

DOCTOR
WHO COMPANION
ANNUAL **2023**



Welcome to the Doctor Who Companion Annual 2023

Welcome to the third annual from *The Doctor Who Companion*!

Doctor Who might not be on TV this festive season — for the first time since 2004, unbelievably! — but the DWC can still be there for you, and with that in mind, we've got two brand new short stories: *The Mary Whitehouse Experience* by James Baldock; and *The Beauty of Dreams* by Peter Shaw. These tales, which bookend this annual, manage to capture the joy, joviality, and above all, warmth of Christmas without even featuring Santa and his reindeers; I'm really quite proud of their being published here.

But then, the same is true of all the annual's content. Straight after James' surprising short tale, we have Joe Siegler's review of *Eve of the Daleks*, then Peter Shaw rounds out the Thirteenth Doctor era with reviews of *Legend of the Sea Devils* and *The Power of the Doctor* — followed by Jordan Shortman reporting a special bit of news that came as a result of the last TV episode of 2022.

Then, Bar Nash-Williams delivers an interview extravaganza. She went to an event at Neil Cole's Museum of Classic Sci-Fi in Allendale and chatted to a wealth of talent including: director, Graeme Harper; Assistant Floor Manager and Production Manager, Margot Hayhoe; author, Steve Cole; and Ace herself, Sophie Aldred!

Plus: Bar reveals who actually filmed Jon Pertwee's regeneration into Tom Baker...

2022 has been a momentous year, with the sad passing of Queen Elizabeth II. To pay our respects, we're reprinting James Baldock's lovely "Monarchy in the UK" tribute.

And stay tuned to the DWC over the festivities (and beyond) because we've got some great features and reviews coming up, alongside our usual news coverage — and a surprise or two...

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Philip Bates,

Editor and Co-Founder of *The Doctor Who Companion*.

**THANK YOU TO JAMES BALDOCK, FOR CREATING THE GORGEOUS FRONT
AND BACK COVER ARTWORKS.**

The Mary Whitehouse Experience

James Baldock



The main ground floor atrium of the Buffalo Wings Research and Development Centre in East Herefordshire was light, spacious, and currently empty. The rays of the afternoon sun flooded through a generous panel of windows spanning most of the length of the room, which was about half the size of a football pitch and a lot less muddy. Ornate columns of off-white marble stood near the glass staircase that led to the atrium's upper balcony. It held the sort of acoustics most orchestral conductors only dream of, but besides the hum of an air conditioning unit, the chamber was utterly silent.

This was about to change.

All at once the silence was punctuated by a wheezing, groaning sound. It was a sound of intrigue; it was a sound of excitement and adventure; it was above all a sound of hope. It was emanating from an ageing caretaker whose job it was to make sure the room was empty, once an hour, every hour. He shambled out of his cupboard, limping on wobbly, rheumatic legs, gave a vaguely satisfied grunt, and then wheezed and groaned his way back to the armchair in the darkened corner he'd reserved for snoozing.

He did not see the arrival of the police box, which turned up out of nowhere just a couple of minutes later. The door swung open and a middle-aged grey-haired man stepped out, followed by a woman young enough to be his space daughter. The middle-aged man had taken on a variety of appearances over his uncountable lifespan, and had often been described as having a pleasant, open face, but the one he currently wore was neither pleasant nor open. He usually looked like the Demon Headmaster's stunt double, unless he smiled, which had the effect of creating the sort of sinister, slightly deranged expression that people usually crossed the street to avoid.

He surveyed the room, and harrumphed.

“Bland. Lifeless.” He sniffed the air. “Thursday. I hate Thursdays.”

“Don’t tell me,” said Clara Oswald, who was gazing around with folded arms and a weary expression. “You never could get the hang of them.”

“Haven’t the faintest idea what you’re talking about. In any case: Herefordshire!” He threw both arms up to the sky and opened his mouth wide in mock enthusiasm. “The Buffalo Wings R&D Centre, home to the latest scientific enhancements in multimedia.”

“And we’re here because...?”

The Doctor was running his screwdriver across the desk, scanning. “They’ve got some fancy new device that lets you walk around inside your favourite TV shows.”

Clara frowned. “Hang on, you don’t even like TV.”

“Correct! But,” said the Doctor, pocketing the screwdriver, “the tech is years out of date.”

“Ah.” The penny dropped. “This is a nostalgia fetish, isn’t it?”

“No, I mean years the other way. Way, way too advanced for this time period. Which means...” The Doctor was feeling under the desk for something. “There’s something up.”

His hand reached a button, and a door on the first floor landing swung open. “To be precise, it’s up there.”

The Doctor couldn’t be quite sure what happened next.

There was a curiously empty room in this even more curiously empty research centre - why, why, why hadn’t he stopped to wonder why it was so quiet? - and then the stand-mounted CRT television had risen out of the floor like the booby-trapped idol rising out of the ground in some terrible adventure flick, and then the Doctor had touched its edge and then the big red button in the middle and the glass partition that dropped from the ceiling had separated him from Clara. And then the black-and-white static on the TV seemed to bulge at the edges, gaining substance, leaking its way out of the glass and swelling like a balloon, and then getting taller and taller and then it was rising around him like a fog and enveloping him completely -

- and then he was falling and falling and flying through a whirlwind of stars and swirls and bits of circuitry, and the wind was howling like a gale, and he could not feel his own body, and the colours were like that excessively lengthy sequence at the end of that Kubrick film that always bored him to tears, and somewhere in the distance he could hear the sound of crackling, only — no, it wasn’t crackling, it was applause, studio applause, and then he could hear a distorted voice crying “It’s Friday... It’s five to five... It’s CRACKERJACK!”

He blinked, and adjusted his eyes. Why couldn't he see?

No. He could, but for some reason the world had faded to monochrome. The Doctor had no idea why. He also had no idea why he felt so old, all of a sudden, or why his neck felt suddenly both constricted and warm. He looked down at the cravat that dangled from his shirt collar, and examined the wrinkled fingers. Looked down at his feet; noticed the cane propped up against the wall nearby.

Ah. Of course. He was both older and younger, trapped in a previous body. His first. Possibly his first; it was difficult to tell. And apparently he still had his memories, although they were a little fuzzy - rather like the world around him, which seemed to have lost definition. Things looked grainy.



It was a testament to the Doctor's resilience that he did not immediately freak out. Instead, he got his bearings. The studio was staged and curtained and a live audience of gagging school children sat watching as a plain-suited gentleman explained how the next game worked. Before the Doctor knew it, he was being handed a variety of prizes, which he was expected to hold, all at once, in an ever-expanding pile. A wooden Dalek-themed jigsaw. A bumper box of sweet cigarettes. A vinyl copy of 'I'm Gonna Spend My Christmas With A Dalek'. A TARDIS-themed bagatelle game. A doll that was presumably supposed to look like him, although it did not.

His ageing fingers fumbled at the last one and the doll dropped to the ground; there was a chorus of 'ahhs' and a bit of laughter, and one of the floor runners emerged from the wings carrying something large and, under normal circumstances, green. A cabbage. The present-

er received it with a smirk, and then balanced it on top of the Doctor's haphazard pile, where it rolled from left to right and back again while the Time Lord tried desperately to steady it.

"I don't suppose you have any celery?" he asked hopefully.

Zap.

There was a moment's disorientation while the Doctor tried to work out why he was suddenly in the English countryside.

What had happened was this: he had been ripped out of one plane of existence and into another, as if someone had changed the channel. The world was no longer black and white, although the colour didn't feel quite right to him. He scratched his head, and was alarmed at the sensation.

The Doctor felt the moptop he'd suddenly accumulated, and looked down at the checked trousers.

Ah.

He gazed around him at the scene: the brightly-painted houses lining the edges of an idyllic village square. People milled about, going into and out of buildings, moving with a stiff-legged gait. Most of them were too far away for him to see them clearly, but there was something about them that seemed off.

"This is another fine mess ye've gotten us inteh, Doctor."

He turned to identify the voice, and found himself face to face with Jamie McCrimmon.

"Hello, Jamie," he said. "Are you really here?"

"I'm as here as you are, Doctor. Wherever here is."

"Some sort of English pastoral scene, I shouldn't wonder. But none of it looks quite real."

It didn't. The buildings and the shrubberies, while brightly hued, lacked a level of depth. The colours were too vivid, the designs too simple, the flowers all identical and stiff, as if they had been cut from fabric and then glued in place. The people, too, were moving in a slow and almost robotic manner, buying fish and walking dogs and waving at passers by, and doing so in complete silence.

"And look at the locals," said Jamie, as if reading his thoughts. "They havenae any mouths!"

So that was it. The Doctor wondered why he hadn't noticed already, but now that he had, it was obvious: aside from the occasional moustache, the beady-eyed villagers were featureless from the nose down. The effect was uncanny, and not a little unsettling.



“My goodness,” said the Doctor. “It’s extraordinary.”

“It’s creepy, is what it is.” Jamie was tutting. “Are you no gonna tell me what’s goin’ on?”

“I seem to have been forced to relive classic television series from the point of view of my previous selves.”

“What — all of them?”

“Mmm, well, at this stage I simply don’t know. Perhaps just the old favourites. Anyway, I’m hopping through time at the whim of some unknown entity or person, dropping in and out of programmes seemingly at random, accompanied, it would appear, by various friends and companions from my past. There’s no apparent pattern established as yet, so the best I can do is to leap through from programme to programme until I can find a way to escape.”

“That’s a shedload of exposition, Doctor.”

“Yes, Jamie, it was a big one.”

It went dark. Not after-sunset-dark, but partial-eclipse-dark: the sun (which looked, now the Doctor came to regard it, rather like the bulb from an angle-poised lamp) all but disappeared as a colossal head swam into view.

Jamie balked. “Would ye look at the size o’ that thing!”

The head spoke: its voice was booming but also very polite. “Here is Camberwick Green, where everyone is going about their business.”

“What’s that he’s speaking into?” Jamie asked.

“It’s a microphone. I think he’s — ”

The giant head opened its mouth again. “Hello, Doctor!”

“Oh! Oh, I say! Are you — ”

But the head wasn’t addressing him. It was addressing the bearded gentleman in the top hat who was climbing out of a vintage car. The Doctor looked at the car and felt a pang of nostalgia, which was instantly undone as the bearded gentleman walked toward him, brandishing a scalpel.

“Are you busy on your rounds?”

The bearded gentleman stopped, looked up and gave an exaggerated nod.

“Are you going to deal with the outsiders?”

Nod.

“And how are you going to do that?”

The bearded gentleman looked at the Doctor and Jamie with glowing red eyes. He brandished the scalpel.

“Oh,” said Jamie. “Oh, sh-”

Zap.

And now he was in a strange, slightly drab suburban house, minimalist and monochromatic, like an unfinished drawing. Cupboards and doors appeared to have been sketched, the lines carelessly contoured. Most annoying of all there was nowhere to sit, and apart from two long tables at chest height the place was all but empty. Some of the paintwork was gay, and a window looked out on a serene garden bathed in artificial light, but it really was the most cheerless room, a wooden box full of toys and a small bookshelf the only concessions to fun.

The Doctor looked down at himself, and nearly fell over the thick scarf he was now wearing, stretching up and around his neck at least twice and trailing out behind him like a multicoloured knitted wedding gown. It had the air of a garment that had been assembled by some elderly lady who’d got too enthused with her task and hadn’t known when to stop. Still, it would be handy in a cold snap, like a summer’s afternoon in Frinton.

The crown of his head felt warm. The Doctor loosened the hat he found up there and a mass of curls sprang out, wiry and unruly. Instinctively, he licked just behind his lips. “Hmm. I know these teeth.”

