard initially?

James Moran: I had no idea, they only tell me what I need to know, except when they drop massive spoilers on me purely to laugh at the expression on my face. My reaction was exactly the same when I heard Eccleston was leaving: damn, the show is doomed, and nobody can replace him. I couldn't have been more wrong back then, and I look forward to being wrong again. They never put a foot wrong, so I have complete faith that they'll just keep wowing us. It's a huge shame to lose David, he's a wonderful Doctor and I'll miss him in the role. But I can't wait to see what the team pulls out of the hat next.

W: Before they announced Matt Smith as the Eleventh Doctor, did you have any suggestions for Doctor #11 and his regular companion? Would you like to see a female doctor? Or a male companion for a male doctor? Or any other interesting permutations of pairings?

JM: Not touching that one with a 40 foot pole....Seriously though, I am absolutely rubbish at casting, so it was pointless me speculating. But I would like to see a male companion, and would have loved to see the two Davids from *The Next Doctor* having some adventures together. And I think the Doctor can be anything they feel like – male, female, aardvark, lamp – as long as the character remains consistent, it'll still be great. Although maybe a lamp would be a bit boring.

W: And your reaction to Matt's casting?

JM: I haven't seen any of Matt Smith's work yet, apart from that small deleted scene from *In Bruges*, so I have no idea what he'll be like. But he looks good, has proper Mad Hair (essential for a good Doctor), and seems to be hugely excited about playing the part, so I'm highly optimistic and look forward to his first appearance. And nobody knows anything until we start watching Series Five, so there's no sense in anyone worrying or deciding what he'll be like just yet. If the team reckons he's the real deal, then I'm happy, and can't wait to see what he does with the role.

W: You were a big *Doctor Who* fan as a child and the classic show was a "part of your life since age 4". Did you ever try your hand at writing a *Doctor Who* script or story as practice or on spec or just for fun? Or was *The Fires of Pompeii* your first effort to tackle the Doctor?

JM: Since before age 4, really, it's just something I've always watched, so I don't even remember what the first one I watched was. I may have written *Doctor Who* stories as a kid, I can't remember. I definitely acted some out when playing, usually with toys and constructing elaborate headquarters or spaceships out of Lego. As far as I can remember though, *The Fires of Pompeii* was my first actual attempt at a proper *Doctor Who* story. Weirdly, I never played as the Doctor, I was always his companion – don't know if that's a common occurrence, but I always wanted to tag along, not be the main hero. Let him save the day and do the difficult things, I'm just there to happily sightsee, scream, and ask questions.

W: What in your previous writing experience prepared you to do a *Doctor*



THE JAMES MORAN INTERVIEW

A WHOTOPIA EXCLUSIVE

Who script and take part in the entire process from idea to finished episode?

JM: I'd just spent several months working on a Torchwood episode from start to finish, so I was in the TV writing groove. That helped, because when it comes down to it, it is simply another TV script job. I mean, obviously it's much more than that, but you have to try and pretend it's a standard job, or you go mad. I thought it would be easy, because I knew the show inside out, but it's absolutely insane, the hardest show to write for and nobody knows why! You sit down, type "INT: TARDIS – DAY", and your brain just goes "flibble", and you suddenly realise you've been sitting staring into space for 4 hours without typing anything, whispering "I'm writing Doctor Who" to yourself over and over, occasionally shrieking in terror. It really scares the neighbours. But once you force yourself to treat it as a normal script, normal story, let yourself just go with the flow, it comes easier. Still incredibly hard, though.

W: You were originally told *The Fires of Pompeii* would feature a new companion named Penny (described as in her 30s, blunt yet a bit naïve, but generally down to earth). How difficult was it to try to capture Penny, not knowing who would be playing her and were there any advantages in writing a character like that who was an 'unknown quantity'?

JM: No advantages, because they're still a character that exists in someone's head – it makes it harder because you haven't seen them on screen yet, and don't know the rhythm of their speech. Although they kept saying "like Donna in *The Runaway Bride*, at the end," so it was heading that way anyway. I tried to not make her too much like Donna, because she wasn't Donna, but little did I know she was going to be. It's hard when someone else is trying to explain to you who a person is like, and you're trying to make sure they sound right.



David Tennant and Catherine Tate in various scenes from "The Fires of Pompeii"



More scenes from "The Fires of Pompeii"

W: Once Catherine Tate was on board, did you have to do massive rewrites? Were you somewhat relieved to have an existing template and character to write to?

JM: Not massive, I'd been going in that direction anyway, and trying to pull away from it – so I just relaxed and went with Donna. Looking at my very first draft, with Penny, she's actually the same person as Donna, same attitude, but just a bit wordier. She'd give a long, complicated comeback, whereas Donna would just come out with something short and snappy. It definitely makes it easier if there's a character you can watch on screen to see how they talk.

W: Which elements did Russell T Davies ask you to insert in *The Fires of Pompeii* to further the series-long story arc? His brief apparently included featuring a large moral dilemma, fire creatures under a volcano, single-family POV, and an escape pod flying out of a volcanic eruption. What else were you asked to include or add? What element that you came up with yourself is your favourite?

JM: The story-arc stuff (something on your back, she is returning, lost

planet) was added by him, and he wouldn't tell me what they meant – partly because he knows spoilers drive me mad, partly because it reduces the chance of things leaking out. Everything else comes from notes, or discussions we had, so it's hard to say what was an instruction or what came out of script chats. The thing of mine that's my favourite is Donna putting her hand on top of his, on the lever – helping him make the decision, taking a share of the responsibility, telling him it's okay and needs to be done, all with one silent action.

W: In his book *The Writer's Tale*, RTD gives you 'special' thanks for allowing an in-depth look at the rewriting process related to your Doctor Who script. Did you have any trepidation exposing that painstaking process to the public, since it was, in a sense, your 'baby'? How did you feel about going through that rigorous rewriting process and would you have preferred greater control over the final script?

JM: No trepidation at all, I was happy to let people see into the process, see how much of an influence he really is. I don't think he gets enough credit, and also I think it's interesting to see how these things work, from the outside. Because I came into an in-production show, and played my part, I felt less protective of it in a way, which meant I could be more ruthless when cutting stuff out. The rewriting process was something that everyone knows up front might happen, and I was fine with it – and when it happened, it was like getting a master class in writing, you get the new version back and think "ah, so that's how it's done". I always want more control over everything, but on this occasion, I was happy to learn from the best. It feels much more like a team effort than anything else.

W: Name one favourite villain from Classic and New series? One favourite creature? Favourite classic Doctor and companion?

JM: Villain: Classic, not really a favourite, but the Master always scared me more than the others, because I always knew that he genuinely could defeat the Doctor, given the chance. Any time he turned up, I was worried. New, can't go wrong with the Daleks, I still get that thrill of excitement every time they appear.

Creature: Do Cybermen count as a creature? I say they do, so there. They always scared me too – the Daleks can be quite funny, because they hate EVERYTHING and want to kill EVERYONE, it's almost endearing. But the Cybermen want to make you into one of them, it's worse than death, and nobody wants that. Classic Doctor & Companion: Fourth Doc, Sarah Jane. And I'll fight anyone who says otherwise.

W: Would you like to see a Doctor Who film, or would past efforts make you sceptical? If yes, would you like to try your hand at writing it?

JM: I don't know, I think Doctor Who belongs on telly at teatime, so the family can sit around and watch together. It's more cosy and intimate

than the movies. But if we're talking a feature-length adventure for TV, then there's no reason why not, just needs a big enough story. If we're talking a cinema movie, then I don't know if there's a need for it – it'd take ages, and then be over in two hours, I'd rather have 13 episodes. Would I like to write it?? Dude. I would have written *The Fires of Pompeii* for free. I would have PAID them. Don't tell them I said that. (Russell, if you're reading this, I already spent the money, you can't have it back.)

W: It used to be much easier for an aspiring writer with no representation or agent to submit unsolicited Doctor Who stories to the BBC as scripts, or BBC books, or Big Finish, etc. Nowadays, it's nigh on impossible for a new writer to get a foot in the door in the vast empire that is Doctor Who. Can one still break through the old-fashioned way, or is it essential to have an agent? Any additional pointers, as mentioned in your blog, that you can offer here?

JM: There are still ways to get into the non-TV stuff – you hear about it all the time, writers saying things like “it's impossible to get in this way, but it happened to work for me this one time” – you definitely need an agent, except for those people who didn't, etc. But the best way to become a Doctor Who writer, is to be a writer. You can't just write Doctor Who stuff and nothing else. Either you

want to be a writer, or you want your name on something Doctor Who-related – that sounds harsh, but being a writer is something you have to do, you have stories bursting in your head that are crying to get out, all kinds of stories, with all kinds of characters. You need to be writing, all the time, re-writing, reading, learning, experiencing life, and if you're good enough and passionate enough, then you'll break into the business. Once you do, then you have just as much chance of writing for Doctor Who as any other writer. Everyone wants good writing, so as long as you're good, you will succeed. Might take a while, but talent, hard work, and persistence are essential.

W: What is your view on fan fiction in general, and specifically the fiction dealing with Doctor Who and the more risqué possibilities of Torchwood? Do you feel that fanfic authors can successfully transition to commercial writing or is fanfic a whole different mindset that might interfere if you want a career in writing?

JM: I can't speak for other writers – but if someone is sufficiently inspired by something I wrote to actually go off and spend the time and effort to write their own stories about it, then that's amazing, as far as I'm concerned. I mean, you want the audience to connect with your work, and you couldn't really ask for a better compliment. As for the risqué possibilities, hey, whatever tickles your fancy and doesn't hurt anyone is cool in my book. And you all probably know by now I have a filthy mind.

There's no reason fanfic authors can't transition to commercial stuff, for the same reason non-fanfic authors can do so – if you're good, you'll break in somehow, if you're not, you won't. Doesn't matter where you start. I'm not hugely familiar with fanfic, so I don't know if there's a different mindset (and obviously I'm not legally allowed to read any, which makes it tricky to discuss it properly), but I'd imagine that fanfic stories have beginnings, middles and ends, just like any other stories. The only thing that will stop you breaking in is if you only write fanfic, as most

people aren't allowed to read it, to avoid legal problems. Write it by all means, but write your own stuff too, so you can get your work read.

W: How does writing for Torchwood compare to writing for Doctor Who? Did you deliberately strive for that darker, more sinister, more 'grown up' tone in your Torchwood episodes?

JM: Well, I did Torchwood before Doctor Who, and it was my first TV gig, so I just came up with what I thought was a cool story idea – one that would enable me to have lots of action, excitement, drama, banter, and interesting characters. One that I could show off with, basically. Which is a good attitude when writing anything. So going to Doctor

Who, there were some things you just can't do (swearing, sex, killing babies in comedy ways). I do have two strands of my mind – one can do friendly, cheery, family fun stuff, one is a dark, twisted path filled with thorns. Both have good and bad points. The only way they compare is in what you can and can't do, but in terms of stories, they're just the same: what is the most interesting, exciting, dramatic story I can tell this week?

W: Who is your favourite character to write for on Torchwood? Which character is most difficult to write for?

JM: I could write lines for Ianto all day long, because he makes me laugh, and he can also do the serious stuff really well. But Jack is fun too, as he can say whatever the hell he likes, and gets away with it because he's Jack. They're all easy to write for, though.

W: Any chance more Sleeper Cells will crop up in Doctor Who or Torchwood or anywhere anytime soon?

JM: Well, they're still here, a cell in nearly every major city, so you never know. The actual invasion could happen at any moment – today, tomorrow, in a thousand years. Until then, they'll be watching. Waiting... Will they come back on screen? I don't know.

W: Now that you've written for Doctor Who and Torchwood, would you like to write for the Sarah Jane Adventures? Have you been watching the show? If so, what do you think of it?

JM: I'd love to write for it, it's a brilliant show. I watched the very first one, just to be polite, thinking it'd be a kiddie thing – but it hooked me, and I've watched every single one so far. It's really mature, clever, and complex, I love it to bits. I think they filled all their writing slots though, so I'm out of luck for now. But I remind them every time I see them that I'm available...

Look out for Part Two of this interview in the next issue of Whotopia. James talks about the writing process, upcoming projects, and zombies taking over the world. You don't want to miss it!

Our undying gratitude to James Moran for answering Whotopia's questions. You can keep up with James' brilliant advice to aspiring writers, occasional rants, and global misadventures at his blog: <http://www.jamesmoran.blogspot.com>

INTERVIEW BY NANCY GROSS



THE NEXT DOCTOR

In Review



The Next Doctor had an added impetus for fans as it marks the countdown to the forthcoming departure of David Tennant as the Tenth Doctor. Although the story itself is rather bland, it serves to show what a superb Doctor David Tennant is. He will be sadly missed and virtually impossible to replace. However, the star of this particular story was undoubtedly David Morrissey as the supposed 'Next Doctor'.

It was a refreshing change not to have a contemporary Christmas story for a change. Doctor Who has always excelled when its stories are set in Victorian England such as *Evil of the Daleks*, *Talons of Weng-Chiang* and *The Unquiet Dead* are proof of this and despite its rather slight story *The Next Doctor* absorbs the atmosphere of a Victorian Christmas superbly.

This is in no small part due to the superb direction of WHO newcomer, Andy Goddard who delivers the goods superbly, all the more remarkable because Goddard has to me always been one of the weakest and most uninspired *Torchwood* directors. Whilst I hope that he will return to direct more WHO, I say this with caution since James Strong did a fantastic job on *The Impossible Planet/The Satan Pit* and has done nothing of note since.

That said the actual story is slight to the point of being non-existent. 'The Doctor' is investigating the mysterious death of Philanthropic clergyman Rev Aubrey Fairchild who was found with mysterious burn marks on his forehead and the death of one Jackson Lane whose body has never been found.

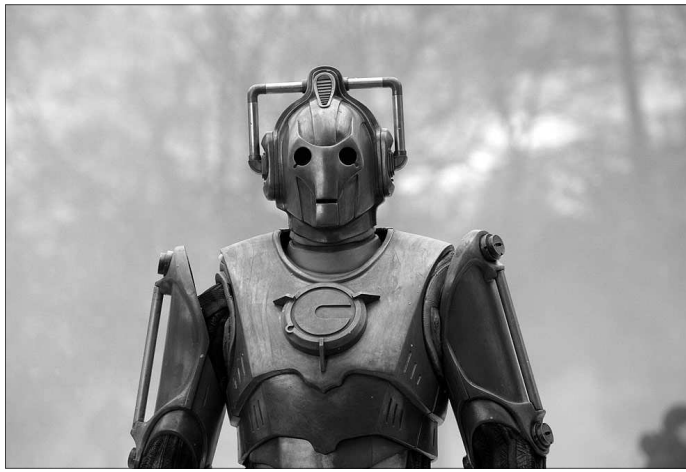
David Morrissey gives a superb performance throughout and if anything is even better than David Tennant, so much so that it is a great shame to discover (all too quickly) that his character isn't a Time Lord but a man who moved to London to take up a post at the university. The Cybermen, hiding in his house killed his wife Caroline and took his son Frederick.

Morrissey's performance is outstanding from his confident, slightly arrogant 'Doctor' whose 'TARDIS' is a hot air balloon - the acronym TARDIS on this occasion standing for Tethered Aerial Release Tethered In Style'. His manner varies from gross self confidence as he proclaims himself to be, 'The One, The only and the best' to the sorrow of the reawakening of his memories of Caroline's death which are truly moving. He exudes bravado, destroying Cybermen with. Info tabs as they attempt to eliminate the Doctor in Fairchild's Vicarage and those stood by Miss Hartigan as The Doctor encounters her for the first time with their own info tabs.

Velele Tshabalala is superb as Jackson Lane's feisty companion, Rosita. Indeed it is to be hoped that Steven Moffatt will have the gumption to return to Victorian England and ensure that Rosita will board the TARDIS for real as this feisty ethnic cockney is right up there with Rose, Martha and Donna and it is to be hoped that we do see her again, to not do so would be a waste of a golden opportunity. Her shining moment, indeed one of the highlights of the story is that wherein she thumps Miss Hartigan receiving the tongue in cheek rebuke from the Tenth Doctor, 'Can I say I completely disapprove'.

“
David Tennant gives his most assured performance since the episode *Midnight*.

David Tennant gives his most assured performance since the episode *Midnight*. This is the tenth Doctor we have come to know and love. He is wise, eccentric, cheeky and understanding. This is the Tenth Doctor at his very best and considering the uninspiring list names who have been cited as his replacement I for one wish he would change his mind about leaving as on this performance he has another season or two in him yet.