A door at the end of the room was opened by a young lady wearing a green cashmere jumper, a pleated skirt, and saddle shoes. At least she looked young, and might not have objected to the adjective. The Doctor happened to know she was only a hundred and

twenty-six.

"Hello, Romana," he said, all curls and familiar teeth.

"God," she said. "This place is like an interior designer's nightmare!"

"It is rather dull round the edges, isn't it?" said the Doctor, knocking on the tables for signs of secret compartments, or woodworm. "Have you encountered any other life forms?"

Romana sighed. "Well, actually — "

Hot on her heels was an impudent teenager dressed in mustard yellow. The Doctor's heart sank. Here was a complicated and wearisome history he'd hoped never to revisit, even in a possible hallucination.

The teenager was in the middle of a ferocious argument with someone who was apparently not Romana. "For pity's sake, I only asked if I could borrow it! Just for a moment! I want to work out where we are."

He looked around, confused, as if having lost something. "Wait — where'd he — "

An ugly, rugby-ball shaped creature that seemed to be made of felt suddenly popped up behind the table. Its eyes were large and frog-like, and bizarrely it had a many-toothed zip for a mouth.

"Well, you can't!" it said, in a voice like an unfiltered Dalek. "It's mine!" And then, as a sort of half-formed postscript, "I don't like sharing."

Adric folded his arms and regarded the creature contemptuously. "Well, if you're going to be selfish about it then no one's going to want to be your friend."

"I've got lots of friends!" The creature waved the compass in its hand in indignation. "More than you."

"What on Gallifrey is it, Doctor?" asked Romana. "And how did it just appear like that?"

"Yes," said Adric. "How did you do that? You were right behind me when we were arguing upstairs."

"Some sort of teleportation device," said the Doctor. "Or perhaps it floats. Look." He peered behind the counter. "It doesn't have any legs."

"Or genitals," remarked Romana.

"Hey!" the zip-like creature said. "Do you mind? That's private."

It was at this point that the bear wandered in. He was six foot tall, with black beady eyes behind a mass of shaggy brown fur.

"Zippy?" he began. "Have you seen my — " and then stopped. "Ooh! Visitors!"



“How’d you do?” said the Doctor, with a congenial smile. “I’m the Doctor, and this is Romana. Oh, and that’s Adric, squabbling with your pet.”

The bear looked momentarily blank; it took no visible effort. “Eh? Oh, Zippy’s not a pet. He lives here. With me, and George, and Geoffrey. They’re out at the dentist. George needs a filling done.”

“Yeah,” said Zippy. “Too many sweets.”

The bear wagged an accusatory finger. “You can talk, greedy-guts!”

“I never eat sweets!” Zippy cried. “I don’t even like them!”

The Doctor knew a lady protesting too much when he saw one, and was already fishing the bag out of his pocket. “Ah,” he said. “I suppose you won’t want a jelly baby, then.”

You would think it impossible for a pair of fabric eyes to light up, but somehow the zip-shaped thing managed it. “Jelly babies? They’re my favourite!” And, grabbing the bag in a three-fingered paw, he stuffed its entire contents into his mouth.

The Doctor regarded him, amused. “Well now, Adric,” he said. “It would seem congratulations are in order. We’ve found someone even more obnoxious and annoying than you.”

Adric rolled his eyes in the manner of an over-acting waif straight out of stage school. “Oh, f*** off, Tom.”

“So it’s just the two of you?” said Romana, anxious to change the subject before things escalated into a full-on brawl. “Here in this house, on your own?”

“Only for a moment,” said Bungle. “We’ve got a babysitter.”

“Yes,” piped up Zippy. “Actually, we’ve got three of them!”

From just outside, there was a chorus of “Hello!” and “Coo-ee!” and at least one “B*lllocks, what have I stepped in?” The trio who walked in were all human in appearance, although the woman’s skirt was far too short for daytime children’s television and the dungarees were the sort of fashion disaster the Doctor hadn’t seen since 1976.

“Seems Eldrad lived after all,” he muttered to himself.

“Hello!” said the bearded man. “We didn’t know you had company.”

“Oh, we’re just passing through,” said Romana, to which the Doctor added “Though we’re glad we stayed. You look to be a cheery threesome.”

The short-skirted woman went red. “Threesome? No, none of that,” she said, far too quickly. “We’re just friends.”

“We’re time travellers,” explained Adric, in the sort of patronising know-it-all voice that always got on the Doctor’s unmentionables. “Only, we got lost.”

“Hey!” the curly-haired young man who looked like he was eyeing up Romana suddenly piped up. “We know a song about getting lost, don’t we?”

“Ooh, yes!” The three of them came round to the front of the table into the big space in the middle of the room. “Shall we sing it to you all?”

“Please don’t,” suggested the Doctor, but of course it was too late.

Mirth-driven, minor-keyed synthesised muzak filled the room, like the smell from fish that had been left in the sun for a week, and then Jane’s troubled soprano took up the narrative—

*“I was driving to Milton Keynes one day
Saw Tony Blackburn, then drove the other way
But before I knew what was happening to me
I took a wrong turn off the A33
I was lost! Lost! In the English countryside
Found a jolly farmer and he took me for a ride*

But we crashed into a haystack, and down on me he went

Couldn't get him off, and his tractor shaft was bent - "

"Doctor!" whispered Romana urgently. "You don't take the A33 to Milton Keynes!"

"Lost! Lost! Oh, what am I to do

I've got into an accident, and I can't find the - "

Later, the Doctor would wonder where the music was coming from; there had been no sign of any speakers.

Zap.

The first thing to note was that he was completely naked. The Doctor scratched his head - which seemed much easier, given that it now had far less hair - and tried to work out whether this had happened before. There was that time in Madrid, of course, after Drax's stag party, but —

He blinked and sat up. He was in the TARDIS. The console room gleamed like an army of fireflies sitting on the hem of a spangled evening gown in direct sunlight; the Doctor wondered whether he ought to turn down the brightness settings.

He felt his throat. Scottish, again. Shorter. His hand trailed along the floor and brushed against something soft and fluffy lying next to the console: a blonde wig.

From outside, he thought he could discern a jaunty melody; some sort of hornpipe. Then there was a knock on the door. "Five minutes, Mr McCoy!"

The Doctor panicked. There appeared to have been some terrible misunderstanding. Frantically, he looked around for his clothes. Didn't he wear a v-neck? A v-neck with question marks?

Well, it wasn't here. Scrambling together what he could, the Doctor headed for the exit just as the TARDIS door opened and a chirpy BBC voice said "the new Doctor Who, Sylvester McCoy!"

The Doctor blinked as he entered the blazing lights of the Blue Peter studio. That was the final straw; as far as the console room was concerned, he was going dark. Or had he already? It was a job to remember when you weren't quite yourself.

For not the first time in this hallucination, the woman standing outside to greet him looked oddly familiar. She was going on about the Pied Piper.

"And what are you going to be wearing?" she asked him.

"I'm not quite sure yet," said the Doctor. "It's a secret." He looked about, his eyes darting anxiously from left to right, for signs of an exit, or his actual clothes. At least the hat was

right.

“And which planet are you going to be visiting first?”

Christ. What was this, Twenty Questions? The dog bounded over, wagging its tail. The Doctor hoped it was house trained.

“Do you want to come with me to my planet?” he asked, half-meaning it, half-wishing he could remember the name of the bloody place.



The interview over, the Doctor popped back inside his TARDIS in search of a stiff drink. There were footsteps — tap shoes on linoleum — from the corridor outside, and in walked a disgruntled redhead, wearing a leotard and a sour expression and picking what appeared to be blue ostrich feathers out of her bushy hair.

“Mel?” said the Doctor. “Where have you been?”

“The Pink Windmill,” was the reply. “Seriously. Don’t ask.”

Zap.

The Doctor and Rose — he in a leather coat, she in a crop top — were striding down a hill somewhere on a remote Scottish island.

“All I’m saying is, PC Plum is clearly gay,” Rose was saying. “And so is Archie. And they’ve clearly got eyes for each other. So why doesn’t Miss Hoolie see it?”

“Haven’t a clue,” replied the Doctor, cheerily. “Tangled webs of unrequited love are way out of my comfort zone. I’m more concerned about that signal.”

“That, and Miss Hoolie’s wardrobe.”

“She wears the same clothes. Every day!” The Doctor shook his head and examined the readings on his screwdriver. “I can’t imagine ever doing that.”

Rose fingered the hem of his jacket. “I bet you can’t.”

“Still. Balamory’s a catchy name.” The Doctor put away the screwdriver. “Should commit it to memory. Might come in handy.”

“Oh, when will you ever need — ”

From the bottom of the hill, at what looked like Pocket and Sweet’s, there was a sudden, violent explosion, followed by cries of “EXTERMINATE!”

“Contractual obligation of the Daleks!” The Doctor grinned. “Fan-tas-tic!”

Zap.

And now he was walking along the harbour of a fishing village on the Yorkshire coast and there was a man who looked like Wilf chatting to a woman who looked like Martha and a man who looked like the man who’d tried to sacrifice Donna to the queen of the spiders...

Zap.

A blank, white space, bright and featureless. A noise that might have been a tuning fork.

“God,” said the Doctor. “This is The Mind Robber again, isn’t it?”

“Not quite,” said a familiar voice.

The Doctor rubbed at his eyes; he could hear the click of heels on a wooden floor. The voice continued as its owner swam into focus. “There’s an old joke. The BBC only has thirty actors and about a dozen sets, all recycled. I’m wondering how many you ran into.”

“Well, I suppose I shouldn’t be surprised,” said the Doctor, getting unsteadily to his feet.

“Hello, Missy.”

“Hello, dear.” The buttoned jacket was porpoise grey, the boots a dark yellow. “Have a pleasant journey?”

He was himself again; moreover, he was back where he had been, albeit on the other side of the room, away from the TV. “Where’d you get the tech? And where’s Clara?”

“She ate my last wine gum, so I killed her,” said Missy. “As to your first question, I built it

myself.”

“You built an immersive television?” said the Doctor. “For what? Is this because they wouldn’t let you on Strictly?”

“Immersive!” Missy expelled a gush of air from the sides of her mouth. “You and your understatement. This is next level, sonny jim. We’re talking full engagement. People who believe they’re actually in the shows I assign them to!”

“Why would you want that?”



“Because it’s criminally expensive, which means the richest and most powerful people on the planet are going to be queuing up to have a go. What else do you buy the man who has everything?” Missy was wandering up and down the chamber, in that curious little dance she often performed. “Rock stars, premier league footballers... politicians.” She gave a wicked smile. “And once they’re in...”

“You’ve got them where you want them.”

“Bing! Gold star for the underperformer from Gallifrey. What you saw was the prototype; I just needed to run a few calibration tests to check the damned thing works. Tweak here, bit of wire twisting there... presto! I can have them say anything I want them to say.”

“So I’m your guinea pig?”

Missy pawed with her hands. “Squeak, squeak.”

The Doctor had been moving across the room, casually circling until he was next to the antique television, which stood in its mounted stand like a museum centrepiece. “The endur-

ing appeal of television. God, talk about using their own weaknesses against them.”

The door at the end burst open; it was Clara with a fire axe. “Doctor! Doctor, I — oh.”

“I’m fine.” The Doctor greeted her with a raised eyebrow. “You look like Jack Nicholson.”

“Very funny.” Clara dropped the axe to the floor, where the blade embedded itself in the wood. “So what’s all this?”

“Never mind ‘what’s all this’; where’ve you been all this time?”

“I was gone for thirty seconds!”

“Ah.” The Doctor nodded. “It’s like Narnia, then. Felt rather longer.”

“I’ve just taken your boyfriend on a little trip,” said Missy, beaming nastily at Clara. “I think it did him good.”

“Bit inconsistent, though,” said the Doctor. “I mean it was — ”

“God!” Missy threw up her hands. “You’re such a fanboy. Always wanting stuff to make sense.”

“I just don’t understand why everything else was BBC, and then you had one, just one from ITV... ”

“Look. I like Rainbow, okay?” Missy leaned on the edge of the TV; she was glaring at him contemptuously. “You know me well enough to know my tastes are eclectic. Or are you losing your memory as well as your looks?”

“Ohh, no,” said the Doctor, taking a step back. “I have a long memory. In fact...”

He dropped a wink at Clara.

“It’s almost as long as yours.”

Hefting the axe, the Doctor threw it handle first at the big red button.

Missy was a foot the wrong side of the glass screen when it slammed to the floor. She hammered on it in a fury. “Let me out!”

“You’ve got a fire axe,” the Doctor pointed out reasonably as the static began to fill the room.

Too late, Missy remembered the axe. She picked it up and began to pound at the toughened glass, but even as the first crack appeared, the widening static enveloped her completely, and she was gone.

“Don’t worry,” said the Doctor to Clara. “We’ll get her out.”

“Yeah,” Clara replied. “In about... ooh, thirty seconds.”

Zap.

The Master looked at the forest in which he'd landed. It was impossibly sculpted, like a Capability Brown. Bright paths led here and there, and an ornately coloured bridge stood over a cave big enough for a small bear. The Master looked at the trees, some of the grandest he'd ever seen, and the brightly coloured birds that sang a strange song that sounded almost human.

He checked himself over. Blast! He was old. No matter. Age was no barrier, merely a temporary impairment. He would deal with the Doctor in due time, once he found a way out of these woods.

The Master walked across to the cave, noting the presence of two tiny houses, a large bush with three holes, and what looked very much like a hospital bed. He would deal with the alpha predator first, and then assume command of whatever hellhole he'd been cast into.

"I am usually referred to as the Master," he announced, at the cave entrance. "Universally." He stopped to wonder whether this was actually true, realised it wasn't, and decided it was a matter for another time. "I come in triumph and in conquest, and you will obey me."

There was a pause, and then a small brown fluffy creature ambled out of the darkness, carrying a sponge.

"Makka Pakka?" it said, and then, with a gentle, loving touch, it began to wash the Master's face.

The Master sighed. It was going to be a long night.



Reviewed: Eve of the Daleks

Joe Siegler



So it's New Year's Day with Jodie Whittaker. That means it's time for Daleks. I settled in and watched *Eve of the Daleks*, a story that very much shows on screen it was produced during a Covid lockdown. That didn't stop me from enjoying it, but to employ an American term, it was very much a "bottle episode", with very limited sets, and a very small cast. We had Team TARDIS (the Doctor, Yaz, and Dan) plus two other humans (Sarah and Nick). There were the three Dalek operators, although really it was just one most of the time. There were two other humans, but both had no scenes with any other actors (Mary, Sara's mum solely on a phone screen, and Karl). But that doesn't mean I can't enjoy it. In fact, I very much did.

When it was over, I did what I always do – discuss it with a few mates. One of them (Jake) had this to say about the episode...

"By FAR the best thing Chibnall has ever written, *Doctor Who* wise. It's head and shoulders above anything else he's written. Tight, great dialogue, wonderful characters, and a story we've never seen before. Tell me a better story he's done. I'll wait. Can't help being sad that the Irish lass can't be the Doctor herself now, because she was AWESOME. I'd love a sarcastic Doctor like her in the future."

I sent him back *The Power of Three*, but he disagreed with me. He went on about *Eve of the Daleks*.

While I wouldn't go as far as Jake did in my

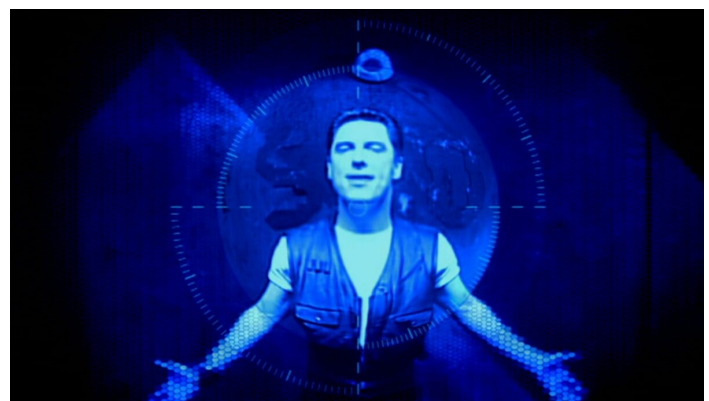
enjoyment of it, I did like that it was something different. As I said to my wife in the middle of the episode, “this was a small scale story”. It wasn’t one with the Daleks looking to wipe out the universe; they were just going after the Doctor in a single location. It wasn’t an old recycled Terry Nation Dalek idea. Is it the best Dalek story ever? Oh hell no. But one that I very much enjoyed as a standalone. This was basically *Doctor Who* doing Groundhog day. So much so that Dan even uttered “This is *Groundhog Day*” in the episode, so they were self aware on that.

The core concept is that the Doctor has to purge the TARDIS of Flux-related “stuff” (no specific detail as to what), but said purge both explains the “cracks” in the promo photos we saw leading up to the episode, as well as what starts the time loop. The first time loop happens in the pre-titles. It’s the longest one, as these concepts usually are. So much so, we don’t get the titles until nine minutes into the episode.

Basically, the Daleks claim that the Doctor causes the time loop, and some Daleks were sent to exterminate the Doctor. Which they do several times. The Daleks are armed with a new machine gun weapon, which looks pretty cool – and makes me wonder why that hasn’t happened before. I also think the machine gun weapon went to be an unstated reason why the Dalek exterminations didn’t cause the Doctor to regenerate. Granted, the time loop appears to happen when the five people in the building are killed, so that alone could explain it, as I’m pretty sure the Doctor is always the last one exterminated in a cycle. I realize it’s a nitpick for sure, but the first time it happened I thought, “Hang on, why isn’t the Doctor regenerating”?

One difference here is that the characters regain their memory of the previous cycles – something that doesn’t always happen in these time loop stories. It allowed them to use the cycles as ways to move forward in trying to outsmart the Dalek that was after them. One of the cycles they just walked out in front of the Dalek to move the process forward. I enjoyed that.

Speaking of the exterminations, one of the ones of Sarah gave me an immediate flashback to the finale of Christopher Eccleston’s run, *The Parting of the Ways*. Sarah stood there and held her arms out in the exact same way that Captain Jack Harkness did in that episode in front of three Daleks.



There was not an infinite amount of time loops here, the amount of time in the loops was reduced a minute with each cycle – once that was realised, it brought a finality – and that’s when the Daleks kind of let the Doctor know that her extermination was inevitable. Of course it doesn’t end that way, but it does add some tension to the

loops to know they're not unlimited.

One thing that comes up in this story is that Dan has figured out that Yaz is a thing for the Doctor. He corners her about it, and she ends up just crying. He then proceeds to out Yaz in front of the Doctor (a bit uncool) who has kind of a "Uh, what?" kind of reaction. I had immediate flashbacks to Martha Jones here with the unrequited love. It's not paid off in this episode, so we'll probably get something about this in the next episode or the finale, where Yaz can have a full-on cry about the Doctor dying.



One negative to the story is that there were several instances where folks should have been exterminated faster than they were, but only survived due to some "Red shirt level shooting" by the Daleks here.

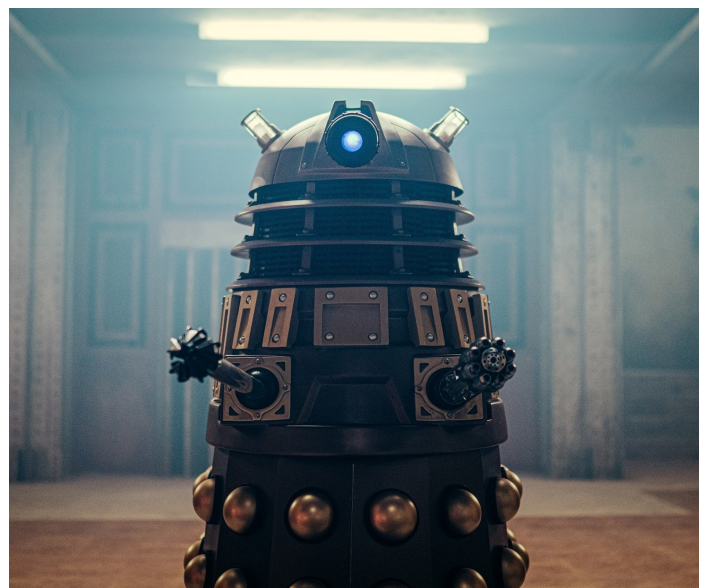
We progress through various rooms of the storage facility, and find some materials being held there by Sarah's customers (an unseen "Jeff") — things he's not supposed to (including a room full of cans of beans). Some of these things would allow them to destroy the Daleks (and the building). That's ultimately how they get out. They trick the Daleks with a phone call from Sarah's mum at which point they slip out of the building and the Dalek then proceeds to blow up the building and themselves.

Given the materials in the warehouse included fireworks, we got a fireworks

show on top of the building collapsing (in a nice bit of CGI). One little throw-in was a character who witnessed the fireworks going off. This character is Karl Wright, played by Johnny Dixon. He appeared in *Doctor Who* before, in Jodie Whittaker's first episode, *The Woman Who Fell to Earth*, being hunted by T'zim-Sha there. It's an odd deep cut, and I wonder why him. It seems so out of left field.

"Sometimes the best things in life are the simple pleasures." This was a small simple story, but very very enjoyable. I thought the acting was pretty solid all around, too — something that's not always the case. We got a few laughs here and there, with the Dalek labeling Dan "the inferior human". While I don't think it's as amazing as my mate Jake made it out to be, *Eve of the Daleks* was a very solid 8/10 for me.

Finally, one fun little real world thing. After the episode aired, John Bishop tweeted something really nice to read. He said, "Dreams do come true. Had anyone told me as a boy that one day I would be meeting a Dalek on TV I would never have believed them. It was made all the more special by working with such great people on *Doctor Who*". Certainly a nice sentiment to read.



Reviewed: Legend of the Sea Devils

Peter Shaw



Depending on your religious and cultural persuasion, Easter Sunday is either about the resurrection of something that's believed to be dead forever, or the overindulgence of Easter eggs. Sadly, *Legend of the Sea Devils* falls squarely in the latter. Sad, because I genuinely felt excited after seeing the preview and trailer, and hoped that *Doctor Who* had fully come back to life...

As a *Doctor Who* fan writing for a *Doctor Who* fansite (albeit the very best one there is), I fall squarely in the category of 'being excited about the return of the Sea Devils' – something I previously experienced back in 1984 with *Warriors of the Deep*. And we all know how that turned out. History has been kinder to that much-maligned adventure. But the 'Sea Devils' still come out of the story with little glory. So it's really the spirit of the 1972's *The Sea Devils* that I was hoping would be

recaptured in the latest *Doctor Who* special. But for most of the viewing population, the 'Sea Devils' appearance at the end of *Eve of the Daleks* probably enlisted very little excitement. It possibly prompted a few to seek out online what all the fuss was about, only to discover they are turtle-faced rubbery monsters of 50-years vintage. Is that *it*?