Dervla Kirwan gives a noteworthy performance as Workhouse Matron Miss Mercy Hartigan who is in the pay of the Cybermen. Over the past week since the story was broadcast here in the UK I have heard Miss Hartigan compared to Lady Peinforte of *Silver Nemesis* fame. There are obvious similarities but Hartigan is far more subtle (and much better acted) and in a time when women, unlike today knew their place and didn't aspire to careers the power she exudes is remarkable.



What lets the character down, other than the fact that she comes over as an atypical, if rather pantomimesque villainess is her shock reaction when she learns that she is to sit on the throne of the Cyberking, the scene wherein her mind is joined with that of the 'king' thus removing the whites of her eyes evokes memories of the Bene Gesserit sisterhood after they have endured the Water of Life ceremony in Frank Herbert's novel *Dune*.

Miss Hartigan having ordered the Cybermen to slaughter the vicar and most of the mourners keeps alive several philanthropists including messers scones and Cole who are soon seen wearing lumic style earpods as under Miss Hartigan's control they round up local orphans as part of the attempt to awaken the Cyberking. Here one must ask why, apart from an obvious *Oliver Twist* moment, when the cybermen are more than capable of turning the primitive Victorian machinery themselves. The only purpose this seems to serve is for us to learn what happened to Frederick Lane who is rescued by the Doctor.



One could say that Tom Langford who plays Frederick is a graduate of the Matthew Waterhouse school of acting, but the lad is given little to do other than be rescued by the Doctor then embraced by his father as the Cyberking stomps around London.

The scenes of Fairchild's funeral wherein Miss Hartigan, inappropriately dressed for a Victorian Christmas eve in a scarlet coloured dress with an open neck, yet not once does she shiver!!! I must confess that I am not a fan of the new Cybermen at all but this is their best story yet. Having spent a large amount of the story wondering how Lumic alternative universes Cybermen end up in Victorian England we learn that they stole a Dimension board from the Daleks which allowed them to time travel. This is a bit of a cliché but in a story where plot takes second place to plot, it hardly matters.

It must be said however, that by and large the appearance of the Cybermen in this story is almost as superfluous as their appearance in *SILVER NEMESIS* back in 1988. In this story they seem to have no other purpose than to be THE monster or merely to pre-empt the coming of the Cyberking, which as a big clunking robot of almost Season 12 vintage, could have been any huge robot!!! However, I do wonder what was the point in putting the cybercontroller in those ridiculous 'shades'. Is this the beginning of 'Cybercool' or had he just returned from a sun-

filled fortnight in Majorca?

The cylindrical Info Stamps are something of a mixed blessing. Those which show the history of London from 1066 to 1851 and which were used by the Cybermen as part of their invasion plan and that which Jackson Lane found showing the Doctor's history and ten incarnations, thus giving us a much more subtle *Earthshock*-style flashback sequence, which led him to believe he is the Doctor are superb innovations which work, but those which act as weapons, whilst giving us two terrific action scenes as Lane uses one to destroy the two cybermen who are attempting to delete the Doctor at Fairchild's parsonage and which he later uses to destroy the two who are guarding Miss Hartigan as she confronts the Doctor are something of a cliché.

It is a great pity that the power of The Cyberking's technology isn't gone into more deeply as Hartigan claims she can see infinity and the Vortex. This is rather akin to Rose looking into the heart of the TARDIS in *The Parting of The Ways* and although Hartigan has a mind strong enough to control the Cybermen, it is pure cliché.

Alas, the story has two great letdowns. The first is the Cybershades. We are told that they are creatures with the brain of a dog or cat. They look more like the Taran hunting beasts from *The Androids of Tara* on all fours, or a miniature long haired Daschund on all fours. They have great agility and can steer a horse and carriage. Apart from that they have no purpose whatsoever.

The other major disappointment is The Cyberking. It looks very much like a clumsier version of the Giant Robot from Tom Baker's debut story and he sight of it clunking about Victorian London on Christmas Day does rather bring back memories of King Kong!!!

Unfortunately the story climaxes with a piece of pure 1930s B-Movie pap as the awoken cyberking stomps around Victo-

rian London destroying anything and everything in it's path whilst the Doctor, in Jackson Lane's TARDIS ie hot air balloon destroys the thing with a dimension bolt eventually sending it back into the time vortex where it will eventually be dissolved, well, I for one hope it will as I couldn't bear to watch the stupid looking thing again!!!

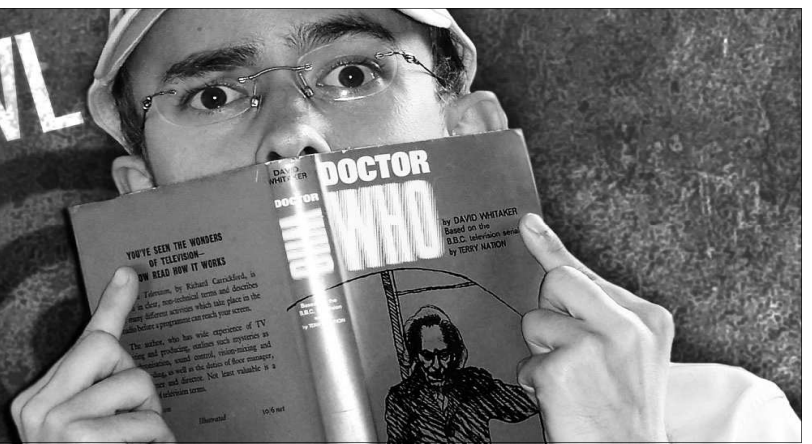
The story's ending is a mixed blessing. We are again treated to an example of the tenth Doctor's loneliness as he tells Jackson that all his companions leave him and Jackson's bemused reaction to the console room is superbly amusing. It is a great pity that the story ends with the Doctor accepting Jackson's invitation to Christmas dinner and not with any sort of clue to the Easter special *Planet of The Dead*.

As Christmas specials go, this was undoubtedly one of the best. Though that isn't saying very much. Once we find out that Jackson Lane (a name far too American for Victorian England) isn't the next Doctor, there is basically no plot of any great kind. The best one can say is that this is a butchered Victorian version of *The Invasion* despite the fact that the characterisation is incredibly strong. THE NEXT

Continued on page 38

TARGET TRAWL

WITH NICK MELLISH



My name: Nick Mellish.
My mission: to read all the TARGET novelizations, in order.
My reason: just because.

As I sit down to type out this article on my trusty MacBook, I find myself wearing thick gloves, my lower-half wrapped up in black blankets like some sort of cocoon, my chest covered by thermal everythings, as the cold freeze hitting England right now continues with aplomb and out heating proves to be as ineffectual as K-9 on cobbled surfaces.

It is, to be blunt, bloody freezing.

But, on with the show! This month, can Doctor Who outwit the sinister Think Tank before the world is menaced by a Giant Robot?
 (CLUE: Yes, he can.)

Doctor Who and the Giant Robot
By Terrance Dicks
Based on Robot by Terrance Dicks

Looking back over my years in fandom, I don't recall ever meeting anyone who has actively disliked *Robot*, though I am not sure why this is.

Okay, so it's not like it tramples all over the characters or flips the bird to established continuity, but... well, it's not amazing, is it?

It doesn't do anything actively wrong, but it never does anything actively great, either. It's just sort of there.

Part of the reason I feel it gets overlooked in terms of scorn is that it contains a lot that's good: Harry Sullivan, the titular Robot's design - flimsy



Nick has a special visitor drop by to read the book to him

hands aside - Sarah Jane Smith, investigative journalist, actually indulging in some investigative journalism.

Oh, yes, and it also introduces us to the Fourth Doctor.

Sort of.

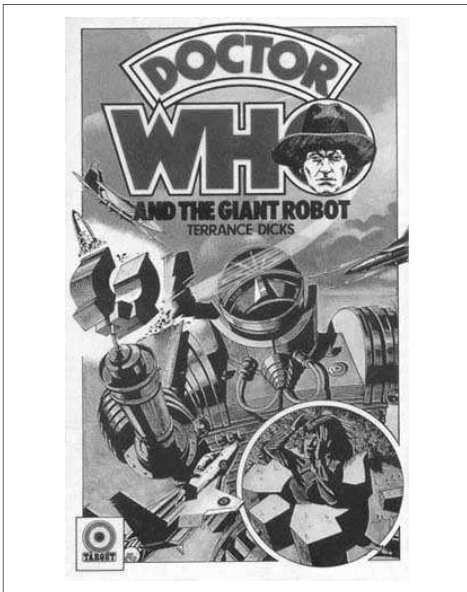
Y'see, it's definitely Tom Baker playing the role, and he's definitely wearing the correct costume, but he doesn't really feel like Tom Baker's Doctor, does he? True, Baker's Doctor changed wildly throughout his varying Producers, but here he is unlike any other portrayal of him. Think Pertwee injected with 'eccentric' and you get the idea.

Part of *Robot's* problem is that it doesn't give this new Doctor time to estab-

lish himself really, stuck as he is permanently in Pertwee's shadow in terms of surroundings and story (not a new observation, granted, but a true one nevertheless), and true as this is on screen, the case is also the same in print.

Written and released very soon after *Robot* was transmitted, the novelisation proves itself to be very faithful to what we saw on screen, though this is not necessarily a good thing. Yes, Harry Sullivan is still fantastic; yes, Sarah Jane Smith, investigative journalist, remains steeped in investigative journalism; and yes, we do get the nifty robot design on the front cover of the book.

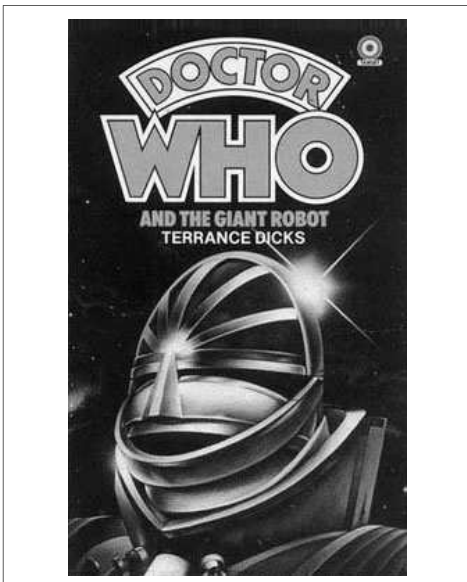
But the Doctor... oh, the Doctor. He's still the same rather mystifying



The original cover for "Doctor Who and The Giant Robot"

persona we saw on screen, far removed from what Baker achieved but mere weeks later in the rest of Season Twelve. This is not meant to be a slight on Terrance Dicks, by the way; with no way of knowing where the character would go next, it's fair enough like he write the role more as Doctor Generic than any firm stamp on how the character should go. It's just a pity that Doctor Generic gets carried over into the main story, too, which ticks all the boxes but never strays beyond box ticking.

Like the scripts, the novelisation whisks



The cover for the second printing of "The Giant Robot"

along nicely without taking risks and feels terribly cosy overall. The occasional embellishment– the background information on the grumpy guard to begin with, the Brigadier's feelings of helplessness

The thefts of electronic components and secret plans have been happening both at night and in broad daylight and with the Doctor confined to sick bay there is little the Brigadier can do. When the Doctor recovers, he inspects the site of the most recent theft and realises that he and his friends are up against something distinctly non-human as heavy vehicle tracks have been found in the vicinity of the supposedly secure buildings which housed the components. In a later incident, the perpetrator actually drills through the ground to gain access to a heavily armed vault at Emmett Electronics.

It is Sarah who first meets the culprit, a massive robot invented by one Professor J.P. Kettlewell while he was working for the Think Tank, a government installation involved in developing emerging technologies. The robot has been re-programmed under the direction of the director of Think Tank, Miss Hilda Winters, and used to obtain the means for constructing a disintegrator gun with which the Scientific Reform Society - of which she is a leading member - can obtain the computer codes controlling the nuclear weapons of the world's leading powers. In this way, the SRS hope to hold the world to ransom unless their demands for a purer way of life are met.

Kettlewell, although claiming no knowledge of Miss Winters's activities, is actually a party to them, and is ultimately killed by his creation when he realises his error and tries to stop the Robot from wiping out a group of UNIT troops.

The Robot suffers an electronic/mental breakdown upon killing its creator, and this coincides with the Brigadier's attempt to destroy the behemoth with the disintegrator gun. Unfortunately this causes the robot to grow and the now gigantic creature goes on the rampage through the UNIT troops, protecting only Sarah Jane with whom it feels an affinity. The Doctor manages to save the day by brewing up a virulent metal virus described in Kettlewell's notes, and using it to eat away the towering titan until there is nothing left but a small heap of decaying rust, which itself is soon destroyed by the virus.

With this problem sorted out, the Doctor, now fully recovered following his change of appearance, decides that the time has come to travel once more. He persuades Sarah Jane and UNIT medic, Surgeon-Lieutenant Harry Sullivan, to join him. The Brigadier is less than pleased to see the TARDIS dematerialise, as the Doctor has been invited to an audience at the Palace.

Synopsis from Doctor Who: The Fourth Doctor Handbook by David J. Howe, Mark Stammers and Stephen James Walker

with everything going on – are nice enough but, again, feel very much like they are fulfilling the 'make sure you expand a little bit' role than being exciting

additions.

The flaws from the televised script– the rather jarring comedy scene of the Doctor rapidly changing his clothing, the complete non-shock that Kettlewell is the bad guy– remain. Heck, they even keep in the Action Man tank (though that admittedly works far better here than it did on screen).

Indeed, it's the comedy moments that come off the worst, much as on screen. This new Doctor was to apparently lose the sternness of Pertwee's incarnation; it just didn't need to do it by pratfalling on stage with naff card tricks.

In summary then? A bit of a miss this one, really. It's not badly written, it's not badly constructed, it's not a bad read; it's just devoid of any real attraction beyond the obvious ones– Sarah, Harry, the first story for the Fourth Doctor. Except, it's not really the Fourth Doctor's first story at all.

Do yourself a favour, and dig out *The Ark in Space*. That's when things started to come together.

THINGS I LEARNT FROM THIS BOOK

◆ Sarah Jane gets thrills from the idea of Miss. Winters in handcuffs. There's a Gay Agenda joke to be made here I am sure, but I'll restrain myself.

◆ Apparently, the Third Doctor and Fourth Doctor alike have the ability to get on with anyone straight away. Really, the Third Doctor? Really? I must have missed that one on screen; maybe he was too busy shouting down authority figures. ... Really?!

◆ Things explode into nothingness (quote) with alarming regularity when Disintegrator Guns are involved.

◆ Oh, and one more: how the Hell did Benton get a promotion? Witness his role in this book. He messes up quite literally every task he is set pre-promotion, and carries on in the same sterling form post-, too. One presumes he had some mighty fine escapades off-screen. Godspeed, Benton!

Nick's Target Trawl is featured in each issue of Whotopia

in this final look at some of the themes and motifs of *Doctor Who* we take a look at a brace of story arcs with one all-important ingredient in common: the Doctor's infamous arch enemy, the Master.

Fans of the series since 2005 were given their first look at the Doctor's long-time foe in the Tenth Doctor adventure, *Utopia* (2007). This story formed the opening act in a three-part tale which became the finale to Series Three and saw the rogue Time Lord portrayed by not one but by two actors. Those devotees with longer memories may recall a certain Master-based theme which ran through three particular adventures in the early 1980s. The very same theme has joined the ever-growing army of DVD box sets under the title *New Beginnings*; and it is this subject which forms our first helping of story arc-telling.

Back in the day when John Nathan-Turner was still finding his feet as series producer, and a certain science-oriented journalist and former actor, Christopher H. Bidmead, was gainfully employed as script editor, a plan was hatched to bring back the Doctor's dastardly Time Lord counterpart. The idea stemmed from Nathan-Turner. His enthusiasm for the series' ever-growing history ex-

erted a considerable influence upon the shape of *Doctor Who* throughout the 1980s. The Master's return marks the opening salvo in his nostalgia-driven storytelling.

Nathan-Turner's determination to see the Master brought back presented Bidmead and the rest of the production team with a decidedly knotty challenge. Ultimately, it fell to Johnny Byrne's inspired script, *The Keeper of Traken* (1981), to present the villain's long-awaited resurrection. Byrne's story tells of how the Master, still desperately clinging to life after his last appearance in Robert Holmes' *The Deadly Assassin* (1976), plots to become the long-lived and near-omnipotent Keeper of Traken. As

the newly-installed Keeper, the Master threatens a tyrannous reign. In the nick of time, the Doctor thwarts his villainous contemporary, but not before the Master absorbs sufficient power from the Keepership to enable him to hijack the body of the Traken Consul, Tremas.