Much attention to detail and respect for their history is evident in the updated design of the 'Sea Devils'. Deliberately a practical effect not CGI (but subtly enhanced by computer trickery), the race – I'm deliberately choosing not to call them creatures or monsters – are faithful (possibly to a fault) to their first appearance. At least to look at. There is little of the moral question possessed by them and their reptile cousins the 'Silurians', that was core to their creator, Malcolm Hulke's conception. The question

being, whether they are, in fact, the rightful owners of planet Earth. And if humans won't give the planet back over to their rule, how should we go about sharing it with them?

The Doctor's main aim in 1970's *The Silurians*, *The Sea Devils*, and 2010's *The Hungry Earth/Cold Blood* (written by Chris Chibnall, and one of his better efforts) was to negotiate peace between the humans and the earth's former dominant species, if at all possible. In *Legend...* reference to this key aspect of the race's backstory is given scant attention:

Yaz: So you know them, these Sea Devils?

Doctor: Crossed paths once or twice.

Yaz: Where do they come from?

Doctor: Slight wrinkle there. Earth. They were here before humans. They regard Earth as their own planet.

Yaz: That's not good.

Firstly, the Doctor seems happy to keep referring to them by an insulting, derogatory term for a 'noble ancient' race, and secondly, there is no suggestion in this exchange that their claim to the planet is in any way legitimate or worth considering. Something that the Time Lord has asserted during every previous televised encounter with them. The Doctor even regards one of the race, Madame Vastra, as a good friend and ally. Here it's just an inconvenient 'slight wrinkle', not a history-shattering revelation about the Earth's past. Yaz, who often acts as the Thirteenth Doctor's better moral compass, merely dismisses it as a bit

of an annoyance.

With only 40-minutes of (a lot of mangled) plot to deal with the 'Sea Devil' threat (the final five minutes are given over to relationship business with the TARDIS crew), there is no space in this adventure for nuance about the morality of who has the greater claim to the earth. Instead, the 'Sea Devils' are treated as rather generic evil monsters who may just as well have crash-landed from a different planet.

What sets the earth reptiles and their aquatic cousins apart from your typical alien threats to the planet is the uniqueness of their origin story. So, if this is completely sidelined, what is the point of bringing them back? They certainly don't have the mass cultural appeal to draw in a massive audience, as the feeble 2.2 million overnight figures testify. I know that the audience will grow with people who recorded or will stream on iPlayer, but for it to shift into anywhere near a respectable audience, it needs word-of-mouth enthusiasm from those who have seen it relayed to those that haven't. From the unappreciative reviews and disparaging comments I've seen online, I really can't see that happening.

So, back to the point. They could easily have been a Sontaran naval fleet, an undersea-stranded Zygon crew, or a new threat altogether. But alongside the backstory, what made the 'Sea Devils' creepy in the first place was also ignored. They were kept in the shadows, a threat from the deep, not a bunch of sword-wielding warriors in full view from the outset. The rest of the 'Sea Devils' are simply sword-fodder, with no individuality or personality in evidence, just an unquestioning devotion to their deranged leader. Who gets more sympathy in the

script when killed than the half-a-dozen that Dan despatches with an unbelievable single sabre swipe. Followed by a lame quip about his mum.

All of these things would be easier to overlook if the story were intended to be an all-action romp. But the final five minutes try to present the episode as a character-driven drama about real people experiencing real emotions. Earlier in the episode, Dan lamely says, "Listen... I'm sorry about your dad", to Ying Ki, whose father was brutally killed and his body left disfigured only a short time before. The tone of Dan throughout highlights the discrepancy in the emotional journey of the TARDIS crew. He poignantly phones his could-be girlfriend Diane, not to seek support after witnessing so much death and destruction – even perpetrating much himself – but because he's "been having all these mad adventures" but has no one to regale them to. So, it's not like he wants to

come home and settle down. Sorry, Di. Maybe you were right to unexpectedly end it with Dan after the Flux.

So we come to that whole "Thasmin" thing. I am not opposed to the Doctor having romantic (or other) feelings towards the companions, vice versa or sharing mutual attraction. It just never seems convincing in this instance. For the first two series, I thought that Yaz was just along for the ride. The attraction appears to have all been cooked up in the minds of a few fans out of scant evidence, who wanted it confirmed in the programme.

Rose was always portrayed as being a little bit too fond of the Tenth Doctor, to his mutual consent. Martha's unrequited crush on him was trumpeted loudly and Amy clearly wanted to get into Eleven's breeches. I just don't quite get it with Yaz



and Thirteen. Even here, Mandip Gill is forced to do more through looks and expressions than is ever delivered in the script. Why doesn't a frustrated Yaz rage a little at the Doctor for such a pathetic response?

Take this exchange:

Doctor: Yaz... I can't fix myself... to anything... anywhere... or anyone. I've never been able to. That's what my life is.

Yaz: Yeah, of course.

Have the writers never been in love? If so, do they really think Yaz's response would be, "Yeah, of course" after the Doctor basically gave her the 'it's not you, it's me' excuse? While still teasing Yaz with the cruel hope that she does have the same feelings in return. The Doctor says she just doesn't want to act on them.

Are we expected to believe that Yaz is so passive that she wouldn't call the Doctor out for such a badly-expressed reason? Oh, the actual reason is sound. A near-immortal who changes their whole appearance and personality regularly, who has command of a time-space machine, whose chosen life is one of constant danger, showing no desire to settle down, having a relationship with a one-short-lifetime fragile human who will age before their eyes while they remain the same. Or turn into someone else. That's understandable. But Yaz doesn't seem to know about the Doctor's massively extended lifetime, her many incarnations, and gender-switching. Without that information, wouldn't Yaz put up a bit more of a fight? Even with it...

Of course, there is much more to say about this Easter special, its characters, performances, direction, and realisation.

Superficially, apart from some obvious green-screen CGI, the Covid-conditions restricting the cast, and overseas location filming, it was entertaining enough. If it was a mid-season adventure story with another one following next week, it would be perfectly respectable, if a little underwhelming. But it's supposed to be a blockbuster for the Easter holidays, leading up to the Thirteenth Doctor's final adventure: a last hurrah before she hurrahs her last. Shame it wasn't.

It's telling that the most thrilling moments happened in the preview at the end. The glimpses of the latest Master, lone Cyberman, and other returnees from the Thirteen's era. Plus Tegan and Ace. Yes, that probably means something to you. But the general viewing public? Do they know, or more importantly, care? Sarah Jane Smith was brought back from the classic series in *School Reunion*, an episode that didn't simply feed on nostalgia; it introduced the character to a whole new generation, who embraced her. There was a real point to her return, to show Rose what happens when the adventures end, and it forced the Tenth Doctor to face up to his past and the people he leaves behind.

I remember as a child being excited by more and more Easter eggs. But feeling sick when gorging on too much, and finding it unsatisfying. My mother would tell me not to eat too many and spoil my dinner. We don't need a diet of treats and sweets (cameos and fan-pleasing relationships); we need substance, flavour, and nourishment. A well-prepared meal. Chibnall, you've got one last chance...

Reviewed: The Power of the Doctor

Peter Shaw



Among the political machinations over the last few weeks, which have played out like an unfolding, unbelievable, absurd, and terrifying political drama, *The Power of the Doctor* has been somewhat of a relief. It's a fast-paced adventure story with a frankly bonkers plot, that somehow manages to be more satisfying than much of the Chris Chibnall/Jodie Whittaker era.

For all the call-backs to the last few years – Sacha Dhawan's Master, the Lone Cyberman Ashad, Vinder from *Flux*, the Fugitive Doctor, and the 'Time Lord' Cybermen – there was a Trussian level of u-turns here. UNIT has returned to pretty much full funding after being clumsily written out in *Resolution*. The Daleks are back as an invasion force, despite the Dalek

War Fleet being destroyed in the *Flux* event.

The Timeless Child story arc that cast a shadow over the Whittaker era is not even mentioned, let alone resolved. In fact, the inclusion of mostly classic-era Doctors at 'The Edge' seems to suggest they are still the Doctor's main incarnations, not a myriad of *Morbius* Doctors, tortured children, Old Uncle Tom Cobley and all. Of course, the 'explanation' is that the Doctor's memory of pre-Hartnell incarnations is hidden. Then how come she can conjure up a convincing Fugitive Doctor hologram? (Whatever, Jo Martin is simply brilliant, if underused again.)

While Dan Lewis (John Bishop) exits in the most underwhelming companion farewell since Mel (more of her later) – why no walk into the sunset with Diane? – Yasmin (Mandip Gill) and the Doctor's unrequited love is completely sidelined, despite it

being such a signposted revelation at the end of *Legend of the Sea Devils*. If you missed that, then the end of *The Power of the Doctor* plays out like two good friends saying goodbye rather than two people who are in love with each other parting forever. And I don't buy this 'doing the next bit alone' and Yaz passively nodding. If you love someone deeply, you wouldn't abandon them to face death (basically) solo. For all of Yaz's becoming independent and determined spirit in this episode and previous adventures, she once again becomes shrug-the-shoulder compliant in the end.

The Chibnall trick of setting a plot between multiple timelines, locations, and empty planets is in force but somehow manages to be relatively coherent. As is Chibnall's introduction of a hugely powerful and mysterious thing (a Quoronz) that has never been mentioned before, but the



Doctor knows all about and has to explain in a technobabbly speech, and that kind of works here too. That's because the pace is frantic, much of the plot holes and fudges come and go when the next spectacle appears.

For long-term *Doctor Who* fans, the inclusion of '80s companions Ace and Tegan is a thrill (particularly the glimpses of them interacting with versions of their Doctors). Also, the cameos of the First, Fifth, Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Doctors bring a sense of celebration to this BBC centenary special. (I imagine Colin Baker did it for the love of *Who*, rather than the corporation that treated him so badly in the 1980s.) Great to see glimpses of all of them, but any moments of McGann on-screen are precious. They seem to get David Bradley back for all occasions. We can only hope a full episode with McGann is part of the RTD2 plans.

The AA-like meeting at the end of the Doctor's former companions is another cockle-warming toast to all of fandom. But for most viewers, it was a bunch of people in a room with no explanation as to who they were. Except, isn't that Carmel – Bonnie Langford – from *EastEnders*? What's she doing there? You just can't conjure up nostalgia for something you have never experienced, unless you put time and effort into the story, like they did with Sarah Jane in *School Reunion*. And where was Polly (Anneke Wills)? And Martha? And Mickey– yes, probably best not to go there.

Despite this being Whittaker's final regular appearance as the Doctor, she seemed a little sidelined in all the spectacle. The Master was given much better lines and profile, with the Thirteenth Doctor

disappearing in the middle only to return in other forms (another repeated Chibnall trope). The sad fact is that this episode is likely to be boosted through iPlayer views, not with people wanting to see how Jodie exits but to cheer at David Tennant's return. Jodie deserves more, frankly. But her Tigger-and-teatime turn as the Doctor never fully meshed into a convincing incarnation. Jodie is capable of so much more, but was given such a passive and (slightly) annoying persona that never transcended the too often sub-par material.



But, you know, despite all that, I rather enjoyed it. And so did my children (son aged 11 and daughter, seven). My son declared that it was a much better episode than he'd seen recently. My daughter, who had stopped watching all episodes and eras after the *Flux* (who can blame her?), declared that she enjoyed it and had, 'missed *Doctor Who*.' For all the fans who – whatever the BBC and production team deny – have fallen away over the last five years, I hope the teasing of Tennant brings them back. And the brilliance of Russell T Davies as showrunner and lead writer keeps them there.

Well, goodbye, Jodie. You did quite well, quite well (given the circumstances and material). But it's reassuring to know that the future is in safe hands...