With his mobility fully restored, the Master is once more able to wreak havoc upon the universe, setting the stage for Bidmead's widely acclaimed *Logopolis* (1981). Tying together the entropy theme which runs so finely throughout Season Eighteen, Bidmead



Nathan-Turner's determination to see the Master brought back presented Bidmead and the rest of the production team with a decidedly knotty challenge.



THEMES AND STORY ARCS

Villains and Vendettas

weaves a tale which not only gives the iconic Fourth Doctor an unforgettable exit, but also presents the viewer with an all-new Master, as portrayed by Anthony Ainley. The long-awaited clash between the Doctor and the Master is just the tip of the iceberg, however. Trapping the Doctor in a shrinking TARDIS and leaving in his wake a trail of shrunken corpses are mere appetisers in the Master's grand scheme. His main course involves unlocking the secret mathematics of the Logopolitans and ultimately holding the entire universe to ransom.

As an adventure, *Logopolis* is certainly weightier than some of the Doctor's other outings, if not to say downright cerebral. This is no accident. Bidmead's remit as script editor was to instill a stronger degree of scientific thinking into the series. As such it should come as no surprise that the season finale, penned by Bidmead himself, has an overtly scientific tone to it.

The closing act in this trilogy is Bidmead's equally crafty *Castrovalva* (1982). Carrying on from the tense climax of *Logopolis*, a recently regenerated Doctor must do battle against his old adversary by way of avoiding the Big Bang; only to be followed by yet another trap of the space-time sort involving the mysterious citadel of Castrovalva. Ainley's portrayal of the deceptive Portreeve – the newly restored Master's first disguise – is arguably his finest hour in the series. In addition, characters like Shardovan the librarian and Mergrave the apothecary lend the narrative a richness to which budding *Doctor Who* script writers should pay careful heed. The final touch in this artful tale is given by the unique nature of the collapse of the Master's fictive town of Castrovalva, inspired – at least in part – by the works of the Dutch artist, M.C. Escher. As a standalone adventure *Castrovalva* is a winner; as the concluding segment in a well-built story arc it is praiseworthy indeed.

In regard to other thematic exercises, Season Eighteen's *The Master Trilogy* – as the BBC's official *Doctor Who* website would have it – is right up there with the best of them. Skillfully composed and carefully managed, a good deal of merit must go to Bidmead for guiding its construction and penning two thirds of its content. What is more, bearing in mind his influence on *The E-Space Trilogy*, as well as his shrewd employment of Season Eighteen's entropy motif in *Logopolis*, Bidmead should go down as one of the series' most capable



Different guises of the Master

Top: The Keeper of Traken/ Center: Logopolis

Bottom: Castrovalva

story-arc writers.

If the largely unexpected appearance of the Master in 1981 was a coup for Nathan-Turner et al., the rumours surrounding the evil genius' comeback in 2007 fuelled the fan forums for a goodly time. The growing speculation was quite understandable. Like the Bad Wolf (2005) and Torchwood (2006) motifs, the Master's return had been subtly advertised for some while. This time the build-up was by way of a shadowy figure known simply as Mister Saxon. In *Love and Monsters* (2006) a newspaper article makes reference to Saxon's growing political success; and his name is mentioned during the climax of *The Runaway Bride* (2006) and in the Series Three opener *Smith and Jones* (2007). Still further, rumour steadily becomes substance when his decidedly sinister associates make an appearance in *The Lazarus Experiment* (2007) and 42 (2007).

Dropping hints here and there is only the half of it; a well-judged and highly satisfying finish is what makes a story arc tick. The opening promise of this much-anticipated conclusion was certainly achieved in *Utopia* (2007). Revisiting the Master in this story involved addressing one very serious obstacle, however. Since the rebirth of *Doctor Who* in 2005 it had been made clear that the only Time Lord to survive the Time War was the Doctor. How, therefore, could the Master be restored without stripping him of his Time Lord status?

The answer which Russell T Davies and his team came up with was little short of genius. Most crucially, it drew upon a plot device presented in an earlier adventure. In Paul Cornell's much-acclaimed *Human Nature* (2007) and *The Family of Blood* (2007) it is revealed that a Time Lord can alter his or her biology by way of a machine called a chameleon arch. Once transformed, the Time Lord's true essence is kept safely stored away in an unremarkable vessel: a fob watch. When the watch is opened the Time Lord in question reverts back.

Thus, as *Utopia* is played out, those eagle-eyed fans amongst us may have noticed that the kindly – and quite human – Professor Yana wears a fob watch. Soon enough the significance of this otherwise everyday timepiece becomes evident: Professor Yana is the Master in human form. Resurrected by the Time Lords to wage war against the Daleks, the renegade chose to flee the Time War by taking refuge as a human

being at the very end of the universe. As events unfold apace, the Master quickly returns to his wicked ways by dint of murdering his long-time assistant and then attempting to make his getaway in the Doctor's TARDIS. A further twist then follows when the Master is fatally wounded and forced to regenerate. In the last shocking moments of the episode a new, younger Master is unveiled, equally intent upon universe-wide domination and killing the Doctor.

As cliffhangers go, the ending of *Utopia* is one of the best around. However, whether its subsequent parts make the grade remains to be seen. In the case of *The Sound of Drums* (2007), we are given another lively script from the pen of Russell T Davies. The newly-elected British Prime Minister, Harold Saxon (*aka* the Master) engineers a paradoxical situation in which the far-off descendants of the human race (the refugees of the Utopia Project) return to terrorise and devastate their ancestors on present-day Earth. A distinctly manic performance from John Simm as a youthful Master is one of the highlights of this episode. As its dramatic cliffhanger approaches, it seems that only a miracle will save humanity from the Master's terrible schemes; which is where Davies' penchant for the *deus ex machina* ending takes centre stage once again.

Make no mistake about it, as the final episode in this story arc, *Last of the Time Lords* (2007), builds towards its conclusion only something truly incredible will put the world to rights. With a terribly weakened and aged Doctor, an enslaved Earth and the only alleged weapon capable of killing the Master utterly destroyed, Davies conjures up a finale which makes Rose Tyler's Time Vortex experience at the close of *The Parting of the Ways* (2005) look positively tame.

Having created a paradox (*ie*, future humans returning to the present-day and rewriting their own history) Davies goes about dismantling it – in striking fashion – and thereby totally erasing the awful events of the Master's one-year rule over the Earth, save only for the memories of the Doctor and his friends.

As an ensemble piece the resurrection of the Master in 2007 achieves a great deal. Davies' signalling – all the way back to mid-2006 and *Love and Monsters* – is spot-on throughout; and the final return of the Master in *Utopia* is jaw-dropping stuff. But a somewhat contrived ending at the close of *Last of the Time Lords* leaves us with a conclusion that falls some way short of expectations.

The Master is undoubtedly one of the icons of *Doctor Who*. Whilst his appearances in the series have become few and far between, even the briefest of returns will spark off any amount of speculation amongst the fans. In 1981, it was producer John Nathan-Turner who stole a march by re-introducing the Doctor's



premier humanoid adversary after a break of some four years. On that occasion the writing skill of script editor Christopher H. Bidmead and his team of writers made the villain's revival a triumph. In 2007, the challenge of bringing back the Master was mapped out over more than one series, culminating in the explosive three-part finale which saw the Master regenerate on-screen for the first time; and the introduction of a new piece of *Doctor Who* hardware, the Master's Paradox Machine. If you like *deus ex machina* endings this story arc will not disappoint; if not, the chances are you'll feel somewhat let down by the 'it was all a dream'-like finish.

In considering the above story arcs, two points becomes clear. First, there is more than one method to constructing an overarching narrative.

Second, if the ending is at all disappointing the hard work of setting up the theme is wasted. In the first instance, for example, we find a trilogy of stories driven by the machinations of the same villain, the Master. His scheming changes from story to story, but in the main the underlying theme is clearly signposted from start to finish, and the conclusion is satisfying. In the second instance, however, there stands



Dropping hints here and there is only the half of it; a well-judged and highly satisfying finish is what makes a story arc tick.

a series of adventures spread out over the best part of a year's worth of television, which slowly but surely leaves behind it a trail of clues portending to something much greater looming ever nearer. When the 'something' is finally uncovered, it sets off a veritable

fireworks display of action-packed climaxes and finales. However, at the finish there is left the distinct feeling of having been short changed, which in turn colours the success of the story arc as a whole.

Theme- and story arc-writing in *Doctor Who* comes in all shapes and sizes. Over the years we've had season-long heavyweights like *The Trial of a Time Lord*, intriguing three-parters like *The E-Space Trilogy*, and well-crafted backdrops like UNIT. Nowadays, with head writers such as Russell T Davies at the helm, thematic excursions have become a far more subtle business. Cryptic hints and barely-noticed plot threads are painstakingly laid out, each in turn building towards a much-anticipated climax, the latest of which has seen the return of the diabolical Dalek-builder, Davros.

Our short series of theme-based ponderings is now drawn to a close. Of course, this is not to say that we've run out of subjects to explore. Season Twelve's Space Station Nerva backdrop and Season Eighteen's entropy motif both deserve a mention, along with the creation of Torchwood in Series Two (2006) and the return of Davros in Series Four (2008). More, if new head writer Stephen Moffat chooses to pursue a storytelling formula in the same vein as that of his predecessor, there are sure to be plenty more examples of overarching stories in the future. Here's to the specials of 2009 and another story arc to enjoy.

SARAH JANE ADVENTURES

Season 2 Reviews

+ The second year of *The Sarah Jane Adventures* had a huge burden of expectation on its shoulders when it launched back in September. The show's debut season, after a woeful *Slitheen* two-parter, transcended the notion of being mere 'children's television' and delivered a remarkably consistent run of thrilling, funny and entertaining episodes. Could the second year match the highs of the first or turn out to be a mere shadow of events? Our Season 2 reviewers - Brendan Kennedy, Gary Phillips, Nancy Gross, Joe Ford & Ken Holtzhouser - sit down and watch all twelve episodes and report their thoughts on each story. Let's see what they have to say...

EPISODES 1/2: THE LAST SONTARAN



Brendan Kennedy:

The season opener has an uncomfortably wide remit. The departure of Maria and her father, the arrival and swift departure of Kaagh, as well as the actual plot featuring wayward satellites are all delicately interwoven and almost perfectly balanced by Phil Ford and new-to-the show director Joss Agnew. Ford's scripts have a tendency to be very top heavy, usually involving a tremendous amount of plot establishment and character interaction, but very little in the way of a satisfying denouement. The Last Sontaran admirably wraps up Maria's storyline, but the rest of the plot is somewhat of a disappointment. Joss Agnew's direction is vibrant and in places very reminiscent of Graeme Harper's work. It would be fantastic to see his direction on the parent show, either in the specials or during Moffat's era. **6/10**

Gary Phillips:

Just as the first Season of the *Sarah Jane Adventures* got off to a mediocre start with *Revenge of The Slitheen*, then so does the second Season with *The Last Sontaran*. Modern Sontarans seem to have lost the Warlike aggression of the originals and here in a story appallingly directed by one Joss Agnew, Anthony O'Donnell as Commander Kaarg comes over merely as a grumpy old man rather than a valiant warrior. The regulars also seem bored and Maria and Alan's farewell is unremarkable an uninspiring start to the Season. The Last Sontaran is merely a tedious run-around with nothing to recommend it. **1/10**

Nancy Gross:

I was really looking forward to the second series of *Sarah Jane Adventures*, especially after the DW finale. However, the promising start, with

the whole gang together, failed to sustain itself. The Sontaran with his escape pod and very slick armour was well visualized, but the lame acting all around ruined it. I mean, they even couldn't manage convincing mind-controlled zombies! Once again, we see an all-pervasive, global network being turned to evil to destroy the world. Surely, the season premiere deserved more originality. **6/10**

OVERALL RATING: **4.3/10**

EPISODE 3/4: DAY OF THE CLOWN



Brendan Kennedy:

Some very dodgy transformation effects, the woeful miscasting of Bradley Walsh as the titular clown and that accent of his (oi vey!) all drag this episode down in my estimation. My inability to divorce Walsh from his *Coronation Street* role (which will definitely not be as much of an issue for overseas viewers) definitely hampered my enjoyment of what should have been a far more menacing clown. I just can't take the man seriously as an actor! In other casting issues Anjali Mohindra's arrival as the new girl lends the episode greater significance than is probably deserved, but she's a great addition to the cast. As energetic, bubbly and likable as her predecessor, but with a more pronounced emotional intensity, the arrival and development of the teasingly named Rani is the highlight of an otherwise middling season. **7/10**

Gary Phillips:

This is more like it!!! Phil Ford returns with this suspense filled masterpiece which plays upon Children's fears of clowns. Comedian and former *Coronation Street* star Bradley Walsh gives a superb performance as Circus museum owner Elijah Spellman, sinister clown Oddbob and the Pied Piper, an alien who has been abducting children for over 700 years. Unfortunately the story is let down by the Chandra family who are unremarkable but this is more than made up for with Michael Kerrigan, returning to the WHO fold after 19 years. His direction is superbly taut and helps to make this story a masterpiece. **10/10**

Nancy Gross:

I confess, I hate clowns too. That being said, this whole evil clown thing has already been done to death. And this episode used it poorly, with a shape-shifting alien whose mission and powers made very little sense. The Clown turns into a Ringmaster who turns out to be The Pied Piper?! WTF?! Rani and her family are introduced into the show but they strain

my belief. Rani looks and acts older than her putative age, and her Mum and Dad are presented in a much more cartoonish way than Maria's family. **5/10**

OVERALL RATING: 7.3/10

EPISODE 5/6: SECRETS OF THE STARS



Brendan Kennedy:

When originally broadcast, this episode inexplicably received very mixed but mostly negative reviews from the Outpost Gallifrey fans, but I found it a traditional (in the mould of old Who, with plenty of Doctor references thrown in for good measure) romp, with plenty of Gareth Robert's trademark comedy holding the episodes together. Russ Abbot is perfect as the formerly washed up performer (not exactly straying from real life there, is he?) and the episode belts along at a fair old pace. It's nothing special, true, but it's the small details like Clyde shooting to his feet at Trueman's command and Rani's mum's persistence in calling Sarah Jane, "Sarah," as well as Sarah Jane's withering insistence that she's called "Sarah Jane." She never got this narky when Tom Baker's Doctor called her Sarah. Must be a merchandising thing? *Secrets of the Stars* is a fun romp, which has its heart in the right place as well as a well defined sense of humour frequently absent in Phil Ford's scripts. Best of the season. **9/10**

Gary Phillips:

Michael Kerrigan delivers the goods again with this superb story. Comedian Russ Abbott who proved his dramatic credentials in the ITV series *September Song* gives a superb performance as astrologer Martin Trueman. The Chandras are much improved here, although the mother still comes over as a toned down version of Chrissie Jackson. Thankfully the regulars are on top form, in particular Daniel Anthony who has the makings of a superb actor and one hopes that he will go from Strength to strength. If this story has a fault it is that Martin wasn't redeemed at its climax. A superb and intriguing mystery. **9/10**

Nancy Gross:

This would have been a great series-starting episode! Very well done characterizations, including Luke, Trueman, and Cheryl. I cheered when I saw the Doctor, even just in flashbacks. Luke's lament early on about having no birthday telegraphed his pivotal role in saving the world, but at least it made some sort of internal sense. The twist of how the hypnotic spell was actually broken was clever. This story left me wanting to see more of the Ancient Lights and less of the precocious Rani and her caricature family. **7/10**

OVERALL RATING: 8.3/10

EPISODE 7/8: THE MARK OF THE BERSERKER

Brendan Kennedy:

The parental themes of this season begin to come to the fore in this Joseph Lidster penned two-parter. The obligatory "give Lis Sladen a bit of a rest for one episode," approach yielded the superb Trickster two-parter from last year and this year's effort, a spotlight on Clyde and his family is almost as strong. Lidster is renowned for his emotionally heightened scripts and his Torchwood effort, *A Day in the Death*, was the most mature, intelligent, heart-warming and witty script from Torchwood season 2. This episode is thematically similar, with Clyde's yearning to know his father more very similar to the bride from *A Day in the Death*'s desire to know what could have been with her husband. It's an episode that successfully tugs on the heartstrings, but without Sarah Jane the episode



lacks a central charming force to revolve around. **7/10**

Gary Phillips:

I thought *THE LAST SONTARAN* was bad, but *MARK OF THE BERSERKER* was absolutely appalling! What is the point of a Sarah Jane Adventure wherein Sarah Jane is herself largely absent? Here we have Gary Beadle as Clyde's errant dad and here lies this story's problem as Beadle merely recreates his character from *Eastenders*. This story's faults are further compounded by the fact that the alien menace is concealed within a pendant which offers little more than an opportunity for anyone who comes into contact with it to overact. Utter drivel! **0/10**

Nancy Gross:

A welcome change in focus as we get to find out more about Clyde and his family. Clyde's back-story is complex, and it's not glossed over. Right and wrong, love and need, greed and self-sacrifice, are all subtly explored. The return of Maria and her Dad, from across the pond, was most welcome; it showed up the deficiencies in the portrayal of Rani and her family even more as Maria's Dad kicked butt hacking into UNIT's network. Successfully continuing an underlying motif of the show, we see real families with real problems dealt with in a realistic way, despite the sci-fi wrapping. **7/10**

OVERALL RATING: 4.7/10

EPISODE 9/10: THE TEMPTATION OF SARAH JANE SMITH



Brendan Kennedy:

Rather disappointingly this is a somewhat ho-hum retread of Gareth Robert's own *Whatever Happened to Sarah Jane?* All of the same antagonists are in place, the incompetent Graske, the unimpressive-unless-he's-shot-against-a-plain-white-backdrop Trickster and the same macguffin cube all feature. There's some TARDIS related teasing in the second part and the occasional great line ("Is that the fashion in the Punjab?" or words to that effect), but the whole thing never really coalesces like *Whatever Happened...* did. Perhaps that's down to the fact that it's over familiar, what with the story borrowing heavily not only from *Whatever Happened...* but also from Paul Cornell's *Human Nature*. Borrowing from so many esteemed sources, one could imagine such elements would make for a tremendous romp. In places, everything seems to gel wonderfully- the ravaged London, Sarah Jane meeting her parents, and the absolutely wonderful direction. However, *The Temptation of Sarah Jane Smith* is much less than the sum of its parts. **5/10**

Gary Phillips:

Not being a fan of Whatever Happened to Sarah Jane, I wasn't looking forward to this sequel, but in the hands of the maestro Graeme Harper the Trickster's return is a superb story. If there is a problem with this story it is that Sarah Jane's parents seem rather too down-to-Earth and it is hard to imagine Eddie Smith having a sister who not only has a name like Lavinia, but who is also a noted virologist, Sarah's parents should have been more slightly more refined but the moral dilemma she faces in meeting them is deeply moving. A masterpiece of storytelling. **10/10**

Nancy Gross:

This story draws on a lot of familiar themes (shades of Alex's quest in *Ashes to Ashes, Back to the Future*, the Grandfather paradox, etc.), but employs them well. Once I got over my initial shock that Sarah Jane, knowing all she does, would mess with timelines, I enjoyed the ride. The Police Box scene was comic and poignant. The Trickster is definitely a worthy adversary; it was good to see more of him and his powers. Being a time travel tale, this felt a lot like Doctor Who, in a good way. The DW-like background score, however, seemed like a reach. All in all, Gareth Roberts once again delivers an intelligent story that appeals to adults, kids, and fans. **7/10**

OVERALL RATING: 7.3/10

EPISODE 11/12: ENEMY OF THE BANE



Brendan Kennedy:

More of a coda to the season, after the thematic resolution of *The Temptation of Sarah Jane Smith*, Phil Ford's finale features the long awaited and demanded return of Brigadier Alastair Gordon Lethbridge Stewart. It also features the somewhat less demanded return of Samantha Bond's Mrs Wormwood from the New Year's 2007 special, proves a camp delight in these episodes. Quite how appreciated the return of the Brig' is by the show's core audience of CBBC tweens doesn't matter, what matters is how wonderful it is to see him again. Nick Courtenay steps back into the role and despite having a sizeable spare-tyre now; he's very much the same character. The first episode is wonderful; everything falls into place and culminates in a terrific cliff-hanger, with the return of Kaagh from *The Last Sontaran*. However, everything falls apart in the finale thanks in part due to Phil Ford's inability to juggle all of the returning aspects successfully. The Brigadier is hastily written out half-way through and we're left with a mind-numbingly boring confrontation in a field just outside Cardiff (or London- whatever). The final punch in the face is an almost verbatim restatement of Sarah Jane's wonderful love of the universe during the finale scene. It gets more saccharine and intolerable every time it's used. A cynical two-parter that wastes such a well-loved character as the Brigadier. **3/10**

Gary Phillips:

The return of Mrs Wormwood and Commander Kaarg should have been the equivalent of *STOLEN EARTH/JOURNEY'S END* but comes across as a damp squib of a story. Kaarg still comes over as a grumpy old man and Mrs Wormwood was much better in *INVASION OF THE BANE*. Tommy Knight as Luke remains unremarkable. He comes across as permanently bored and I was left disappointed that he didn't join Mrs Wormwood. On the positive side Nicholas Courtney gives his best performance since *INFERNO* as The Brigadier and saves this unremarkable story from total mediocrity. An unremarkable end to a mixed season. **6/10**

Nancy Gross:

This confused mess in the mould of a mini-DW-type finale lumps together disparate returning aliens and characters out of the past. Mrs. Wormwood, outcast from the Bane, manages to get off a few amusing lines, but overall is unconvincing. It was good to see the Brig, although he seemed frail and rather pointless. The main plot clumsily combines fake world myths to introduce a mysterious, powerful entity who turns out to be a dud in the end. This finale left me cold, and Rani and her family still strike me as unrealistic and grating. I hope series three tweaks the family and character dynamic to bring back the old magic to the Sarah Jane team. **6/10**

SEASON OVERALL RATING: 5/10

INTRO BY BOB FURNELL

REVIEW PANEL: BRENDAN KENNEDY, GARY PHILLIPS, NANCY GROSS

STORY MONTAGES: ANDY HACKETT • VISIT ANDY'S WEBSITE AT WWW.GENESISARK.CO.UK

SARAH JANE ADVENTURES SEASON 2 EPISODE GUIDE

Episode 1: [The Last Sontaran - Part 1](#)

When Sarah Jane investigates the report of strange lights in the sky by the Tycho Project radio telescope, she discovers a lone surviving Sontaran from the failed conversion of Planet Earth who wants revenge for the deaths of his comrades. Meanwhile, Maria must make a decision when her father is offered a new job in America.

Episode 2: [The Last Sontaran - Part 2](#)

Sontaran Commander Kaagh begins his plan for revenge against the planet- and Sarah Jane only has forty-five minutes to stop him.

Episode 3: [The Day of the Clown - Part 1](#)

A new family, the Chandras, move to Bannerman Road. However, the daughter of the family- Rani- is seeing a creepy-looking clown. There have also been reports of children disappearing. When a friend of Clyde's vanishes, and he starts seeing the clown as well, Sarah Jane's investigation leads to Spellman's Magical Museum of the Circus and the revelation that an ages-old fairy tale (that of the Pied Piper) may actually be real.

Episode 4: [The Day of the Clown - Part 2](#)

As Spellman begins his plan to spirit away all the school-children, Sarah Jane must face some of her oldest and deepest fears in order to defeat him.

Episode 5: [Secrets Of The Stars - Part 1](#)

A fraudulent astrologer named Martin Trueman is hit by an extraterrestrial body and begins to impress everyone with his uncanny predictions. However, what he predicts for Sarah Jane is far from pleasant...

Episode 6: [Secrets Of The Stars - Part 2](#)

Possessed by the Ancient Lights, Martin Trueman begins to take over the population via their star signs, one by one. Sarah Jane and the others must infiltrate Trueman's inner circle to stop him.

Episode 7: [The Mark Of The Berserker - Part 1](#)

An alien pendant which gives the wearer the power to control others finds its way into the hands of one of Rani's schoolmates and then to Rani itself- but the use of the pendant causes a strange mark on the skin. Rani leaves it with Mr Smith for safekeeping. Meanwhile, Clyde has to face a family issue- after five years, his estranged father Paul comes to visit. But Clyde's decision to tell Paul about what he and the others do brings trouble when Paul takes the pendant...

Episode 8: [The Mark Of The Berserker - Part 2](#)

With Clyde's father Paul possessed by the alien pendant, he takes Clyde off for some fun. With a little help from some old friends, Rani and Luke try and track them down, leading to a waterside confrontation with the Berserker...

Episode 9: [The Temptation Of Sarah Jane Smith - Part 1](#)

When Sarah Jane finds a time fissure, her curiosity leads her to go through it and she finds herself in 1951, in the village of Foxgrove, where she was born. Eager to see the parents she never knew, she makes a decision that will have catastrophic consequences.

Episode 10: [The Temptation Of Sarah Jane Smith - Part 2](#)

With the Earth devastated under the control of the Trickster, Sarah Jane and Luke go back to 1951 and change things back to how they were- which means that Sarah Jane's parents must die. Will she make that sacrifice?

Episode 11: [Enemy Of The Bane - Part 1](#)

Mrs Wormwood returns to see Sarah Jane- but to ask help. The Bane have turned against Mrs Wormwood and are preparing to unleash a dark power against the universe. However, to thwart the Bane's plan, Sarah Jane must call upon an old friend.

Episode 12: [Enemy of the Bane - Part 2](#)

Mrs Wormwood and Kaagh kidnap Luke as they prepare to find the body of Horath and unleash chaos on the world. Sarah Jane must stop them before it's too late, leading to a showdown at the stone circle in Whitebarrow.

THE MEMORY OF DARKNESS

Story by: Julio Angel Ortiz

Part One

Gretchen's heart threatened to explode from her chest.

She must have been running since the forest clearing; what was that now? One hundred yards? Two hundred? It felt like an eternity. The burning in her chest made a duet with the loud rasps she was unable to contain. Low sobs tickled at the back of her throat; as the sun descended far too quickly on the horizon, Gretchen found herself in the streets of the town.

Almost there, almost there, almost there, she thought, a mantra that she somehow hoped would will her into the safety of her home. Instead, she was out here, running in a frenzy down streets that now seemed too treacherous, shadows betraying and menacing.

Stupid!, she berated herself. Gretchen had promised herself that she would only shoot pictures for an hour or so; but instead, she had gotten wrapped up in the wildlife and the false serenity of the forest. When she realized it was getting dark, Gretchen had taken off, leaving her camera in the forest so as to not have anything to hinder her movements.

And it may not be enough, she thought grimly.

She had lived in Evansburg for years, and yet now each alleyway and street was like an alien labyrinth. Every turn was an agony, a reminder that she nowhere near home yet.

And the dark was coming. Much too soon.

Around her, Gretchen saw doors being shut and locks being secured. The few people she saw refused to make eye contact with her. Every closed door felt like a gavel of judgment being slammed down for her.

No!, Gretchen wanted to scream. Not that it would do any good; people were scared. No one was willing to take a chance that they would open their homes to the Darkness.

And so she ran.

It at once infuriated and disappointed her, knowing that she was being abandoned in this way. The weight of it pushed down hard on Gretchen's chest, the air threatening to escape her lungs in a wrenching rush. Her heartbeat already pounded against her sternum, the incessant throb making her want to vomit. But as much as her senses and stamina were tested, she knew that she could not stop.

Gretchen was about three blocks away.

She dared a glance back and saw the sun already dipping below the horizon, the clouds darkening. Gretchen was unable to contain a choked sob, and as she turned to look forward she saw a street that she wanted to turn in order to make a shortcut.

That's when her feet gave out under her.

Gretchen cursed loudly as she tumbled a couple of times, knees and hands scraping against the unforgiving pavement. In a continuous motion, Gretchen rolled into a standing position and continued to run,

ignoring her burning hands and knees. More choked sobs came, and she turned left to run through a neighbor's yard to cut across to her street, trampling through a newly planted flowerbed in the process.

To hell with them, she said. *They're not going to open the door to save me.*

Gretchen noticed that the skies had darkened considerably, and the fear drove her legs. A chill permeated the air, and it was all Gretchen could do not to scream. She cleared the yard out onto the street, and saw her own house fifty yards away. Gretchen rocketed away.

"Almost there, almost there, almost there," she repeated, a mantra that she hoped would give her the speed necessary.

Gretchen reached the steps, and ascended two at a time.

Almost there.

Darkness had fallen.

Gretchen fumbled for her keys, and screamed when they fell out of her hands to the wooden porch.

Gretchen leaned down quickly to grab them, but by then it was too late. Darkness closed in all around her, and she could only scream as the burning consumed her...

The Doctor could not remember the last time he had been down in the TARDIS' pool. At first guess, it was possibly a few hundred years, and when he had stumbled upon it again several weeks ago he was surprised to find the water absolutely clean and the area tidy. Although he was excited, it soon turned to mild disappointment, since the Doctor was alone, and swimming alone never made much sense to him in any of his lives. Nevertheless he had kicked off his shoes and sat by the pool, dipping his feet into the warm waters, allowing the cuffs of his pants to get wet. The Doctor ran his hand through his wild mane of brown hair, now peppered with gray, and blew air through his lips. He was lost in thought when it happened, and had barely noticed it even then.

The Doctor looked up, and quickly brought his legs back and over the side of the pool, standing quickly and slipping into his shoes.

"This is no time for a swim, silly Doctor," he said to no one, and rushed through the hallways that lead back to the TARDIS console room. Upon entering, he walked straight to the monitor that was built into the console and punched some

keys on the antiquated keyboard. The console responded with a few beeps and a flat tone.

The Doctor pressed his lips into a thin line. "Yes, I know, but why are you losing power?" he muttered, and flipped a switch to his right. He took another glance at the console. "Maybe 'bleeding' is the right word."

The Doctor looked aside, catching a glimpse of the hallway he had just existed, and could see quite a ways down. He saw the lights slowly going out, beginning at the far end working its way towards him. The



Doctor looked back down at the monitor, seeing the words displayed on the screen, and leaned closer for verification.

“Error 71?” he said aloud. “But how?”

But before he could finish his thought, the lights went out in the console room, and the Doctor could only scream...

* * * * *

Where there had once been a muse, there was only silence. Katelyn found herself sighing yet again before the blank canvas.

She absentmindedly stroked back an errant piece of her dark red hair, pulling it behind her ear and then scratching her forehead in frustration. Katelyn stood and walked into the kitchen, grabbing a glass and filling it with water from the faucet. She drank the cool water and then stared out the window, not for the first time drifting off into fragmented memories and dreams.

Bill.

Something wrapped around her heart, crushing in slow waves and threatening to leave Katelyn breathless and, worse still, on the floor sobbing and useless. Katelyn dropped the glass into the sink, a clear *thunk* shattering the stillness. She moved back into the living room, and back to the small niche she had carved out for herself to paint. Katelyn sat down for several minutes more but knew it was useless. No art was going to come today, or certainly not in this session. Katelyn sighed again in frustration, and stood and went upstairs. After changing her shirt and pulling her hair back into a ponytail, Katelyn left her home, leaving behind what she hoped was only temporary frustration.

* * * * *

The trail was exactly as Katelyn preferred it; empty.

During her three-mile jog, Katelyn had seen only one other person. Glancing at her watch, she noted that it was one in the afternoon, and there was still plenty of daylight left. Usually she would have seen a lot more people by now during her customary jogs, but today she didn't feel like being around people. Still, she could not help but feel some slight apprehension at the thought that no one was coming outside anymore.

Has it really come to this?

Katelyn still wondered how it was possible that no one in town wanted to talk about it, much less get help. Had they really become so beaten down that they had given up hope? Had the town contained such a dark secret that it was now manifesting itself and consuming them all?

Katelyn found herself once again receding into the tide of memories and dreams that had assailed her since Bill died in the car accident four months ago. A part of Katelyn, one which came to her in the middle of the night as she would lay in bed, staring out into the impenetrable darkness, would be thankful that Bill had died and not lived long enough to witness what was happening to the town, or for her to be wracked with fear if he were not home from work before sundown. This conflicted with the deep, abiding desire to have him there with her, to hold her and whisper into her ear that everything would be fine and that she should not fear the dark. A cynical scoff escaped Katelyn's lips. She wondered if this was another side effect of the dark, the guilt-drenched self-admission that Katelyn may be fine with Bill being dead. Was this something she had gone over in therapy? And when was the last time she had gone to see Doctor Merlock?

Katelyn shook her head, trying to cast off the images and doubts, and in doing so something caught her eye. Katelyn did a double-take, and confirmed what she had seen: a pair of feet sticking out from under some bushes off of the trail. She gasped, stopping dead and turning reflexively towards the bushes. As she approached and rounded the area, Katelyn tensed. What if this was a ploy? What if this was a rapist in wait? She reached into her pocket, for her keychain which contained a small spray can of mace. When she finished rounding the bushes, she gasped again, her hand instinctively letting go of the keychain and flying up to her mouth.