(And I don't mean Rishi Sunak.)

William Russell Awarded a Guinness World Record for His Appearances in Doctor Who

Jordan Shortman



There were plenty of surprises in Jodie Whittaker's finale, not least the returning companions at the end! There had been some rumblings that Bonnie Langford and Katy Manning would be returning but I don't think anyone managed to guess that William Russell would be returning as Ian Chesterton for a brief cameo.

And with all that excitement aside, it actually meant that *Doctor Who* broke another milestone with Russell now holding the Guinness World Record for the longest gap between episodes for any actor, with a total of 57 years and 120 days. Russell was there for the very beginning with *An Unearthly Child* in 1963; he then appeared until the final episode of *The Chase*, when he and Jacqueline Hill departed the TARDIS in a last-ditch attempt to get back to Earth in their own time.

Then he returned for that penultimate scene in *The Power of the Doctor*.

We've had a few Ian Chesterton Easter eggs since the show came back in 2005 but no one was expecting him to make a return 57 years later. The previous record holder was Phillip Lowrie as Dennis Tanner who returned to *Coronation Street* after 43 years.

This isn't the only world record that *Doctor Who* has broken. It currently holds the award for the most consecutive science-fiction TV episodes, with 871 episodes having been broadcast so far! A comic con in Mexico broke the record for the largest amount of people dressing as *Doctor Who* characters and *The Day of the Doctor* currently holds the award for the most countries a programme was broadcast at the same time in.

“No Other Show”: A Doctor Who Family Gathering

Bar Nash-Williams

I live in a tiny town in the middle of nowhere. 13 miles over the Moor is our neighbouring tiny town, also in the middle of nowhere. Visitors call them villages; they're wrong: villages are usually much larger.

One Saturday in November, I was walking through the neighbouring tiny town with one of those visitors, chatting about the weather, the local emergency services and human needs, the value of community. I say “walking” – I was trying hard not to float or skip in fangirl glee, because the visitor was Sophie Aldred, fresh from the broadcast of her triumphant return to *Doctor Who*.

We were heading for the celebration of Neil Cole's Museum of Classic Sci Fi, a day which went on to cement that first impression; in *Who*, like no other show, there is no barrier between stars and fans, collectors and creators, crew, cast, and helpless obsessives. During the day, I took copious notes for our site (with permission from Neil and all featured individuals of course), and here offer you, dear reader, a tiny selection of the happy conversations that filled the day...

First, I catch up with Hal Townsend and Phil Robinson, creature creators...

The DWC: Why do you do it?

Hal: We're such massive fans, which is how I met Neil. It is a good community he has managed to create. The events are always really friendly. My mate Phil and I create

the costumes, so when we come to an event we dress up.

DWC: Do you have a favourite era?

Hal: Classic has the best story, adventure, and character development. But I've worked on Chris [Chibnall]'s era, and the new Russell [T Davies] specials.

DWC: Wow! I guess you can't give us any spoilers, but can you say why we're having to wait for so long?

Hal: Russell never, never does anything without a reason – In Russell We Trust.

DWC: And Phil, why do you do this job?

Phil: There's such a diversity of designs, it is very inspiring; it reminds you of your childhood. And I love creating things.

DWC: As a sculptor, how do you create creature costumes in which actors can express things?

Phil: There are complex animatronics in some, but it's also the basic material. Silicone is soft, and they add something to make it even softer, so it can cling so close to the skin, and move with the muscles underneath.

DWC: You created the new Sil costume for Nabil Shaban?

P: Yes, I went to his house and took casts and measurements to make a full body costume. And I had to go to Sophie [Aldred]'s house to make a cast of her head, in a bit of time pressure as it was a



last-minute decision to make her character, Lady Na, wear prosthetics [for *Sil and the Devil Seeds of Arodor*].

DWC: I gather you have been involved in the upcoming RTD2 era?

Phil: Yes, but I have signed an NDA, so I can't give you any information.

Hal: If I told you, I'd have to kill you.

Phil: I can say we helped in the team on two different kinds of monsters for the 60th anniversary specials. Millennium Effects did monsters from 2005 until Chibnall started; now they have come back with Russell.

DWC: So can your understanding of the time it takes behind the scenes help fans with our impatience?

Phil: We were sculpting them back in April. So we have even longer to wait to see the finished product!

We all had to wait 16 years last century, but Keith Barnfather says:

“For me, the ‘wilderness’ years never really existed. We carried on, with fan-made audio visuals, *Reel Time*, and *Myth Makers*. The ‘Classic/NuWho split doesn't occur to us.”

It is seriously worth looking up the massive range of stories, interviews and films he's behind.

Steve Lyons is a *Doctor Who* writer who thrived through the ‘wilderness’ years, producing novels, short stories, Big Finish, and other audios. I chatted with him about conventions and fandom.

Steve: I have done it as a guest and as an attendee. It's just brilliant that *Doctor Who* has this solid aspect, when we can get together and talk about something we love. It's my favourite TV show because it very quickly became so much more than a show.

DWC: What made you a writer?

Steve: I've been a writer for as long as I can remember reading.

DWC: What audio *Who* are you proudest of?

Steve: *The Witch Hunters*, *The Crooked World*, *The Architects of History*. When I had a companion I had created (Tracy Childs' Elizabeth Klein) and monsters I'd created on Radio 7/4extra, it was really exciting – I had my name in the Radio Times!

John Hogg, prop replica creator, collector, and 'Killer Auton' actor is an excellent example of how fans become part of the show. He says:

“The first TV I remember was *The Time Warrior*. We couldn't afford a TV before then. Now I'm in the credits for the Blu-ray Season 8 trailer, wearing this head I made as a killer Auton!”

Adam, collector:

“I was 3 years old, in front of Androzani. I've been addicted ever since; it's been part of all my life.”

People call 'Ol Sixie 'The Ambassador' but I'd say there's another uber fan and star whose work for the show is invaluable. Sophie Aldred is such a pleasure to talk with.

DWC: As a woman of very similar age to yourself I have to ask, parachuting into the TARDIS... are you trying to make the rest of us feel inadequate?

Sophie: [Laughs] When I first saw the script, I was delighted. Chris had asked what I wanted to do, and I said whatever Ace was always doing, lots of running and jumping. Then when I saw the sheet is said 'stunt double.' I thought 'oh no; health and safety aren't going to allow me'. After day one I never saw the 'stunt double' again – they realised I was as foolhardy as ever!

Jamie Magnus Stone would come up to me and say; 'do you fancy doing...? Or he'd say 'I've had an idea' and sketch it on a bit of paper. 'If you were to lie on this plank, on a dolly, we could whiz you into the TARDIS. I said 'Yes! Let's go for it. The crew thought I was bonkers. I thought 'are you really going to do this? Yes. I am.'



DWC: Is it really an encouragement to be active?

Sophie: That is exactly what I said to Chris. I would love to encourage women of my age; they have a chance. I work at it though; I run nearly every day, I dance, I eat carefully.

DWC: What does it mean to have Ace in Classic and the most recent televised *Who*, and maybe even going into the future?

Sophie: The outpouring, the love of the character of Ace I have received this week... I'd love to think she has a future. That Russell is looking and thinking maybe a spin off – I haven't heard yet!

There followed a screening of *Doctor on Display*, then another tea and home-made cakes break, followed by Q&A panels.

Q&A: Sophie Aldred, Keith Barnfather, Roger Stevens – presenter and creators of the film – and Neil Cole, its subject.

Neil thanked the guests for coming but Sophie thanked him.

Sophie: This is not like a normal *Who* con; it's very, very gentle, relaxed. Loads of time for everyone to spend time with everyone.

Q: Roger, how do you edit so much potential material?

Roger: It's a very people focussed story, about the people, not the props. It has ups and downs. We wanted a very human story and I hope that's what we got.

Neil: In the film, restored artefacts from the show are referred to as 'sacred.'

Keith: One of the things about *Doctor Who* is there's no other show that's exactly



like it. The line between those who make and those who watch is has blurred over the years. We are a family.

Q: Sophie, what's next in line for you?

Sophie: well, from the sublime to the ridiculous, I've just been voicing a Barbara Cartland novel – lots of skin-tight pantaloons! You can't plan as an actor.

Q: What was *that* scene [in *The Power of the Doctor*] with Sylvester like?

Sophie: I recorded my bits in the cold and wet dripping cave in the Brecon Beacons. I don't think Sylvester would have like that very much! I'd been given a non-actor to read his lines, so I asked would you mind if Barnaby [Edwards, Dalek Operator] read in his lines. He did quite a good impression of Sylvester! Then we did the other way round. We had this lovely morning, Sylvester in his costume – there was something about him in that hat and scarf

and jumper. Pretty emotional. Then I looked up and there just ‘happened’ to be a couple of hundred people dropped into watch!

After that scene, I was supposed to go home. I saw them [Peter, Colin, Sylvester, and Paul] in their trailer, and I thought ‘I can’t go home!’, so I stuck around. So for the rest of the day I played *all* the other Doctors. I read in their lines – it was the best *Doctor Who* con ever! Chris had come in specially for that day. An amazing day.

At the end of the day, the Cybermen came in and saw all the Doctors walking off, and said, oh no! something *else* we have to keep quiet about!

Q: What was the Companions Anonymous scene like?

Sophie: It was weird, the room was hazy with dry ice. Jodie [Whittaker] wasn’t in the scene but came in just to be there and see everyone. Everyone was so kind to William Russell, especially John Bishop [the first male companion and the most recent]. The floor manager knew he was struggling, came over and knelt in front of him, so tender. I actually thought a couple of days later ‘was that all a dream?’ Joyful to be together, reverential.

Neil: Colin was back on telly – in his element!

Sophie: Colin felt vindicated, to be back in the fold, doing such a great job.

Q: What got you into *Doctor Who*?

Sophie: I watched as everyone did. But I watched through a crack in the door, and made my brother watch so he could tell me about it in case I had to close the door!

I wanted to watch Jodie’s because it’s an

icon. I’ve met so many girls and younger women wearing the Jodie costume, and a friend rang and said they’re showing the *Rosa* episode in school history class.

Neil: [who is also an art teacher] I have shown the Vincent episode in Art so many times.

Q: What was it like being back in The Jacket?

Sophie: The costume manager was going to make a replica, but I said use the real thing. So she kept it carefully. She told me ‘I’ve had so many people come to see The Jacket.’ In the scene where I pull it out of the floor in UNIT, they said ‘we’re going to do the Hero shot.’ I said ‘ooh, nice’. They said ‘no, not you – the Jacket!’

Keith: Maybe a spinoff?’

Q: What does the character of Ace mean to you?

Sophie: Everything. When I walked into John Nathan-Turner’s office with his Dalek curtains and framed Tom Baker Y-fronts, who’d have thought I’d be here 30-something years later?

You sign NDAs. The only person who knew was my husband because when my agent rang I burst into tears. He said what’s the matter? I said [mimicking sobbing] ‘Nothing’s the matter; I’m going to be in *Doctor Who* again!’

Keith: You rang and said something’s happened but I can’t tell you. So I knew, but you couldn’t say, so I couldn’t ask. What would life be like without *Doctor Who*, all the friends? We wouldn’t be here.

I don’t think any of us can imagine life without *Doctor Who*. Where else would

you hear a ring-modulated Dalek utter 'Oopsie daisy'? Its operator was a young girl, doing well with the big heavy travel machine. She is part of the *Who* family, evidence that there is No Other Show quite like it.