Besides the bushes was body, blackened, as if set on fire. Katelyn rushed up to the body, kneeling down beside it and pausing, thinking of what to do next. Her hand slid down to one of the wrists, searching for a pulse. Her

fingertips brushed against the rugged, crisp exterior of the arm, and Katelyn fought the urge to vomit.

And then a charcoal hand grabbed her wrist.

Katelyn screamed, yanking her arm back with such force that, when the hand let go with ease, she swung back hard and fell. She was still screaming when she scurried away along the ground and stopped when she glanced up and saw the body was not coming after her, but rather was now convulsing.

He's still alive.

The thought stopped Katelyn cold. *He?* How was she sure? Katelyn gave the burnt figure another look. She couldn't be so sure; instinct told her that the body was masculine, in the build of the shoulders and torso. She moved close again, the figure still convulsing but now much slower.

“What can I do?” Katelyn heard herself mutter, and then decided on the only course of action. She took out her cell phone and called for help.

* * * * *

Katelyn, not for the first time, wondered what she was doing here.

She was in the hospital lobby, legs crossed as she sat in her petite chair. The white of the walls was offensive; it had been that way since Bill died. Katelyn recalled the long wait in the room, *in this very room*, and the eventual slow walk by the doctor over to her to inform Katelyn of the inevitable. In being here she was almost reliving the death of her husband, and for the life of her Katelyn could not understand what compelled her to come in the ambulance and stay at the hospital, awaiting word on the survival of a person she didn't even know, much less was likely to survive given their condition. It did not make sense, but then again very little else did when it concerned the darkness.

The Darkness.

That must have been what happened to the poor soul, Katelyn realized. It was similar to what had happened to everyone else caught out in the dark, after sundown, in these past few, horrid months. In short order the doctor emerged from the room, asked Katelyn the polite questions: *Were you related to the patient? Were you a friend? I'm sorry to say, they didn't make it.* Katelyn numbly nodded and shook her head when appropriate, and barely heard the follow-up statements, regarding that the person must have been caught after dark, and that she should head home soon. Katelyn nodded and left, relieved to be away from the hospital, and feeling guilty that it was at the cost of a life.

She stepped out of the hospital and down the street when she saw a parked delivery truck. The man, in a brown shirt and pants, was off-loading some items out of the back of the truck. Katelyn noticed that he was a handsome man, around her age if not a little younger. He was fit, and Katelyn's eyes wandered down his arms and back until she caught herself and screwed her eyes shut for a moment.

Her therapist had warned about the guilt she would feel for finding another man attractive after Bill's death, and had informed her that it was normal to look at another man, that it was not a reflection of her love for Bill or a smear on his memory. Katelyn had nodded and agreed at the time, but here in the moment it was shredding her heart and leaving her head swimming. She opened her eyes and found the delivery man looking at her.

“Are you okay?” he asked, genuine concern in his eyes.

Katelyn felt the blood escape in a rush from her face. To her horror she realized that she had stopped walking when she closed her eyes, and had done so right beside the man's truck.

God, he must think I'm some kind of weirdo, she thought.

“No, no,” Katelyn said quickly, shaking her head and waving him off. “I'm fine, just a momentary headache.”

The delivery man chuckled. “One hell of a headache, eh?” he said.

Katelyn smiled and laughed, despite herself. “You could say that.”

The man turned back to his truck, removing a box and placing it on the handcart. “What's weird is that folks around here seem a bit jumpy. You're not the only from I've seen.”

“Really?” was all Katelyn could muster.

“Yeah, I don't get it either. Seems like a nice enough, quiet town.” He closed the back of his truck and moved the cart over to the building. He looked



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next. Her hand slid down
to one of the wrists,
searching for a pulse.*

back, favoring her with smile that she found unnervingly cute. "Hey, uh, I know this is pretty forward of me—"

"No," Katelyn said, much quicker than she had meant to.

The delivery man looked at her like a bomb had gone off. "Uh, well, I meant to say," he said, trailing off, clearly embarrassed.

"No, no," Katelyn said quickly. "Look, uh, it's just that my husband passed away recently, and I'm not over that yet."

The delivery man nodded quickly. "I'm very sorry to hear that. I didn't know." Looking back at the building, the man said, "Well, you have yourself a good day."

Katelyn muttered "You too," but it came out as an inaudible mess, and she hurried away, before she could embarrass herself further and shed tears in front of the man.

Officer Stimpson looked out into the darkness.

"Damn," was all he could say.

"I'm sorry," Esperanza said, a sympathetic hand on his shoulder.

Stimpson nodded and turned towards her. It was not her fault, he kept telling himself, and knew that getting mad at her would not solve his immediate dilemma; namely, that he was late, it was now dark outside, and that there was no way he was leaving until dawn. The problem was that he was only supposed to come fill out a report on the burnt body, which probably was another victim of the dark by Stimpson's guess, and that should not have taken too long. Long enough to get back to the station, finish up some paperwork, and get home to his wife.

But arriving at the hospital and finding that Esperanza was working complicated matters. After seeing each other again and having a brief conversation, they made their way to a secluded area of the hospital that Esperanza knew and lost themselves in each other, for much longer than either anticipated.

And now he was stuck at the hospital overnight.

"How am I going to explain this to Helen?" he wondered aloud.

"You could tell her that you're finally leaving her," Esperanza said, the mirth obvious in her voice.

Stimpson looked back at Esperanza with one eye cocked and none too amused. "Funny, Esperanza," he said.

Esperanza shrugged. "You're the one who keeps screwing me," she said, and leaned in and gave him a quick kiss on the lips. "Well, I need to get back. If you're still around later..." She let the words hang between them.

"Oh, you can bet," he said, flashing the maverick smile that helped him with so many ladies, before and after Helen.

After Esperanza left, Stimpson took out his cell phone and made a few phone calls. One was to his chief, Brock, who sounded unconvinced by Stimpson's line of reasoning but let the matter go. Stimpson then phoned his wife, who was even less convinced and hung up the phone with a slam, the last thing Stimpson catching was the sound of their baby crying. With a sigh and a shake of the head, Stimpson returned his cell phone to his pocket. He began to move down the hallway.

"Well, I'm here, so I might as well see the body," he muttered to himself.

In the dream, the Big Hand reached out to her, slowly threatening to suffocate.

Katelyn was in a room, the angles skewed and the shadows inky, diffused. There was a window far across from her, and outside she saw a moon that was a sickly yellow color, like cigarette hands. Katelyn found herself hunched against the wall, knees held tight to her chest. A fear was in the air, and Katelyn's throat was tight. Her eyes shifted quickly, her gaze darting around the room. In one moment, it appeared that the hand was in the corner, shadow fingers making a slow crawl towards her. In another moment, it was reaching down from the ceiling, a shadow god seeking to crush. Katelyn looked back out the window, and saw the hand crushing the moon. Panic seeped in; were the moon to go out, she would be left in darkness, and with that Katelyn screamed.

Katelyn woke up, sitting up in bed, her shirt damp. She took slow breaths in bed, waiting for the reality of the moment to sink in. Afterward, she swung her legs over the side of the bed, and walked over to the window. She stared up, trying to see the moon, or stars, or other signs of life.

Instead, there was only darkness.

Stimpson's memory drifted to the first time his father told him that his mother was leaving.

There had been the usual arguing and yelling, but Stimpson, even at age nine, had learned to simply go to his room and wait for the storm to blow over, as it inevitably did. There were accusations and words that Stimpson did not know, but it mattered little to him. He pulled out the latest issue of *Weird Comics* and proceeded to read. Several minutes later the screaming subsided, and for several more minutes there was only silence. Stimpson, after finishing his issue, left his room and meandered down the hall to his parents' room.

Daring to peak in, he saw his mother with a suitcase on the bed, and packing clothes in it. His father was by their window. His dad turned his attention towards him, and walked over to him, in the most eerie, calm manner. He knelt down beside his son, placing a hand on his shoulder.

"Son," he began, "your mom's leaving us."

"Go to hell, Jimmy," his mother spat, directed at his father.

"It's true, you lying whore! You're leaving, ain't ya?"

His mom slammed the suitcase shut. "And you're the reason, Jimmy!"

"I thought it was that other fella', what's his name? Robert or something?"

"At least he doesn't have a bottle in his hand more than he has a job."

"Mom," Stimpson said, the numbness wearing off, "mom, you're not really leaving, right?"

His mother spared him a sad, distant glance, and then turned back to her suitcase. "I'm sorry, baby boy." She picked up the suitcase and moved out of the room.

Stimpson followed on her heels. "Mom, no! Mom, no!"

His mother turned to him, again with those sad eyes. "You'll be fine here with your father. A boy needs his father."

Stimpson threw his arms around his mother.

"No, mommy! Don't go! Please, no!"

But she simply hugged him, and looked at him again with the haunted eyes.

"See? She don't care about you," he remembered his father saying, from the bedroom doorway.

His mother gave his father a withering look, and looked back at Stimpson. "Now, you know that's not true." She sighed, and Stimpson saw tears hidden behind the wall of her calm. "Be good, baby boy." And she got up and walked out of his life.

And after all of these years, after the last time that he saw his mother, it was those same haunted eyes that came back to him. It was those same eyes that came to him at night, staring out into the unfathomable darkness, as well as now, as he had stood over the burnt body in the hospital morgue. It was in the moments following beginning his report, and his examination of the body, when its hand inexplicably shot up towards his throat, calloused fingers gripping his throat, and the light-headedness that filled him as darkness threatened to overtake him. And in that darkness, he saw the eyes of his mother, and at the end he could not tell if they were of pity or disappointment...

TO BE CONTINUED

Story by Julio Angel Ortiz

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*His mother turned to him,
again with those sad eyes.*

*"You'll be fine here with
your father. A boy needs
his father."*

Screwdrivers, Scaries & Scarves

BY JEZ STRICKLEY

From Doctors and Daleks to costumes and companions Doctor Who is surrounded by a wealth of iconography, helping to make the series an enduring success. Each issue Screwdrivers, Scares and Scarves spotlights one of these remarkable icons.

CYBERMEN:

THE ULTIMATE BODY HORROR

One of the things that's sure to send some younger viewers scurrying behind the sofa is body horror. Certainly Doctor Who has its fair share of it. From robotized humans in *The Dalek Invasion of Earth* (1964) to the dire results of Richard Lazarus' work in *The Lazarus Experiment* (2007), examples of someone turning into something are not too difficult to come by. And if there's one iconic menace that knows the business of body horror better than most, it is surely the Cybermen.

Most fans post-2005 will be familiar with the Doctor's cybernetic foes courtesy of a rarely used, parallel world plot device in *Rise of the Cybermen/The Age of Steel* (2006) and *Army of Ghosts/Doomsday* (2006). More recently, a remnant of the very same Cyber army that fought at the Battle of Canary Wharf made its presence felt in the Christmas Special *The Next Doctor* (2008).

But that's it for fans of parallel Cybermen, I'm afraid. Don't get me wrong, I think the new-style cyborgs, and the legion of special effects accompanying their return, are really rather good. But story-wise it all comes as a bit of a letdown. And, for me at least, *The Next Doctor* was the final straw. Yes, it certainly was fun, and there were oodles of glitz and razzamatazz. Oh, and David Morrissey's 'next Doctor' was simply terrific. But in terms of plotting – you know, that really quite vital stuff that helps to make a series a continuing success – Russell T Davies and the team were on exceedingly thin ground.

More of my plot complaints another time. Besides, the Cybermen have weathered weak storylines before and they'll do so again, that's part of what makes them so special. As a fan growing up in the 1980s my first encounter with them was by way of Eric Saward's killing fest, *Earthshock* (1982). Shadowy androids, laser battles galore and a phalanx of all-powerful 'robots' ready to crush the Earth. For a young fan it couldn't get much better.

It wasn't until I saw *Attack of the Cybermen* (1985) that I understood that they weren't robots at all, and that's where the body horror begins. In the Cybermen's secret base in the sewers of London, we see some of the poor souls unlucky enough to be captured alive and slowly converted into Cybermen. The fate of

Commander Lytton makes the extent of this terrible fate all too plain. I mean, who wouldn't want to die if given a choice between oblivion and being locked into a cold, metal casing, devoid of emotions and enslaved to logic?

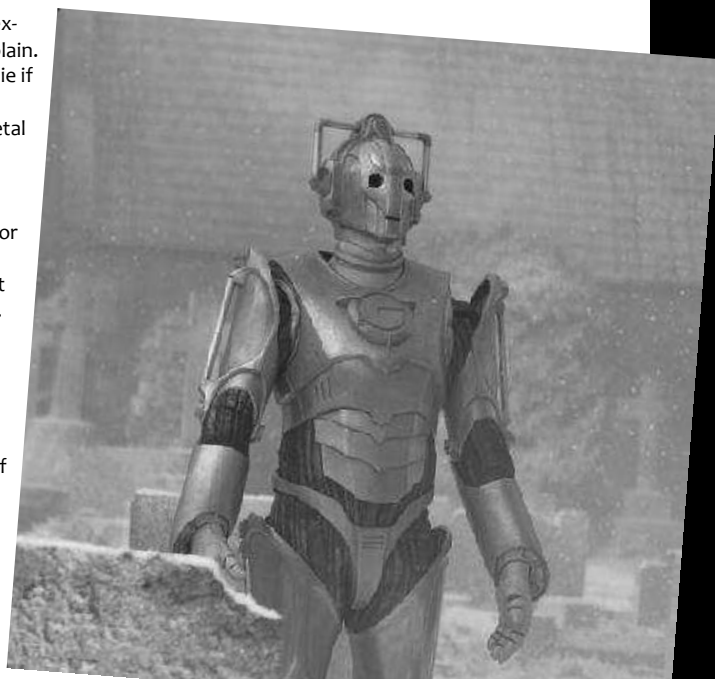
Attack may have opened the door on the process of Cyber-conversion for the first time, but sadly it fell foul of poor plotting. Along with *The Five Doctors* (1983), which revealed just how easy it is to wipe out a squad or two of Cybermen, and *Silver Nemesis* (1988), that saw them taken to the cleaners by a bag of gold coins and a catapult, the 1980s was hardly a golden – if you'll excuse the pun – decade insofar as the Cybermen were concerned.

Okay, so if the 1980s were a touch hit-and-miss for the silver giants, and a solitary – and in my opinion rather average – outing was all the 1970s could muster, it's very much left to the 1960s to show us just how these chilling nasties came to be one of the icons of Doctor Who.

When the Cybermen made their debut in *The Tenth Planet* (1966) cybernetics (the science of communication and control systems) was barely heard about. Then along came the writing partnership of script editor Gerry Davis and scientist Kit Pedler. Between them they created a race of beings who, in seeking to extend their lives, had exchanged their organic frame for one of metal and plastic, and their emotions for logic. These terrifyingly impassive aliens with cloth faces (and I think those cloth-like masks still take some beating) stole the plaudits for Season Four and gave the series a serious shot in the arm. Historical backdrops were quickly sidelined, and the newly arrived Second Doctor began to battle all manner of monsters, at the head of which stood the ominous Cybermen.

With the success of their cybernetic creations evident, Davis and Pedler quickly turned out a remake in the shape of *The Moonbase* (1967), before penning the undoubted classic *The Tomb of the Cybermen* (1967). Along with two more outings in *The Wheel in Space* (1968) and *The Invasion* (1968) the Cybermen quickly took centre stage during the late 1960s.

What is more, these metallic horrors arguably gave more viewers more nightmares than their



Frightening pseudo-robots to small children, sophisticated cyborgs to those in the know.

Skarosian rivals had ever done, and body horror has its part to play in this. The Cybermen's humanoid shape and expressionless 'face' are simply frightening, and since *Doctor Who* has derived a good deal of its success from conjuring up many a spine-chilling moment, Mondas' finest have certainly pulled their weight in this regard.

Getting to the bottom of this icon is, perhaps, as much about recognizing our own worst nightmare as anything else. Daleks, Sontarans and Ice Warriors are death-dealers one and all. Yet when you see them, you see a scary monster – or scary for some of us. When you see the Cybermen, however, the chances are you might just see yourself – or a possible 'you' anyway – and that's what's so terribly troubling and truly shocking. The Cybermen are icons, at least in part, because they are a timeless reminder of where our hubris and ignorance could well lead us. All of our science and learning brought together to form not a more compassionate race of human beings, but rather a mass of cold-hearted creatures, driven by logic and encased in a hide of unforgiving metal.

Of all the things *Doctor Who* is really good at, warning us about possible futures – and decidedly dark ones at that – is one of its most important traits. The Cybermen are one such warning. Frightening pseudo-robots to small children, sophisticated cyborgs to those in the know. But above all a warning, and an iconic one at that.