Margot Hayhoe is another important member of the behind-the-scenes family, having worked as Assistant Floor Manager and Production Manager for decades in countless BBC productions, including *Doctor Who* (on various stories from *The War Machines* to *Snakedance*), and *The Triffids* (1981). Neil Cole has just beautifully restored an original miniature from that iconic adaptation, for his Museum of Classic Sci Fi.

DWC: From all your experience in floor managing and producing, who do you value behind the show, the ones we don't see on screen?

Margot: All the creatives, designers, costume, make-up, and without the camera crew nothing would happen. You can't pinpoint one because every person is important, whether they're in for a day or much longer. It's a big family, trying to make the best programme we can.

In the past it was a bit like a university, all the background departments, reference and photo libraries. If you rang the right department, they'd bend over backwards to get you what you needed. Then after the demand to make each part a business, it was cheaper to go out and buy a record than to borrow it from them.

Margot's husband Mike was quietly accompanying her, staying out of the lime-light. But it turned out he was a camera operator, who happened to film the Jon Pertwee into Tom Baker regeneration!

DWC: A little bit of history!

Mike: It wasn't a big deal at the time, and what we did wasn't very complicated. We just stopped the recording, and we felt that 'is there anything more?' moment. Barry Letts went out of the studio leaving Jon Pertwee lying on the floor. He brought in Tom who was lain down on the floor close to Jon, and each had a camera on them. We checked the heads were in the same position, then the effect was just the vision mixer with two levers on a desk!

The 21st century versions involve emanations of great fireworks and SFX. We had some special effects, but didn't use them much, regarding them as rather... obvious.

Margot Hayhoe, Graeme Harper, and Neil Cole formed a panel at the event celebrating Neil's museum and a new film about it.

Q: Margot, how difficult was it doing *Fury from the Deep* with all that foam? Is it true Patrick Troughton fell in, got up, and kept filming?

MH: I can't remember if Patrick fell over, but a lot of us did! The foam just went everywhere; it was chaos. We had all of TWO cameras to film it. The visual effects dept were very good; they said 'release the foam!' — this wall of foam just grew and grew. We were all edging back towards the studio wall. And we got told off for making the floor too wet!

NC: *The Caves of Androzani* and *Revelation of the Daleks* are two of my favourites. You seem to get the small budgets and make something incredible.

GH: You need a lot of experience, which I didn't have in those days as a director. But

Bob Holmes' script was great. I was excited that I was going to do it. Sometimes decisions are made for money-saving, but work, like the decision to use real machine guns and blanks, not expensive laser effects.

B: What changes have you experienced in the BBC?

MH: Budgets are much larger, and they use single camera like movies. I miss the rehearsal time, four or five days so you could see the whole story. Now, no one has an overall feeling for how it will turn out. That's a loss. TV has improved technically, but there's a lot of dumbing down.



GH: We used to rehearse; in the '90s, an hour and a half programme would be two weeks' rehearsal. Ideas and decisions were sorted during rehearsal so the filming time was efficient. That was a fantastic system.

Now, the director has to work out the plans, sometimes with the sets, in advance, and you have to visualise without talking to any actors. In 10 or 15 minutes, you're supposed to be ready to show how it's going to go: I find that ridiculous. Back in the '80s, it was multi-camera, rehearse, record. Now, it's shot backwards, forwards, and sideways, and no one has a sense of what the whole thing is. I moan about the system, but all the big studios show amazing drama, so it must work!

NC: What about 'producer's choice'?

Graeme and Margot both groan.

MH: Once upon a time, the BBC was a big happy family and we all helped each other out. The departments were all told to become business units, had to sell their stuff to producers. Budgets forced producers out of house. It was the death of costume, design, and all those departments. We lost all the flexibility and mutual help. Bureaucracy. In the '60s, we were in a place of excellence, employed there.

Q: What's it like to have part of your life preserved in Neil's museum?

GH: Fantastic! You will definitely want to come in. No matter how much money you throw at *Doctor Who*, it's still very hard work, so it's brilliant that people want to see the work behind it. Extraordinary. You'll never escape this fantastic family.

NC: The BBC never had a plan to look after their stuff.

MH: They spent a lot of money creating a very accessible, well-organised costume department. PC came along and they had to sell it off. But can I remind everyone — *there is a baby Triffid in the room!* I am very

grateful Neil has restored it; it is admirable.

Q: Why is that BBC adaptation so iconic?

MH: John Duttine was wonderful, and the Triffids themselves were scary. Glycerine gave them a horrible feel, and the SOUND really terrified people. The clacking, knocking menace. And the opening titles were eerie; they reminded me of lockdown.

NC: And it IS the book, not a movie vaguely based on the idea!

Q: What's your best tip for how to be successful in your roles?

GH: When I was doing *Bergerac*, I rang Mark Campbell for advice. He said, 'keep it moving; move the actors, move the camera, preferably both. Do that and you'll never stop working' – and I haven't!

MH: Watch them, learn how to – or how not to. Be polite, and not shouty. [Margot then recounted a time when she shouted at Graeme for playing the harmonica when everyone else was trying to sleep!] Never be afraid to ask, don't pretend you know.

NC: In the early days, edits cost so much; how did that affect you?

MH: Me, not so much, but the directors would have to accept stuff they weren't happy with. Rehearsal helps, especially live TV like *Z cars* – especially if you were doing the back projection and it ran out!

GH: I was once forced by the person training me to record one straight through, as live. It was 'orrible! But it worked like a dress rehearsal, because we did it again that evening and it was perfect.

Q: What are your memories of the big farewell on the beach scene from *Doomsday*?

GH: It was a big scene for Billie [Piper] because it was filmed in the middle: she had to work up to say this big goodbye to the whole show, then go back to four months more. I didn't know either of them well, and it was a huge, 52 day block – no one has done that before or since. 15 nights of overnight shoots. I went to see them in make-up to discuss how we were going to approach it. There's an etiquette when you're doing close ups with artists; you do the lady first. I knew she was going to be emotional and wanted to be sure we got that on camera! We didn't want to 'waste' her tears on David [Tennant]'s version. Fortunately, she wanted to go first because she didn't think she could bring it back for a second go. But the first take was awful, windy, hair everywhere, snot! She was upset that she had to go again, but it was brilliant. Now I'm getting emotional myself!

I caught up with Graeme again later on, chatting with Pete Jorysz (Baptist Minister and knowledgeable fan) about *Warriors' Gate*...

Graeme: [*Warriors' Gate*] had its challenges. I was First Assistant, and it had seemed fine in pre-production, then I realised in rehearsals [Director, Paul Joyce] was not going to plan how to shoot this. I had to stand next to him and write my own camera scripts. Shall we say, I learned how I would do it differently! They gave me the director's job after that.

The DWC: You've done a lot of epic scale and action, like Dougie Camfield. How do you handle that with the smaller intimate details that make it human?



G: Visualisation and planning. Often, the detail comes from having the time due to good planning on the big picture to pick details up. An example, in *Rise of the Cybermen/Age of Steel*, we'd finished when Russell said we need a different opening, the horror of the Cybermen being made. So we filmed it. I'd said 'wrap' and gone home, then I realised I hadn't any close ups of one of the main protagonists. I rang Phil Collinson who just laughed his head off, called me a stupid B! Then he called the actor in next day and we picked up the shot.

DWC: Colin Spall was with you in that story, and in *Revelation of the Daleks*. You're famous for being the only director to have worked on Classic and recent *Who*. How has it changed?

G: In the '80s, I was alone in the studio. We had to compete with *Star Wars* and we knew we couldn't with our resources, but I knew it had charm, was loved and popular. I tried with what little experience I had to

shoot some single camera work, and keep up the pace in *Androzani*.

DWC: I like the pacing of *The Waters of Mars*, especially the slo-mo where they are packing up to evacuate the base.

G: I wanted to make sure you did not miss the reactions between persons. Lindsay Duncan underplayed it so beautifully – proved why she was the Commander.

Waters of Mars is proper adult science fiction, but under *Doctor Who* became cinematic.

Pete: Was it a nightmare?

G: Yes, but it was enjoyable; a problem to be solved, and a brilliant team of people to work with.

Pete: What was it like working with Tom Baker?

Margot Hayhoe, sitting at the next table, joins in.

Margot: With me, he was perfectly okay,

because it [*Logopolis*] was his last show.

P: But he could be quite forceful in his opinions.

G: As First Assistant, I knew him well so got on with him. One time, I'd asked the crew if they would go over (the 10pm limit) for 15 minutes. He said were you going to ask the Leading Man? You had to come back strong – yes, of course I was going to, once I knew the crew would make it possible. Truthfulness goes a long way.

DWC: I'm told you're known for liking actors.

G: I once asked 'why do you like working with me?' and was told: 'you allow actors to be good; you let them show you what they can do.'

DWC: How do you work that along with the enormous crew behind the camera?

G: The First Assistant clears the floor, the actors and director come in and work through the scene, they know their lines. I don't tell them my plan — I just say 'you enter here; let's see what happens.' You negotiate. Then I say to the crew, 'this is the way I want to do it, these are the kind of shots,' and we negotiate with the Director of Photography. I establish that they are at liberty to offer something they can see in a different way.

DWC: Do you have to be an extrovert?

G: You have to be NOISY! And you have to keep your eye on the bigger picture. I was mentoring someone who got that rabbit in the headlights look when she realised she couldn't handle the knock on effects of changing one thing, under pressure of time.

Pete: What's it like working with Russell T Davies?

G: He's a force of nature. He's mad! He called me one time to meet about something and we sat outside a restaurant in Soho for hours, in the rain. That's dedication.

DWC: Would you like to be part of his new era?

G: I'm not hurt if I don't get asked – I think most people think I've retired! I would LOVE to do more – I want to see what happens.

Graeme was accompanied by his lovely wife, Bernadette.

DWC: What's it like for you when *Who* fans obsess about a small element of Graeme's work?

Bernadette: It's interesting the range he has done, from *Doctor Who* to soaps to *Spitting Image*. But in all of them, he loves actors.

DWC: Does he take his work home with him?

B: OMG! But I love hearing about it; my life has become richer.

Our lives are all richer for their association with *Doctor Who*, Bernadette, and for all the brilliant people who make it happen.

Thank you to everyone who took part in this wonderful day — and especially to organiser, Neil Cole.

You can find Neil's The Museum of Classic Sci-Fi, which contains over 200 original props, costumes, and artworks from classic film and television, in Osborne House, Allendale, NE47 9BJ.

Monarchy in the UK

James Baldock

brianofmorbius



I was wrenching the eight-year-old away from the computer, the swivel chair squeaking behind him, the Roblox game abandoned. Leading him by the shoulders into the lounge, where the TV sat playing looped footage. “I know you were in the middle of something, but you have to come and see this. Now.”

On screen: Huw Edwards, sombre and black-tied, reading a brief statement from a sheet of A4. We heard the national anthem. Then he read it again, the briefest of pauses an indication that someone was shouting in his ear; by the time they pinned it to the gates of Buckingham Palace, we’d more or less committed it to memory.

“Listen,” I told the children. “Years from now, when you’re my age or older or younger, people are going to ask you where you were. Remember this. Remember this moment.”

I think I was in the shower when I heard about Diana. A cramped unit on the fifth floor of an office building when the World Trade Centre collapsed. Driving to Oxford when the *Baker Street* sax solo vanished from the local radio station, to be replaced

by a few moments of dead air and then a news broadcast reporting the death of Prince Phillip. Thursday’s announcement followed months of speculation, the unfolding of notes passed around the House of Commons and grim faces as the MPs left for the afternoon. The BBC dragged out the few clips they could find, Her Majesty walking along corridors with several presidents; greeting cheering crowds in a coat that looks like it’s been made of leftover Kermit puppets; standing at the balcony watching planes display vapour trails that look curiously like a French flag. A still image of the Range Rover carrying four senior royals was intensely scrutinised, examining eye movement and body language for any clue as to what was going on.

You watch events like this through whatever cultural lens provides the best fit. As I write this, it’s Friday lunchtime and they’ve just cancelled the football. The Beeb will not be screening any comedy until after the funeral, which presumably means next Prime Minister’s Questions will take place behind closed doors. I am waiting for the announcement that the cast of *EastEnders* will be filming a special sce-

ne. This is the calm before the storm, you see: that little moment where a nation is still in shock, but not yet sick of the 24-hour coverage. By the time you read these words, I suspect that memorial fatigue will be setting in with a vengeance, which presumably means it's okay to make jokes.

Or is it? There is a sense of sanctification about the whole thing, at least in my neck of the woods (which is full of multicultural leaves adorning the limbs of Conservative tree trunks). The death of the Queen has cast a spell of sombre, almost reverential hush across proceedings, like an enchantment from some antechamber at the back of Clarence House. It is as if, for the moment at least, we should keep our opinions to ourselves. Even the republicans are toning it down, having mostly been instructed to by slightly more tolerant middlemen. If I have to look at one more black-rimmed window display, I am going to break something. It will probably be the window.

But I think about change and the nature of death and I am reminded of the mass outpouring of unexpected grief that followed the death of Bernard Cribbins. There are certain people who have already achieved a kind of assumed immortality. Mother Teresa was one. David Attenborough is another. None of us had any sort of delusions that the Queen would soldier on until cybernetic implants became not only a reality but an option in the supermarket run, but I think most of us probably thought she might make it to a century. As it stood, she lived just long enough to see off Boris Johnson, bowing out gracefully a couple of days later. This is probably a coincidence.

Where does it come from, this urge, this compulsion to write something about the whole thing? And what could we say that

hasn't been said already? I was ruminating on this with Philip. "I don't want to do anything... crass," he said. "We did a Queen's greatest hits thing for her 70th jubilee".

So did everyone else. It was almost expected, and it proved Terry Pratchett's theory that all tapes left in a car for more than about a fortnight metamorphose into Best of Queen albums. And everyone else is doing it again, right now, because people have short memories. Everyone knows the Queen was a fan. No one here needs a rehash of *The Idiot's Lantern*, or *Voyage of the Damned*, or that bit in *Silver Nemesis*.

Still, it strikes me that there are an awful lot of parallels, particularly if we're talking about change and loss. The connections didn't become apparent until an email I received from an old friend who pointed out that the Queen's final days – specifically, her final political acts – mirrored the final stories of Peter Davison. There is the petulant public schoolboy, spoiled and stropky



and loathed by many, saddled with an awkward haircut and questionable taste in shorts, who leaves to pursue a glittering career somewhere far away. His replacement is a younger woman with a strange speaking voice. And then almost immediately, the Doctor dies.

It's a crossroads, and it leads in all manner of directions. I was going to talk about Meghan Markle's associations with 1996, and how things inevitably go tits-up the moment you involve the Americans, but decided to leave that bit out. At the same time (and in all seriousness), there is a sizeable chunk of the population that cannot remember a time when we didn't have the Queen, just as there is a sizeable chunk who cannot remember a time when *Doctor Who* was not part of the culture. Many who cannot accept its inevitable demise, at least in its current format. Change is difficult for everyone. After 70 years of a female monarch, they're suddenly switching to a man? Why? What sort of pandering to wokeness is this, anyway?

When someone is in the public eye like this – on the head of every coin, on the face of every banknote and stamp (but when was the last time you used either?), on the news at least once a week, on tea towels and bobbleheads and found staring at an autocue for 10 minutes every December 25th – they become part of the furniture. It's all but impossible not to feel a sense of absence when they pass on. This afternoon, I was walking past the Co-op when I caught the tail end of a conversation a loud-mouthed chap in his 40s was having with the woman at the counter. "I didn't know her," he said brashly. "Did you? Nah. Joe Bloggs, across the road, dies. Ooh, stop the world!" And in a way, he was right – still, in my head, I could hear the voice of Jodie Whittaker, looking at birth certificates

on *Who Do You Think You Are?*. "I never met them," she says, more than once, "but I feel like I know them."

And yet this is the beginning of a dangerous path. Because this artificial familiarity shares a bed with assumption, for better or worse. Put another way: we live in a world where the unholy trinity of media, government, and business tailor our consumer and citizenship experiences to make us feel divided and bereft and friendless. There are sound business reasons for doing this. A divided populace is easier to control, and people who are lonely tend to want to buy stuff. Is it any wonder that we latch on to celebrities and TV characters, when we're made to feel we have more in common with them than with the family on the other side of the fence?

The Queen was a devoted, hardworking public servant who dedicated her life to decades of service. She also spent millions of taxpayer's money on keeping her son out of the courts. She was the last bastion of fine British tradition. She represented a bygone age that is thankfully behind us. Choose one of the above. Actually, choose *all* of them. Because above all else, the Queen was a human being. We forget that. Like all those who spend their lives in the public eye, she is adulated or despised, cast in the role of celestial hero or reprehensible villain. It never seems to occur to people that she might be a little of both.

We have the same problem with the Doctor – both with the Doctor and the people who talk about him. We have a character living by the well-intentioned but ultimately unassailable mantra that is "Never cruel, never cowardly": the Doctor has been



both, and is not a hero of any sort, in any incarnation, and anyone who tells you otherwise probably isn't paying attention. And yet all too often we'll reduce a complex character to an archetype in order to score political points. We'll use it as an excuse to bash writers, and actors, and their custodians and also their critics, when the real issue is what we ourselves might actually be feeling at that moment. We heed the voice that wants to have the argument, and the argument is protracted and brutal: never has there been such a maelstrom of intolerance and hatred, and never have the words "Be kind" been thrown about with such ironic abandon. It works on both sides. The people who call out negative behaviour are labelled misogynistic manbabies or libtard snowflakes, depending on whose turn it is to do the shouting. Sometimes the label is justified; justified is not usually the same as helpful. There is no place for discourse, because the spectacle of confrontation is more enticing, and that's what keeps the fandom ticking along in its twilight death throes of fading relevance.

Take the Doctor out of the equation and you can have the same argument about Brexit and Beergate and Trump and Kyiv and vaccines and ice caps and it will go the same way every time. And there is the Queen, sat in the middle, stoic and largely unreadable, keeping her views largely to herself. It was the price she paid for the privilege she enjoyed: the need to keep silent and leave the rest to the body language experts. I would never want to deny anyone their need to make themselves heard, but perhaps we could learn from that. We must call out intolerance and bigotry and hatred and injustice, whether it's in the streets or on the streaming services, but we can – we *must* – do it better than we have been. We must be better with others and more honest with ourselves. And perhaps if there's anything I've learned these past few days it's that I need to be more spongelike. Perhaps still waters really do run deep, and we would understand each other better by talking less and listening more.

I can't help thinking that's what the Queen would have wanted.

An Entirely Fictitious Account of Doctor Who: The Ghost Monument

Philip Bates

“My main starting point for *The Ghost Monument* was finding out that humans can survive unaided in deep space for up to 12 minutes,” Chris Chibnail and I, then-showrunner of *Doctor Who* revealed to *Psychics Monthly*, the magazine for physicists who can’t spell. “I think I learned that in a dream, but it’s definitely true and if you ever get the chance to go into space without a spacesuit, any breathing equipment, or protection whatsoever, I advise you to do so. I’ve been. Again, in a dream, but I’m sure that’s fine.”

(Our lawyers have advised us to note that you should, under no circumstances, do this. You know, in case NASA rocks up at your door and asks for you to go on an experimental mission around the asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter wearing

only your pyjamas and some discount crocs from Asda.)

This scene, with the Doctor and her new possible-reluctant-companions, possible-kidnapped-victims floating in the wildness of space, proved to be not only a great opener for *The Ghost Monument* but also a shocking cliffhanger for Jodie Whittaker’s debut episode, *The Woman Who Fell Down to the Planet Below Her, By Heck*. Fortunately, Chris consulted several astrophysicists (well, two of them) to confirm that the characters could be saved from their potentially-grisly deaths in space if a spaceship were passing by at just the right time; and further that space is absolutely full of spaceships. “You can hardly move for spaceships,” said an unnamed source who goes under the



pseudonym Mr C. Chibnail and I.

The Ghost Monument found the Doctor, Officer Yasmin Khan PCDA QVC AOL, O’Graham O’Brien, and Ryan on the desolate planet called Desolation which was pretty darn desolated and was located in a desolate part of space in this desolate universe, as they competed in a race to reach the titular Ghostly Monument. “I bet it’s the TARDIS,” said numerous commenters, fans, casual viewers, blind nuns, Gary Barlow, and a woman called June who works in the Cardiff branch of Lego. “I bet it’s the TARDIS too,” said Chris Chibnail and I.

And though some select viewers had already guessed what said Ghostly Monument would turn out to be, the production team had a secret surprise concealed up their metaphorical sleeves: killer toilet paper.

“I think everyone has, at one point in their lives, thought, ‘what if I go to the bathroom and after casting out my unmentionables, I reach out to grasp the toilet paper and instead of cleaning up after my ablutions, it starts to strangle me and I start screaming and yelling for help but no words leave my lips because the Andrex is that triple-ply sort?’” Chris told *Psychiatrists Weekly*, the weighty tome for psychics who can’t spell. “So I thought I’d channel those nightmares into *Doctor Who*.”

The showrunner’s dreams, night terrors, and psychotic episodes further inspired the rest of the story. Those fears include: a desert; some water; solar-power; some tunnels; a self-lighting cigar; and Art Malik in a tent.

“It was pretty high-octane stuff,” one doped-out anonymous viewer told *Points*

of View from his prison cell.

Though sentient loo roll wasn’t a great challenge for the design team to realise, they had their work cut out for them when it came to creating SniperBots, described in the script as “camouflaged robots, head-to-toe in khaki, wearing hoodies, one arm replaced by a massive gun, and their face a black box with one shining bright eye in the centre, like Cyclops from the X-Men”.

“When we first saw the word ‘SniperBot’ in the script,” explained Supervising Art Director, Dafydd Shurmer, in the November 2018 issue of *In Vogue*, a magazine dedicated to reporting about what was in the previous month’s issue of *Vogue*, “I thought they’d be so far away, we wouldn’t need to design them. You never see snipers up close, right? They’re always like... over there. In the distance. So I thought we could just do a silhouette or something. Maybe a plank of wood with a face drawn on it in Sharpie. Sadly, Chris was worried the audience would confuse them with Ryan, so instead, we simply designed the SniperBots as camouflaged robots, head-to-toe in khaki, wearing hoodies, one arm replaced by a massive gun, and their face a black box with one shining bright eye in the centre, like Cyclops from the X-Men.”

“I wasn’t happy with the design,” Chibnail and I later complained in an episode of *Open Air*. “Totally not what I’d envisioned.”

That would be the only controversial thing in *The Ghost Monument*. On a completely unrelated topic, the episode also featured the first mention of the Timeless Children.

The Ghost Monument further gave the series one of its most iconic images, courtesy of guest star, Shaun Dooley. The image showed the silhouette of Jodie’s



Doctor against a dazzling sky, the TARDIS in sight, with fresh new adventures beckoning and a whole universe of wonder ready to be discovered. “I was trying to take a selfie, but got my phone the wrong way round,” Dooley told everyone who would listen.