WARGING ABOUT IN TIME

Classic Davison era Doctor Who through the eyes of a new fan

As a New-Who fan, it was only through the short special *Time Crash* that I had experience of Peter Davison's incarnation of the Doctor, which turned out to be extremely entertaining. So, the idea of watching some previous episodes of the Fifth Doctor was an exciting one.

Time Flight is the first episode included in this box set. The story starts quite promisingly with a disappearing plane at Heathrow. The dialogue in the TARDIS between Davison and his companions, Nyssa and Tegan, acts quite nicely as an advertisement for the previous story *Earthshock*. The story is set around the location of Heathrow Airport, an interesting location that allows humorous banter between the Doctor and airport security. The backdrops of planes and the airport makes the viewer believe that there has been a great improvement in the production of *Doctor Who*, compared to previous series, when a lot of imagination was needed to watch the show.

Towards the end of part one, however, we suddenly lose this in favour of a more pixelated background. This allows the Doctor to be suddenly thrown into a prehistoric age. Unfortunately, the "special effects" just begin to get worse and worse, with a toy plane being used to represent another far-off plane in the prehistoric land. Next we are introduced to what can only be described as a ridiculous villain, Kalid, who

stands in front of a crystal ball muttering gibberish.

As the episodes move on we meet more and more characters, including pilots and a professor of hypnosis who constantly embarrasses himself by refusing to believe the Doctor. This idea should be quite funny, but gets a bit old a bit too



By part three, you begin to wonder how the story is going to last for another two parts

soon, causing the professor to be more annoying than funny. There is some impressive acting by Nyssa, who carries out possession wonderfully well and shows-up the acting of the minor characters. However, this is followed by Nyssa and Tegan sitting out of the action for a while; something that isn't a very clever move on the writer's behalf. Tegan even looks bored while

she looks after Nyssa.

The parts of the episodes away from the Doctor are slightly repetitive, with the flight crew becoming possessed, freed and then possessed again. This continues into part three. Also, the fact that a whole plane's worth of passengers accept the fact they are in a prehistoric land without fuss is questionable.

Thankfully, the minor characters are reunited with the Doctor, allowing them to get back in on the action. Nyssa and Tegan are too brought back into the action, with a nice little side quest. As they race to help the Doctor, they are faced with people and monsters from their past. This rewards long-term fans who understand all these references.

The writers must have realised just how laughable Kalid was as he is thankfully replaced with a much more experienced, scary (as opposed to stupid) villain. As Kalid appears defeated and the story appears over, an old enemy of the Doctor appears. The same actor was credited under an anagram of their name, a clever trick on the production team's behalf. This acts as a nice cliffhanger to part two.

By part three, you begin to wonder how the story is going to last for another two parts. However, some new ideas are introduced: a By

part three, you begin to wonder how the story is going to last for another two parts. However, some new ideas are introduced: a flight crew stranded in the TARDIS and the Doctor meeting a new race. The basis for this race is quite clever. A white and dark version of the same race; one good side and one bad side. This new race answers some left-over questions from the previous episodes. For example, what exactly possessed Nyssa and what was so important about breaking through the wall?

By the end of episode three all hope appears lost. But this is not the case at all. As with many parts of this episode, exciting moments start off well, with a great build-up, but frizzle out into nothing. All hope wasn't lost at all and the Doctor is rescued moments later. flight crew stranded in the TARDIS and the Doctor meeting a new race. The basis for this race is quite clever. A white and dark version of the same race; one good side and one bad side. This new race answers some left-over questions from the previous episodes. For example, what exactly possessed Nyssa and what was so important about breaking through the wall?

Part four sees the return of the cringe-worthy toy aeroplane, but apart from that, gets on without too much in the way of special effects. There is some humour in this part, when Tegan merely tells the passengers the whole thing was a "delay." The episode is littered with these little gems; sadly just not enough. The fourth part concludes with an excellent cliffhanger: the Doctor departs, leaving Tegan stranded in Heathrow airport without any explanation. This is a nice ending to Season Nineteen of the show, not unlike the series finales of New-Who.

Overall, this adventure is missing a lot of action. Each part starts off well and ends with good cliffhangers, but the spaces in between are lacking. On a positive note, however, not as much imagination is needed to view the story. It is easier to watch, even though there are some quite 'plastic' moments. Also, the DVD is packed full of extras. These include a lovely interview with Janet Fielding, as well as deleted scenes and outtakes. This isn't really enough to warrant purchase of this DVD by itself, however. Thankfully, it's bundled up with a much more entertaining adventure.

Arc of Infinity is the second story in this box set as well as the opening instalment of the twentieth season of *Doctor Who* and once again features Peter Davison as the Doctor.

This episode is set on Gallifrey, the Doctor's home planet. However, there is a traitor on Gallifrey; someone is helping an outside force and needs the Doctor's bio-print to carry out their plan. We are next brought to Amsterdam (the show's first overseas filming in years) where we meet two new characters: Colin, Tegan's cousin, and his friend Robin). The fact that these are only minor characters is a small mercy. On the one hand, we only have to bear their terrible acting for one episode. On the other hand, we still have to put up with them for one episode. Their voices show no emotion and their faces never change their expressions. Monsters soon turn up, scaring our new friends. Colin becomes possessed (but it's a bit hard to tell as he looks no different) while Robin runs for help.

However, the episode is built around a clever plot that makes the viewer think. We are introduced to



Pictures top to bottom:

Kahlid in *Time Flight* / The fifth Doctor in trouble (*Arc of Infinity*)

The gangs all here in *Tim Flight*

Counsellor Hedin, fifth Doctor & Nyssa in *Arc of Infinity*

several characters on Gallifrey who each could be the traitor. This makes the viewer play close attention for clues to who the traitor might be. On Gallifrey, we

see a soon-to-be familiar face, Colin Baker.

For a New-Who fan, the concept of one actor or actress playing two different characters (Freema Agyeman being the example in the second and third series of New-Who) is not strange, but it is interesting to see that the idea is not a new one.

The cliffhanger for part one is quite like ones seen before – an injured Doctor. But the show lives on, so we can safely say that so too does the Doctor. In part two we see the return of Tegan. This is most welcome, but strangely late. Sadly, there is not enough of Tegan in this episode as there should be, something we would expect as she is pictured on the box set. She is rather wasted spending time in Amsterdam with her cousin's friend, who frankly cannot act. She doesn't get as many lines as she should. Even in comparison to the previous episode, Tegan does very little. Moreover, the humour that should be found in the idea that Tegan would find aliens strange is lost, simply because the guest actor is so bad.

There is a moment that demonstrates how the show has developed over time. The actors, who have played the character of the Doctor since William Hartnell, have based their characters on the actor before them. When the Doctor delivers the line "I have much more to say" in part two, we can hear David Tennant's voice. This is a nice little link for New Who fans, intentional or not.

Again, with part two, an injured Doctor is the basis for the cliffhanger, but this time, the idea is taken to another level. Part three moves well, but is stunted by the horrible acting of the minor characters. Thankfully, the horrible acting by the 'humans' is somewhat rescued by the acting of the Time Lords, who all do an excellent job of portraying their characters. Even the short scene where Tegan and her companion are captured one after another shows the horrible acting of the minor characters. We can make the comparison easily, as it is right there in front of us.

As mentioned before, there are small clues to indicate who the traitor of Gallifrey is. We see many scenes where the traitor is speaking with the enemy, without seeing their face. Included in these scenes are shots of the traitor playing with an item in their hands. This seems like a clue at first, but turns out to be rather pointless and, in fact, the continuity between these shots is all over the place. This, however, is a small glitch.

Once again, when the fourth part arrives, the viewer begins to think if it is necessary or not. But unlike its previous episode, part four moves quickly. The plot twist and inclusion of an old enemy of the Doctor contribute to the fast-paced nature of the episode. Sadly, the enemy's chase towards the end of the episode is a bit drawn out. We do get a lovely view of the city of Amsterdam, but is that really what a *Doctor Who* fan looks for in an episode?

Generally, *Arc of Infinity* is excellent. It does not rely too much on special effects and spends more time worrying about the plot. The results pay off and we are given an extremely entertaining episode. The inclusion of extras seems more like a treat for this episode, as opposed to the saving grace they add to the previous episode. Quite simply, this episode makes the box set worth buying.

ARTICLE: CONOR O'ROURKE



Finding Light in THE DARK DIMENSION

How many of you reading this very fanzine are familiar with the 1996 TV Movie starring Paul McGann and Sylvester McCoy? Ah ha. I see numerous hands going up. Quite a few of you, right? Well how many of you are familiar with the 1993 Thirtieth Anniversary Special? Hmmm? C'mon; put your hands up. I don't see those hands going up. I can assure you I'm not nuts or dreaming. You have no idea what I'm talking about do you? I see heads shaking left to right. No offence, but I'm not surprised. I bet now you're wondering, what in the world I'm talking about? There go those heads again. Well sit back, get comfy, and I'll tell you a little tale about "The Dark Dimension".

Come with me as I take you back to a time before the present series, to a time when there was no *Doctor Who* on television. A time when it had been over three years since the last new episode had been broadcast. Hard to believe but yes, there was such a time. Like the Doctor, we journey back in time, our journey stops at the beginning of the adventure. The time is September 1992. We've landed in the offices of BBC Enterprises, the marketing wing of the BBC. There sit several of Enterprises executives and they're having one of their weekly departmental meetings. They're talking about plans for future merchandise releases. Well aware that one of their product lines - the *Doctor Who* line in fact - has over the years been making them quite a bit of money, especially in the sales of videotapes. In the course of the conversation, someone brings up the idea that why don't they bring *Doctor Who* back? "Why not", agrees another executive. "It's been three years since the series has been on television, and I'm sure there must be a way to exploit the product, especially to its large fan base". Another executive turns to face the others and suggests they make a special feature-length television drama to celebrate the show's upcoming thirtieth anniversary in 1993. "What a great idea", says another executive, and after a few minutes further discussion, the project has been green lighted for production. *Doctor Who* will return to British television screens in 1993. But as we know it, it didn't return in 1993. It didn't return until 1996.

While the above is a fictitious account of how the idea came to be, I imagine its likely pretty close to the reality.

What really did happen and why the show didn't return in 1993 is a long story. Through this article I'll try and shed some light on the ill-fated thirtieth anniversary special, *The Dark Dimension*.

Around September 1992, BBC Enterprises, well aware of the commercial success of its Doctor Who merchandise, in particular the pre-recorded reissues of the original series episodes on video, decided that in view of the show's forthcoming thirtieth anniversary in 1993, it made sense to produce and release a special, direct-to-video feature film. Spurred on by this idea, two of BBC Enterprises senior producers - Penny Mills and David Jackson - got involved with the original concept. The two agreed that it was a great idea and together they approached their boss, Tony Greenwood. Initially Greenwood was reluctant that Enterprises take on the production, but he was eventually persuaded by Mills and Jackson.

Details of what exactly happened around this time, let alone around the entire production, are rather sketchy, but it was around this point when former fourth Doctor Tom Baker got involved. After several years disassociated with the series, Baker was keen to be involved in some aspect of the series. It's possible that Enterprises got wind of Baker's desire to play the role again, so it's even possible to suggest that the idea of the special was mooted to Baker by Penny Mills or David Jackson. However, or whoever, informed Baker about the pending project, he had expressed a keen interest in participating.

Around November 1992, then BBC-1 Controller, Jonathan Powell learned of the project. Powell wasn't keen on Enterprises making the production especially on the grounds that Enterprises was the marketing wing of the BBC and not a drama production unit. Despite Powell's objections, Tony Greenwood forged ahead while David Jackson sought a writer for the potential project. Jackson eventually commissioned BBC writer and fan Adrian Rigelsford to write the script. (Rigelsford is the author of *"The Monsters"* from Boxtree Books.)

"They called me and it went from there. My basic brief was don't do 'The Five Doctors'; do Doctor Who as it hadn't been seen before", says Adrian Rigelsford. The writer was also instructed that the story had to feature all the then surviving Doctors and most of the popular monsters. Definitely a rather difficult brief but Rigelsford was up for the task.

Rigelsford is said to have been responsible for securing the services of Graeme Harper as director of the project.



The above is rumored to be a sample of the redesigned Cybermen

The project seemed to be progressing and just wasn't someone living out a rather elaborate pipedream. Despite having originally been against the project, BBC-TV reluctantly offered assistance. Head of Drama Peter Cregeen was appointed Producer, while Penny Mills became co-Producer, representing Enterprises.

Sometime around early 1993, the project momentarily floundered when there was numerous major changes in the hierarchy at the BBC. Both Jonathan Powell and Mark Shivas, Head of Series and Serials, were replaced by Alan Yentob and Charles Denton. Then in May 1993, Peter Cregeen was suddenly removed from his post. Those who had originally supported the project were gone, but luckily both Yentob and Denton

had reviewed the project and given the go-ahead for the special to be broadcast on BBC-1 followed by a video release containing bonus footage.

During this time Adrian Rigelsford had been busy working on the script but found he was having problems fitting in all of the demands that had been requested. A second writer was brought in to assist him in the form of Joanna McCaul.



What really did happen and why the show didn't return in 1993 is a long story.

The story was to have featured the Daleks, Cybermen and the Ice Warriors and as result the Beeb was keen to update the look of these three classic foes. A team of top designers, including a team from Jim Henson's Creature Shop, were brought in to update and recreate these foes. In speaking with various magazines at the time, Rigelsford confirmed the new look monsters. *"The Cybermen were not like any ever seen before. There was a specific Cyberman who was being made by people at Henson's Creature Workshop. The guy who designed it was trained by H.R. Giger."* The Workshop was also responsible for redesigning the Daleks, and the project's special effects technician Mike Tucker revealed at a convention in 1994 that there was to have been a scene where the fourth

Doctor was being chased by a new-look Special Weapons Dalek.

The script was completed in late May 1993 and it was around this time when both BBC Enterprises and Television submitted budgets - Enterprises was rumored to have budget £750,000 and BBC TV at £1.2 million. Enterprises secured the bid but BBC TV expressed concern over their lack of experience at producing drama and was costing the show far too low.

By early June 1993, Enterprises had set up a production office and other production personnel had been hired including Nick Jagels as

production associate, Tony Harding (the designer of K9) as visual effects designer and Kevin van Thompson as assistant director. Even former producer John Nathan-Turner had been approached to oversee the production but he declined dubious about the script, specifically the gulf between it and the budget the special had been given.

June was also the time that the script was sent to Tom Baker, who reportedly loved it especially as he featured in approximately 40 minutes of the 98 minute screen time. There were parts for all of the other 'Doctors' including Sylvester McCoy, Colin Baker, Peter Davison and Jon Pertwee, who had the least amount of screen time.

As well as the remaining Doctors, both Sophie Aldred and Nicholas Courtney were scheduled to appear as Ace and Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart, while Rik Mayall, Brian Blessed and David Warner had been considered for the yet to be cast main villain of the piece, Hawkspur.

While Tom Baker had received a copy of the script, a few observers had commented that none of the other actors had been sent copies yet. Whether this was deliberate, or just down to inexperience on Enterprises part, apparently little had been done to contact the rest of the cast. For some unknown reason, Enterprises was under the impression that all of the Doctors would sign on in due course. It wasn't until the beginning of July that the other actors received their scripts.

The production seemed to be at a very advanced stage at this point and it was hoped that the special would be scheduled for a mid-evening timeslot. *"The slot we had was Saturday November 27, and it would have followed 'Noel's House Party'",* says Rigelsford.

Fandom finally learned about the project in June 1993, although no official announcement had yet been made. Finally in July, *Doctor Who Magazine* broke the news about the special when they interviewed both Rigelsford and Graeme Harper in issue 202.

However, despite all of the above, this seems to be where the whole production started to fall apart very quickly.

Around late June or early July 1993, Colin Baker, Peter Davison, Jon Pertwee and Sylvester McCoy apparently started to voice their concern over the project. When interviewed in DWM in 2003, Colin Baker had this to say, *"The BBC had made a cock-up with 'The Five Doctors' so they wanted to get Tom on board. The rest of us could sink or swim."* Baker



“

**...the whole
production started to
fall apart very quickly.**

However, on July 14, Tony Greenwood confirmed to numerous parties that the production had not been cancelled and was still very much alive; so much so, that he felt the production could still be remounted as a video release and completed in time for Christmas 1993. Rigelsford was instructed to rewrite the script using only the fourth and seventh Doctors, as it was clear the others did not want to be involved. Rigelsford was quoted as saying, *"it all depends on who wants to do it. Tom certainly wants to do it. Sylvester wants to do it. I don't know about Colin Baker, and Peter Davison had made it clear he doesn't [want to do it]."* Whatever was the case, any plans to make the special never materialized and it all seemed to fizzle away after that.

ARTICLE BY BOB FURNELL

The author would like to thank David Carey for his assistance in the writing of this article.

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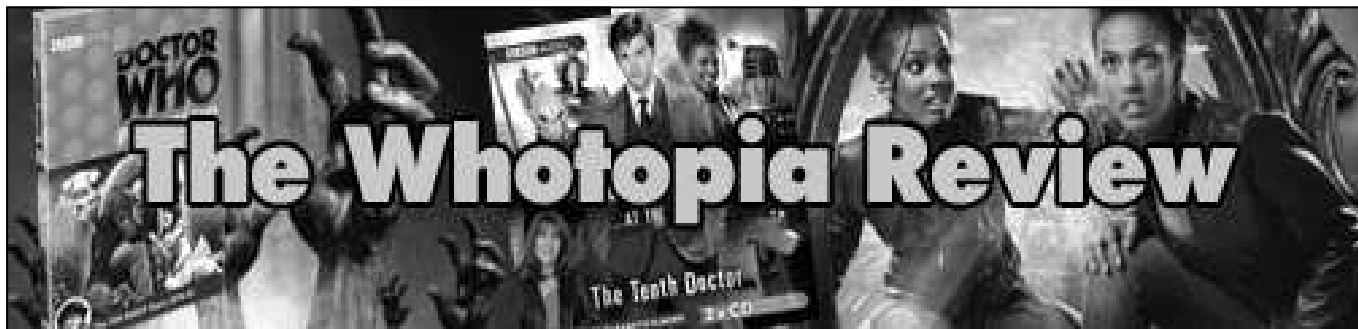
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The Next Doctor review continued from page 23

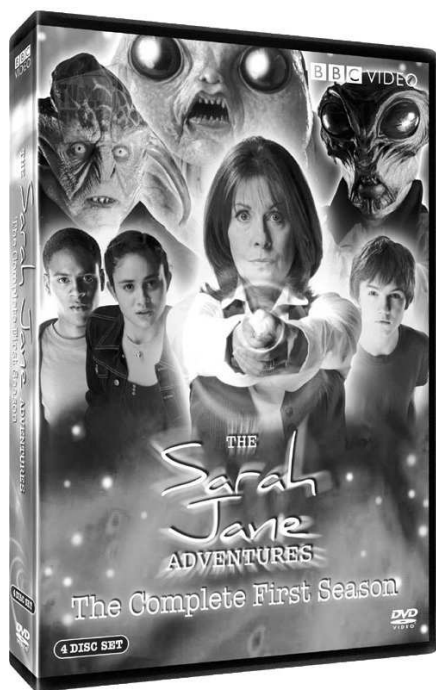
DOCTOR was a solid story which unlike last year's *Voyage of the Damned*, wasn't an excuse for style over substance. It must be said however that 45 or as in this case 60 minutes isn't long enough to produce a story of any real depth and as it is Christmas one would think that the BBC would allow a Doctor Who special a solid 90 minute slot so that plot can have as strong a place in the story as charac-

ter. That said this was without a doubt the best Christmas special since *The Christmas Invasion* with David Morrissey's outstanding performance making it so. If only the 10th Doctor could do a Princess Astra and regenerate into Jackson Lane. With David Morrissey at the helm, we would have a memorable eleventh Doctor indeed. **8/10**

REVIEWED BY GARY PHILLIPS



SARAH JANE ADVENTURES
THE COMPLETE FIRST SEASON
 2ENTERTIAN/BBC • OCTOBER 2008



If you have watched *The Stolen Earth* and *Journey End*, you may have got a little confused about the young boy in Sarah Jane's house. That is unless you have watched the first series of the Sarah Jane Adventures, not that many people have. Thinking about it terms of viewing figures, approximately 10% of the television audience of Doctor Who watched the Sarah Jane Adventures first time around. That leaves about 90% still to enjoy the magic of the show, and now they can with the release of the Series One box set. If you haven't yet seen the programme then go out now and get your hands on a copy because the show is an excellent example of how to produce a spin-off series.

What you get with this collection is the 2007 one-hour special *Invasion of the Bane* and Series One, which has six stories separated into 12 episodes, each 30 minutes long. There is a more leisurely pace than many episodes of Doctor Who, with the stories being given room to breathe, and with cliff-hangers reminiscent of the classic series. In fact, a lot of fun can be had picking up on the references to Sarah Jane's old adventures, be it in the dialogue or in her house. The production values are fantastic considering that the amount of money spent on it is signifi-

cantly less than Doctor Who. They have taken the effort to maximise the value of money spent and it shows.

In tone, the show is certainly less dark than Doctor Who, although this doesn't mean that it can't pull out the heavy punches now and again. The last two stories, *Whatever Happened to Sarah Jane* and *The Lost Boy*, have moments which are quite startling, and there are lines in the other episodes that can only be for adults to pick up. However, the light-heartedness of the show is, really, one of its best points; full of larger-than-life monsters, alien technology, and super computers. Watching it as an adult, you remember why, as a child, you fell in love with Doctor Who; if you weren't a child, you'll discover the joys of what it was like.

Now, if you ever watched Sarah Jane's first spin-off, *K9 and Company*, you might be worried about the role Elisabeth Sladen has to take in this series. Back in 1981, the writers tried to make her into another Doctor and it didn't work. Twenty-odd years later, they've learned from the past mistakes, and Sarah Jane is herself again, older and maybe a bit wiser but she still has all her old tendencies to rush headlong into situations to try to help. That said, they haven't completely abandoned the idea of Sarah Jane acquiring Doctor-ish traits. She is as lonely as the Doctor was in *Rose*, forced to live alone after seeing all that she has seen.

In fact, you could say that her adoption of Luke is akin to the Doctor's pairing with Rose Tyler. There are, also, elements of Jon Pertwee's Doctor in there; for a woman in her mid 50s, the amount of high-energy action she brings to the role is brilliant. As she climbs walls, runs away from aliens and fights bad guys, she looks far younger than her years. She embodies the eternal youth that Pertwee used to have. So, instead of making her the all-knowing saviour, the writers have given her the strengths of the Doctor that are more human than alien.

Talking about aliens, the monsters in the Sarah Jane Adventures are just fantastic. Ostensibly, the idea was to recycle as many of the monsters from Doctor Who as possible therefore saving on budget, which means we get to see the Siltheen again. But before you start sighing, what we have is a far better use of the Siltheen in a story that is more suited to their fear factor. And although there is still the farting, the use is more judicious than in it was in Doctor Who. However, the monsters created specifically for the series are better executed, *The Trickster*, who you may have heard referenced in *Turn Left*, is nightmare-inducing scary, with no eyes and a mouth that looks like it devours children

at bedtime. It is good to see that they have attempted to put a bit of fear into the younger audience, something that is sadly missing in this cotton-wool world.

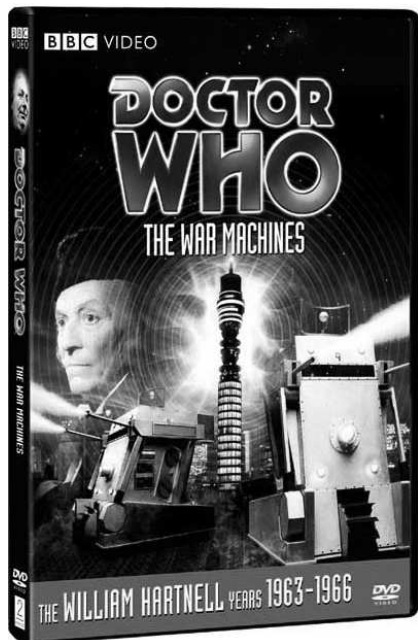
The Sarah Jane Adventures does something even more daring in terms of a television series: it is predominantly female led. Sarah Jane and Maria Jackson notwithstanding, there is a great deal of British female talent gracing the screens, with fantastic actresses such as Phyllida Law, Jane Asher, and Samantha Bond all relishing parts that are very rarely given to women. It's wonderful to see, especially when you think that most of them should have been in Doctor Who ages ago. Even better is the character of Chrissie Jackson played by Juliet Cowan, the self-obsessed, opinionated, absent mother of Maria, who you could see as being a friend of the *The Runaway Bride* version of Donna. She manages to take what could be a rather annoying character and turn her into someone who lifts you up whenever she comes on the screen.

If there is one problem with this box set, it is the extras bundled with it - they are terrible. Perhaps it's being used to Doctor Who's fantastic features, but this set is lacking so much. All you get are a few paltry outtakes, a quiz, the same character profiles on every disc (pointless space filler really), a couple of rather boring interviews, and a single Blue Peter spot where they make a Siltheen mask. You can't really complain because this is reflected in the price and, like most Sarah Jane products, the price is very reasonable. All I can say is pretend that the extras don't exist and just buy the box set for the stories.

To sum it all up, if you haven't seen the series go and get your hands on a copy of this set. You will be pleasantly surprised at the amount of enjoyment it brings. Just don't blame me if you end up running up a big phone bill because you're telling your friends how great it is. Go on, do it now. You won't regret it. I promise. 9/10
 [MARGARET BROWN]

DOCTOR WHO
THE WAR MACHINES
 2ENTERTIAN/BBC • JANUARY 2009

I have to start by saying I'm extremely biased towards old B&W sci-fi in general and Classic Doctor Who in particular. That made this serial an absolute must for my ever expanding Doctor Who collection. And we're quite lucky to have this particular serial available (but more on that later).



The Story

I'm not going to go into any great depth here. I'll just skim the surface. It was one of William Hartnell's last serials, and in fact it was the last one for the third season... sorry... series. Certain serials, in my mind, are 'must haves' for a variety of reasons, not just the story itself. Series openers and finales fit the bill. So too companion arrival and departure stories. The War Machines meets three of those four criteria right away.

Dodo departs. Unfortunately, it's completely off camera and, whether you liked the character/actress or not, it is a lousy send-off for a companion. In fact, she didn't even make it through all four parts of this serial.

Ben and Polly arrive and while I understand giving ample action and screen time to the incoming companions, and I quite like Polly and Ben, Dodo did deserve better.

The serial opens beautifully. The title card sequences are unique and when the Doctor emerges from the TARDIS, he 'senses' something, a feeling that he experienced when he encountered the Daleks and the original audience no doubt were on the edge of their seats, waiting for the Daleks to appear. They obviously don't but still, a brilliant introduction.

Now, there are some questions raised by the story.

For one, WOTAN, the super computer in the new Post Office Tower, with designs on world domination, calls the Doctor, 'Doctor Who'. It's the only time that any one refers to the Doctor as such in the classic or revived series and it stands out as being very strange.

Another is that WOTAN, for all its logic and super computer intelligence speaks like it has a speech impediment: slow and halting. You can't help but wonder why. Shouldn't a computer capable of taking control of almost everything be able to communicate just a bit more expediently and efficiently?

The third gripe is that WOTAN, apparently just 'turned on', has somehow managed to have an incredible amount of resources shipped to various locations to begin building its war machines in... well, overnight really. And all the boxes have a nice 'W' stamped on them. We're left wondering if WOTAN had managed to turn itself on earlier, without the scientists knowing, because assembling all those resources takes time, even for a super computer.

As for the war machines themselves... well, the serial was made in the 1960s. Even though they're slow as molasses, not very agile and actually seem to get stuck hitting the rubbish bins they supposedly barrel through, we should be scared. I mean they do have these nasty guns that expel gas that (sometimes) kills people.

Special Features

Special features have never been a make or break for me. In fact, I don't always watch them because they're often hit or miss for my tastes but I always enjoy the Now and Then featurettes regarding location shooting and this one provides an interesting anecdote. The original building they wanted to film from, for the skyline opening sweep and the arrival of the TARDIS, refused them permission.

The Blue Peter featurettes, I must admit, don't do much for me unless they contain interviews of cast members. Maybe it's because I'm in the colonies and not England herself but the first time I saw Blue Peter on a Doctor Who DVD case I thought it was Cockney slang for... well, never mind. I just wondered what it was and it turned out to be a kid's show.

There are three separate Blue Peter segments on this DVD. The first contains a tour of the Post Office Tower and finishes with, as a craft show, teaching the kids how to make a model of the tower for themselves.

The second has one of the war machines with an explanation of its various abilities and the third shows a school class that built their own Dalek (which then taught a math lesson) and another little boy who built his own Dalek. Not exactly my cup of tea but still, quite cute.

One Foot in the Past gives us archive footage of the construction of the Post Office Tower, some additional footage of the tower when it was open to the public and ends with the former Post Master General, who opened the tower originally, taking a tour of the building now. And sadly, now, it's closed to the public. Easily one of the best parts of the special feature is his narration as he goes up on to the roof, looks out over the city and says "There's Saint Paul's Cathedral, where they worship God and there's the Bank of England, where they worship money." My jaw dropped. I couldn't believe he'd said that. I replayed it just to make sure I wasn't imagining it and couldn't help laughing. Cheeky chap.

I mentioned at the start that we're lucky to have this episode. WOTAN Assembly is a featurette that shows us that this was one of the "missing episodes" and was pieced together

from fan-recorded audio and parts found in New Zealand, Australia and, of all unlikely places, Nigeria. It's an interesting look at how serials are, if we're very lucky, able to be restored. The irony with this one: footage cut by the censors in New Zealand as being unsuitable for children was found... at Blue Peter, a children's show.

There's also a photo gallery, some PDFs for your computer and an Easter Egg, but you'll just have to find that Easter Egg yourself.

All in all, a definite must for your collection if you're a Classic Doctor Who fan. 8/10 [JOSEPH AVERY-NORTH]

TORCHWOOD: ALMOST PERFECT
JAMES GOSS
BBC BOOKS • OCTOBER 2008



James Goss's *Almost Perfect* is, excuse the cliché, a real love it or hate it. The attention-grabbing blurb – 'Ianto Jones wakes up as a woman!' will draw readers in, but the body-swap storyline takes second place to a somewhat confusing tale of gorgeous gay alien Gods on a mission to makeover the universe.

The plot itself is a little overshadowed by the non-standard and gimmicky format (the novel opens with a list chapter titled, 'Five rare times Ianto Jones swears' and a main character is introduced via a chapter of Facebook status updates) which, judging by feedback online, readers seem to regard either as annoyingly fanficcy or refreshingly original. Relentlessly modern, the frequent pop-culture references to *Heat* magazine, *Girls Aloud* and David Beckham's squeaky voice fit with the guest characters and overall tone, but an alien inhabiting the voice and persona of Cheryl Cole took the idea too far for my liking and felt like a cheap joke.

Much of the story is told from the POV of regular girl Emma (Bridget Jones with less charm) who is a lonely singleton until she opens Pan-

dora's box in the form of a bullying seductive orb. Goss is an effective writer with a down to earth blokey style perfect for capturing Cardiff after dark, but I just don't care about the trials and tribulations of the dating scene, or the boring battles of modern-day office life, and it takes a while until it becomes a proper sci-fi story. Gradually other elements – decaying skeletons, crumbling cars and a rise in static electricity – pique Torchwood's attention, but they're preoccupied with Ianto's new status.

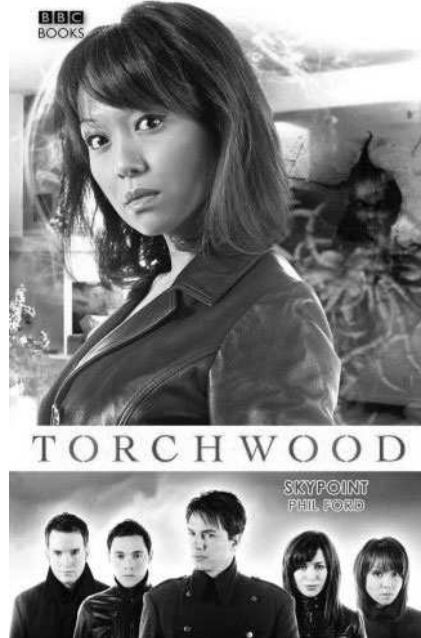
Yep, that old sci-fi classic, bodyswap. Ianto wakes up a woman (disappointingly not shown), which of course means he instantly becomes a catty, tarty, flighty creature tottering about in heels and miniskirts making bitchy comments about Gwen's weight. While Ianto's adjustment process dealing with his new body is subtle (starting out blasé using deadpan snarky humour and slowly unravelling), much of his portrayal is just too out of character. Ianto with a giant handbag to hide his gun is funny; Ianto delaying a crucial mission where Jack's life hangs in the balance to tot up his Weight Watchers points really is not. Even pre-female Ianto in flashback is OOC; since when is Ianto a sloppy person who belches, wipes his mouth on his sleeve, gets wasted and starts spilling Torchwood secrets in public? As the plot hinges on a crucial scene, where Ianto secretly follows up on one of the late Owen's case files concerning an illegal gene therapy programme promising to cure all known diseases and problems, and ends up drunk and begging to have painful memories of his dead friends and girlfriend removed, this is a serious flaw, and made it hard for me to follow his motivations and intent. At least Jack's responses are spot on (yes, it's implied they have sex while Ianto is a woman) and Jack takes the lead in investigating and even working out the 'science stuff', although I wish writers would remember that *Torchwood* Jack is far darker and more serious than the flirty, slutty joker *Doctor Who* Jack, as much fun as that is.