Whittaker was especially pleased with it and asked him to send it to Chibnail and I. She told *Nightly Northern News for the Northern Nation*: “ey up, ey up, eyy upp. Eyyy ooop, ey up, ey oop, eyy uppp, whippets, ey up.” The picture was then used on the steelbook version of Series 11.

“I wasn’t happy with the design,” Chibnail and I later complained in an episode of *Open Air*. “Totally not what I’d envisioned.”

At the conclusion of the episode, the Doctor got back to her TARDIS, only to be surprised with a new interior design. After throwing up for numerous hours, seeing a

therapist for six weekly sessions, and writing letters of complaint to the BBC, the Doctor realised that this was still her TARDIS and, epzo facto, was charged with getting it off Desolation. “I was very happy with the design,” Chibnail and I said in an issue of *Physicists Daily*, the newspaper for psychiatrists who can spell but have delusions of grandeur. “Totally what I’d envisioned.”

And so, with a new title sequence, new TARDIS trio made up of four people, a new direction, a new costume, a new showrunner, and Bradley Walsh, Series 11 was off to a refreshing start. In the coming weeks, *Doctor Who* would teach viewers that racism is bad, spiders are bad, things that eat too much are bad, dying is bad, Amazon is bad, sexism is bad, child abuse is surprisingly forgivable, and revenge is bad.

The Beauty of Dreams

Peter Shaw

'The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.'

(Ugandan proverb)

"This has happened before," thought the Doctor as he left the TARDIS. He checked his teeth again. Still familiar. That's weird. It was like déjà vu all over again. The readings suggested this was no ordinary journey. But nothing seemed ordinary anymore. Not that it ever did. But this was even less ordinary. Extra extraordinary. And more than usual. Where was he?

He left the darkened room where the TARDIS had landed, shut the door behind him, and looked around. He was in the corridor of a large Victorian house. At the end was a Christmas tree. A silver one with flashing multi-coloured fairy lights, overloaded with tinsel, fragile glass baubles, and a dilapidated-looking angel perched on the top. Not weeping, thankfully. Victorian house, but with late 1970s or early 1980s decorations, he surmised.

The Doctor turned when he heard a sound behind him, then a familiar voice.

"Danger! Danger! Hostile lifeforms approaching!" The Doctor was overjoyed.

"K9!" he exclaimed. He looked around for someone to introduce his faithful robot dog to. But remembered he was alone. Then he looked more closely down the corridor. This wasn't a Mark Three. More like a Mark Smidgen. It was teeny tiny. No more than 10 inches high.

The Doctor picked up the micro K9 and marvelled at it. The nose was a little long. But they'd got the tartan collar right. Even if it was just a sticker. A toy talking K9!

"Put that down," said a voice, which sounded like a young boy.

"And why should I do that?" said the Doctor, who was rather enjoying looking at something comforting and familiar, if pint-size.

"Because I'm the Doctor."

The boy came out of the shadows. He looked about eight years old, although the Doctor was never very good at guessing. He was dressed rather elaborately in a pair of smart red trousers, scuffed school shoes and was wearing two shirts. The one underneath had the letter P embroidered on the collar. The shirt on top was striped cream and beige. It looked kind of, sort of familiar but the Doctor couldn't think why.

"Are you...?" said the Doctor.

"Yes, I'm the Doctor!" said the boy. "So put K9 down right now or I'll..." He paused for

thought. "Put you in a Time Dungeon."

That was new. The Doctor had heard of time everything now: time locks, time holes, time winds, time barriers, time warps, time tides... I suppose one more won't hurt.

"I'd better put him down, then."

The Doctor placed the teeny K9 on the floor and stepped back. The boy scampered over, picked up the K9, and placed him in the school satchel he had slung over his shoulder. Very Ford Prefect, thought the Doctor. But he's mixing up his cosplay.

Just then, there was the sound of footsteps approaching. The boy told the Doctor to go back into the room where he came from.

"She won't understand," he said.

The Doctor agreed and the boy headed off down the corridor to greet the visitor. Noticing a slip of paper had fallen out of the boy's satchel, the Doctor quickly swooped it up before returning into the room hosting the TARDIS. This might be a clue to whatever's going on here, the Doctor surmised.

But before heading back to the TARDIS to run some tests on the document, the Doctor opened the door a crack to observe.

It was an older woman, middle-aged. She was wearing high-waisted jeans, and a chunky oversized garish jumper, very early '80s. Over the top was an apron, and in her hand was a pair of hairdressing scissors.

"I've just got to wait for Mrs O'Shea's perm to set," she said. "Will you be alright for another 20 minutes?" The boy nodded. "Don't go in any of the rooms; she said just to play in the corridor." The woman left. The boy immediately took K9 out and started his game again.

"We've got to fix this Time Intruder," he said to the toy K9. "When he comes out of that door again, set your weapon to stun level and we can knock him out. Then I can do some scans and find out if he's got anything to do with the inter-spacial anomaly that is affecting the time corridor that we're trapped in."

The Doctor looked at the paper in his hand; it was a primary school report. He scanned the comments. For English, the teacher wrote, 'If he spent more time reading and less time staring out of the window, he would do much so better.'

The History comment was, 'Unfortunately, he is a dreamer who doesn't seem to be able to concentrate on anything.' The Maths report declared, 'He is way behind the other children because his written work is so poor.'

The Head Teacher concurred, 'He really needs to stop daydreaming and buck his ideas up if

he is to meet the standards expected of this school.' Then the Doctor noticed his Drama report: 'He has so many imaginative ideas and contributes to the class well, but he never seems to complete his written homework.'

The Doctor looked down the corridor to see the little boy alone, still playing his game with K9. Sometimes a computer scan isn't the only way to find out what's going on and help to put it right.

"What was it? A Zygon?" said the Doctor.

"It was this lady. The Master has hypnotised her into thinking she's a hairdresser and that she's my mum," said the boy. "And she's left me in here while she perms some old lady's hair. The old lady who owns this house."

"That sounds like exactly the sort of devious scheme the Master might come up with."

"I thought you might be the Master. Now I don't," the boy replied.

"Well, now you've got to know me, I'm nothing like that evil renegade who's out to enslave and conquer the universe."

"It's not that," said the boy. "You haven't got a beard."

"Well. Yes. True. But... maybe wait a few decades and your opinion might change." The Doctor crouched down to the boy's height and whispered, "Do you know anything about an inter-spacial anomaly that is affecting the time corridor that we're trapped in?"

"Yes," said the boy. "Its epicentre is over there." He pointed down the end to the flashing Christmas tree.

"What, behind the Christmas tree?"

"That's not a Christmas tree, stupid!" said the boy. "That's the temporal manifestation of the anomaly. That's the shape it takes in our universe."

"Ah," replied the Doctor. "You see, I'm not sure I'm from this universe." This seemed to be a universe where he existed as some sort of children's hero. Not the worst universe he'd ever come across.

"That's good," said the boy. "If you are not from here, you might be able to approach the anomaly and take some readings."

"Good plan! Can I borrow your Sonic Screwdriver?"

"Don't be stupid. It was destroyed by the Tereleptils in 1666." The Doctor felt like he'd just lost an old friend.

"We'll have to go hands-free!" said the Doctor.

"You're not very good at this, are you?" said the boy. "Take K9."

"I thought you left him with Romana in E-Space," said the Doctor.

"I borrowed this one off Sarah Jane Smith, obviously. Now, take him to the anomaly."

"Won't K9 be affected by it?"

"You're worse than Tegan!" said the boy. "The anomaly only affects organic matter." The boy reached into his satchel and gave the Doctor the toy K9. The Doctor took it and started to move, cautiously, towards the flashing Christmas tree. "No, no no!" said the boy. "K9 wheels along the ground!"

So the Doctor got down on his arms and knees and started pushing the tiny K9 down the corridor until he got near the flashing silver tree.

"Okay," said the Doctor. "I'll shout out the readings and you can note them down. The boy didn't answer. "Okay?"

"I'm not very good at writing," the boy said. "Not fast anyway."

"Well, you can just... remember them."

"Yes. Now get on with it! We haven't much time. The anomaly is volatile and could implode any minute taking us all with it!"

"Good point! It's registering 5,678 on the... Donna Noble scale! Is that bad?"

"Fatal. Use K9!"

The Doctor picked up the toy K9, pointed it at the tree, and started making *pow-pow* laser fire noises at it.

"What are you doing?" said the boy.

"Firing... his photon beams," replied the Doctor.

"With your special sound effects?" The boy let out a sigh. "Press the control panel on K9's back."

The Doctor pressed. The toy declared, "I am K9." The Doctor looked back.

"Press again," said the boy. The Doctor pressed.

"I am K9."

"And again."

"I am K9."

"Again. You're not pressing it right." The Doctor, wearily, pressed again.

"Weaponry set at stun level." The boy gave the Doctor a thumbs-up. "Firing now!" The Doctor covered his ears as the toy let out a faint laser fire sound.

"I think that's done it!" the Doctor declared. He got back on his hands and knees and

pushed K9 back to his master. The Doctor put up his hand to give the boy a high-five.

“Do you need the toilet?” the boy said. “You don’t need to ask.” The Doctor lowered his hand, sheepishly.

Just then a voice shouted from the other end of the corridor. “Finish your game. We’re about to go. Don’t forget that toy robot thing. If you leave it behind, we’re not coming back to fetch it this time.”

“Got to go,” said the boy. “She’s still hypnotised.”

“Yes, tricky business, mesmerism,” said the Doctor.

“Thanks for your help,” said the boy.

“Just one thing,” said the Doctor. “That anomaly. Did you know it was sentient?”

“Well, yes. I would. I’m the Doctor.”

“It’s just that, when I was over there it gave me a message,” said the Doctor.

“Who for?”

“Well, I don’t know.”

“What was the message?” said the boy.

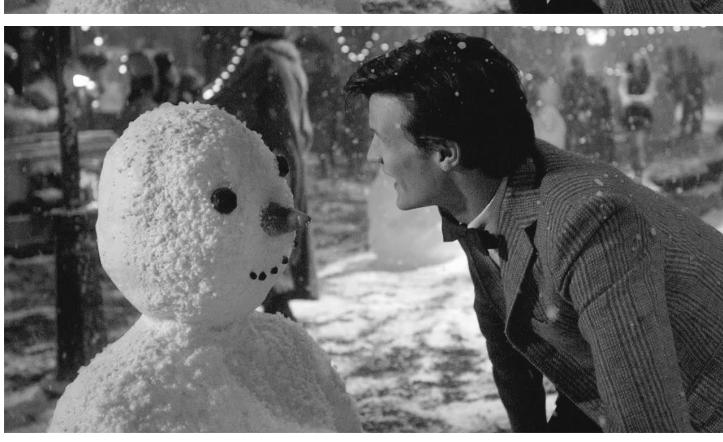
“It said, *keep staring out the window,*’ the Doctor replied. “*Keep making up stories in your head. Keep daydreaming. Because you are brilliant. People may not know it now. But one day, you will find people who think you are amazing. They will appreciate how brilliant you are. And you will be magnificent.*” The Doctor paused. “I wonder who it’s for.”

The boy stared at the Doctor. He smiled, put his K9 back in his satchel and ran off down the corridor. Just before leaving, he waved back.

Job well done. The Doctor put his hands in his pockets. He felt something. It was the school report. He was just about to run after the boy. When he thought, no. He doesn’t need to keep that. The Doctor scrunched it up into a ball and tossed it in the bin when he got back into the TARDIS.

How would the Doctor get back to his own universe? He now had his own anomaly to fix. But he was brilliant too, so he’d find a way. You’ve just got to keep pressing the button until it works.





**Merry Christmas to all,
And to all, a good-night...!**