Shippers will enjoy Jack and Ianto's sweet snuggles and kiss memories, and even the 'L' word is mentioned, but I much preferred the bonding between Gwen and Ianto. With Owen and Tosh now gone, but certainly not forgotten, the rest of the team have become much tighter. Rhys (or as I call him, 'Lovely Rhys') also comes more to the fore, even going on an undercover mission, and I enjoyed his scenes with Gwen most of all. Rhys is a sweetheart and very brave, and although endlessly supportive of Gwen and her job, more than holds his own with her. Gwen can be a touch catty, sometimes insecure and a little patronising, but she tries to be nice – well, she is nice, but her life can be very trying, and all this makes for one of the most real and multi-layered portrayals of Gwen Cooper.

Meanwhile Jack tries to atone for a terrible past mistake, leading to a showdown at a gay club and a truly vomit-inducing climax. *Almost Perfect* has a fair amount of action, humour and character development, and I can't quite put my finger on why it's so polarising. It feels like it wants to be a trenchant criticism of the homogenising 'perfect clone' culture of the gay club scene, with its inherent superficiality and vanity (the 'gay club = meat market' metaphor is rammed home pretty hard), when ultimately

love will triumph and save the day, but it's been done and it's not really the place. But hey, how can you not kind of love a book where Jack Harkness has a threesome with the Gods? 5/10 [NAOMI WESTERMAN]

TORCHWOOD: SKYPOINT
PHIL FORD
BBC BOOKS • OCTOBER 2008



Phil Ford's updated haunted house tale provides a backdrop for insights into Owen and Toshiko, and serves as a poignant swansong for the late lamented pair. Newlywed Gwen discovers Rhys has big plans for married life. But when they visit Cardiff's premiere apartment building and discover people are disappearing, Torchwood are forced to fight for their lives in a desperate race against a vicious psychopath and a man-eating monster. While Gwen's and Rhys's deeply loving relationship is given space, the novel really belongs to Owen and Tosh, who in cruel irony get the chance to play Mr and Mrs.

The first half of the novel is a tight psychological exploration of Owen's and Tosh's inner turmoils and the relationship between them. There is a little clunky exposition explaining Owen's backstory to readers who may be unfamiliar with his undead status but otherwise Ford perfectly balances Owen's dry black humour and cynicism with his newfound introspective view of 'life.' His fear and profound loneliness are clear, but it's still the same old Owen: cocky, cool, smart, and frankly a bit of a bastard.

As for Tosh, usually so reserved, it's a treat to be able to get inside her head. As a genius geek freak who takes refuge in maths and is in love with a zombie, Tosh is keenly portrayed. Of course, she is also brilliant, quick-witted, funny and can give as good as she gets. The one criticism is her jarringly out-of-character act of un-planned fury, which turns out to be a pivotal plot point.

Owen and Tosh are well drawn separately, but

it's the interplay between them that captivates. Both smart, messed-up people, they are equally aware of what the other is feeling, but unable somehow to break through. Playing husband and wife allows them to imagine a life neither will ever have a chance at, and they quickly fall into an uncomfortably realistic couple pattern. The unspoken subtext and game playing between them, the squabbling and jealousies are as important as their Torchwood investigation. Needless to say, the foreshadowing is unbearable.

SkyPoint almost feels like two stories in one, with the second half more a standard haunted house/escape drama. Weakly, the team are split much of the time, with Jack and Gwen taking on most of the action. Gwen is resourceful, competent, and independent enough, while Ford's Jack is less well-drawn, falling back on innuendo and flirtatiousness. The most important thing about Jack is his (literally) undying loyalty to his team.

Owen gets to play the protector via pro-domme tools and homemade incendiaries (of course Owen knows how to make bombs with household cleaning products and pickle jars). Unfortunately, Ianto (who seems to vanish after one token, 'do something kickass then been after Jack' chapter) and Tosh (humiliatingly reduced to a helpless heroine awaiting rescue) are woefully overlooked.

I'm sure there must be some Jack/Tosh shippers who will find their mild flirting and musings on playing 'bed games' not as out of the blue as I did. Jack's rescue of her from UNIT prison gave Tosh back her life and hope when she had resigned herself to insanity and death, This underlies the team dynamic and show just how much Torchwood are Jack's team. Overall, the few group scenes show the team well.

Pantomime villain (He's evil! He's super-rich and lives in a hi-tech lair!) Besnik Lucca's warped plan to use team Torchwood as guinea pigs is reminiscent of the 'killer house' movie *Demon Seed*, and evokes comparisons to 007 novel *Doctor No* and the human-hunting concept of *The Most Dangerous Game*. The brave heroes leading a team of civilians to safety references *The Towering Inferno* and *The Poseidon Adventure* with a dash of *Die Hard*, while the inverted dystopia of the superficially perfect microcosm society of *SkyPoint* owes a nod to classic claustrophobic flicks like *The Stepford Wives* and *Rosemary's Baby*. It's fun playing spot the pop culture reference, but the plot is pretty generic. It almost feels as though Ford really wanted to play with Owen, Tosh and after-life concepts, and had to cram in a sci-fi plot in order to do so.

The atheistic view of life after death, a recurrent theme throughout the show, underlies this novel. Owen and other characters are haunted by the unrelenting cold darkness and the loss of hope for 'the lie that keeps the human race sane'. But it's not completely nihilistic because it's coupled with the idea of taking hope in life and living for today, not for the promise of salvation after death. Granted, this is hardly *Forrest Gump*. Tosh's rescue from UNIT, Lucca's rescue, Owen and his young friend's second chances at life, all show the unexpected hope

that materialised just when all seems lost, even if it comes at a high price.

A secondary theme is the nature of reality vs. image, and the human need to hide the darker parts of ourselves. The characters who live in SkyPoint, from the prim spinster, the heroin addicts, the devoted mother, are all ultimately a façade. Fake people living in a fake world. Seeing Owen and Tosh reconvene with the rest of the team after their first day undercover, seeing the shiny new twistedly perfect SkyPoint contrasted with the grimy dangerous but basically 'real home' of the Hub, shows how much Torchwood is a home and a family, and what those things mean. For all their flaws, Torchwood are not hiding. 7/10 [NAOMI WESTERMAN]

TORCHWOOD: PACK ANIMALS
PETER ANGHELIDES
BBC BOOKS - OCTOBER 2008



Long-time Whoniverse author Peter Anghelides' latest novel is delightfully bonkers. Boring normal life explodes into violence when horrific, bloodthirsty monsters start rampaging around Cardiff. Why do cards from the popular Monsta-Quest trading card game keep appearing near murder victims, and how is the sinisterly effective Achenbrite Corporation involved?

The plot of *Pack Animals* is simple—monsters! In Cardiff! But the sheer delirious imagination of this story hides a multitude of minor flaws and plot holes. Gwen and Rhys are wedding shopping in a mall when carnage erupts. Weevils are running around in public, guerrilla gorillas are throwing toasters in Homewares, and swarms of giant alien insects are battling Disney plushies. Elsewhere, Jack and Ianto's long-anticipated date is interrupted when a tiger escapes at the zoo. The action culminates in a thrilling but completely insane battle royale at that Cardiff icon, Millennium Stadium. To say more would give it away. Suffice it to say, the

way the alien threat is finally dispatched must be read to be believed. There's plenty of humour throughout, some thrills, an action-packed but quirky car chase in a Vauxhall Vectra, and plenty of gore.

All the characters, even minor ones, are well drawn and given space to make them real. Gwen and Rhys's bickering old (nearly)-married-couple routine is endearing, and Gwen is pretty easygoing, but since when was she a label freak...or an accidental shoplifter? Professionally she is cool, calm and in control, and even the obligatory 'Gwen Cares and never gets jaded by death' doesn't jar.

Anghelides knows how to write for women, and both Gwen and Tosh get to show off their talents and take the lead in action scenes. Owen is not introduced until later, possibly because Anghelides doesn't seem too comfortable with his undead status, and indeed seems to ignore it most of the time. We get a little existential angst, but Anghelides doesn't really do existential angst. What he does do is broad humour: cocky cockney Owen, cracking bad jokes and slapping weevils, is a lot of fun, but certainly not post-Reset Owen.

'Janto' fans will be delighted to finally see them on a date, complete with hand-holding and one good kiss. Their relationship continues to develop subtly with emphasis on their conversations, not their sex life (although there are a fair few references to it) and Ianto gets to do far more than usual. Strangely enough, it's Jack, funny and flirty as always, who comes across as the flattest, and is relegated for much of the novel by a canon-busting injury that sees him confined to the Hub.

One of the most enjoyable elements is the relationship between the team. They clearly like each other a lot and work together as a well-oiled machine. Although it's clear they do care and worry about each other, they have a lot of laughs, engage in harmless teasing (much at the expense of naked invisible Ianto – yep, naked invisible Ianto), and share a special intimacy (apparently the whole team now knows about "naked hide'n'seek"). There is a lot of humour in general, but then humour is subjective. I loved the toy weevils and invisible Ianto kicking people up the arse, but was left cold by the fart jokes. Make no mistake though, this book is very, very funny (Torchwood vs. the WAG! Dip-lodocus in the Hub! Actually either would make great episode or book titles), but the level of humour comes across as too flippant for the drama and violence. The tone makes *Pack Animals* seem more of a 'day in the life of Torchwood' than a desperate battle to save the earth from a real threat.

The addition of the mysterious Achenbrite provides necessary intrigue and bulks out the thin plot, as well as allowing for some 'Torchwood undercover/spy thriller' parts (and an excuse to get Ianto naked again). It's a bit disconcerting such a company could flourish in Cardiff, but they eventually pay the price for their own meddling, which is just as well. Achenbrite are clearly far too competent to exist side by side with Torchwood.

One bum note is the addition of a pesky investigative reporter stalking Jack. While it's interesting to finally see a realistic downside, or any acknowledgement, to the whole 'everyone knows about "bloody Torchwood"' joke, I kept thinking of the character, 'hope this is going somewhere.' Well, it does, sort of. Brigstocke's press credentials come in handy, and the character eventually provides a neat denouement to the themes of truth, lies, and choice. Is it better to face a hostile and dangerous reality, or to live in a safe peaceful lie? Torchwood might make that choice for the people of Cardiff, but with them protecting the streets, maybe it's for the best. 8/10 [NAOMI WESTERMAN]

SARAH JANE ADVENTURES
THE LOST BOY/THE LAST SONTARRAN
DAY OF THE CLOWN
BBC BOOKS - FEBRUARY 2009



It has been some time since the last set of Sarah Jane novelizations but the wait has been worthwhile. Not only do we have the last novelizations from Series One but they have brought out the first two stories from the latest series.



What you get for your money are four very good stories aimed at the younger market. Very much like the Target novelizations of yesteryear, these books are a great read and far better than the novelizations produced for blockbuster films or other television series. This, primarily, is down to the fact that we have some proper names writing the adaptations: Rupert Light, Phil Ford and Gary Russell. It is people who love the show and who know their audience that write the books, and it shows.



The books themselves are top quality. You get the basics of a modern-

day novelisation, the middle has colour stills from the programme, language pitched at a younger readership level and writing that is big and easy to read but which is as juvenile as it gets. The stories themselves are far more detailed than on-screen with swathes of back story created for the secondary characters and motivations examined deeper. *The Lost Boy* does this exceptionally, with a look at the lives of the people the Siltheen take over, which is quite bleak considering the audience. If I were to choose a writer above all the others, it would

have to be Gary Russell. He knows what he is doing, clearing up continuity, making motivations obvious and carefully revealing a new back story throughout and making nods to previous adventures both in Bannerman Road and in Sarah Jane's past. In *The Last Sontaran*, we have a whole chapter dedicated to Sarah Jane's experience of the events in *The Poison Sky* as a precursor to the main story. I can only hope that he does more novelizations in the future because he has the knowledge and the skill to make them extra special to a fan.

All right, so the books might not appeal to everyone. Reading them in public might not impress people but as a guilty little pleasure, you can't go wrong. They are cheap to buy and fun to read. The kind of thing you can reward yourself with, after reading something very demanding or if you are tired and just want a story before you go to sleep. Alternatively, if you have a little *Doctor Who* fan in your life who maybe doesn't read enough, they can be a positive way to introduce them to books. They are so good; in fact, I don't know why they haven't done a *Doctor Who* version of them. We should maybe get a mass campaign together for that.

Whatever Happened to Sarah Jane? 8/10
 The Lost Boy 10/10
 The Last Sontaran 10/10
 Day of the Clown 8/10 [MARGARET BROWN]

SARAH JANE ADVENTURES
THE GHOST HOUSE
THE TIME CAPSULE
 BBC AUDIOBOOKS - NOVEMBER 2008

Thanks to the new series and the release of the Series One box set, there has been a wealth of new tie-in material released around the Sarah Jane Adventures. Having listened to the previous original audio dramas, I was looking forward to the two new CDs read by Elisabeth Sladen, *The*



Ghost House (originally entitled *Shatter Point*) and *The Time Capsule*. Being a massive Sarah Jane Adventures fan, a couple of new adventures were just what I needed after the series ended. However, what we have here is a dictionary definition of a mixed bag. While both are definitely worth buying, I cannot help but prefer *The Time Capsule* to *The Ghost House*.

Peter Anghelides has pitched the tone of the audio drama just right. The story moves along at a good pace, with the characters written well and in tune with the television series. He also makes judicious nods to the classic *Doctor Who* series (which you do feel tempted to shout out when you hear it), and reminds us that Sarah Jane had adventures before moving to Bannerman Road. The use of secondary characters is well done and designed to suit Elisabeth Sladen's delivery, since the story focuses around Sarah. The action level throughout is expertly judged, with plenty of chases and monsters building to the climax in the scrap yard. Anghelides shows himself to be a brave writer penning a conclusion that is more emotionally uncomfortable than you were expecting. A good thing, when too many adventures end so cleanly.

In comparison, *The Ghost House* by Stephen Cole appeals to me less, which is surprising because I normally like his writing. While the idea of the plot is not all bad, it is the execution of the subject matter that lacks. The whole concept seems

rushed with developments in some of the characterisation moving too quickly to be believable. The characters of the children are more stereotypical than normal, Luke has gone from immature boy genius to autistic savant, Clyde seems far too chirpy, and Rani is completely annoying. They don't seem to listen to Sarah Jane either, jumping back in time with insolence, despite the fact that in the television series they do acknowledge the dangers of their actions. It's just all too condensed; it needs more time to develop, which it doesn't receive. Another bug bear is the unnecessary repetition of the backstory of every character. We know that Luke was created rather born, we know that Rani's father is the headmaster and, even if we didn't, the information isn't necessary to the plot. Where is the point to this, especially when the story is too tight at any rate?

Narration wise, Elisabeth Sladen is comfortable and speaks at a good pace. You can sit back and enjoy her voice as it tells the story without the drowsiness that some narrators can make you feel. We learn in *The Time Capsule* that Elisabeth Sladen does an excellent Gita Chandra impression, however, it's the voice she puts on for D'eathy the Bounty Hunter in *The Ghost House* that makes me recommend it to you. Trust me; you'll be picking yourself up off the floor after listening to it - a mix of chav and funny foreigner. It's worth the price of the CD alone which, now we come to it, is extremely reasonable, and worth a go if you've got a few extra dollars left over in your *Doctor Who* budget (What? You don't have a *Doctor Who* budget, how do you stop yourself then?)

So, what to make of this new collection of stories for Sarah Jane? Not bad at all really. They could do better on some accounts but I'd rather see them try than not have anything.

The Ghost House 5/10
The Time Capsule 9/10 [MARGARET BROWN]

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Issue 17 celebrates the doctor's companions through the years

plus



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K-9: A Time Lord's Best Friend
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